

Age is in the Eye of the Beholder: Examining the Cues Employed to Construct the Illusion of
Youth in Teen Pornography

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Abstract

Past research has identified a subgenre of mainstream pornography that attempts to create the illusion for consumers that sex is occurring between an adult and a minor (i.e., a child or young adolescent under the age of 18). This illusion is established through various textual, verbal, visual, and behavioral cues. Although the construction of adult-minor relationships in pornography has received some scholarly attention, there has been no attempt to investigate this phenomenon within pornographic videos available through the Internet. The current study addressed this omission by analyzing for content 150 of the most popular “teen” pornography videos appearing on three pornography websites. The researchers coded for textual, visual, verbal, and behavioral content that connoted sexual activity between an adult and a minor. Results indicated that a small number of videos (28, 18.7% of the sample) contained a disproportionate percentage of cues (54.2%), with the remaining videos containing little or no youth sexualized content. The researchers conclude that only a subsample of videos clearly attempted to portray adult-minor relationships. The prevalence of various cues within the sample was quantified and discussed, as were limitations associated with this study and directions for future research.

Keywords: pornography, Internet, content analysis, media, sexually explicit material

According to Barron and Kimmel (2000), researchers investigating pornography have typically focused on: 1) the effect of short- and long-term exposure on viewers; and 2) the content of the medium itself. The former stream of research has typically focused on negative values and behaviors such as aggression, rape myth acceptance, sexual callousness, tolerance of violence towards women, diminished values, and habituation to novel, more extreme forms of pornography (Allen, D'Alessio, & Brezgel, 1995; Allen, Emmers, Gebhardt, & Giery, 1995; Check & Guloien, 1989; Malamuth, Addison, & Koss, 2000; Zillmann, 1989). The latter stream, which tends to adopt an anti-pornography feminist perspective, has sampled a wide range of media including adult comics (Palmer, 1979); *Playboy* cartoons (Matacin & Burger, 1987); pornographic novels (Jensen & Dines, 1998), magazines (Barron & Kimmel, 2000), DVDs and videos (Jensen, 2010; McKee, 2005; Monk-Turner & Purcell, 1999); and pornographic content available on the Internet (Gorman, Monk-Turner, & Fish, 2010; Heider & Harp, 2002; Mehta & Plaza, 1997). An interesting finding from this diverse body of research is that across multiple media, some pornographic content appears to deliberately suggest that a sexual relationship is taking place between an adult and a minor (i.e., a child or young adolescent under the age of 18). Given the purpose of the current study, these findings will be reviewed in greater detail.

An early content analysis of 100 pornographic comic strips by Palmer (1979) found that 10% contained a theme of defloration, 9% portrayed sex between adults and adolescents, while 4% portrayed an incestuous male-adult/female-child relationship. Similarly, Matacin and Burger (1987) reported that approximately 5.6% of the cartoons featured in *Playboy* magazine depicted women as sexually inexperienced and childlike. Unfortunately, neither study describes these findings in detail.

The presentation of adult women as children, through their appearance and behavior, is not an uncommon occurrence within non-animated pornography. For example, Jensen and Dines' (1998) content analysis of 14 best-selling pornographic videos revealed that a number of them sexualize differences in age. First, the women featured were made to look younger than they really are (e.g., they wore schoolgirl uniforms or had their hair in pigtails). Second, these women were depicted as passive and sexually inexperienced, often requiring instruction before performing sexual acts. Third, male performers were more controlling; substantially older than their female counterparts; and spoke to these women like one might speak to a child (i.e., they used words associated with youth such as "lollipop," "school bus," "good girl," and "little girl": Jensen & Dines, pp. 88-89). Although these videos featured women over the age of 18, the authors conclude that the intent of the pornographers was to depict sex between an adult and a child. This subgenre of pornography is sometimes referred to as "pseudo-child pornography" (PCP: Dines, 2009, p. 124) or "youth sexualized imagery" (Jensen, 2010).

Mehta and Plaza (1997) found that a subgroup of Internet pornographic images contained textual and visual cues (e.g., teddy bears) that were used to *intimate* a model was underage. Heider and Harp's (2002) content analysis of various pornography websites further illustrated the role of written text in the depiction of adult women as children. The researchers found that words such as "teen," "schoolgirl," and "little sister" were used to describe pictures of women dressed in Catholic school uniforms or cheerleader outfits, with props such as school books and teddy bears (Heider & Harp, 2002).

In a recent content analysis of 200 adult DVD covers, Jensen (2010) focused specifically on "youth sexualized language" (YSL) and "youth sexualized imagery" (YSI). YSL and YSI, respectively, are language and visual depictions "that sexually objectify people who look like

they might be underage” (Jensen, 2010, p. 373). In this sense, PCP would appear to contain examples of both YSL and YSI. The results of this study indicated that, among the adult DVD covers analyzed for content, YSL and YSI were present in 21% and 22% of the sample, respectively. Several examples of YSL were youth descriptors (e.g., “innocent,” “debutant,” “starlet”); adjectives associated with youth (e.g., “cute,” “fresh,” “sweet”); references to school; the word “teen;” language children use (e.g., “naughty”); terms of endearment more associated with children (e.g., “sweetie,” “cutie”); and references to virginity. Examples of YSI were childlike adornment of text (e.g., flowers and/or hearts); childish background drawings (e.g., hearts, flowers, cartoons, and/or toys); women dressed as schoolgirls or wearing pigtails; a school-related or child’s bedroom setting; and the presence of children’s toys or school-related props.

Although Jensen’s (2010) study is relevant to the discussion of PCP, it focuses on a medium (DVDs) that appears to be declining in importance. The popularity of Internet pornography, however, is increasing, perhaps because it is more affordable and can be accessed both easily and anonymously (Stack, Wasserman, & Kern, 2004). For that reason, it would appear reasonable to conduct a content analysis of “teen” pornography that samples material from the Internet.

Although not framed as a content analysis per se, Dines (2009) offers a very detailed description of websites that specialize in “teen” pornography, which she describes as being virtually synonymous with PCP. First, both the website titles and the text accompanying their images and videos appear to be the easiest means of convincing the user that he is viewing underage girls. Words and phrases such as “teen,” “innocent,” and “first time sex,” are used in titles, while female performers are described as being “cute,” “sweet,” “fresh,” “virgins,”

“honeys,” and “sweethearts¹.” A second distinctive feature of these sites is the performers. The women appear young (likely being in their late teens or early 20s) and, in contrast to females typically appearing in pornography, are very thin, have small breasts, and wear little makeup. These women are often paired with much older men; adorned with childish clothes and props; and behave like “innocent children” by smiling, blushing, giggling, and appearing sexually inexperienced (Dines, 2009).

Although provocative, Dines’ (2009) description of “teen” pornography websites has two key limitations. First, despite offering a very detailed description of what the researcher *suspects* are prototypical examples of “teen” pornography, Dines does not quantify the prevalence of her findings within these websites. Second, her description appears to be limited to websites specializing in “teen” pornography. This may have provided Dines with characteristic examples of PCP; however, it does not illuminate the nature of “teen” pornography as it appears on larger pornographic websites, which contain a heterogeneous selection of pornographic content (including “teen” pornography).

Purpose

There appears to be a subgenre of legal, mainstream pornography that uses various textual, verbal, visual, and behavioral cues to create the illusion that the adult female performers are underage. It is not a relatively new phenomenon, and occurs across multiple pornographic media (Cowan et al., 1988; Dines, 2009; Jensen, 2010; Jensen & Dines, 1998; Mehta & Plaza, 1997; Palmer, 1979). Although “teen” pornography on the Internet has been described in some detail (see Dines, 2009), to the researchers’ knowledge, no published study has attempted to formally analyze the content of this popular genre. Thus, the primary purpose of this research was to investigate how “teen” pornography videos on the Internet construct the illusion that sex

is occurring between a male adult and an underage female. Specifically, the researchers have attempted to determine which cues are used to achieve this goal and the frequency with which these cues appear.

Method

Website Selection

A previously employed method of selecting websites for content analyses is via search engines (Gorman et al., 2010; Gossett & Byrne, 2002). Therefore, an initial list of websites was selected from a *Google* search for “porn.” *Google* search results are primarily based upon relevance to the search terms (Google, 2011). However, the goal of this study required that the most popular pornographic websites be selected. Therefore, a second provisional list of the most popular websites, as determined by American Internet traffic statistics from *Alexa.com*, was selected. Of the ten most popular pornographic websites, two were excluded because they were “live sex” **Do we need to explain what live sex sites are?** websites. The eight remaining websites, listed in order of decreasing popularity, were *PornHub*, *xHamster*, *XVideos*, *YouPorn*, *XNXX*, *Tube8*, *RedTube*, and *YouJizz*. As anticipated, these were all tube sites² and contained “teen” pornography category pages.

All eight websites were examined to determine if they were suitable for the purposes of this study. The researchers’ video sampling procedure study required that websites allow their videos to be ranked according to view-counts. As *XVideos*, *XNXX*, and *xHamster* do not offer this feature, they were excluded. *PornHub*, *Tube8*, and *YouPorn* contain an identical advertisement that lists these three sites (among others) as being part of the “PornHub Network.” Therefore, it appears these websites may be owned by the same parent company and/or, perhaps, have some type of content-sharing policy. To minimize the possibility that the same video may

be coded multiple times across different websites, only the most popular of the three was retained (*PornHub*). There were no identified methodological limitations associated with the three websites used in this study (*PornHub*, *RedTube*, and *YouJizz*)³. *PornHub*, *RedTube*, and *YouJizz* were also among the first twelve results from the *Google* search. Therefore, not only are they some of the most popular pornographic websites, they seem likely to be found if one is using a general search engine to locate pornography.

Video Selection

Previous content analyses of pornographic videos typically include a sample ranging from 40 to 55 videos (Barron & Kimmel, 2000; Cowan & Campbell, 1994; Cowan et al., 1988; Gorman et al., 2010; McKee, 2005; Monk-Turner & Purcell, 1999). However, the websites included in this sample also contain shortened versions of full-length videos. To account for this, the researchers selected a sample of 150 videos, a number that is similar to those used in content analyses of non-pornographic *YouTube* videos (Elkin, Thomson, & Wilson, 2010; Forsythe & Malone, 2010; Keelan, Pavri-Garcia, Tomlinson, & Wilson, 2007).

Fifty videos were analyzed from each website ($N = 150$), and all videos were drawn from the websites' "teen" pornography database. To select videos, the following protocol was employed. First, each database was either set to, or by default, include videos that had been present for any period of time. Second, each database was set to rank videos in descending order according to their view-counts. This is a presumed measure of popularity. Finally, every third video was selected for inclusion in the content analysis. This form of systematic sampling, as described by Krippendorff (2004), produced a randomly selected sample from the most popular "teen" videos from each website.

The sample did not include videos that are “amateur,” defined by the researchers as videos made unprofessionally by laypersons and featuring nonprofessional actors. For the purposes of the current study, the term “amateur” does not apply to professionally made videos that claim to feature “amateur” (typically female) performers. Similarly, animated videos were excluded, and no video was analyzed twice. Non-English videos without subtitles also were removed from the sample. No video with fewer than 1,000,000 views or which was less than a minute in length was analyzed.

Initially, 195 videos (65 from each website) were selected. Thus, if a video was deleted or discovered to be inappropriate for analysis during the data collection period, it was replaced by the next most popular video, according to the view counts at the original time of selection. A list of the videos that were coded is available upon request.

Materials and Coding Procedure

The researchers developed a coding sheet to be used in the content analysis. This coding sheet is divided into various categories, which were created (primarily) using previous content analyses as a guide (Cowan et al., 1988; Dines, 2009; Jensen, 2010; Jensen & Dines, 1998; Matacin & Burger, 1987; Mehta & Plaza, 1997; Palmer, 1979). Content categories were: “textual references,” “the sexualizing subject–sexualized object relationship” (a distinction borrowed from Jensen, 2010), “appearance of the sexualized object,” “props,” “setting,” “the sexualizing subject,” and “behaviour of the sexualized object.” The sex acts present in each video, the use of coercion, and the estimated age of the “adult” partner(s) were also recorded.

Each content category has multiple sub-categories. “Textual references” includes explicit references to age or youth (e.g., “teen” and “schoolgirl”), implicit references to youth (e.g., “cutie,” “naughty,” and “babysitter”), references to innocence/sexual inexperience (e.g.,

“innocent” and “fresh”), and the loss of virginity (e.g., “virgin” and “first time”). Text occurring within the title of each video as well as text appearing within the video were coded. The “sexualizing subject–sexualized object relationship” refers to a male-female relationship that implies the female is a minor (e.g., teacher-student, parent-babysitter, and father-daughter). “Appearance of the sexualized object” includes the dress of the female performer(s) (e.g., schoolgirl outfit and knee socks), her hairstyle (e.g., pigtails and childish hair accessories), and her physical appearance (i.e., her build, breast size, and amount of make-up worn). The absence of pubic hair was not coded because it is now common for adult women within and outside the pornography industry to completely remove their pubic hair (Dines, 2009). “Props” includes objects manipulated by the female performers either prior to or during sexual activity (e.g., candy, stuffed animals and toys). “Setting” refers to the real or constructed film set, which implies the female performer is a minor (e.g., elementary school classroom, a child’s bedroom, and a set adorned with childish objects/decorations). “The sexualizing subject” includes the verbal cues employed by the male performer(s) that either explicitly refer to age (e.g., “young girl”) or intimate youth by using childish words to communicate (e.g., “special friend” and “naughty girl”), as well as terms of endearment primarily associated with youth (e.g., “cutie” and “sweetie”). “Behavior of the sexualized object” includes behavioral/verbal cues from the “teen” performer which connote shyness or innocence (e.g., giggling and speaking in a soft or childish voice), imply sexual inexperience (e.g., requiring instruction on how to perform sex acts), indicate the loss of virginity (e.g., displaying blood following sex), or refer to age either directly (e.g., “young” and “little girl”) or indirectly (e.g., the use of childish words or statements which imply youth). Each coding category also contained an “other” section, in which other cues deemed relevant could be coded. A copy of the coding sheet is available upon request.

The types of cues that were not coded were similar to those excluded by Jensen (2010). For example, terms of endearment or other labels which can be used for both underage and adult women (e.g., “chick,” “girl,” and “beautiful”); references to size (e.g., “tight” and “small”); clothes (e.g., tank tops, running shoes, and blue jeans) or hairstyles (e.g., ponytails) common to both groups; and settings that are used by children and adults (e.g., swimming pools) were not coded. However, overtly childish words or phrases containing the word “girl” were coded (e.g., “good girl” and “naughty girl”). Furthermore, if the word “little” was used to refer to a female performer but was not related to the size of specific body parts (e.g., “little girl” as opposed to “little breasts”) then it was coded. If a cue occurred multiple times from the same person (e.g., the word “naughty” being repeated multiple times), this was noted on the coding sheet but was counted in the analysis as a single occurrence. However, if the same cue appeared multiple times from different performers, multiple occurrences were coded. For example, if two actresses were featured wearing knee socks and giggling, then “knee socks” and “giggling” would be coded twice: one count of each cue for each female performer. Therefore, it was possible for some videos to be recorded as having more than one occurrence of a given cue. In the rare instances when a video contained more than three male or female performers, three of each were selected at random and coded.

Procedure

On two occasions, two of the three authors reviewed a small selection of videos: author 1/author 3 and author 2/author 3. The purposes of having two coders assess a small number of videos were: a) it determined whether the coding sheet was “user-friendly”; b) it assisted in establishing a set of procedural coding rules; and c) it facilitated an initial estimate of consistency between coders. These videos were not included in the actual video sample nor were

these results included in the analysis. Once reliability between coders was achieved, the entire sample of videos was selected; their titles, view-counts, and URLs were recorded. The first author then coded all videos, with separate random subsamples (10% each) being assessed by the remaining authors. All data collection occurred off campus, in private, on personal computers and no pornography was downloaded. Data collection took place between December 2011 and March 2012.

Data Analysis

All data from the coding sheet was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). An estimate of inter-rater reliability between the first author and the second and third authors was calculated as the proportion of items on the coding sheet that were consistent. Congruency estimates between the first author and authors 2 and 3 were 98.9% and 99.1%, respectively. These high levels of inter-rater reliability suggest that coders were evaluating the content in a consistent manner.

Results

Sample Characteristics

View counts for the sample ranged from 1,281,069 to 21,154,805 views ($M = 5,014,273$, $SD = 3,276,277$). Video length ranged from 1.28 to 41.65 minutes ($M = 16.16$, $SD = 10.35$). Overall, the content surrounding 188 female performers (the “teens”) was coded. The number of videos that contained one, two, or three+ female performers was 122 (81.3%), 18 (12.0% [i.e., 36 females]), and 10 (6.7% [i.e., 30 females]), respectively. Overall, the content surrounding 164 “adult” sexual partners was coded. The number of videos that contained one, two, or three+ partners was 117 (78.0%), 16 (10.7% [i.e., 32 partners]), and 5 (3.3% [i.e., 15 partners]),

respectively. The proportions for “adult” and “teen” performers do not differ statistically $\chi^2(2, N = 352) = 3.72, p = ns, Cramer's V = .10$. Twelve (8.0%) videos did not contain a partner.

Of the 164 “adult” partners, 158 (96.3%) were male and six (3.7%) were female. With respect to their estimated age, a majority of male partners were between 18 and 45 years (18-25: $n = 22, 13.9\%$; 26-35: $n = 57, 36.1\%$; 36-45: $n = 39, 24.7\%$). Among the small number of female partners, two age bands were represented: 26-35 ($n = 2, 33.3\%$) and 36-45 ($n = 4, 66.7\%$). The estimated age of the female “teens” was not coded because, invariably, these actresses appeared to be between the ages of 18 and 29.

Sex Acts

The percent of videos which contain various sex acts are listed in descending order: fellatio (78.0%), vaginal intercourse (73.3%), cunnilingus (41.3%), foreplay such as kissing or sensual massaging (38.0%), manual stimulation of female genitalia by a partner (37.3%), female masturbation (34.7%), anal sex (19.3%), manual stimulation of male genitalia by a partner (16.7%), spanking (4.7%), and bondage (3.3%). Other sex acts (e.g., anilingus) were present in 12.7% of the videos coded. Female masturbation during intercourse and brief male masturbation just prior to ejaculating onto a female performer were not coded. Also not coded was manual stimulation during oral sex and sex acts which occurred for only a few seconds.

Coercion and Consent

Coercion was used in 11 (7.3%) videos. In particular, verbal coercion, physical coercion, and economic coercion were present in three (2.0%), four (2.7%), and four (2.7%) of the videos, respectively. Furthermore, an authoritative role (e.g., a teacher) was exploited to procure sex in seven (4.7%) videos. Within 146 (97.3%) videos, the female performers appeared to consent throughout. Two (1.3%) videos contained female performers that at no point consented. One

depicted a woman who was sexually assaulted while she was sleeping; the other contained an explicit rape. Two (1.3%) videos contained female performers that were not consenting at first, but did “consent” by the end.

Youth Sexualized Content

Overall, there were 602 cues present within 122 (81.3%) videos. These included textual, visual, verbal, and behavioral cues, as well as instances of sexualizing subject-sexualized object relationships. The descriptive data concerning the number of videos with a certain number of total cues is presented in Table 1. It is worth noting that an increasingly smaller percentage of videos contained an increasingly larger percentage of total cues. A similar pattern was observed when these data were stratified by domain of content (textual, visual, verbal and so on), with each type of cue being absent in over half the sample.

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Relative Popularity of Youth Sexualized Content by Types of Cues

Included in Table 2 is the relative popularity of various cues designed to connote the female performer’s “youth.” Although similar percentages of videos (41.3 to 46.7) contained visual, verbal, textual, or behavioral cues, in terms of raw numbers, verbal cues were the most common. With regard to the different performers (“adult” partner versus “teen”), more videos contained cues stemming from the “teen” performer (53.3%) than the “adult” sexual partner (32.0%). Sexualizing subject-sexualized object relationship cues were present in the smallest proportion of videos and accounted for a minority of total cues.

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Descriptive information about each type of cue is presented from most to least frequent (i.e., verbal followed by visual and so on).

Verbal Cues

“Adult” sexual partners. The “adult” partners’ language conveyed the youth of the “teen” in 123 instances across 48 (32.0%) of the videos coded. The most common words or phrases included the word “girl” and conveyed the childishness of the recipient (e.g., “good girl,” but not “hot girl”). These data are described in Table 3.

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“Teen” performers. Verbal cues to connote youth were given by the female performer 94 times across 48 (32.0%) videos. Direct references to youth, the use of childish words, and speaking in a soft or childish voice were the most common verbal cues observed (see Table 4).

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Visual Cues

Sixty-three (42.0%) videos contained 160 visual cues. These cues have been further stratified into those concerning the “teen” performer and the setting.

Appearance of the “teen” performer. The appearance of the female performer (i.e., her clothing, hair, and use of props) was employed to imply youth 143 times across 61 (40.7%) videos. A more detailed description of these data is presented in Table 5. As indicated in this table, children’s clothing was the most common type of cue, with knee socks, schoolgirl uniforms, pigtails, and childish jewelry (e.g., bracelets and necklaces) being particularly common.

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Physical characteristics (i.e., body size, breast size, and make-up) were analyzed separately because the researchers felt that, while perhaps congruent with the illusion that a female performer is underage, these elements also may characterize adult women and, thus, do not convey youth as strongly as, for example, pigtails and schoolgirl uniforms. Overall, 88

(48.6%) female performers appearing in 74 (49.3 %) videos were skinny, had small breasts, and were wearing little to no make-up. For “teen” performers, small breasts (64.1%) were less common than a skinny build (80.7%) and the absence of make-up (72.9%). It is worth noting that 75 (39.9%) and 60 (31.9%) of the female performers had visible non-ear piercings or tattoos, respectively; characteristics that may be incompatible with an illusion of “youth.”

Setting. The setting conveyed the youth of the “teen” performer in 17 (11.3%) of the videos coded. In particular, 8 (5.3%) videos took place in a grade-school classroom, 4 (2.7%) took place in a child’s bedroom, and 5 (3.3%) took place in non-significant locations (e.g., living rooms) that were adorned with childish decorations or objects (e.g., teddy bears).

Behavioral Cues

Behavioral cues enacted by “teen” performers occurred 114 times across 62 (41.3%) videos. Giggling was the most common cue observed, occurring 63 times in 51 (34.0%) videos (see Table 4). It should be noted that, as they could not logically connote the “teen” performer’s youth, behavioral cues provided by “adult” sexual partners were not coded.

Textual References Denotative of Youth

Seventy videos (46.7%) contained 86 textual references suggestive of youth. Specific data for each category and particular references are presented in Table 6. The most common type was explicit references to age or youth, with the word “teen” and its variants accounting for roughly half of all textual references. Those implying sexual inexperience were least common.

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Subject-Object Relationships

Sexualizing subject-sexualized object relationships conveyed adult-child sexual relations in 19 (12.7%) videos (see Table 3). Teacher-student, parent-babysitter, and babysitter-child

relationships were the most common, occurring in 7 (4.7%), 5 (3.3%), and 2 (1.3%) videos, respectively. No incestuous relationships between characters related by blood were present, only through marriage (e.g., a step father-daughter sexual relationship was portrayed in 1 video).

Discussion

The primary purpose of this research was to determine how some of the most popular teen pornography on the Internet constructs the illusion for viewers that sex is occurring between an underage female and an adult male. In general, the researchers found many characteristic examples of youth sexualized content described by other researchers (Cowan et al., 1988; Dines, 2009; Jensen, 2010; Jensen & Dines, 1998; Matacin & Burger, 1987; Mehta & Plaza, 1997; Palmer, 1979).

Textual cues denotative of youth were present in just under half of the videos sampled, similar to the percentage of videos that contain verbal, visual, and behavioral cues. However, the *absolute* occurrence of textual content was relatively uncommon, accounting for less than 15% of the total cues observed. The most common textual cue was the word “teen” and its variants, which accounted for just over half of all textual content observed. Otherwise, none of the other textual cues occurred more than four times. The presence and type of textual content found is consistent with past research (e.g., Heider & Harp, 2002; Jensen, 2010).

Visual content included appearance-related cues (e.g., dress and hairstyle) and video settings. These cues occurred in just over 40% of the sample, and accounted for approximately a quarter of the total cues. Like Jensen (2010), we found that some videos took place in settings typically frequented by children, with classroom settings being the most popular. Not surprisingly, videos with these settings typically contained other school-related cues (e.g.,

schoolgirl outfits). Nevertheless, the use of child-like settings was infrequent, appearing in only 11.3% of the videos coded.

In line with previous studies (e.g., Jensen & Dines, 1998), the researchers found that the appearance of female performers was used to portray them as underage. This cue was present in approximately 40% of the videos, and accounted for roughly 24% of the total cues. Findings also indicated that less than half of the female performers appearing in less than half of the videos analyzed, possessed slender builds with small breasts while wearing little to no make-up. Given the description offered by Dines (2009), it was expected that a larger proportion of female performers would meet this description. The presence of small breasts was the least common physical characteristic observed. This is likely due to the fact that many of these individuals were not “teens,” but young-adult pornography performers who, typically, have larger breasts. A significant number of “teen” performers also had non-ear facial or body piercings and/or tattoos, which, surely, do not depict a “child-like” body.

Content surrounding the “adult” sexual partners was also analyzed. As expected from previous research (e.g., Jensen & Dines, 1998), the vast majority of sexual partners were male. However, six videos contained “adult” sexual partners that were female. These women were always older than the ones portrayed as “teens,” appearing to be in their 30s or 40s. Often, these women played the role of the male partner’s “wife” or “girlfriend.” Interestingly, these women always “brought” their partner the “teen” performer and encouraged them to have sex. For example, in one video, an older man’s girlfriend brought him two teenage girls to have sex with, one of which was her daughter. She then watched, providing encouragement and masturbating as her boyfriend had sex with her daughter and her daughter’s friend.

Discrepant from previous content analyses (e.g., Heider & Harp, 2002; Jensen & Dines, 1998), the male sexual partners were not *all* older: approximately 50% were between 18 and 35. Nevertheless, there was often a disparity between male partners' ages, and those of the female performers, with half of the male partners appearing to be above the age of 35. In contrast, "teen" performers typically appeared to be in their early to mid-20s.

With respect to "adult" sexual partners' verbal content, the most popular cues involved the use of childish words or labels that connote youth. Words such as "girl" and "little" (e.g., "good girl," and "little girl") were the most popular. The presence of these cues was expected and is congruent with past research (e.g., Jensen & Dines, 1998).

Verbal and behavioral content from female performers was more commonly used to denote youth than content pertaining to male sexual partners, occurring in just over half of the sample and accounting for just over a third of the total content. This is not surprising; as the viewers of teen pornography will mostly be heterosexual men, their focus is likely to be on the female, and not the male partner. However, this difference appears to be comprised largely by the behavioral content (which occurred in 41.3% of videos and constituted 18.9% of the total content). Overall, behavioral cues conveying innocence or shyness, along with references to youth, were the most popular (e.g., giggling and speaking in a soft or childish voice).

The results concerning behavioral cues are significant since, as far as the researchers know, they have yet to be quantitatively described in any study. Further, while Jensen's (2010) concepts of YSI and YSL were relevant to most of the content encountered, the amount of behavioral content observed suggests that future content analyses will need to code for and analyze behavioral cues. Therefore, viewing "youth sexualized behavior" or acts of childish

behavior within sexually suggestive or explicit material as being conceptually similar to YSI and YSL appears warranted.

Interestingly, behavioral and textual cues that conveyed the loss of virginity or sexual inexperience were relatively uncommon within the videos analyzed. It appears that, while a subset of “teen” pornography videos portray women acting as sexually inexperienced and/or virgins (perhaps for a select minority of viewers), the majority do not. This suggests that, perhaps, the typical viewer is not attracted to the sexual inexperience of teenagers per se, but rather, the fact that they are young and behave as such. In fact, the portrayal of teenagers as *not* sexually inexperienced may account for some men’s interest in “teen” pornography.

Overall, verbal cues accounted for the largest proportion of the total content, followed by visual, behavioral, textual, and then subject-object relationship cues. When looking at the distribution of all the cues: almost a fifth of the videos contained no cues; a majority of videos contained a relatively small number of cues whereas the same amount of videos (18.7%) contained just over half of the total cues. Furthermore, each type of cue was absent in over half the videos sampled. From this analysis, it can be seen that it is a small subsample of videos that contain the majority of youth sexualized content designed to imply the female performer is underage. In other words, only a fraction of the videos seemed to embody Dines’ description of pseudo-child pornography, or the subgenre of pornography described by Jensen and Dines (1998). This finding questions Dines’ (2009) assumption that pseudo-child pornography is essentially synonymous with “teen” pornography.

Finally, it should be noted that explicit indicants of a power imbalance between male and female performers were relatively uncommon. An implied adult-minor relationship (primarily teacher-student) was evident in 12.7% of the videos analyzed, and only 1.3% depicted females

that at no point consented to the sexual activities performed. Dines (2009) has argued that consent (i.e., the willingness to engage in sex rather than legal consent) is of central importance to pseudo-child pornography. She argues that without consent, the average viewer becomes too aware of the inappropriateness of the adult-child sexual relationship being portrayed. Thus, the finding of almost ubiquitous consent and infrequency of coercion among female performers would be compatible with this argument. An equally compelling explanation, however, is that the average pornography viewer prefers to watch female performers as willing participants, and is not aroused by depictions of coercion and rape. Indeed, this seems reasonable given that the majority of mainstream pornography does not depict rape-imagery (i.e., men forcing themselves onto non-consenting women) (Gorman et al., 2010) suggesting a relative lack of demand for this content among typical viewers.

Limitations & Future Research

The primary limitation associated with this study is that the sampling frame restricts the generalizability of the results. Although the three websites used for the content analysis may be among the most popular, the vast number of websites available to the public suggests that the three we targeted may reflect the viewing preferences of a minority of pornography consumers. Furthermore, the results of this study cannot attest to the prevalence of youth sexualized content within Internet pornography as a whole. A second limitation concerns the use of view-counts to estimate popularity. As each website likely counts individual instances of viewing, it is possible that certain videos may have been viewed multiple times by the *same* viewers. Although multiple viewings may only reflect a small fraction of total view-counts, it still (potentially) inflated the actual popularity of certain videos to some degree.

The results of this study have a number of implications that warrant future research. First, it is unclear what effect, if any, consuming this type of pornography has on men. Dines (2009) contends that “teen” pornography is a steppingstone to consuming child pornography. She argues that men who are sexually aroused by children will use it as a legal substitute for child pornography; however, desensitization will eventually occur, propelling men from “barely legal” teen pornography into illegal child pornography⁵. While the present research suggests that most “teen” pornography could not fulfill this role, it appears that at least a subset of it can. Second, it is unclear what effect, if any, “teen” pornography may have on men who initially evidence little or no sexual interest in children. Paul and Linz (2008) provide experimental evidence suggesting that a “child-sex cognitive schema” (p. 3) may be created following exposure to “teen” pornography⁶. However, the creation of such a schema does not necessarily translate to sexual interest in and/or offending against children. Furthermore, the results of this study have limited ecological validity. Exposure to “teen” pornography was brief (only a few seconds) and does not reflect levels of exposure experienced by actual consumers, nor does it illuminate the effect that repeatedly masturbating to “teen” pornography over long periods of time may have on men’s cognitive schemas, beliefs, or behaviors. Third, future research should examine how common “teen” pornography is, as compared to other genres, on the Internet. A fourth and final direction surrounds men’s motivations for viewing “teen” pornography. Dines (2009) argues that “teen” pornography serves as an outlet for men who are sexually interested in children or have become “desensitized” to conventional pornography. However, until researchers begin to actually ask men *why* they view “teen” pornography, any attempt to answer this question remains speculative. Similarly, researchers should determine what the most attractive feature of “teen” pornography is. The results of the present study offer a good estimation, if one assumes that the popularity of

content reflects the demands of viewers. However, this is not necessarily the case, and should be confirmed by future research.

Conclusion

In closing, this study attempted to quantify the occurrences of youth sexualized content in a sample of the most popular “teen” pornography videos available on the Internet. Expectedly, many examples of the content described in past research were observed. Also in line with previous research, a small subset of videos was clearly trying to portray adult-child sexual relationships. However, it was found that many videos contained little or no youth sexualized content and a small subsample of videos contained the majority of content. This study offers insight into how the illusion of adult-child sex is constructed within “teen” pornography. It is the task of future research to determine why consumers are attracted to this genre, and the effect such attraction may have on society.

Notes

1. Dines (2009) notes that such descriptors differ from abusive terms such as “slut” and “whore” traditionally reserved for women in pornography.
2. Internet pornography is typically accessed through what are sometimes called “tube sites”: pornography websites modeled after the popular video-sharing website, *YouTube* (Woida, 2009). Compared to their predecessors, tube sites host a vast and diverse amount of free pornographic content, both commercially produced videos (which users previously would have been required to pay for) and user-uploaded material (Woida, 2009). Given the advantages of tube sites, it is not surprising they are now the most popular sites offering pornography (Alexa, 2011).
3. It is worth noting that all three websites contain search engines that, if provided the term “teen,” display a list of videos either identical or very similar to the “teen category” database. Therefore, a similar sample would likely be found if videos were selected from each website’s search engine rather than the provided category databases.
4. Although it was uncommon, some verbal cues came from cameramen. In this sense, “cameraman” refers to a male partner behind the camera who spoke to the female but did not engage in any sex acts with her. This occurred six times across four (2.7%) of the videos. The word “naughty” was used in two (1.3%) of the videos, whereas the words “sweetie,” “little,” “girl,” and references to school were each present in one (0.7%) of the videos.
5. Zillmann (1989) summarizes experimental evidence attesting to a similar desensitization effect in male viewers, albeit using non-child pornography as stimuli.

6. In this stud, “teen pornography” was operationalised as pornographic images from websites in which the age of the adult models was estimated to be under 18 during a pilot study. The researchers found that participants exposed to this material were faster to recognize sexual words when paired with sexually neutral images of underage girls, compared to participants who had been exposed to typical, non-teen pornography.

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Table 1

Data for the Distribution of Total Cues among Videos

Number of Cues	Number of Videos	Percent of Videos	Percent of Total Cues
None	28	18.7	--
1-3	61	40.7	18.8
4-6	33	22.0	26.9
7 or more	28	18.7	54.2

Table 2

Relative Percentages of Total Cues by Different Types of Cues

Type of Cue	Percent of Total Videos	Number of Cues	Percent of Total Cues
Textual	46.7%	86	14.3%
Visual	42.0%	160	26.6%
Verbal	46.7%	223	37.0%
Behavioral	41.3%	114	18.9%
Subject-object relationship	12.7%	19	3.2%

Note: As videos could contain multiple cues, the percent of total videos does not equal 100.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics Concerning Verbal Cues from “Adult” Partners⁴

Verbal Cues	Number of Cues	Percent of Verbal Cues	Number of Videos	Percent of Total Videos
Language indicative of youth:	90	73.2	48	32.0
Good girl	22	17.9	16	10.7
Girl (other)	19	15.4	16	10.7
Little	17	13.9	14	9.3
Childish words	13	10.6	12	8.0
Naughty	5	4.1	5	3.3
Young	4	3.3	4	2.7
Bad girl	4	3.3	4	2.7
Kid(s)	2	1.6	2	1.3
Other	4	3.3	4	2.7
Terms of endearment:	7	5.7	7	4.7
Sweetie	6	4.9	6	4.0
Cutie	1	0.8	1	0.7
Other verbal cues:	26	21.1	22	14.7
Tone of voice	7	5.7	7	4.7
References to her parents	6	4.9	6	4.0
“Punishing” for childish indiscretions	3	2.4	3	2.0
References to virginity	3	2.4	3	2.0
“Teaching” something a child would need to learn	2	1.6	2	1.3
Other	5	4.1	5	3.3

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics Concerning Verbal and Behavioral Cues from “Teen” Female Performers

Verbal and Behavioral Cues	Number of Cues	Percent of Verbal/Behavioral cues	Number of Videos	Percent of Total Videos
Innocence/shyness:	99	47.6	60	40.0
Giggling**	63	30.3	51	34.0
Soft or childish voice*	25	12.0	21	14.0
Shying away from camera**	6	2.9	6	4.0
Looking embarrassed**	3	1.4	3	2.0
Verbal statements (e.g., “I’m shy”)*	2	1.0	2	1.3
Sexual inexperience:	25	12.1	18	12.0
Requiring instruction or control**	11	5.3	11	7.3
Verbal statements*	7	3.4	7	4.7
Appearing nervous**	4	1.9	3	2.0
Inexperienced sexual behavior**	3	1.4	3	2.0
Loss of virginity	9	4.3	8	5.3
Verbal statements*	6	2.9	6	4.0
Displaying blood**	3	1.4	3	2.0
Direct references to her youth:	24	11.5	17	11.3
Little*	13	6.3	13	8.6
Girl*	4	1.9	4	2.7
Teen*	3	1.4	3	2.0
Young*	2	1.0	2	1.3
Other*	2	1.0	2	1.3
Indirect references to youth:	30	14.4	22	14.7
Using childish words or phrases (e.g., “naughty”)*	25	12.0	19	12.7
Statements which imply youth (e.g., “Don’t tell my parents”)*	5	2.4	5	3.3
Other behavior:	21	10.1	11	7.3
Acting silly**	8	3.8	4	2.7
Playing with toys**	7	3.4	4	2.7
Cute/sweet mannerisms**	3	1.4	3	2.0
Child-like crying**	2	1.0	2	1.3
Other**	1	0.5	1	0.7

Note. * = verbal cue; ** = behavioral cue.

Table 5

Descriptive Data for Cues Surrounding the Appearance of “Teen” Female Performers

Type and specific cue present	Number of Cues	Percent of Total “Appearance” Cues	Number of Videos	Percent of Total Videos
Dress				
School-girl uniform (total):	20	14.0	13	8.7
Plaid skirt	13	9.1	8	5.3
Plaid skirt/white shirt	7	4.9	5	3.3
Children’s Clothing (total):	38	26.6	32	21.3
Knee socks	24	16.8	18	12.0
Shirts	5	3.5	5	3.3
Underwear	3	2.1	3	2.0
Other socks	3	2.1	3	2.0
Pajamas	2	1.4	2	1.3
Shoes	1	.07	1	0.7
Childish Jewelry	19	13.3	17	11.3
Other Dress	2	1.4	2	1.3
Braces	2	1.4	2	1.3
Pigtails	25	17.5	21	14.0
Hair accessories:	18	12.6	17	11.3
Flowers	7	4.9	7	4.7
Barrettes/Pins	5	3.5	5	3.3
Hair bands	3	2.1	3	2.0
Elastics	2	1.4	2	1.3
Ribbons	1	.07	1	0.7
Other Hair	1	.07	1	0.7
Props:	18	12.6	12	8.0
Toys	10	7.0	6	4.0
School-related	6	4.2	4	2.7
Food	2	1.4	2	1.3

Table 6

Descriptive Data for Textual References

References	Number of Cues	Percent of Textual References	Number of Videos ^a	Percent of Total Videos
Explicit References:	54	62.8	54	36.0
Teen...	44	51.2	44	29.3
School-girl	4	4.7	4	2.7
Young	3	3.5	3	2.0
Other	3	3.5	3	2.0
Implicit References:	12	14.0	11	7.3
Babysitter	3	3.5	3	2.0
Naughty	2	2.3	2	1.3
Allusions to School	2	2.3	2	1.3
Adorable	2	2.3	2	1.3
Cutie	1	1.2	1	0.7
Sweet	1	1.2	1	0.7
Other	1	1.2	1	0.7
Sexual Inexperience:	4	4.7	4	2.7
Fresh	1	1.2	1	0.7
Innocent	1	1.2	1	0.7
Other	2	2.3	2	1.3
Loss of Virginity:	9	10.5	7	4.7
First time	4	4.7	4	2.7
Deflower...	2	2.3	2	1.3
Virgin	1	1.2	1	0.7
Other	2	2.3	2	1.3
Other Text	7	8.1	7	4.7

Note. Ellipses signify that variants for a given word were also included. For example, the word “teenager” would be coded as “teen”. ^aThe total “number of videos” in this table exceeds 70 because some videos contained more than one textual cue.