

Conforming, Challenging, Countering

An exploration of interpersonal scripts on porn
and sex through focus groups with Flemish
young adults.

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Conforming the gendered script

Jess (W, Lesbian): I also think cause there's this taboo – porn is super normative and mostly made for straight men. And if you, as a 'straight girly', admit you watch it or would like to, or want to talk about it, that's suddenly this big extra step that's much harder to bridge.

Kim (W, Bisexual): Absolutely. I completely agree with that. Let's be honest, the average teenage boy sends porn to his mates (...) and okay, not all of them, but you get it. Uhm, but I think for a girl to admit she watches or consumes porn, it's definitely still a thing like (surprised) "you, as a woman?"

Challenging the gendered script

Diana (W, Bisexual): In the media, it's like porn equals men (...) women are never included in this narrative (...) but I think it depends on what kind of circle you're in. Because in my environment, I do notice that it's like — women watch porn too. But that's because we're kind of into those topics, you know? (...) I notice it's a bit more understood in my circle that women watch porn too, but that's just my environment.

Sophia (W, Bicurious): [It's a misconception] that women don't watch it. I've heard that so many times. But in my experience, that's not the case at all in my circle — like, maybe the percentage of my guy friends who watch it is higher than my female friends, but women definitely watch it too.

Challenging the harm script

Hayley (W, Bisexual): It's also like that step-by-step script in porn, right? It's like, you meet each other, kiss, then a blowjob, penetration, the guy comes, and you're just lying there.

Sienna (GQ, Pansexual): Well, I saw this sexologist, she pops up on my TikTok quite a lot. And she gave a really good tip. She said: you shouldn't see sex as starter, main course, dessert - but as tapas. (everyone laughs) And I thought that was just brilliant.

Klara (W, Pansexual): I saw that too!

(...)

Diana (W, Bisexual): Yeah, I only really realized that too once I started having sex with women - like 'wow!' it's actually so much more than just that. It's wild, really.

Countering the gendered/harm script

Interviewer: I mean that in dominant discourses, it's often assumed that young people only ever watch Pornhub, YouPorn, and stuff like that?

Wes (M, homosexual): (enthusiastically) Smut!! (everyone laughs)

Hind (W, bisexual): That's exactly what I thought of - smut is so in right now!

Ollie (NB, homosexual): Yeah, it really is!

Hind: Yeah, it's super popular atm, like seriously, especially on BookTok it's a huge thing. And influencers are doing it more and more too (well, I do mostly follow queer influencers), but they're making loads of ads for audio porn and stuff, and just yeah, sex is getting promoted a lot, and I really feel like... normalize it!

‘A lot of my friends are queer too, and yeah, the norms in our friend group are just different. Like, for example shaving, but also with other things – everyone just kind of does their own thing. We all have this mindset like as long as you’re not hurting anyone, you do you’

Hind, W, Bisexual

Thanks! Questions?

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