Respondent: Robots, Ethics, and Intimacy: the need for scientific research

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Intimate robots: Play, pretense and panic

Be intimate!
Be intimate!
Are sex robots physical pornography? If so, then will sex robots increase likelihood of sexual violence (i.e. non-consensual acts)?
Evidence for a causal relationship between exposure to pornography and sexual aggression is slim

[exaggerated by politicians, pressure groups and some social scientists].

Evidence of negative effects of violent pornography is inconsistent

[violent pornography is comparatively rare in the real world].

Victimization rates for rape demonstrate an inverse relationship between pornography consumption and rape rates.

Are sex robots embodied video games?

If so, then will allowing sexual violence with sex robots increase likelihood of sexual violence (i.e. non-consentual acts) with humans?
Exposure to violent videogames is a causal risk factor for:

• increased aggressive Behavior
• Cognition
• Affect
• decreased empathy
• prosocial behavior

Are sex robots play or real?

If sex robots create safe pretense, then will they satisfy participant imagination without negatively affecting real interactions with other humans?
Whatever I’m doing with a robot it isn’t real, I’m just pretending
What is pretense?

Pretend beliefs involves complex representations of the world both as it is and as it is not.

Representations decoupled from action that would emerge if pretense were true:
- E.g. pretending the banana is a telephone means
  - Talking to an inanimate object and supposing a real person is listening
  - Not eating the banana


Real and pretense

P = x is raping a woman
Q = x is having consenting sex with a woman
R = x is having consenting sex with a robot
S = x is raping a robot
T = x is simulating sex with a robot

X BELIEVES Q
I believe I’m having consenting sex with a woman

X PRETENDS P
I’m pretending I’m raping a woman
Real and pretense

\[ P = x \text{ is raping a woman} \]
\[ Q = x \text{ is having consenting sex with a woman} \]
\[ R = x \text{ is having consenting sex with a robot} \]
\[ S = x \text{ is raping a robot} \]
\[ T = x \text{ is simulating sex with a robot} \]
62% of women have had a rape fantasy

- sexual fantasy are imaginative conscious mental imagery or daydream that includes sexual activity or is sexually arousing.
- fantasy does not necessarily imply a desired experience or a pleasurable event
- many rape fantasies are not realistic depictions of rape.
  - Often abstracted, eroticized portrayals that emphasize some aspects of actual rape and omit or distort other features

Positive play

If sex robots create safe pretense, then will they satisfy participant imagination without negatively affecting real interactions with other humans? Even improving them?
The cognitive value of pretend play

• Pretend play helps counterfactual causal reasoning
  • Thinking about how our actions may have consequences in the world
  • Learning causal structures and dependencies

Build intimacy robots with ethics to train respectful behaviours—even if outside “normal”
Thank you