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Introduction (331/1,000 words)

Background

Religion heavily affects the way people think about sex. About 70% of young people interviewed in a study by the University of Nottingham said they referred to religion every day to make decisions, including about sex. Many of those interviewed also said their religious texts had a negative or nonexistent view of sex (Yip, Keenan, and Page 9). Even if their desires are considered normal by society, Christians and other religious people are more likely to self-prohibit when it comes to sex; this feeling is more pronounced in people who are homosexual and/or genderqueer. Many religious people feel tension between their sexuality and religious beliefs, and some even compartmentalize their lives to feel sexually fulfilled.

Research focus

Despite the fact that sexual activity has many benefits, including lower risk of mortality, many people in America think of sex as a negative activity. This perception is caused by a lack of positive information about sex in schools and on the internet. Religion, specifically Christianity, is a culprit to blame for America's poor relationship with sex. Many schools are taught an abstinence-centered education, and some states have banned adult toys.

America's complicated relationship with sex is influenced by centuries-old ideologies and rules. Regardless of proof that more sex education keeps young people from having unwanted pregnancies, America continues to uphold “abstinence-until-marriage ideology” (Whipple, Knowles, and Davis 9). Many people in power are religious Christian conservatives and use their power to censor sex as much as possible in schools and the media.

Research aim and objectives

The overall aim of the research that will be conducted is to obtain an understanding of the impact of sex education on citizens of the United States. More specifically, the objectives of this research are to:

- Understand why sex is seen as a taboo in American culture.
- Assess the quality of sex education in the United States.
- Identify and evaluate methods used to teach Americans sex education.
- Determine areas in which American sex education can be improved.

Religion and the perception of sex in the United States (485/1,100 words)

Sex in religion

The perception of sex in religion varies heavily depending on the type of religion. While religions like Hinduism and Buddhism are positive or neutral toward sexual intercourse, Christianity, Judaism, and Islam tend to be quite negative toward the activity.

Religion in the United States

Christians make up x% of the United States. Despite the increase of atheism in America, many Americans still heavily value Christianity. For example, all Presidents since the inception of the Constitution have been Christian. Not being Christian conveys a threat, as evidenced by the politically conservative accusations that President Barack Obama is a Muslim.

Christianity and nudity

Our relationship with sex has a heavy effect on more than just our time in the bedroom; it also affects how we view nudity. Naked buttocks and crotches are taboo as well. Ray states that “sexual training in guilt, shame and fear begins virtually at birth by sexualizing nudity. The religious signal is that nudity is always sexual and the body must be covered for modesty.” Sex sells because it is partially seen as an indulgence. We have a problem with our natural bodies and urges; this project will be part of the solution.

Christianity and gender

Many people perceive nudity, especially bare female breasts, as something to reject and hide. Women are shamed for showing bare breasts in public and on television.

Christianity and sex in America

Though less Americans than ever are religious, society is still heavily inspired by Christian ideals.

Religion and personal opinions about modesty have been influencing how we think about sex for centuries. For example, in *Sex and God: How Religion Distorts Sexuality*, the author Darrel Ray points out that polygamy was once legal and widely practiced: "...there is nothing in the Ten Commandments about the number of spouses you can have. At the time of the writing of Exodus and Deuteronomy, polygamy was well accepted and practiced by Judaism and surrounding cultures..." (Ray 50) However, as Christianity grew more popular, its proponents pressured people to become monogamous using tactics such as psychological manipulation and the revision of history.

Ray states that one tool religion often uses to manipulate people is shame. "With shame, the very thought of engaging in a given behavior evokes associations of disease and ostracism. Actually doing the behavior creates huge emotional turmoil. Feelings of filth and uncleanness may overwhelm the person, making him or her feel worthless." (Ray 56) Christianity's idols, Jesus and the Virgin Mary, were described as asexual beings in the Bible; many people including myself have gone through cycles of inspiration and guilt in an attempt to be impossibly pure like they supposedly were.

The American sex positivity movement

With the increase of atheism in America, many began to question the negative attitudes toward sex. Sex positivity, seemingly inspired by the 1960's free love movement, emerged and reinvigorated the argument for polyamory as well as sexual freedom.

Sex education in the United States (192/1,100 words)

Current state of sex education in America

Sex education in America varies heavily by state and region. Due to the fact that the American government cannot completely control states, American sex education is not cohesive or consistent. Some states encourage schools to teach abstinence-only education. Other states teach a more comprehensive sex education that covers sex organs, contraception, pregnancy, and more. The types of sex education in America are:

The effects of American sex education

Since the quality of sex education varies by state, so do the effects.

Abstinence-only effects

Prevention-focused sex ed

Neutral sex education (?)

Sex positive education

Key issues & the need for empirical research

Though there was much information about the negative perception of sex in the United States as well as the effects of abstinence-only sex education on teenage pregnancy rates, the research lacked details about other related areas. For example, there was little information about the percentage of Americans who gained most of their sexual knowledge through internet searches. Gaps in sexual education were not explored. In addition to the former, the amount of research regarding the effect of American media on the perception of sex was lacking [?].

Research methods (122/1,000 words)

Introduction

Research strategy

A questionnaire with qualitative and quantitative questions will surface helpful answers about the religiosity of Americans across different age groups as well as help determine a sentiment

regarding Americans' bodies and sex. Additionally, the general quality of American sex education can be assessed from the perspective of those who directly experienced it.

Methods of data collection

Empirical research

In order to assess the quality of sex education in the United States and determine areas in which American sex education can be improved, empirical research must be conducted.

The questionnaire will ask questions such as...

American sex education curricula

In addition to empirical research, a review of American sex education curricula will be conducted.

Data analysis framework

Limitations & issues

Bias...

Survey results: findings, analysis, & synthesis (80/1,000 words)

Introduction

Sex as taboo in the United States

Quality of sex education in the United States

Despite the variety of sex education in the United States, many people still relied on the internet to learn about sex.

American sex education curricula

Sex education in the United States is heavily focused on pregnancy prevention and STI prevention. Many curricula underscore the idea that young people should not have sex.

Recommendations

Explore a curriculum that doesn't treat sex like a dirty concept.

Video games & education (229/1,000 words)

The educational power of games

As [x] says, ...

Games are being used to educate people at an increasing pace.

Existing sex education games

American mobile gamers

My project is focused on people who have been affected by religions similar to Christianity and are interested in learning about sex. My main target group is people between the ages of fourteen and twenty-five in the United States of America who were raised in a Christian household. I believe America's relationship with sex is quite different and more nuanced than other countries'; our media is inundated with sex, yet we are taught to avoid it as children and young adults.

In order to reach my target audience, the game will be released for Android and iOS, the two largest smartphone operating systems. According to a 2013 study by the Nielsen Company, almost 80% of young adults own a smartphone. Since many young people share computers with other family members, releasing the game for smartphones increases the chance that people will be able to play the game with less possibility of punishment.

46% of young religious people in America think their religion is neutral or negative towards sex (Yip, Keenan, and Page 12). That is a massive number of people who are being negatively influenced. This project can help to reverse the damage.

Mobile games young people play

Prototype (496/800 words)

Before the first prototype was created, sketches and wireframes were generated to create an understanding of the amount of content that would need to be designed. The idea was quite

complicated in that players would embody a traveler in a fantasy world whose goal was to assist various townspeople with interpersonal issues.

The original prototype, created in the Spring of 2015, consisted of a home screen, a personality quiz, a grading system, and two blank screens that were placeholders for a world map and town map. The quiz consisted of the following multiple-choice questions related to self-esteem, sensuality, and communication:

- What is your first name/nickname?
- Do you like the way your body looks?
- Would you accept compliments about your appearance from your friends?
- Do you compare yourself to other people?
- Would you ever wear revealing clothing outside?
- Do you think of sex and masturbation as gross and/or sinful?
- How do you think having sex would affect your health?
- If you liked someone, what would you do?
- Do you talk with your immediate family or friends about sex?
- If your partner wanted to have sex and you didn't feel like it, what would you do?
- How did answering these questions make you feel?

Answers to the questions above could either be positive, neutral, or negative. Once the quiz was completed, the game would grade the player's confidence level by adding up the number of positive, neutral, and negative answers. Possible results were:

- Doubtful
- Timid
- Unsure
- Knowledgeable
- Confident

The "doubtful" grade was created for people who were likely very unconfident. People who received this grade were likely to be poor communicators who feel uncomfortable talking about sex. Additionally, they were more likely to believe in a religion that had a negative view of sex.

The “timid” result was given to players who were slightly unconfident and awkward communicators.

Players with the “unsure” grade likely felt neither very positive nor negative about their bodies and sex. They were likely to be acceptable communicators, but not great.

The “knowledgeable” grade was created for people who were likely very unconfident.

Finally, the “confident” grade was received by people who selected the positive option for every question. People who received this grade were likely to be confident communicators with a positive view of sex. Ideally, all players would eventually improve and reach this grade over time.

The aesthetic of the initial version of the game was centered around bright colors, patterns, and round shapes. This palette was chosen with the intention to make players feel less uncomfortable about playing a game with sex as the focal subject.

The aim of the prototype was to allow players to have conversations with multiple people at once to help resolve town issues. However, this idea was too complicated to implement in the first version of the game due to time constraints and the lack of a detailed story. Work on the prototype was placed on hold until the story could be elaborated upon.

Alpha (800 words)

Change in order and number of levels

Number of characters

Narrative-focused, less mechanics-focused.

College focus rather than traveller.

The quiz

Aesthetic

Technology (111/800 words)

The first prototype was coded in HTML and JavaScript. Instead of plain JavaScript, Phaser was used. Phaser is a JavaScript game engine, or framework used to make games.

The second interactive prototype was created using Omnigraffle, a mind-mapping and wireframing software. Once the wireframes were created, they were exported to PNGs and imported into an app called InVision. Using InVision, the wireframes were linked and an interactive prototype was generated.

After confirming the redesign by generating and iterating upon the second prototype, the Alpha version was coded using Phaser.

According to a 2013 study by the Nielsen Company, almost 80% of young adults own a smartphone. In order to directly reach young adults, Intel XDK was used to package the game for mobile phones.

Narrative (516/1,000 words)

Environment

The story of SenseU takes place in an imaginary town off the northwest coast of Washington with a population of about 5,500. The town consists of a rural area, a small downtown area with several shops and large mall, as well as an undergraduate college with a 30-acre campus. The town's median age is 31.

The college is a private, secular, national-level undergraduate school called the University of Sustainable Engineering, Natural Science, and Education. The school is colloquially known as "SENSE U". A large portion of the town's population consists of SENSE U students. There 180 members of staff: 44 members of the staff are teachers, and the remaining 136 members of staff focus on topics including admissions, financial aid, library, cooking, and cleaning. The school consists of 1,900 undergraduate students:

- 600 freshmen
- 500 sophomores
- 450 juniors
- 350 seniors

The campus has 10 educational buildings and 5 dorm buildings. All buildings in total take up 10 acres. Other amenities include 2 parking lots, 1 football field, 3 baseball/soccer fields, 7 tennis courts, and 2 parks. The remaining acreage contains general recreational areas and green spaces.

The ten educational buildings include a lecture hall, one building for each field of study (Sustainable Engineering, Natural Science, and Education), a library, a research center, a common building for student unions and clubs, a gymnasium, a dining hall, and a medical facility. Dorms are separated by student year:

According to recent studies, SENSE U is the 15th-most prestigious undergraduate school in the USA. Approximately 10,000 people apply to attend the school each year. The acceptance rate is quite low at 600 freshmen per year for a total of approximately 6%. SENSE U also allows up to 50 sophomores and juniors to transfer to the school each year.

Tuition at SENSE U costs approximately \$35,000 per year. Including room and board, the tuition goes up to \$48,000. Students attending SENSE U can choose to major in Psychology, Biology, Physics, Mechanical Engineering, Civil Engineering, Computer Science, Art Education, Science Education, or Mathematics Education. Because of the rigorous courses, approximately 100 students leave within their first year, 50 students leave in their second year, and 100 more students leave within their third year. Approximately 350 students out of a 600-person class will graduate from SENSE U.

Primary Character

The primary character in the game is a college sophomore from a city outside Washington who attends SENSE U. This character, who inherits the player's name and personality, has applied to become a resident advisor (RA). After a rigorous process including many interviews, their application was accepted. The story begins one week before school when the character arrives for school orientation.

Before becoming an RA, the player character used a grant and need-based scholarship to pay for school. Their work as an RA enabled them to continue attending SENSE U. Many resident advisors cannot afford room & board fees [x].

Freshman & sophomore dorm...

Many resident advisors help students with a variety of topics ranging from...

Mentorship...

Players communicate with their dorm residents via text message to help resolve issues...

Curriculum (49/1,000 words)

Introduction

The curriculum created for SenseU was formulated with the aim to help people learn about sex in a judgment-free way.

Benefits of sex

Sex has many health benefits; self-understanding is an important part of good sex.

The sensual mind

The sensual body

Kinds of sex

Consensual sex

Society

Conclusion (247/1,000 words)

According to Darrel Ray in *Sex and God: How Religion Distorts Sexuality*, “People who learn sex without guilt make better decisions, talk and negotiate more openly with their partners and respect the sexual preferences and desires of others. They enjoy their own bodies and are less jealous, possessive and judgmental” (Ray 22). People should not be afraid to have sex, but rather equipped with correct information.

SenseU will help people form a more positive relationship with sex. In the opinion of many, abstinence-until-marriage education does not work; it does American society a disservice by preventing people from learning about sex during one of the most hormonally unstable periods of their lives. Teenagers and adults alike need to be informed about sex in order to prevent unplanned pregnancies. This project will help people make better decisions about sex.

Before the agricultural revolution, sex was a group activity that centered around many people experiencing physical release (Ryan, Jetha 14). The authors of *Sex at Dawn: How We Mate, Why We Stray, and What It Means for Modern Relationships* state that Bonobos, one of

our closest genetic relatives, still emulate this behavior and “use eroticism for pleasure, for solidifying friendship, and for cementing a deal” (Ryan, Jetha 85). According to Planned Parenthood, sex has many health benefits including lower risk of mortality, reduced stress, enhanced fertility, and improved sleep (Whipple, Knowles, and Davis 2). People should not stop having sex, but rather do so in a safe and informed manner.

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