

Title: The Effect of Online Extremist Messages on Young Adults: Frequency of Exposure, Brain Immaturity, and Mental Vulnerability

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With improving technology and increasing content available online, one unintended effect is adolescents unconsciously being presented to online extremist messages, which concerns many Americans. This especially concerns parents, despite whether their child is getting influenced by extremist beliefs and nurture them. Some experts say that adolescents are not being influenced, and that extremists were naturally born to be extremists. However, research shows how the key factor is the person's environment so someone born into poverty, where they lack minimum resources, can become an extremist (Jones). Analyzing previous research and our survey results, we found that a message's efficacy increases as the frequency of its exposure increase (Schils et al.). Also, brain immaturity in adolescents allows strong emotions to be processed, but their ability to reason is low, which increases the likelihood of young adults to make harmful decisions. Finally, adolescents' brains are very sensitive to external/internal stimulus, making them easier to become mentally unstable, resulting in their mental vulnerability to extremist influences (Armstrong; United Nations). Incorporating exposure, brain immaturity, and mental vulnerability as key factors, we can take some preventative measures for extremism in adolescents. Parents can help their children limit their contact with online extremist messaging, and young adults should be wary of any information given to them. In order to reduce the occurrence of mental vulnerability from extreme situations, having social interactions is beneficial.

Works Cited

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