

Abstract

This thesis employs a feminist critical discourse analysis to investigate the fears, desires, and pleasures invoked by sex robots in users, as well as the representation of sex robots in media discourse. Feminist critical discourse analysis is used to provide insight into the ways in which technology is shaping human sexuality and changing our perceptions of sex and love. My sample includes 59 articles published in contemporary American media between 2017 and 2023 that focus on human interaction with sex robots. This thesis examines how the current dramatic prognosis of harm of sex robot use is empirically grounded. It also identifies multiple main themes that are present in the media discourse, namely sex robots' human-likeness, future of human relationships, as well as the tendency to associate the use of sex robots with rape and pedophilia. The artificial nature of the robot in the most intimate aspects of life such as love and sex is perceived as threatening, potentially making us less human. However, there are also positive aspects of human-sex robot interaction as framed by media discourse. Sex robots allow people to have a more satisfactory sexual life even when they have difficulties to build interpersonal relationship, for example, for elderly or socially awkward people. Moreover, a rising trend of women building their own sex robots is perceived as something that can help liberate female sexuality. From media discourse, it becomes evident that not only the sexual aspect is important for sex robot users but also the affective one. Users underline that the experience of intimacy for them is about feeling cared and loved, and not sexually aroused. The results of the research could be used by sex robot designers, marketers, and policy makers to create better companion robots for sex and love. These results can also be used by feminist researchers to back up study of the emotional and affective reactions of people towards sex robots or the study of mass media representation of sex robots and other sex toys.