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# The pedagogy of pornography: What popular pornography on the Internet teaches us about aggression and consent

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THE PEDAGOGY OF PORNOGRAPHY: WHAT POPULAR PORNOGRAPHY ON  
THE INTERNET TEACHES US ABOUT AGGRESSION AND CONSENT

By

Anthony Springer Jr.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the

Master of Arts Degree

Hank Greenspun School of Journalism and Media Studies  
Greenspun College of Urban Affairs  
The Graduate College

University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
December 2011

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THE GRADUATE COLLEGE

We recommend the thesis prepared under our supervision by

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**December 2011**

# ABSTRACT

## **The Pedagogy of Pornography: What Popular Pornography on the Internet Teaches Us About Aggression and Consent**

by

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Pornography remains a highly discussed and hotly debated topic within the academy and popular culture. Despite declining revenues for pornographic content, the proliferation of the Internet makes pornography easier to access than ever before. This study examines aggression and consent in popular pornography on the Internet. One hundred scenes across five highly trafficked Web sites' "most viewed" sections were selected for analysis. Consistent with existing research literature, women were overwhelmingly the targets of aggressive acts and typically expressed consensual reactions to acts of aggression. The results are examined within the context of social learning theory to posit what ideas and lessons audiences may be learning from pornographic content on the Internet.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Humans have a fascination with all things revolving around sex. From radio shows that talk about sex, to billboards with sexual innuendos, sex, sexuality, and all things sexual can be found virtually anywhere in society. The use of sexual innuendo has even been used to sell cities as tourist destinations. The Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority used sexual innuendo to sell the city of Las Vegas in an ad campaign that birthed the now popular phrase “What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas” (Pitcher, 2006). Outside of sex and sexuality being used to sell products, research suggests that sexual imagery can serve as a tool for learning (Allen, Emmers, Gebhardt, & Giery, 1995; Rogala & Tydén, 2003; Brown & L’Engle, 2009). Brown (2002) states, “mass media are an increasingly accessible way for people to learn about and see sexual behavior” (p. 42). Despite the dangers of irresponsible sexual activity in the real world, sexual intercourse depicted on television does not often reflect reality. Kunkel, Cope, and Biely (1999) noted that sexual depictions on television do not often show the risks involved with sexual activity, including but not limited to the contraction of sexually transmitted diseases. Repeated viewing of such portrayals is linked to an acceptance—and practice—of risky sexual behavior (Nabi & Clark, 2008).

While the amount of sexual innuendo and sexual depictions on television and other forms of mass media is a concern, pornography is also a concern for scholars (Padgett, Brislin-Slutz, & Neal, 1989; Mundorf, D’Alessio, Allen, & Emmers-Sommer,

2007). Unlike television and other forms of electronic media regulated by the Federal Communications Commission, pornography is not subject to many restrictions in terms of content. The lack of regulation of pornographic content has led to much debate and research on the effects—or perceived effects—of pornography consumption (e.g. Zillmann & Sapolsky, 1977; Zillmann & Bryant, 1986; Fisher & Grenier, 1994; Hald & Malamuth, 2007). Other scholars have examined the role pornography consumption plays in reinforcing sexist views of women in men and contribute to violence against women (Hoffman, 1985) and a breakdown of interpersonal relationships due to sex addiction (Young, 2008). In addition, others assert that the use and wide availability of sexually explicit media lead to a breakdown in societal norms and endorse deviant activity (Perse, 1994).

Despite the concerns of the effects pornography can have on viewers, defenders of pornography argue that it is subject to First Amendment protections, no matter how offended some may be by certain forms of pornographic expression. As Linsley (1991) observed, defenders assert, “the identification and preservation of safe societal norms is assured best by unrestrained discussion and debate which cannot take place under the censor’s axe” (p. 140). Other defenders of pornography note the educational and therapeutic functions of its consumption. Strossen (1995) notes that pornographic materials have been used by therapists to improve the sex life of couples and “solidify their relationships” (p. 164). Additionally, the Meese Commission concluded that pornography could be used to treat sexual dysfunctions (Strossen, 1995).

## Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the level of aggression and consent present in popular online pornography to determine what ideas and lessons audiences may be learning from pornographic content on the Internet. Content will be drawn from five popular online pornography sites that contain a “most viewed” section based on traffic rankings from Alexa.com, a company that tracks Internet traffic based on users who install the Alexa toolbar (Alexa Internet- A company overview). Despite the company's assertion that millions of users participate in the data tracking, the measure is not without its limitations and potential biases. Because Alexa numbers depend entirely on users who opt in—as opposed to a random sample—site statistics could be inflated by Web Masters who install the toolbar and frequently visit their own sites. In spite of potential biases, Alexa maintains that the closer a site gets to the number one ranking, the more reliable the traffic rank (Baker, 2007). Conversely, because users must choose to install the Alexa toolbar and have their Web viewing habits tracked, the potential for undercounting the amount of traffic the sites used in this study exists also. Users may opt to disable the toolbar while visiting pornographic sites or a majority of users who visit the sites in the study may not have installed the Alexa toolbar.

The results will be framed within the social learning theory, which posits that individuals may imitate behavior displayed in mediated content if the character(s) are rewarded for the behavior exhibited (Mundorf et al., 2007). It has been argued that pornography reinforces the objectification of women through degradation, subordination, and violence (Lo and Wei, 2002). For underage males, exposure to pornography has been

correlated with “less progressive gender role attitudes, more permissive sexual norms” and “sexual harassment perpetuation” (Brown & L’Engle, 2009, p. 129). Content analytic data will be used to test hypotheses based on social learning theory and the values and behaviors that online pornography implicitly or explicitly teaches young males about women, sex, and relationships will be examined.

### Statement of the Problem

Due to the recent proliferation of Internet activity, there is a dearth of scholarly research on the content of pornography found online. However, the available data on online pornography reveal that researchers should be just as concerned with pornography on the Internet as they are with other forms of sexually mediated content—and perhaps more so. Unlike other forms of mass communication, pornography on the Internet is more readily available than other forms of mediated sexual content and offers consumers a number of methods—including, but not limited to sexually explicit chats, videos, and stories—for consumption (Lo & Rei, 2002).

While pornography is subject to First Amendment protections and open to consumption by consenting adults, exposure to pornography by minors is the subject of concern by scholars due to perceived issues of sexual development (Ybarra and Mitchell, 2005). Zillmann (2000) noted a concern about sexual callousness and coercion in minors who have been exposed to pornography, but also noted that no concrete research data confirm negative effects. Unlike pornography currently available at adult video stores and other commercial outlets, there is little to regulate and prevent minors from accessing pornography on the Internet aside from software designed to filter adult content. Even

then, the number proportion of minors who knowingly and unknowingly expose themselves to pornography on the Internet is staggering and potentially problematic. A 2005 survey of 1500 youths between the ages of 10 and 17 found that of the 42% who had been exposed to pornography online, 34% sought out the sexually explicit content (Wolak, Mitchell, & Finkelhor, 2007). Eighty-seven percent of those youths who reported self-exposure were over the age of 14 (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2005). With the percentage of youth exposed to pornography documented, what exactly are these young people consuming online and what lessons are they learning—or potentially learning—from the content? Spitznagel (2009) posits that even without a credit card, minors have access to:

bestiality, piss-drinking, throat fucking, bukkake gang bangs, [and] triple anal penetrations...Considering the standard climax to even the most vanilla hard-core scene today, that means there is an entire generation of young people who think sex ends with [a man ejaculating on a woman's face]. (p. 154)

What is Pornography?

As the arguments for or against pornography change, so too, does the definition of pornography. From an etymological perspective, pornography “refers to the description of the life and manners of prostitutes and their patrons” (Weeks, 2005, p. 265). Dworkin (1989) also argued against pornography from an etymology standpoint, noting that the word has roots in the ancient Greek word *porne*, which translates to “whore.” According to Dworkin (1989), this was “exclusively the lowest class of whore...the brothel slut available to all male citizens” (p. 199). When pornography began to surface in mass

mediated messages, the etymology of the term became less prominent and new definitions emerged.

In addition to changing definitions, terminology changed to suggest either acceptance or disapproval of sexually explicit media. In some instances, the term *erotica* was used to describe “sexually explicit media that depicts adult men and women consensually involved in pleasurable, nonviolent, nondegrading , sexual interactions” while pornography was defined as “depictions of sexual activity where one of the participants is objectified or portrayed as powerless or nonconsenting” (Seto, Maric, & Barbaree, 2001). Other definitions are much more descriptive. In a study of self-perceived effects of pornography consumption, Hald and Malamuth (2007) defined pornography as:

any kind of material aiming at creating or enhancing sexual feelings or thoughts in the recipient and, at the same time containing explicit exposure and/or descriptions of the genitals, and clear and explicit sexual acts, such as vaginal intercourse, anal intercourse, oral sex, masturbation, bondage, sadomasochism, rape, urine sex, animal sex, etc. (p. 616)

From a legal perspective, the Supreme Court has avoided a concrete definition for pornography (Traudt, 2005). On one hand, this is problematic because many look to the courts to be an authority on various topics and at the Supreme Court specifically to be the authority and final word on legal and social issues. Despite the lack of a definition of pornography, the Supreme Court unintentionally created a de facto definition of pornography that—at least in many realms of mass society—has stood the test of time. In the case of *Jacobellis v. Ohio*, Justice Stewart refused to define hard-core pornography,

and stated, “But I know it when I see it” (*Jacobellis v. Ohio*, 378 U.S. 184 (1964)). While there may be differing definitions of pornography, many people seem to know it when they see it.

For the purposes of this study, pornography is defined as sexually explicit material not intended for consumption by minors and “material aiming at creating or enhancing sexual feelings or thoughts in the recipient” (Hald and Malamuth, 2007, p. 616). This definition does two things: it does not seek to define pornography by particular sex acts; and does not limit pornography to traditional heteronormative sexual activity, thus covering a variety of sexual encounters including gay/lesbian sexual activities, depictions of bondage and dominance, and other atypical sexual fetishes.

#### The Business of Pornography and Technology

While remaining a taboo topic in western society, the production of pornography became a big business. At its peak, the creation and distribution of pornography became a multi-billion dollar business. While some estimate the dollar amount to be as high as \$11 billion (Hardy, 2008), others dispute the figure, saying adult video sales are less than \$5 billion (Oppliger, 2008) with some estimates as low as \$4 billion (Wosnitzer & Bridges, 2007). Regardless of the actual dollar amount, adult entertainment is in high demand. There are more than 10,000 films produced per year (Hardy, 2008). The films can be found in video stores, the Internet, and inside the privacy of hotel rooms across the country (Oppliger, 2008). Despite adult content still being somewhat taboo in society, revenues from the adult entertainment industry were reportedly larger than the NBA, NFL, and Major League Baseball combined (Young, 2009). Between 1998 and 2003, the

number of pornographic Web sites increased from 14 million web pages to 260 million; in 2005, there were an estimated 1.5 billion pornographic downloads per month (Kimmel, 2008).

Though the proliferation and easy access to pornography courtesy of the Internet caused a boom to the adult entertainment industry, the ease of access ultimately led to the same copyright infringement issues and piracy concerns that affected the music industry. An estimated 30 million people shared nearly 3 billion pornographic files per month in the sixteen months after the now defunct peer-to-peer file sharing service Napster was launched (Palfrey and Gasser, 2008). With pornography remaining a taboo topic, the effects of file sharing and copyright infringement are not often discussed. However, when data are published, they show an industry fighting for its financial survival in a similar manner to its music industry counterpart. Pornography piracy, according to one report, will cost some producers “incalculable amounts of cash” (Schwartz, 2004, para. 9). In addition to copyright infringement issues, the recession also hit the adult entertainment industry hard. Mark Kernes, an editor of the adult industry trade magazine *Adult Video News*, estimates industry revenues fell nearly 50% in 2008 (The trouble with pornography: Hard times, 2009). If one only looked at revenues, it can be safely concluded that pornography consumption in America is declining. A closer look reveals that pornography consumption is actually increasing, which leads to new sets of problems for scholars and policy makers to address.

In addition to the commodification of pornography, the history of technology is interwoven into the history of sexually explicit media. Stern and Handel (2001) observe that advances in technology correlate with easier access to pornographic materials.



Further, not only are the barriers to pornography diminished by advances in technology, pornography also encourages technological innovations. Noonan (1998) notes that interest in pornography led to innovations in VCR technology. In the early years of video recording technology, Betamax and VHS tapes competed for the consumer dollar (Coopersmith, 2006). The competition for video supremacy between the two formats was largely decided by consumer interest in pornographic material, as Johnson (1996) commented that small video rental stores were renting almost exclusively pornography to consumers in VHS format, effectively driving Betamax out of the videocassette market altogether. As home viewing formats shifted with changing technology, the business world again had its eye on pornography to see which technology it would embrace next. Just as it had with VCR technology, pornographic content also shaped the DVD market. In a battle between Blu-Ray and HD-DVD's, some studios shifted to Blu-Ray when pornographic content creators seemed to favor the format over HD-DVD (Edelman, 2009).

### Social Learning Theory

The idea that consumers imitate the behaviors they see rewarded in media is known as social learning theory (Mundorf et al., 2007). Pioneered by Bandura (1978), social learning theory examined the dual role that reinforcement and modeling played on imitative behavior. Lowery and DeFleur (1995) stated that social learning theory suggests that individuals use media to “learn the norms, roles, and other components of social organization that make up the requirements of many kinds of groups” (p. 403). In 1963, Bandura, Ross, and Ross tested the social learning theory with children and adult models,

and blowup “bobo” dolls. According to the researchers, the participating children “were randomly assigned to one of the following groups: aggressive model-rewarded, aggressive model punished, a control group shown highly expressive but nonaggressive models, and a second control group which had no exposure to the models” (p. 602). The researchers posited that the children exposed to the models who were rewarded for their aggressive behaviors towards the bobo doll would exhibit higher levels of aggression compared to children who had no exposure to the models or children who witnessed the models punished for their aggressive behaviors. As the researchers predicted, the children viewing the aggressive models who were positively rewarded for their behavior were more likely to aggress against the bobo dolls themselves. Bandura, Ross, and Ross also reported higher levels of aggression in young boys.

Social learning theory was later adapted by scholars to study the effects of pornography consumption. Several studies show that pornography is a source of information about sexual relationships and sexual acts among college students (Duncan, 1990; Duncan & Donnelly, 1991). In the context of social learning theory, it is important to note that the learning of a behavior must be accompanied by imitation. Several studies have sought to examine the connection to pornography exposure and social learning theory in the context of changing attitudes regarding the acceptance of rape myths (Perse, 1994) and aggression by men against women (Check and Malamuth, 1985). In a review of literature on the connection between pornography and social learning theory, Allen, Emmers, Gebhardt, and Giery (1995) argue that pornography “teaches about the nature of sexual relations between people as well as illustrating the mechanics of intercourse” and that pornography “illustrates how men and women should treat each other before, during,

and after sex” (p. 8). While this study focuses on aggression, it diverges from other studies of pornography, aggression, and social learning theory by focusing on what pornography teaches about sexual relations during sexual acts.

The idea of pornography as an educational tool is also embraced by some in the adult entertainment industry. Nina Hartley, an adult film star, nurse, and social activist literally integrated social learning theory and pornography, becoming one of the first adult film stars to create a series of pornographic instructional videos for couples. Aimed at the “enthusiastic novice,” (Hartley, 2005, p. 172) the videos offered uncut depictions of various sexual acts that placed an emphasis on “the physical skill set and the amorphous emotional act” (p. 172) of the act displayed. In similar fashion, journalist Tristan Taormino wrote two how-to books on anal sex for women (1997, 2006) which were adapted into films (Tristan Taormino). The idea of the adult film star as role model for sexual behavior was again argued and extended in popular media by comedian Margaret Cho. Of former adult film star Tera Patrick, Cho writes, “Because of her [Asian American women] are seen in our entirety...Not only our beautiful faces and bodies but the forbidden things that we were not allowed to show, our sexuality and our desire” (Cho, 2009, p. x). Though social learning theory was originally created to study the reinforcement and modeling played on imitative behavior, Cho, Hartley, and Taormino show that as with other forms of media, the fantasies played out in print, film, and other forms of electronic media have real world implications beyond scholarly research primarily centered on pornography consumption and anti-social actions outside the bounds of sexual activity.

## Summary

This chapter offered a brief introduction on the scholarly research on pornography and social learning theory, the state of the adult entertainment industry, and the proliferation of the pornography on the Internet. Given the easy access to pornography online and the possible implications of adolescent exposure through the theoretical framework of social learning theory, assessing the content of online pornography is an issue of scholarly and societal importance.

Chapter 2 will provide a brief history of content analyses on pornography in film, print and on the Internet. The literature review will also briefly cover the effects of pornography consumption. Chapter 3 will outline the methodological approach to the current study and the measures used to code the data. Chapter 4 will address the results. Chapter 5 will discuss the implications of the results and suggestions for future research.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the existing content analytic research on pornography in three forms of media: print, film, and the Internet. The literature review builds on the ideas put forth in Chapter 1 by summarizing the sexual content examined by researchers, praised by pro-pornography advocates, and condemned by some feminists, conservatives, and religious organizations.

#### Pornography in Print

The introduction of Hugh Hefner's *Playboy* magazine in the 1950s also played a pivotal role in the discourse on sex and sexuality in the United States, two subjects that were previously taboo (Peterson, 2002). Hefner was able to accomplish this by not focusing his magazine solely on nude women. The concept behind *Playboy* was the glorification of a lifestyle—one that happened to include women in various stages of undress. In addition to the centerfolds, Hefner included celebrity interviews, critically acclaimed authors, and advice columns (Smith, 2008). That Hefner was able to take a racy subject like pornography mainstream was no accident. Sarracino and Scott (2008) noted that Hefner “imitated prestigious magazines such as *The Saturday Evening Post* and *The New Yorker* in the quality of paper and sophisticated formatting and graphics he used, publishing only the best writers and photographers” (p. 12). This approach aided Hefner's efforts to focus on selling his readers an overall lifestyle instead of simply selling pictures of nude women. Because of this, *Playboy* achieved mainstream appeal.

Oppliger (2008) noted that female celebrities posed in the magazine “at the height of their careers” (p. 39). Despite *Playboy* centerfolds and depictions of sexual activity being relatively tame in comparison to other forms of pornography, it did not escape criticism from feminists over its depictions of women. Like its hard-core counterparts, *Playboy* centerfolds were also accused of degrading and objectifying women for the pleasure of its male readers (Pitzulo, 2008). In addition to the centerfolds, *Playboy* was also heavily criticized for other content between its pages. In the 1970s, the magazine ran a cartoon parody of “The Wizard of Oz” in which female protagonist Dorothy was gang raped by other male characters from the movie (Berg, 2004). While *Playboy* has been criticized for its depictions of women, it has defied some traditional stereotypes about what is attractive. Models in the magazine have often not been models at all—at least in the traditional sense of the word. *Playboy* has done several spreads devoted to women who work at Wal-Mart, women in college, and even a spread on the women of Enron (Oppliger, 2008).

Pettijohn and Jungeberg (2004) conducted a forty-year content analysis of *Playboy* Playmate body types in relation to changing economic and social conditions in society. The results of the analysis showed that a relationship exists between what men find attractive in relation to the state of the economy. The researchers concluded that “mature features and a more tubular body shape were preferred to a relatively greater extent when times were bad and neotenous features and a more curvaceousness [*sic*] body type were preferred when times were good” (Pettijohn & Jungeberg, 2004, p. 1193). The results conflict with other research pointing to the mass media’s depictions of only thin women being attractive (Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008). The findings are consistent

with the use of multiple body image types in traditional pornography, particularly in the area of niche markets (Springer, 2008).

Another content analysis of *Playboy* models was conducted by Bogaert, Turkovich, and Hafer (1993) that examined explicitness, objectification, and model age from 1953-1990. A total of 430 centerfolds were used in the experiment. Bogaert et al. scored explicitness based on the positions of the models, objectification on whether or not the model's face was displayed. Findings revealed that explicitness in the magazine increased slightly and then leveled off. However, the authors noted that "when high explicitness did occur, this was largely confined to showing breasts, pubic hair, and perhaps a lying posture" (Bogaert et al., 1993, p. 137). A slight increase in model age occurred in the years examined, but the mean age remained relatively low, at just over 21. The level of objectification was low, suggesting that despite some objections to the depiction of women by feminists on pornography, *Playboy* has not reduced its models—at least in terms of centerfolds—to body parts. As previously noted, another source of criticism were the images of women in *Playboy's* cartoons (Berg, 2004), and this paper will now review the findings of those content analyses.

The link between pornography and violence against women has also been a subject of research (Fisher & Grenier, 1994). Though much attention was given to live depictions of people, there was little research literature on the content of pornographic cartoons in magazines. To address this, Matacin and Burger (1987) conducted a content analysis of the cartoons appearing in *Playboy* in 1985. Four areas were explored: "seduction, exploitation, naivety [*sic*], and body image" (Matacin & Burger, 1987, p.

181). Of the 262 cartoons to be analyzed, 101 were pulled from the study because they lacked a sexual theme. Results were consistent with feminist critiques about pornography in that the male was often shown in a dominant position over the female (Dworkin, 1989). Females depicted in the cartoons were more often the initiators of sexual contact. The researchers also found that when themes of coercion were depicted, the male character was always in the authoritative role. Results also revealed that the women depicted were more likely than males to be displayed as naïve and that the women were almost always more attractive than male cartoon depictions (Matacin & Burger, 1987). While the areas of film and print seldom detour from conventional pornography that depict women in a subordinate position to men, the advances of the Internet reveal some deviation from the status quo.

In addition to *Playboy*, the content of other pornographic magazines has also been the subject of scholarly research. Malamuth and Spinner (1980) conducted a longitudinal analysis of sexual violence in popular pornographic magazines. The researchers sampled all issues of *Penthouse* from January 1973 to December 1977. In addition to examining the live models used in the publication, an analysis of sexual violence was also conducted for the cartoon pictorials contained in the issues. One male and one female coder participated in the study and “were instructed to rate as sexually violent those stimuli that depicted rape, sadomasochism or exploitative/coercive sexual relations” (p. 229). The researchers found that although the amount of sexual violence depicted in *Penthouse* increased steadily over the period of analysis, pictorials depicting sexual violence in 1977 accounted for just 10 percent of the pictorials in *Penthouse*. While this number is relatively low, Malamuth and Spinner conclude that the results cannot be examined in a



vacuum, but rather examined against a larger backdrop of media that produces a culture that “sanctions acts of violence against women” (p. 235).

As Malamuth and Spinner (1980) did with *Penthouse*, Scott and Cuvelier (1993) did with *Hustler* magazine. The researchers conducted a longitudinal sample of violence in the magazine from 1974 to 1987. The researchers selected *Hustler* as the subject of analysis due to its high circulation rate and labeled it the “most controversial nonexplicit [sic] sexual magazine” (p. 364). During the 14-year period of study, the researchers found an average of just above 17 violent cartoons or pictorials (17.46) per year with an average of 1.46 per issue. Conversely, the average number of sexually violent cartoons for the period studied was 5.77, or an average of .48 per issue. In proportion to the total number of pages found in *Hustler*, the ratio of violence to total pages was 1.21 for every one hundred pages; the ratio of violence in pictorials to total pages was 2.79 for every one hundred pages (p. 367). Scott and Cuvelier found a decrease in the number of cartoons or pictorials containing violence; however, since the study focused solely on *Hustler*, the researchers could not attribute the decrease of violence as a trend in other pornographic magazines.

While *Playboy*, *Penthouse*, and *Hustler* represented the better selling pornographic magazines, what is the content of other pornographic magazines? Winick (1985) examined all 430 magazines for sale in a New York City Times Square store. Whereas other content analyses of pornographic magazines examined aggression (e.g., Malamuth & Spinner, 1980; Scott & Cuvelier, 1993), Winick conducted the analysis by the subject of the content in the magazines. The magazines were placed into 22

categories, based on the “predominant content” of the publication (p. 206). Content was categorized by one or more factors: “the kinds of people represented,” “types of sexual activity shown,” “emphasis on specific parts of the body,” “ethnicity of persons shown,” or “some combination of these dimensions.” (p. 207). Winick found that 27.8 percent of the magazines featured “content devoted to women in various stages of undress” with half of the magazines examined displaying genitalia in detail (p. 207). Other categories included male-female activity excluding sexual intercourse (15.5 percent), male-female sexual intercourse (8.4 percent), and content that focused on one or more areas such as ethnicity or type of sexual activity depicted with neither area being dominant (14.4 percent). Specialized or niche content included a minority of publications. For example, magazines focusing on one body part (I.e., buttocks, or breast) comprised only 2.7 percent of content, while publications devoted to lesbian sexual activity and swingers comprised 2.6 percent and 1.9 percent respectively. Scenes of aggression were described as “stylized,” with the researcher noting, “even if someone is shown holding a whip, it is rare that another person is actually being whipped” (p. 209). Winick concluded that more research on the content of pornographic magazines is needed to correlate changing content with changing societal standards regarding sexual activity.

### Pornography in Film

Pornography comes in many forms, but film is the backbone of the adult entertainment industry in terms of media consumption. With thousands of films produced each year, the study of the content of aggression in pornographic films has been the subject of significant study. Scholars theorized, “the coupling of sex and aggression in

these portrayals may result in conditioning processes whereby aggressive acts become associated with sexual arousal” (Malamuth, 1984, p. 31).

Yang and Linz (1990) conducted a comparative content analysis of the amount of violence in R-, X-rated films. Films rated XXX were also included in the study, though it was recognized that the XXX-rating was not official and most often used as an “advertising ploy” (p. 28). The researchers randomly selected 30 films from each ratings classification. Coders were instructed to record instances of “sex, violence, sexual violence, and/or prosocial activity” (p. 33). Elements of sexual violence included “slapping, hitting, spanking, pulling hair, being rough in other ways, sexual harassment, bondage and confinement, coercion with weapons, mud wrestling, sadomasochism, and sexual mutilation and murder immediately preceding, during, or after sex” (p. 33). The R-rated films contained more instances of violence than did the X and XXX-rated movies. However, the R-rated films contained more depictions of sexual violence than the XXX-rated movies, but less than the movies rated X. Sexually violent themes varied from the X- and XXX-rated films. The predominant theme of sexual violence in the X-rated films was rape, while the XXX-rated films selected had predominant themes of “exploitative and coercive sexual relations,” “group rape and sadomasochism” (p. 36). When the element of violence was isolated, however, Yang and Linz concluded, “widespread availability of R-rated movies on videocassettes or cable television means that young viewers may be more likely than ever to encounter violence, particularly sexual violence, on the television screen at home” (p. 41).

While a substantial amount of research has been done on the effects of sexually explicit films on consumers (e.g., Zillmann & Bryant, 1986; Hald & Malamuth, 2007),

Wosnitzer and Bridges (2007) conducted an extensive content analysis of top-selling sexually explicit movies. A total of 300 videos were selected for the study based on a compilation of rental and purchase data from Adult Video News. Mirroring research on the effects of pornography, Wosnitzer and Bridges (2007) focused on acts of aggression depicted in the films chosen for content analysis. It is important to note the variety of acts deemed aggressive. Verbal aggression included acts of “name calling/insults; threatening physical harm; and/or using coercive language” (p. 15). The list of acts of physical aggression was much more extensive and included:

pushing/shoving; biting; pinching; pulling hair; spanking; open-hand slapping; gagging (defined as when an object or body part, e.g. penis, hand, is inserted into a character’s mouth, visibly obstructing breathing); choking (when one character visibly places his/her hands around another character’s throat with applied pressure); threatening with weapon; kicking; closed-fist punching; bondage/confining; using weapons; and torturing, mutilating or attempting murder. (pp. 14-15)

The researchers reported a total of 3,376 acts of verbal or physical aggression with “an average of 11.52 acts of either verbal or physical aggression” (p. 18). Only 10.2 of the scenes analyzed had no act of aggression.

Because Wosnitzer and Bridges (2007) did not differentiate the context in which the acts of aggression occurred (I.e., whether or not the intention to harm the target was present), the study gives credence to the arguments of anti-pornography advocates. Though the study determined that women were “overwhelmingly the victims of such

aggression,” (p. 18) the issue of consent is not given significant attention. The researchers also coded for positive behaviors that were said to be defined liberally and included: “kissing...laughing, embracing, caressing, verbal compliments, and statements of ‘making love’ or ‘I love you’” (p. 19). Defining certain acts as positive gives the appearance that the commission of all aggressive acts is inherently negative for all couples or groups engaging in aggressive sexual activity—whether consent was depicted in the film or not. This does not invalidate the study, but the coding measures seem to place the commission of aggressive acts outside the realm of positive sexual behavior.

Sun, Bridges, Wosnitzer, Scharrer, and Liberman (2008) focused on the content of sexually explicit films focused on the similarities and difference of movies made by male and female directors. Forty-four videos were selected for the study, 33 directed by males and 11 directed by females. As with the study by Wosnitzer and Bridges (2007), Sun et al. coded scenes for acts of aggression and/or violence. For this study, aggression was “defined as any action causing or attempting to cause physical or psychological harm to oneself, another person, animal, or inanimate object, intentionally or accidentally whereby physical harm is understood as assaulting another verbally or non-verbally” (p. 13).

Sun et al. (2008) found several similarities and differences in the sexually explicit films made by the male and female directors. Both male and female directed scenes contained aggressive acts, with the female-directed scenes containing *more* aggressive acts (820, 55.2%) than male-directed scenes (666 aggressive acts, 44.8%). While there were more aggressive acts in the female-directed scenes, there were a higher percentage

of aggressive acts in male-directed scenes (77.0% and 85.2% respectively). In terms of the type of physical aggression, there were few differences in the type of physical aggression among male and female directors. The most common forms of physical aggression found included pushing/shoving, biting, hair pulling, and spanking. One interesting finding was the use of whipping as an act of aggression, a behavior found exclusively in female-directed scenes.

Sun et al. (2008) accounted for the differing arguments from the feminist movement concerning female depictions in pornography. For example, Candida Royalle, founder of *Femme Productions*, made softer forms of sexually explicit films that focused on love and affection between participants. Conversely, other female directors, like Vanessa Blue, shoot scenes in which the female is in a dominant and more aggressive position while the male assumes a more passive or submissive role (Springer, 2008).

Beggan and Allison (2003) analyzed 14 Candida Royalle films to discover what made the films appealing to women. Of the films analyzed, the researchers noted several differences in Royalle's films in comparison of the status quo of pornographic videos. In addition to developing a narrative, Royalle also used actors of varying ages. Actresses were not always sexually available, defying a common theme in pornography that women are always available and permissive. The narratives developed in the story were interwoven with the sex scenes, similar to the structure of Harlequin romance novels (Snitow, 2003). Beggan and Allison (2003) also observed that some of Royalle's films touch on the concept of homemade pornography, giving the viewer a story within a story, drawing in elements of real life into the fantasy realm of the films: "A deeper level of

reflexivity occurs in a sequence about a married couple who act out a fantasy about making a porn movie... Thus, Candida Royalle makes a movie about a porn producer named April Hunter who films Kelly making a porn movie” (p. 316). The implication of these findings will be discussed in the conclusion.

### Pornography on the Internet

Just as older research on pornography focused on the intersection between violence and sexuality, the Internet explosion has added another dimension to scholarly study. However, these studies have not been without their problems. One of the largest content analyses conducted regarding pornography on the Internet was thought to have taken place at Carnegie Mellon University (Rimm, 1994). In a summation of Rimm’s findings, Johnson (1996) noted that the majority of content on an early Internet newsgroups was pornographic, “readily available to minors to minors, and that the predominant images on computer nets are pedophilic, hebephilic, and paraphilic, including bondage, sadomasochism, urination, defecation, and bestiality” (p. 224-225). Rimm’s findings and conclusions were the subject of a cover story in *Time* magazine (Elmer-Dewitt, Bloch, Cole & Epperson, 1995). The authors posited that the study would give further ammunition to individuals and activists already opposed to porn and legislators that wanted to ban porn or heavily restrict access to pornography on the Internet. While Rimm’s study was a temporary boon to detractors of pornography, the study did not hold up under scholarly scrutiny. Hoffman and Novak (1995) conducted a thorough critique of the study. The researchers concluded that the study was “rife with methodological flaws” and even the definition of pornography used was “ad-hoc,

inconsistent, and misleading” (p.4). Thomas (1996) noted that Rimm’s research advisor solicited external funding for the project from the United States Department of Justice. The federal entity had an active interest in prosecuting the users of the private adult network Rimm used for the study. Thomas calls this “the most egregious violation of ethics,” noting “grant participants were aware of the Department of Justice’s prosecutorial interests in ‘adult’” online news groups (p. 195). After the findings of the study were discredited, Carnegie Melon University distanced itself from the publication (Thomas, 1996).

Due to the rapid and relatively recent growth of the Internet, there is not a large body of scholarly research on Internet pornography. Despite the dearth of research in this area, several scholars have laid the groundwork with content analyses of pornography on the Internet.

Mehta and Plaza (1997) conducted one of the earliest content analytic studies of pornography online. The subject of analysis was pornographic images found on Internet newsgroups. Unlike pornographic offerings in commercial outlets, adult newsgroups consisted primarily of pornography consumers. The researchers posited that due to legal implications faced by commercial producers of pornography, the images they found were likely to be uploaded by noncommercial consumers because commercial distributors would not risk “arousing public concern” (p. 155) despite a lack of official regulation of pornography on the Internet. A total of 150 images were randomly selected from 17 online newsgroups. Unlike the results of other content analyses on pornographic content in magazines (Winick, 1985), Mehta and Plaza found larger amounts of specialized



content including depictions of oral sex (8.1 percent), homosexual sex (18 percent), and group sex (11 percent). The hypothesis that noncommercial users would post more images than commercial users was not supported, as the researchers found more content uploaded by commercial vendors. The researchers concluded that the posting of commercial material on adult newsgroups was often a method to entice consumers to Internet pay sites.

Mehta (2001) built on the study by Mehta and Plaza (1997) by examining an additional 9,800 images from 32 additional adult newsgroups. The images were gathered over a one-year period from July 1995 to July 1996. After the images were collected, the researcher separated the data by theme, which is consistent with the methodology of the study of pornographic magazines by Winick (1985). The categories were: “Commercial or noncommercial sources,” “number of participants,” “oral sex,” “masturbation,” “ejaculation” (male or female), “homosexual sex,” “bondage and discipline,” and “use of children and adolescents” (pp. 698-699). Mehta found 40.5 percent of the images originated from commercial sources, up from the 35 percent of commercial images from the study by Mehta and Plaza (1997). Further, trends in the types of images posted by commercial and noncommercial sources were also noted:

Commercial sources are more likely to post images containing multiple participants, vaginal and anal penetration, fellatio and cunnilingus, ejaculate, homosexual sex, bondage, hebephilic content, and bestiality. Images depicting discipline, nude children and adolescents, and pedophilic themes are more likely to be posted by noncommercial sources. (p. 276)

Mehta concluded that barriers to production and distribution of pornographic images by traditional means—print and film—facilitate the dissemination of pornography on the Internet and also amplify the cultural, social, and political controversies that typically encompass debates about pornography consumption. Like most forms of media, the evolution of the delivery of pornographic content has kept up with evolutions in content distribution. As Mehta and Plaza (1997) observed, “computer pornography has moved from simple images composed of alphanumeric characters to more sophisticated digitized, moving images” (p. 155). The changes in pornographic content by commercial producers on the Internet have also been observed by other researchers. Gossett and Byrne (2002) added to the research literature on pornography by analyzing the content of web sites that depict rape scenes. While the researchers conceded that violent sexually explicit images were a small portion of pornography available on the Internet, the ease of access to the Internet, coupled with the violent imagery “requires a more careful look at the content of these images” (p. 693).

Gossett and Byrne (2002) conducted a content analysis of pornographic sites that were intentionally marketed to be violent. Search terms for the analysis included: “forced sex,” “torture,” “rapist,” and “gang rape” (p. 694). It is important to note that the researchers purposely left out the minority of Internet sites that depicted men as victims, focusing solely on violence against women. A total of 31 sites were included in the analysis and of those, nearly half (14) included the word rape or a variation of rape in the site name. Another striking—or disturbing—find of the study is that another half of the sites (16) explicitly state that the victim of said rape is young—and may not have reached

the age of majority—through the use of the words “young,” “school girl,” and “Lolita” (p. 699).

As technological advances are made, pornography on the Internet has become more interactive. A 2001 study by Kibby and Costello analyzed interactive sexual entertainment on the Internet. Because users can essentially create their own sexual experience instead of relying on one created for them, as is the case with traditional pornography, the researchers note that the interactive experience has the potential to challenge the status quo perpetuated by commercialized pornography:

On these interactive sites, individuals are constructing their own sexual representations, in effect re-presenting sexuality, and in doing so questioning the hegemony of privileged forms of sexuality and sexual representation. Instead of consuming sexual images, participants act out the construction of sexual imagery, opening up the possibility of a new sexual language with which to communicate individual desires and practices. (p. 354)

Whereas commercial pornography has been strongly criticized by several feminist scholars (e.g., Dworkin, 1989; Russell, 1988) for its perpetuation of stereotypes and reinforcement of gender roles in which men are dominating women, the advent of interactivity in online sexual expression through the use of cameras and chats that encourage two-way communication may level the playing field. Kibby and Costello (2001) posited that “do-it-yourself sexual representations might provide a space in which women and men can develop a mutual sexual language, and explore diverse ways of expressing sexuality” (p. 354). This is consistent with the arguments of some pro-

pornography advocates that mediated pornographic expression can be a source of empowerment to women (Hartley, 2005). One observation was the establishment and enforcement of rules during interaction. There was an emphasis on consensual and mutual interaction, consistent with Kibby and Costello's assertion that interactive pornographic media offered a chance to develop a mutual sexual language between males and females, which defied traditional ideas that pornography was a benefit to men to the detriment of women. While the Internet and pornographic expressions on the Internet may conjure up ideas of free, unrestrained, and un-moderated sexuality, Kibby and Costello (2001) noted that rules were enforced by volunteer or paid moderators.

The findings of the content analysis are consistent with the arguments of pro-pornography advocates and in contention with arguments against pornography. Kibby and Costello (2001) found that users on the interactive sites altered traditional relationships between producers and consumers of pornographic content. With the exception of commercialized interactive sites, which had a defined producer and a defined consumer, public sites often had users who occupied the role of producer and consumer at the same time. The blurring, or total elimination of producer and consumer roles also called into question the rhetoric of anti-pornography advocates. If a man or woman willingly participated in something that would be deemed exploitative or degrading in a commercialized setting, it could not be easily rationalized as being degrading or demeaning (Kibby & Costello, 2001). It is worth noting that no instances of aggression or violence are reported by the researchers. The implications of these findings will be addressed in the summary.

## Summary

This chapter examined content analyses of pornography on film, in print, and on the Internet. While the effects or perceived effects of pornography consumption have driven the bulk of research, content analyses remain an important but underrepresented portion of the discourse. This method of researching pornography is, like research on pornography effects, not without its problems and biases. As previously stated, a lot of the research is driven by the arguments of anti-pornography advocates (e.g., Dworkin, 1989 and 1991) resulting in some content analyses (e.g., Matacin & Burger, 1987) beginning with a conclusion of what is to be expected in the pornographic content that originated from a source unfavorable to pornography. That is not to say that a content analysis with a more positive spin on pornography would be any less biased than one with a negative spin. Another problem with some content analysis research is the omission or disregard for the reaction of targets. For example, Wosnitzer and Bridges (2007) examined acts of aggression in pornography, but failed to factor in the consent—or lack of—by the target of the aggressive act. The use of the word “aggression” has a negative connotation, which would likely lead a reasonable reader to assume that much of the pornographic content analyzed in the study contained scenes of aggression that occurred during the commission of an *unconsensual* sex act. Such an assumption reinforces the argument that pornography reinforces the idea that it is okay to rape. However, one act, choking, that was labeled as an aggressive behavior can actually be used to *heighten* the sexual experience—particularly at the point of orgasm (Downs, 2005). Though the practice is considered to be risky (LeVay, 2000), its performance during a pornographic movie could not be considered aggressive in the sense of it being

violent if performed in a consensual situation. The subjects of degradation and objectification are also subject to scrutiny because the definitions of both are often subjective, and lie with the individual defining the terms. For example, were the models analyzed in a study on *Playboy* (Bogaert et al., 1993) objectified because the *viewer* of the pornographic content felt like they were objectified? Such questions may never be sufficiently answered, but are nonetheless worth noting when analyzing the research literature. In an attempt to identify the root cause of bias in pornography research, Jensen (2003) noted that:

Researchers generally accept a mainstream definition of what is to be considered “normal” sexuality....the form our sexual practices take is socially constructed, and that construction in this culture is rooted in the politics of gender. Relying on the majority view to determine what is erotic implicitly endorses the sexual status quo, which means accepting patriarchal definitions. (p. 419)

As both Mehta (2001) and Mehta and Plaza (1997) noted, the evolution of pornography on the Internet has gone from images to video. While the medium provides for participation from both commercial and noncommercial sources, the landscape of pornographic content online remains dominated by commercial entities. The dominance by commercial sources is two-fold: commercial producers are able to continue to produce content that caters to heteronormative standards and produce content that caters to niche audiences (I.e., gay/lesbian, bondage and discipline).

As mentioned in the scholarly review of research on the content of pornography on the Internet, there is a dearth of research in this area. However, data collection on

Internet pornography sites—several of which highlight the scenes most watched by consumers—will provide researchers a more accurate gauge of what consumers are actually viewing, as opposed to hand selecting a series of scenes or photographs for review. In the same way Sun et al. (2008) selected scenes for examination based on sales, this study examines pornographic scenes on the Internet based on their popularity which provides for an account of viewing habits in real time. This study also examines the reactions of targets after the commission of aggressive acts in an effort to gauge how much the role of consent plays in today's popular pornography.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

Though scholars have been concerned with studying the perceived effects of pornography consumption (Hald & Malamuth, 2007; Malamuth, 1984; Padgett, Brislin-Slutz & Neal, 1989; Perse, 1994), scholars have also been concerned with the content of pornography (Kibby & Costello, 2001; Malamuth & Spinner, 1980; Sun et al., 2008). This study adds to the body of existing content analytic research literature on pornography by examining aggression and reactions to aggressive acts regarding consent in popular pornography on the Internet.

This study differs from other studies by examining the element of consent with elements of aggression. Sun et al. (2008) stated that aggression “constitutes any act that attempts to or results in harm” (p. 316). While this definition may be suitable for studies conducted that examine acts of aggression or violence that occur *without* the target’s consent, this definition of aggression ignores the elements of consent during sexual activity and diverse sexual practices that fall outside of traditional heteronormative sexual activity.

For example, in previous social science research, pornographic depictions of sadomasochism have been portrayed as negative. Depictions of sadomasochism have been described as violent and unusual sexual behavior (Yang & Linz, 1990), compared with bestiality (Zillmann, Bryant, & Carveth, 1981), characterized as a sexual practice of individuals who were abused (Weinberg, 2006), and equated to nonconsensual sexual



activity and torture (Picker & Sun, 2008). Activities described as sadomasochistic are diverse, but generally include “a relationship involving dominance and submission, infliction of pain (e.g., by spanking or flogging), deliberate humiliation (e.g., verbally or with humiliating clothing), physical restriction (e.g., using handcuffs or straitjackets), and the use of fantasy or role-playing” (Lawrence & Love-Crowell, 2008, p. 67). The use of flames, candle wax, and stimulation via electricity may also occur during activity associated with bondage and sadomasochism (Bramwell, 2007). While these activities are deemed problematic and aggressive, participants use language associated with film, theater, or other harmless activities such as engaging in play (Cross & Matheson, 2006) and putting on a scene. For this reason, the element of consent will also be analyzed along with coded acts of aggression.

#### Rationale for this Study

As described in Chapter 2, the bulk of content analytic research focuses on traditional forms of media such as print and film. While pornography found on the Internet encompasses elements of traditional print and film media in that pictorials and films are available for viewing, a dearth of research exists on the content of pornography found on popular pornographic Web sites. While the adult entertainment industry is in a state of financial contraction due to piracy (Schwartz, 2004), the consumption of pornography on the Internet remains high in the United States due to pornographic sites similar to YouTube. These sites contain a variety of pornographic videos—the majority of them uploaded against the wishes of the copyright owner—for consumption by viewers. Each scene has an original title which typically, but may not always include, the

name(s) of the performer(s) and a brief synopsis of what the viewer can expect. Scenes are also sorted by categories such as ethnicity, the color of a performers' hair and the type of sex performed during the scene.

Alexa, a company that tracks traffic on the Internet, lists five pornographic sites where users can watch copyrighted content in its "Top Sites in the United States" section (Top Sites in United States). A total of 100 sites are listed, in order of popularity. Of the pornographic Web pages in the top 100 as of November 20, 2010, three are included for analysis in this study: Pornhub.com, number 37; Xvideos.com, number 76 and; Youporn.com, number 94. The other two sites in the top 100, Tube8.com and Redtube.com, did not contain a most viewed section and were excluded from the analysis. To maintain consistency for the study, two additional free Internet sites that do not specialize in niche content were selected for analysis, Keezmovies.com and Tnaflix.com, which have traffic ranks of 446 and 280 in the United States, respectively. When put in context with other main stream sites, the reach of the porn tube sites is far reaching. According to Alexa rankings, from June to September of 2007, YouPorn received more Web traffic than CNN (Hoffman, 2007).

Given the high amount of pornography consumption on the Internet in the United States, coupled with past and present concerns about the effects of pornography consumption by scholars, examining the content of popular pornography is still important to determine if contemporary pornography regularly depicts, condones, and rewards aggressive, violent, and nonconsensual sexual behavior.

## Research Question and Hypotheses

Two research questions and three hypotheses were generated for this study. The research questions: 1) are nonconsensual depictions of sexual behavior predominant in popular Internet pornography? and; 2) when depictions of nonconsensual behaviors occur in popular Internet pornography, do the acts occur in a consensual or nonconsensual setting? The hypotheses put forth for this study are informed by the content analysis conducted by Sun et al. (2008) which found that in both male and female directed pornography, sex was “intertwined with violence” (p. 321) and “female targets almost always exhibited pleasure or indifference toward the aggression inflicted on them” (p. 321). Drawing from the conclusions of the Sun et al. study, this study poses the following hypotheses:

H<sub>1</sub>: Women will be target of aggression more often than men.

H<sub>2</sub>: Aggressive acts will occur most often during consensual sexual encounters.

H<sub>3</sub>: When nonconsensual sexual acts are depicted, the victim will not reward the act(s) committed by the perpetrator.

H<sub>3</sub> will be examined qualitatively and did not focus on any rewards the perpetrator offered the target. For example, if a nonconsensual act is depicted in a scene in which the target is actively resisting, the target is considered to not have rewarded the commission of the aggressive act. Additionally, if the target complies due to threat of further harm or appears uneasy while complying, the initial aggressive act was still coded as nonconsensual.

## Content Analysis

The hypotheses generated for this study were tested utilizing content analysis. A content analysis is defined as “a procedure that helps researchers identify themes and relevant issues often contained in media messages” (Rubin, Rubin, & Piele, 2005, p. 223). Kenney (2009) describes the content analysis as “an objective, systematic and quantitative method of describing the content of text” (p. 228). This method of examination was chosen for several reasons. First, while media messages and meanings are subject to interpretation, the content analysis provides a method for the uniform coding of mediated content. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2005), all mediated content analyzed “is to be treated in the exact same manner” (p. 151). The systematic method of data collection extends beyond the scope of the media examined, as the content analysis also provides a uniform framework for the training of coders, who must be exposed to the material measured for equal lengths of time (Wimmer & Dominick, 2005). Finally, while the media examined may contain some variants, the objective, systematic method of evaluation “means that one and only one set of guidelines is used for evaluation throughout the study” (Wimmer & Dominick, 2005, p. 151).

## Sampling

This study draws its sample content from five pornography sites on the Internet that offer a variety of free commercial content to users as ranked by Alexa.com on November 20, 2010: Pornhub.com; Xvideos.com; Youporn.com; Tnaflix.com and; Keezmovies.com. The sample comprised of each site’s “most viewed” videos of “all time.” Like the Sun et al. (2008) study which defined popular pornography by compiling

a sample from a list of videos most rented, this study defined popular pornography based on the videos “most viewed” by consumers of Internet pornography from the sites selected for the study. The top 50 scenes from each site’s “most viewed” section comprised the initial universe sample. Scene times varied from a few minutes to a little more than one hour. The unit of analysis for the current study was each, individual, physically aggressive act regardless of repetition. Each physically aggressive act was counted as a separate event to be coded.

Preliminary examination of the proposed sample indicated that the number of aggressive acts within each scene could range between zero (0) and 20 separate coding events, with an approximate average of four or five acts per scene. Therefore the initial universe sample of 50 scenes drawn from each of the five websites was reduced to an actual sample of the top 20 “most viewed” scenes upon recommendation by the thesis advisor.

Due to concerns over the use of copyrighted materials and scenes not being available at the time of analysis, if a scene in the initial sample was missing, scenes after number twenty were utilized to fill the required number of scenes for analysis. Additionally, if a scene in the top 20 was a compilation of multiple scenes edited together, it was discarded.

### Coding and Measures

Operational definitions for each measure are provided in this section and correspond to those summarized in the code sheet provided in Appendix 1. One code sheet was completed for each aggressive act encountered within scenes.

### *Case Number*

As each aggressive act was coded separately, each also needed to be assigned a unique case number beginning with one (1) and continuing until all individual aggressive acts within all scenes have been coded.

### *Site*

The five sites selected for sampling were coded as (1) Pornhub.com; (2) Xvideos.com; (3) Youporn.com; (4) TNAflix.com; or (5) Keezmovies.com.

### *Scene Number*

Scene number was the ranking of the scene, ranging from one (1) to 20, according to the Web site.

### *Scene Title*

Each scene is accompanied by a title provided by the website. This title was entered verbatim and in its entirety.

### *Scene Runtime*

Each scene is accompanied by a run-time indicator. This time was coded as a six-digit indicator. For example, a scene running four minutes and fifty-eight seconds was coded 00:04:58. A scene running one hour and 12 minutes was coded 01:12:00.

### *Initial Aggressive Act*

For the purposes of this study, an initial aggressive act included the performance of any one of various verbal and physical acts incorporated from the study conducted by Wosnitzer and Bridges (2007). The initial aggressive act coded included; (1) spanking, (2) hair pulling, (3) slapping, (4) biting, (5) gagging (defined as when an object or body part, e.g. penis, hand, is inserted into a character's mouth, visibly obstructing breathing), (6) choking (when one character visibly places his/her hands around another character's throat with applied pressure), (7) pushing/shoving, (8) bondage or use of weapons (the physical restraint of a character with rope or another object or the striking of a character with an object) and; (9) smothering. Coding in this area was left blank if no aggressive act occurred.

### *Second Act Concurrent with Initial Aggressive Act*

Preliminary examination of scenes showed that aggressive acts often occurred concurrent with each other. This measure was provided should a second aggressive act occur consequent to the initiation of an initial aggressive act. The same coding scheme was used for this measure.

### *Third Act Concurrent with Initial Aggressive Act*

This measure was provided should a third aggressive act occur consequent to the initiation of an initial and second aggressive act. The same coding scheme was used for this measure.

### *Character Sex*

Each depicted during aggressive acts was also coded. The codes were as follows: (1) single female, (2) single male; (3) female and male; (4) two or more females and one male; (5) two or more males and one female; (6) more than two females and two males; and (7) other (e.g., the presence of a transgendered character).

### *Characters' Ethnicity*

Characters' dominant ethnicity was also coded. Ethnicity was coded as: (1) White or predominantly White; (2) Black or predominantly Black; (3) Latino/a or predominantly Latino/a; (4) Asian or predominantly Asian; (5) mixed ethnicity; and (6) indeterminate.

### *Verbal Aggression*

Each act was also coded for any predominant form of verbal aggression. When present, acts of verbal aggression were coded as either (1) name calling/insults; or (2) threatening physical harm; or (3) the use of coercive language. Coders were instructed to make a judgment as to which, if any, three forms of verbal aggression were dominant in the aggressive act being coded.

Perpetrators of aggressive acts were coded as (1) male or (2) female and targets of aggressive acts were also coded as (1) male or (2) female.

### *Consent*

“Consent” was defined as expressing pleasure or approval during sexual activity. The expression of consent may include, but is not limited to: verbal cues indicating the



acceptance of a sexual act and/or verbal and/or nonverbal cues that encourage the continuance of an act. Conversely, “nonconsensual” activity was defined as expressing displeasure or active resistance in response to sexual activity. Expressions of nonconsensual activity include, but are not limited to: verbally saying “no” or “stop”; expressing hesitation before the commission of an act and physical resistance to an attempted act. Additionally, consent or non-consent was noted after the commission of each aggressive act. If the target expressed pleasure after the commission of an aggressive act or requested the performance of an aggressive act, consent was recorded (yes); if the target expressed displeasure or a sign of inhibition after the commission of an aggressive act, a nonconsensual response (no) was recorded. Consent was coded as (1) yes or (2) no. If the target expressed no observable emotional reaction after the commission of an aggressive act or did not appear to be bothered by the commission of an aggressive act, thus giving tacit approval, (3) indifference was recorded.

### Coding

Coder training and testing was conducted consequent to completion of sampling of all scenes. The primary researcher trained a colleague in coding procedures utilizing the methods outlined in this chapter. After satisfactory training, the primary researcher and colleague coded the sample. After independent coding was complete, 10 percent of the sample size was randomly selected for reliability using Cohen’s kappa. The primary and secondary coder coded ten randomly selected scenes from the sample. There was no disagreement between the primary and secondary coder for the categories of scene run

time, title, character sex, and character ethnicity. Cohen's kappa ranged from  $\kappa = .70$  for initial aggressive act to  $\kappa = 1.0$  for the second consequent aggressive act.

For the variable measuring consent, Cohen's kappa was  $\kappa = .415$ . Upon further analysis of the results, the primary discrepancy measuring consent between the principal and secondary coder occurred when distinguishing the choices of "yes" and "indifferent" after the occurrence of an aggressive act. The significance of this finding will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Following confirmation of appropriate inter-coder reliability levels for the random sample, the remaining 90 percent of the data was analyzed by the principal investigator.

The results of the study will be included in Chapter 4, while the implications of the findings will be discussed in Chapter 5.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

The sample for this study consisted of 100 scenes from the five pornography sites' "most viewed" sections. A total of 322 aggressive acts were coded in the analysis of the scenes. Of the scenes analyzed, 55 percent contained one or more aggressive acts and a total of 309 aggressive acts were recorded. Percentages for aggressive acts were not rounded up and equal 100. Of the aggressive acts recorded, nearly a third of the aggressive acts came from the 20 scenes analyzed from Pornhub.com (32.6 percent). Xvideos.com accounted for 20.4 percent; Youporn.com and TNAflix.com both accounted for 17.7 percent of the sample and; Keezmovies.com comprised 11.7 percent of the aggressive acts coded.

#### Scene Time

The length of scenes was recorded for all scenes in the study. Scene times ranged from 2:17 to a high of 67:52. The average scene time for all scenes analyzed was 19:06.

#### Character Ethnicity and Sex

Character ethnicity was coded for all scenes. A total of 69 percent of scenes coded contained white or predominately white characters; 18 percent contained characters of different ethnicities; 6 percent contained Asian or predominately Asian characters; and 2 percent featured predominately Latino/a characters. An "other" category was also coded for ethnicities for instances in which characters fell outside the primary ethnicities

decided on by the thesis adviser and principal coder. A total of 18 percent of scenes were coded as “other.” Though black characters were present during some scenes, no scenes in the study contained all, or a majority of black characters.

The sex of the characters was also coded for all scenes. Individual character sex was not accounted for unless only one character was present in a scene. The character sex coding grouped males and females by the type of scene; therefore, this study does not count how many males and females appeared in the 100 scenes coded. A total of 78 percent of scenes contained the traditional, heteronormative pairing of one male and one female; 7 percent of scenes contained two or more males with one female; 5 percent of scenes contained two or more females with one male; 3 percent of scenes contained more than two males and more than two females; and just 1 percent of scenes coded contained a single female. For instances which fell outside the predetermined categories, an “other” category was added for coding. A total of 6 percent of scenes were coded as “other.” These included scenes which contained two or more women with no men or transgender characters. There were no scenes with containing two or men with no women. Additionally, no scenes with a single male appeared in the sample for this study.

#### Aggressive Acts

A total of 323 aggressive acts were recorded. Of the aggressive acts recorded, 309 were physically aggressive while just 14 verbal acts of aggression were recorded. Spanking comprised the majority of the initial aggressive acts recorded, with 202 instances occurring (54.9 percent). Instances of slapping were observed 37 times (10.1 percent), followed by gagging (8.4 percent), choking (4.6 percent), and hair pulling (4.1

percent). The other aggressive acts recorded—pushing/shoving, bondage/use of weapons, and smothering—rarely occurred (.8, .5, and .5 percent respectively). No instances of biting were observed. All instances of verbal aggression were name calling/insults.

This study also coded instances of second and third acts of aggression that occurred consequent to the initial act of coded aggression. A total of 25 aggressive acts were recorded consequent to an initial aggressive act. Only 8 aggressive acts occurred consequent to the first and second aggressive acts recorded. The significance of these findings will be discussed in Chapter 5.

#### Character Ethnicity, Sex, and Aggression

The majority of the aggressive acts observed occurred in traditional heteronormative male/female pairings. Aggression in scenes involving one male and one female accounted for 80.9 percent of the aggressive acts recorded. Scenes with two or more males with one female accounted for 7.9 percent of the aggressive acts, while more than two males and two females accounted for 5.2 percent of the total. Aggressive acts containing two or more females with one male and scenes containing “other” combined for less than six percent of aggressive acts.

#### Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study contained two research questions and three hypotheses. Recall  
Research Question 1: Are nonconsensual depictions of sexual behavior predominant in popular Internet pornography. Based on the analysis of the 100 scenes, nonconsensual depictions are not predominant in popular Internet pornography. Of the 368 aggressive

acts coded, 34 acts—or 10.7 percent of the total—were coded as nonconsensual. While just 65 acts—or 20.4 percent of the total—were coded as explicitly consensual, a yes or no dichotomy does not accurately address the research question. The majority of target reactions to physically aggressive acts were that of indifference, which made up 59.8 percent of the total. When combined with the percentage of “yes’s,” consensual and indifferent reactions made up 89.4 percent of the total reactions to acts of aggression.

Recall Research Question 2: When depictions of nonconsensual behaviors occur in popular Internet pornography, do the acts occur in a consensual or nonconsensual setting? This question was analyzed qualitatively. Of the 34 acts of physical aggression that received a nonconsensual reaction, 33 occurred during scenes that depicted characters being raped. The one instance of nonconsensual aggression took place in the midst of other aggressive acts in which the character did not actively resist the other aggressive acts, suggesting that characters can withdraw consent for certain acts while maintaining consent for the overall encounter. Given these findings, nonconsensual acts of aggression in popular Internet pornography occur overwhelmingly in situations that are explicitly depicted to be nonconsensual.

The findings from the study supported Hypothesis 1. Recall Hypothesis 1: Women will be targets of aggression more often than men, was supported by the research findings. According to the findings, women were not only the targets of aggression more often than men, women were overwhelmingly more likely to be the targets of acts of aggression, comprising 94.1 percent of the sample. Conversely, male targets comprised the remaining 5.9 percent.

Findings for Hypothesis 2 were gathered by examining target reactions to the first act of physical aggression using cross tabulation. For statistical analysis, reactions of “indifference” were combined with “yes” reactions to determine the sample and the five acts of aggression recorded enough to be statistically significant—spanking, hair pulling, slapping, gagging, and choking—were used for analysis. Recall Hypothesis 2: Aggressive acts will most often occur during consensual sexual encounters. Gagging was the most accepted act of physical aggression, with targets expressing explicit consent in 100 percent of instances recorded. Acts of spanking were accepted by targets in 97.5 percent of the cases and made up the majority of the sample with 196 occurrences. Hair pulling received a consensual reaction in 93.3 percent of occurrences. Occurrences of nonconsensual reactions rise above ten percent in instances of choking and slapping. When targets were choked, nonconsensual reactions were recorded in 17.6 percent of incidents recorded. In instances when targets were slapped, the level of nonconsensual reactions surpasses that of consensual reactions. Targets of aggression who were slapped elicited nonconsensual reactions 54.1 percent of the time. The findings of Hypothesis 2 will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Findings for Hypothesis 3 were supported. Recall Hypothesis 3: When nonconsensual sexual acts are depicted, the victim will not reward the act(s) committed by the perpetrator. This hypothesis was examined using qualitative methods. As highlighted in Research Question 2, 97 percent of aggressive acts that occurred that elicited a nonconsensual reaction from the target occurred in scenes that depicted rape. During each commission of an aggressive act in said scenes, the target did not express pleasure and/or actively resisted the act.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this content analysis was to add to the existing body of research literature on the connection between popular pornography on the Internet and aggression to determine what lessons audiences may be learning from the content. This study also adds to the existing body of research by examining the role of consent during the commission of an aggressive act. While the widely known cliché that “sex sells” continues to dominate the contemporary pop culture landscape, previous studies and the continued study of pornography remain important precisely because sexually oriented content remain widely consumed. Though some may point to declining revenues as a sign of an industry losing influence among society, it must be noted that a decrease in revenue is attributed not to a lack of interest in pornographic material, but to an increase in piracy (Schwartz, 2004, *The trouble with pornography: Hard times*, 2009).

The current study examined whether consent was given or withheld during the commission of aggressive acts in popular pornography on the Internet. Two research questions were generated for this study. Research Question 1 examined whether nonconsensual depictions of sexual activity were predominant in popular Internet pornography? Based on the 368 aggressive acts coded, 89.4 percent of the reactions to aggressive acts were coded as either indifferent or explicitly consensual. Research Question 2 examined what happened when a nonconsensual act was depicted on film in the context of social learning theory. Of the 34 acts coded as nonconsensual, 33 took



place during depictions of rape scenes in which the targets were actively resisting or not expressing pleasure during the commission of the aggressive acts.

This study provides support for Hypothesis 1. In comparison to men, women were overwhelmingly more likely to be the targets of aggression in pornography. Women comprised 94.1 percent of the targets of aggressive acts, compared to just 5.1 percent for men. This finding is consistent with existing research literature in that women remain the primary targets of aggression. Hypothesis 2 was also supported by this study. Acts coded as aggressive occurred most frequently elicited consensual reactions from targets. Spanking was accepted during 97.5 percent of occurrences, hair pulling in 93.3 percent of occurrences, and gagging was accepted in 100 percent of occurrences. Support for Hypothesis 3 was also found. During instances in which a reaction of non-consent was recorded, targets did not reward the behavior in the majority of cases. In 97 percent of nonconsensual encounters, the target actively resisted. This lends credibility to the argument that nonconsensual behaviors in popular pornography are not depicted as rewarding. In a meta-analysis of studies focusing on exposure to pornography and acceptance of rape myths, Allen, Emmers, Gebhardt, and Giery (1995) concluded that exposure to violent and nonviolent forms of pornography led to an acceptance of rape myths (I.e., that a woman who says “no,” really means “yes.”). However, if the current study is any indication, viewers who believe that nonconsensual reactions are consensual reactions in disguise are not learning these lessons from pornography, as nonconsensual reactions are not accompanied by compliance by targets of unwanted aggressive acts.

## Interpretation of the Results

The current study suggests that popular pornography on the Internet remains consistent with the findings of other content analyses on aggression in sexually explicit media. Women remain the predominant targets of aggressive acts and men remain the predominant perpetrators of aggressive acts. Additionally as Sun et al. (2008) noted, the targets of aggressive acts passively consent to acts of aggression through reactions of indifference; in other instances, acts of aggression are explicitly rewarded after commission or requested. Recall from Chapter 2 that the content analysis conducted by Wosnitzer and Bridges (2007) framed positive and negative behaviors in pornography in very explicit ways. Aggressive acts—many of which were included for analysis in this study—were defined as “*any* action causing or attempting to cause physical or psychological harm to oneself” or “another person.” This definition provides little room for interpretation and depicts, however indirectly, that all forms of sexual aggression are committed with the intent to do physical or psychological harm. Conversely, the researchers also labeled “kissing,” “laughing,” and “verbal compliments” as positive behaviors, setting up an either/or dichotomy in which all aggressive acts are inherently negative. Further, Sun et al. (2008) continued this dichotomy, adopting a definition of aggression that was initially utilized for a content analysis on television violence. Though this particular study focused on differences and similarities between male and female directors, the researchers ultimately concluded that pornography is “a world of violence and aggression” (p. 321).

The aforementioned studies do not take the element of consent into account and dismiss the importance of obtaining and maintaining explicit or tacit consent during

sexual encounters. That targets do not react negatively to aggressive acts does little to negate the idea that pornography is little more than sexual barbarism in which male characters have their way with female characters that contain little or no sexual agency. Recall from Chapter 4 that there were a total of 33 aggressive acts that occurred consequent to an initial act of aggression. The majority of the aggressive acts found in the current study were individual acts, which contradicts the idea that pornography is a world filled with the type of violence and aggression that one would see on a fictional television crime or drama show. Additionally, the world of popular pornography on the Internet is also not reflective of Spitznagel's (2009) assertion that acts such as bestiality and urine drinking are widely watched by the public. In the context of social learning theory, this distinction is important. If viewers are taking cues for sexual behavior from pornography, the results of the current study indicate that aggression will not be a primary focus.

### Implications

Recall from Chapter 1 that social learning theory is the idea that consumers will imitate the behaviors they see rewarded in media (Mundorf et al., 2007). Regarding pornography and social learning theory, recall the conclusion drawn from a review of literature that Allen, Emmers, Gebhardt, and Giery (1995) posited that pornography “teaches about the nature of sexual relations between people as well as illustrating the mechanics of intercourse” and that pornography “illustrates how men and women should treat each other before during and after sex” (p. 8). If the results of this study are taken in a vacuum, consumers of popular pornography on the Internet are not being immersed in a world of sexual violence as previous content analyses have concluded (Wosnitzer &

Bridges, 2007, Sun et al., 2008). Instead, the results indicate that viewers of popular pornography on the Internet are exposed to periodic and singular acts of aggression—with the notable exceptions of depictions of rape—that do not resemble acts of non-consensual violence found in popular action movies or television shows. Additionally, viewers are also likely to learn—or have previous views reinforced—that consent for aggression or casual sexual activity is important. In the context of social learning theory, this both affirms and contradicts previous research, depending upon the viewpoint of the consumer. With the notable exception of the three scenes that depicted rape, the women in the scenes were always sexually available and willing to their partners. This affirms previous research that argues that any exposure to pornography—regardless of the content—can lead to an acceptance of rape myths (Allen, Emmers, Gebhardt, & Giery, 1995). In male consumers, the consistent reinforcement of the always available woman can create unrealistic expectations. As the researcher notes, “the potential exists that the message receiver comes to accept the values in the material and desires that the fantasy become a reality” (p. 9). While women were always willing and available in the material analyzed in the current study, the context of social learning theory also shows that the idea of obtaining consent before entering into sexual activity—and maintaining consent throughout—is reinforced in consumers of popular pornography on the Internet.

The frequency and type of sexual acts observed in the current study give us a glimpse into what may be acceptable to consumers in actual sexual practice. If social learning theory is any indication, certain forms of aggression during sexual acts are not seen as taboo, but instead become a common occurrence. Recall the study from Sun et al. (2008) found spanking, hair pulling, biting, and pushing/shoving occurred with the most

frequency. Now recall from the current study that spanking accounted for more than half of the aggressive acts recorded at 54.2 percent. While the current study also found statistically significant instances of slapping, gagging, choking, and hair pulling, the frequency with which targets were spanked indicates more mainstream acceptance for this particular act. If the current study is any indication of men and women taking their cues for sexual behavior from popular pornography on the Internet, we can also posit that sexual relations between and within the sexes are becoming more aggressive and are not mirroring the images found in Beggan and Allison's (2003) study of Candida Royalle films.

In addition to examining aggression and consent, the current study also gives us a glimpse into what consumers of popular pornography on the Internet are watching. Viewing habits for the scenes analyzed contained scenes with predominately white characters (69 %) with characters representing people of color comprising just over a third of the scenes (36%). While African-American or black characters appeared alongside characters of different ethnicities, there were no scenes featuring all black characters. Further, the most viewed scenes tended to favor traditional heteronormative pairings of one male and one female character (78%). A small percentage of scenes contained a single male or female with multiple females or males (12%) and an even smaller percentage featured multiple males and females (3%).

### Strengths of the Study

The Websites chosen for examination were one of the major strengths of the study. Five heavily trafficked pornography sites on the Internet, consisting of 20 of the

“most viewed” scenes on each site were analyzed. The sample selection, while not representative of the vast diversity of pornographic offerings, gives a glimpse at what types of pornography the majority of consumers are viewing on the Internet. Though a handful of scenes in the original top 20 were missing, due to copyright violations or broken Web links, no other technical difficulties occurred and a 100-video sample size was still obtained.

Another strength of the current study was the examination of consent in the content analysis. Chapter Two notes several studies that examine the content of pornographic films (Beggan & Allison, 2003; Wosnitzer & Bridges, 2007; Sun et al., 2008). However, none of the aforementioned studies focuses heavily on the consent—or lack thereof—of the targets. The current study takes target reactions into account with the attempt to put the commission of aggressive acts into a proper context. While this study affirms previous studies in that aggressive acts still occur in pornography, the current analysis reveals that in the majority of cases, targets often give tacit or active approval. Regardless of how one feels about the commission of aggressive acts, the implication that aggressive acts in pornography—in the majority of cases—are synonymous with nonconsensual violence found in other forms of media is not supported by the current findings.

#### Limitations of the Study

The sample for the current study only provides a snapshot of the viewing habits of consumers of popular pornography on the Internet by analyzing the “most viewed” scenes on heavily trafficked Web sites. It may not accurately reflect old or emerging

trends in the viewing habits of pornography viewers online. Further, due to the number of pornography sites online, the current study did not observe niche sites which may cater to viewers who desire more aggressive pornography that does not depict consensual sexual encounters. As Gossett and Byrne (2002) found, such sites exist but were not analyzed in the current study.

The use of the “most viewed” scenes to gauge popularity is also a limitation of the study. Unlike studies that use sales data to determine popularity (e.g. Wosnitzer & Bridges, 2007; Sun et al., 2008) a site’s “most viewed” section could be subject to manipulation by Web masters who want to push a certain scenes’ viewing numbers up.

An additional limitation of the study was the inter-coder reliability measures. Though the thesis advisor and principal coder took great care to concretely define the scope and definitions of the study, identifying consent after the commission of an aggressive act remains a largely subjective endeavor. There was universal agreement among the principal and secondary coder on depictions of non-consensual responses; however, a notable difference between reactions that were clearly consensual—or “yes” on the code sheet—and “indifferent” reactions on the part of targets was found in the testing phase.

The research design also limited the scope of the study. Just as differences among the principal and secondary coder were discovered regarding consent, the potential for differences among consumers is also possible. Due to the limits of a content analysis, no room for viewer interpretation regarding aggression and consent in pornography could be obtained. It is certainly possible—and probable, given the opposing views on pornography consumption that exist—that male consumers interpret the scenes

differently from female viewers. Since women are often the targets of aggression, a man may view the commission of an aggressive act in which a woman offers no consent as okay, while a woman viewing the same aggressive act may not see an indifferent reaction as consensual. Future research should examine the perceptions of male and female viewers on the subject of aggression and consent in pornography on the Internet.

The current study also did not examine correlations between the length of scenes and the number of aggressive acts. Since the sites selected treat each scene as its own unique Web page, no analysis on whether longer scenes—on average—contained more aggressive acts than shorter scenes was not conducted.

#### Suggestions For Future Research

Because the design of the current study did not analyze audience reactions, future research should examine audience attitudes regarding aggression and consent in pornography on the Internet. Examining audience perceptions is useful to scholars and producers of pornography. For scholars, the evaluation of actual consumer attitudes eliminates some of the need to posit what messages consumers are actually receiving during and after the consumption of pornography. While consumer attitudes about pornography have been examined, as social mores change, examination of consumer attitudes must be informed by—but cannot rest on—previous research. This research should continue bridging the gap between what scholars believe pornography is doing to consumers and the self-perceptions viewers have of the effects of pornography in their lives. As Hald and Malamuth (2008) found, young adults reported positive effects of consuming hardcore pornography. Lane (2008) also noted that as time passes, attitudes



about sex and sexually explicit materials trend “toward a more liberal attitude,” suggestion that what was once considered taboo may now be common place (p. 289). For example, if researchers are examining the potential benefits or harm done by pornography consumption, figuring out how much consumers believe is fantasy versus how much of what is consumed has an element of reality is important.

Future research should also examine what—if any—practices consumers are incorporating into their regular sexual practices. As Rogala and Tydén (2003) found in their study of the effects of pornography on women, there is a correlation between pornography consumption and certain sexual behaviors, particularly anal intercourse. With access to the Internet—and subsequently, pornography—becoming easier, this research should examine whether the behaviors depicted in popular pornography on the Internet continue to be mimicked by consumers as previous research suggests. One way to measure consumer sexual habits in future research is to compare amateur or “homemade” pornography on the Internet to its more commercial, professional counterpart. As Kibby and Costello (2001) posited, homemade content may provide avenues of mutually beneficial sexual encounters that do not explicitly cater to the needs of men over women or vice versa. Examining this content will give researchers a glimpse of what acts and habits—including the aggression examined in the current study—are making their way to the bedrooms of those sexually adventurous enough to upload images or video of themselves for little or no money.

While the current study coded for character sex and ethnicity, no attempt was made to code for a characters’ age. Future research should examine character age to

determine whether or not any power imbalance exists in terms of aggression in scenes containing characters who appear to be of similar age or characters where an age difference is apparent.

Researchers should also use more neutral words in future studies. The current study chose words like “aggression” and “indifference” to model the word choice in previous studies. As previously stated, “aggression” typically carries a negative context and researchers should take care not to paint all physical acts committed in pornography in a negative light. Additionally, the use of indifference also carries a negative stigma as well. The use of “indifference” in the current study in no way implies that characters apathetic or listless after the commission of an aggressive act, only that targets did not exhibit an observable positive or negative reaction after an aggressive act took place. Because consensual and nonconsensual reactions also reside at opposite ends of a spectrum, future research should also break down indifferent reactions to aggressive acts in more detail. For example, researchers should note any changes in character demeanor, such as hesitation to continue or a more enthusiastic attitude after the commission of an aggressive act.

Finally, future research should replicate the current study by examining the content of pornography on heavily trafficked free Internet sites’ “most viewed” sections for aggression and consent. Because this study examines copyrighted content which may be taken down at any time at the request of the copyright holder, future researchers should also devise a method to save the scenes analyzed so a replication of the exact scenes analyzed can be conducted as well. Results from those studies should be

compared with the current study to see if the content of pornography that the majority of viewers gravitate towards remains focused on mutual consent during sexual activity or begins to lean towards non-consensual sexual activity.

APPENDIX 1

Springer—Internet Pornography Content Analysis Code Guide

Coder 1 – Springer

Coder 2 –

Site

1-Pornhub.com 2- Xvideos.com 3- Youporn.com 4- TNAflix.com  
5- Keezmovies.com

Scene Number -

Scene Title -

Scene Run Time -

Initial Aggressive Act

1- Spanking 2- Hair Pulling 3- Slapping 4- Biting 5- Gagging 6- Choking  
7- Pushing/Shoving 8- Bondage/Use of Weapons 9- Smothering

Second Act Concurrent with Initial Aggressive Act

Third Act Concurrent with Initial Aggressive Act

Character Sex

1-Single male 2 – single female 3 – female and male 4 – two or more females with one male  
5 – two or more males with one female 6 – more than two females and two males 7 – other

Character Ethnicity

1- White or predominately white 2- Black or predominately black 3- Latino/a or  
predominately Latina/a 4- Asian or predominately Asian 5- mixed ethnicity 6 – other

Verbally Aggressive Acts

1- Name calling/insults 2- Threatening Physical Harm 3- Coercive Language

Perpetrator of Aggressive Act (Sex)

1- Male 2- Female

Target of Aggressive Act (Sex)

1- Male 2- Female

Consent After a Physical Act of Aggression

1- Yes 2- No 3- Indifference

Consent After a Verbal Act of Aggression

1- Yes 2- No 3- Indifference

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