Worse than objects: The depiction of black women and men and their sexual relationship in pornography

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Worse than objects: The depiction of black women and men and their sexual relationship

in pornography

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Abstract: Previous content analyses of pornography suggest black women may be the target of aggression more often compared to white women. Furthermore, research suggested that the most aggressive depictions occurred between interracial couples. However, there are still relatively few studies of the depiction of black women in online pornography. The current study examined 1,741 pornographic scenes featuring heterosexual couples (including 118 scenes with black women) from two of the largest online pornographic streaming tube sites in the world (Xvideos.com and Pornhub.com). Findings suggest black women are more often the target of aggression when compared to white women. In addition, black men are more often portrayed as the perpetrators of aggression against women and are depicted as significantly less intimate with their partners in comparison to white men. Notably, depictions of aggression towards women are highest in scenes featuring black couples compared to all other racial pairings including interracial pairings. Further exploration of the depiction of other sexual behaviors, including oral, vaginal, and anal sex, indicated these behaviors did not vary significantly based on actor's race.

In Alice Walker's short story "Coming Apart," she describes the realization a black husband has about pornography. He thinks, "where white women are depicted in pornography as 'objects,' black women are depicted as animals. Where white women are depicted as human bodies if not beings, black women are depicted as shit" (Walker, 1981, p. 103). It is a moment in which the man recognizes the potential for sexism through objectification in pornography, but also uniquely understands the intersection of sexism and racism, how gender and race intersect in pornography. He realizes that to be a black woman in porn is to be depicted differently than a white woman. It is a realization which, while perhaps experienced and even protested by many, has been chronically under-examined through a feminist social scientific lens. This study utilizes a social scientific approach to explore, through a quantitative content analysis of mainstream online pornography, the portrayal of black women - and black men- in online pornography.

Sexual Socialization and Self-Objectification through the Media

Social cognitive theory suggests people can learn behaviors through repeated exposure via media. Additionally, these behaviors are more likely to be learned and emulated when modeled by attractive, identity-salient people (Bandura, 2001). Although not specifically articulated by Bandura, or often studied in sexually explicit media research, race may be a salient identity worth investigating especially in pornography. Focusing on sexual media specifically, the acquisition, activation, and application model ($_3$AM) of sexual socialization explains how different contexts and variables impact how sexual content affects consumers (Wright, 2011). Wright describes how media can provide both specific scripts, such as engaging in particular sexual behaviors, as well as higher order or abstract scripts, such as attitudes or beliefs about sex. One such potential abstract script is the objectification of women. Objectification theory posits that depictions of female objectification in the media result in negative behavioral outcomes,

including depression, disordered eating, and sexual dysfunction, through harmful internal cognitions, including anxiety, shame, interruption of flow, and lack of internal awareness (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). The authors define sexual objectification as when a woman's body is used to represent her whole being, or when women are depicted as existing just to sexually please men. Additionally, sexual aggression, violence, and harassment are included as "direct and extreme" routes of sexual objectification (p. 186). Objectification theory suggests women experience sexual objectification in real life but also through various forms of objectifying media, including the depiction of women in pornography.

Decades of research using objectification theory and social learning theories suggest women experience negative cognitions and harmful behaviors after to exposure to a variety of objectifying media. Examining objectifying television, research has found college students who consume more TV have higher reported levels of self-objectification, body surveillance, appearance anxiety, and body shame (Aubrey, 2006a,b). Additionally, a survey of 558 adolescent girls found consuming sexually objectifying music television (such as MTV) was related to self-objectification and body surveillance through internalization of beauty ideals (Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2012). Looking at reality TV, a study of 1,107 undergraduate students found reality TV was related to self-sexualization for both men and women (Ward et al., 2016). Research has also suggested a connection between social media and self-objectification. One study found social media use was related directly to self-objectification and body surveillance, while the pathway between television and objectification was mediated by internalization (Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2012). Another large study of 1,191 college students found Facebook involvement was related to self-objectification and body shame, which was in turn negatively correlated with sexual assertiveness. For women, this pathway was

stronger; Facebook involvement was directly related to lower sexual assertiveness (Manago et al., 2015). Looking specifically at sexual enjoyment outcomes, a survey of 238 adolescents found internalization of appearance ideals, a measurement similar to self-objectification, lead to body consciousness during sex, and that this relationship was mediated by body surveillance (Vandebosch & Eggermont, 2014). Overall this suggests women exposed to a variety of objectifying media, including television and social media, may experience negative sexual outcomes including body consciousness and lower assertiveness through self-objectification.

Evidence from social learning theory research suggests consumption of pornography is related to sexually aggressive attitudes and behaviors for men and women. Studies suggest men's pornography consumption is related to more accepting attitudes of violence against women, hostile sexism beliefs, and views of women as sex objects (Hald et al. 2013, Hald et al., 2010; Peter and Valkenburg, 2007; Wright and Tokunaga, 2016). Similar patterns hold true for women. Women who consume pornography see women as sex objects and also were more accepting of an objectifying gaze (Peter & Valkenburg, 2007; Wright, Arroyo, and Bae, 2015). Importantly, pornography use has also been found to be correlated with desiring to engage in sexually aggressive behaviors and engaging in these behaviors (Wright, Sun, Steffen, and Tokunaga, 2015; Wright et al., 2016). The research suggests individuals can learn both objectifying abstract scripts, such as women are sex objects, as well as objectifying behaviors, such as sexual aggression, through pornography.

Black Women and Objectification. Objectification theory states the importance of racial identity noting the effect of objectification in media may look different depending on women's racial identities (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). The authors suggest that the effects of objectification on black women may vary given that the depiction of women of color may be

different than the depiction of white women in media. Research examining the effects of media

on black women and girls has found mixed results. For example, one study of 176 African

American adolescent girls found a positive relationship between exposure to black media and

endorsement of beauty ideals. Additionally, girls who identified with black music artists were

also more likely to endorse beauty ideals, whether or not these celebrities were sexualized or not

(Gordon, 2008). However, another study comparing white to black women found that while

mainstream media was related to poorer body image for white women, there was no relationship

for black women. Furthermore, exposure to black-oriented media was related to healthier body

image for black women (Schooler, Ward, Merriwether, & Caruthers, 2004). A study of 426

female teens found black women experienced more self-objectification after viewing non-lean

women's sports videos compared to white women who experienced more self-objectification

after viewing lean videos (Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003). The varied results from these studies

suggests that while the media may impact some individuals' objectifying attitudes about the

body, the effect may differ depending on individual's racial identity and what type of media they

consume. As Mitchell and Mazzeo (2009) note, applied scales and research on objectification

typically focuses on white women and their experiences, often to the exclusion of the

experiences of black women, suggesting the current measures of objectification were not created

for black women and may not be sufficient. In addition to experiencing objectification

differently, Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) explained that black women are often not just

objectified in media, but stereotyped as being like animals, suggesting a different media

portrayal of black women that in turn may have a different effect.

Learned Racial Stereotypes through the Media

As suggested, the sexual objectification of black women intersects with issues of racism and stereotyping. Social categorization theory suggests individuals will model their behaviors based on what they perceive to be the behavioral norms of their perceived group (Turner & Oakes, 1986). Additionally, even considering negative stereotypes, individuals may adhere to the perceived behavioral norm in order assimilate to the group identity (Burkley & Blanton, 2009). Therefore, black women may adhere to negative sexual stereotypes depicted in pornography as part of group identification. Critical feminist scholars have demonstrated the close visual and rhetorical similarities between images of slavery and pornography; furthermore, they suggest images of black men and women as beasts or animals comes from slavery, when humans were sold like cattle (Collins, 1993; Dines, 2006; hooks, 1990). Mixed into the racism and stereotyping of black women's sexuality is the dual idea of being objectified animal, while also being depicted as an aggressive sexual siren. West (1995) describes the Jezebel stereotype of black women as "seductive, hypersexual, exploiter of men's weaknesses" (p. 462). Black men as well have been stereotypically portrayed as overtly sexual and animalistic (Dines, 2006). Black couples therefore may be more likely to be portrayed as hypersexual as well as potentially as aggressive and animal-like.

Impact of the Jezebel Stereotype. Recent research suggests that the stereotype of Black women as Jezebels in the media leads to negative outcomes for black women, black couples, and others. A study of 404 African American undergraduates found higher levels of TV realism—the perception that TV is an accurate representation of life—was related to endorsement of the Jezebel stereotype. Notably in this study, black men's consumption of a wide range of media including music videos, movies, and magazines were all related to the Jezebel stereotype endorsement (Jerald, Ward, et al., 2017). Additional research suggests belief in the Jezebel

stereotype is related to viewing risky sexual behavior as less harmful and engaging in more risky

sexual behaviors for African American girls and young women (Hall & Witherspoon, 2015;

Townsend, et al., 2010). Interview data suggests that young black women are attuned to the

media's depiction of black women as strippers and sex objects, which in turn they believe

impacts other black women's decisions to have unsafe sex (Davis & Tucker-Brown, 2013). On a

broader scale looking at gender role stereotypes, a study of black women suggests that

endorsement of traditional gender and sex roles mediates the relationship between media and

negative sexual outcomes such as lower sexual assertiveness and sexual dishonesty (Ward,

Jerald, Avery, & Cole, 2019). These stereotypes also impact black couples. A study of 137

African Americans in relationships found those who endorsed the Jezebel stereotype has higher

levels of relationship dissatisfaction (Fisher & Coleman, 2017), while another survey of 432

Black Americans found believing the Jezebel stereotype was related to endorsing violence

against women (Cheeseborough, T., Overstreet, N., & Ward, L. M. (2020). In addition to

impacting sexual attitudes and behaviors, stereotypes may impact overall mental health of black

women. A study of 609 young black women found that awareness that others hold negative

stereotypes about your group identification was related to negative health outcomes, including

depression (Jerald, Cole, et al., 2017). The evidence suggests the depiction of black women as

Jezebels in media has negative implications for black women and black men. In addition to

possibly assimilating to the expected behaviors of the stereotype and engaging in risky sexual

behaviors, the awareness of these negative stereotypes can be detrimental to black women's

health.

Depiction of Objectification in Pornography

Until recently there have been relatively few content analyses of internet pornography, even though the internet is the most common source for consuming pornography (Hald, Kuyper, Adam, & de Wit, 2013). There have been even fewer investigations of the portrayals of black women in pornography. In general, however, research suggests that women are objectified in pornography. A 2014 content analysis of 400 online pornographic videos found that women were often treated as objects, defined as a focus on sexual body parts; close-ups of female sexual areas occurred in 61% of scenes while male sexual area focus only occurred in 19% of scenes (Klaassen & Peter, 2014). Examining exploitation of women in pornography, an analysis of 100 online videos, found that women were exploited in 15% of videos compared to 5% for men, when exploitation was defined as when sex or sexual acts were exchanged for drugs, food, shelter, protection, money, or employment (Vannier, Currie, & O'Sullivan, 2014). Furthermore, a content analysis of 300 online pornographic videos found that women were overall more objectified than men using an objectification index that included genital focus, genital gapping, double penetration, stripping, facial ejaculation, and sexual aggression (Fritz & Paul, 2017). This analysis found that women were depicted stripping in 43% of scenes and being ejaculated on in 44% of scenes. Overall, these recent studies suggest that women are still overtly objectified in online pornography.

Depiction of black women in the pornography and the media. Recent content analyses have not examined the depiction of objectification of black women in pornography. However, several studies of the portrayal of black women in advertising suggest conflicting findings about black women in mainstream media that may be applicable to pornography. Studies have found black women were less objectified than white women in both men's magazines and mainstream black magazines. (Baker, 2005; Hazell and Clarke, 2007). Similarly,

Millard & Grant (2006) found that black models in fashion magazines were less sexualized, but they were depicted as more submissive than white models. These differences may be due to the different target audiences of the magazines. Notably, in looking at broad stereotypes of black women Woodard and Mastin (2005) found the Jezebel stereotype, while rare, was the most validated stereotype in *Essence* magazine over a 30-year span. Notably, in an analysis of more than 500 Black artist music videos, a medium reliably found to impact objectification attitudes, women were more likely to be depicted as sex objects, with rap and hip hop over-representing the portrayal of women as sex objects (Avery, Ward, Moss, & Üsküp, 2017). Black women in pornography may be depicted as objects to be sexually used, but they may also be portrayed as sexually aggressive objects who are primarily driven by one-dimensional sexuality. Given the differing depictions between magazines and music videos, it is unclear if black women will be portrayed as more objectified when compared to white women in pornography. Therefore, we ask:

RQ1a: Are black women in pornography depicted as more objectified in comparison to white women?

Depiction of aggression in pornography. The results from studies examining sexual aggression in pornography vary widely depending on which definition of aggression researchers used. Using a narrow definition of sexual aggression as nonconsensual violence with intent to harm, McKee (2005) found only 1.6% of scenes from 50 DVDs analyzed contained sexual violence. Looking online, Gorman et al. (2010) examined 45 online videos and found that overt physical violence was rare and occurred in only one video, while gagging or coercive sex was found in 5 of the 45 videos. A more recent analysis of 172 online videos found 15% of videos contained nonconsensual aggression (Shor & Golriz, 2019). Notably, this definition of

aggression relies on the target to say no, utilizing a "no means no" framework of consent. Other studies have used a different definition, which conceptualizes aggression as any action that does or could cause physical harm to oneself or another person, regardless of the perpetrator's intent and the target's response. This definition relies solely on the depicted actions and therefore is best suited for a content analysis, which is inherently unable to discern the intent of the portrayed actors. Using a similar definition of aggression, Bridges et al. (2010) found 88.2% of scenes contained physical aggression in their analysis of 50 of the bestselling pornographic DVDs. More recent analysis of online videos using similar definitions of aggression found that between 31% and 43% of scenes contained sexual aggression (Fritz & Paul, 2017; Klaassen & Peter, 2015; Shor & Seida, 2019). Specifically looking at race, a 1994 analysis of 54 interracial pornographic videos found black women received more aggression than white women (Cowan & Campbell, 1994). In contrast, a recent analysis of 172 online pornography videos examined race and aggression and found black women were the least likely to be depicted as the target of aggression (Shor & Golriz, 2019). Given the difference between these two studies and the lack of analysis of black women in pornography, this study asks:

RQ1b: Are black women in pornography portrayed as receiving more sexual aggression in comparison to white women?

Black men and their relationship with black women. Although many content analyses do not code for race, a 2010 content analysis of 50 DVDs found about 8.8% of main characters were black (Bridges, Wosnitzer, Scharrer, Sun, & Liberman, 2010). A few content analyses have looked specifically at the relationship between black women and men, including both negative behaviors like aggression as well as positive behaviors like intimacy. Regarding aggression, an analysis of 40 X and XXX-rated videos found there was an equal likelihood of violence when

white couples were compared to black couples (Monk-Turner & Purcell, 1999). Looking at

intimacy, two studies of videos from the 1990s found that there was less intimacy between black

couples, particularly from black men (Cowan & Campbell, 1994; Monk-Turner & Purcell, 1999).

These studies measured intimacy with a variety of measures including kissing, using the other

person's name, caressing, having sex face to face, and talking during sex. In comparison, a more

recent study by Shor and Golriz (2019) examined physical affection and found no difference

between scenes with black men compared to white men. Given the complexity of intimacy and

the now relatively infrequent depictions of talking during sex, kissing will be used as a proxy for

intimacy in this study. Given the mixed results, this study examines how black men are depicted

in online pornography. Therefore, we ask:

RQ2a: Are black men portrayed as more aggressive than white men in pornography?

RQ2b: Are black men portrayed as kissing less than white men in pornography?

Interracial portrayals in pornography. Critical feminist scholar Linda Williams (2004)

notes the importance of the depiction of interracial partners in pornography, whose depictions

relies on a history of inequality including unequal sexual access to women. She suggests that

white men were granted sexual access to black women and black men were forbidden access to

white women. What is relevant is not just the stereotypical portrayal of women or of black

women, but also the depiction of the interaction between these often historically stereotyped

bodies. Notably, both studies on black women in pornography from the nineties investigated the

depiction of aggression between interracial sexual partners. Monk-Turner and Purcell's (1999)

analysis of 40 videos found when white men were portrayed with black women there was a

greater likelihood of a depiction of violence than when a black man was portrayed with a white

woman. Similarly, Cowan and Campbell's (1994) analysis of 54 interracial videos found black

women received more aggression from white men and white women more aggression from black

men. Both studies suggest there may be more aggression depicted with interracial sexual

partners. However, neither of these studies examined if the depiction of intimacy through kissing

varied depending on the racial makeup of the partners. Therefore, we ask:

RQ3a: Does the level of depicted aggression vary depending on the racial makeup of the actors?

RQ3b: Does the level of kissing vary depending on the racial makeup of the actors?

Finally, there are no studies examining whether the depiction of sexual behaviors varies

by race in pornography. Fitting with the social cognitive theory, in addition to attitudes, people

may learn sexual behaviors from pornography such as oral sex, vaginal sex, and anal sex. The

portrayal of certain sexual behaviors may encourage consumers to learn and emulate behaviors

depicted by identity-salient actors. Additionally, the Jezebel stereotype suggests that black

women are sexual sirens, suggesting they may engage in a greater variety of sexual behaviors,

particularly in pornography. However, to-date no one has explored this question. Therefore, we

ask:

RQ4: Do depictions of sexual behaviors, including oral, vaginal, and anal sex, in pornography

vary by the race of the sexual partners?

Method

Sampling of Pornographic Content

The current analysis is part of a larger content analysis of mainstream pornography

analyzing 7,430 online pornographic videos (including heterosexual and LGBT categories) from

Pornhub.com and Xvideos.com. Xvideos is the most popular site for adult content in the world,

while Pornhub is the second most popular according to similarweb.com in 2015

(http://www.similarweb.com/website/xvideos.com). This study originally sampled only from

Xvideos, adding in a smaller sample from Pornhub for diversity and for comparison, and

therefore the Xvideos sample is larger than the Pornhub sample. This content analysis was

created to find rare units of analysis (.001 probability) that were significantly different at .01.

Using Krippendorff's sample size guide, the total number of videos needed was 4,603; however,

this study oversampled additional LGBT data to raise the total sample to 7,430 (Krippendorff,

2004, p. 12). The goal of this content analysis was to take a snapshot of online pornography by

sampling a large and random number of videos from each site and therefore videos were not

selected based on posted date or popularity. All videos were randomly selected from the top most

populous categories on Pornhub and Xvideos (some top categories include: Amateur, Anal,

Black Women, Big Tits, Blonde, Brunette, Ebony, Hardcore, Interracial, Pornstar, Teen). In

order to obtain a random sample, the total number of pages within a category was divided by the

total number of videos needed for the category to calculate the sampling interval (X). The first

video on the first page was selected, followed by the second video X pages after the first,

followed by the third video X pages after that, until the desired amount of videos were selected.

The sample size per category was determined by finding the ratio of the number of videos in the

category compared to the total on the site. In this way the sample was stratified so that larger

categories had more videos sampled from them. The authors sampled and recorded the video

title, category, and URL for each selected video. Videos on Xvideos were sampled during spring

2014; videos on Pornhub were sampled during fall 2014.

For this analysis, only videos with two individuals of different genders were selected;

videos with more than two individuals were not included. The sample was further narrowed

down to only include white and black individuals. See Table 1 for a breakdown of the race of

actors by website. Furthermore, this study analyzed at the scene level not the video level. A

scene was defined as a person or partners undertaking a sexual experience in the same place. A complete change in actors and place with new sexual behavior was considered a new scene. The total number of scenes analyzed which included black women was 118. There were 1,741 total scenes analyzed for this study.

It should be noted that there is a statistically significant difference between the compositions of couples in Pornhub compared to Xvideos. Although the Xvideos and Pornhub samples have statistically similar representations of black women (Xvideos with 6.4% and Pornhub is 8.4%, χ^2(2, n=1,741) = 1.58, p =.21), Pornhub contained significantly fewer videos of white women with black men (χ^2(2,1,741) = 7.95, $p < .05$). Additionally, Xvideos contained significantly fewer depictions of kissing (χ^2(2,1,741) = 70.58, $p < .001$), fellatio (χ^2(2,1,741) = 25.60, $p < .001$), cunnilingus (χ^2(2,1,741) = 60.29, $p < .001$), and vaginal sex (χ^2(2,1,741) = 2702, $p < .001$). Xvideos pornographic scenes also included fewer facial ejaculations (χ^2(2,1,741) = 62.62, $p < .001$) and women stripping (χ^2(2,1,741) = 171.94, $p < .001$). Notably, the websites have statistically similar levels of depictions of aggression against women (χ^2(2,1,741) = 1.69, $p =.19$). These differences speak to the qualitative difference between the websites; Xvideos, in general, contained shorter videos, which featured a lower variety of sexual behaviors. However, previous research demonstrates a variety of differences between different categories on the same website, suggesting that, in general, online pornography varies significantly both by site and category (Klaasen and Peter, 2014; Fritz and Paul, 2017; Vannier, Currie, & O'Sullivan, 2014). Therefore, we combined both sites in our analysis of black women in pornography but acknowledge there are qualitative differences between the sites.

Coding and Reliability

Coding was conducted by 33 undergraduate students between 2014 and 2015; 27 coders

for Xvideos and 6 coders for Pornhub. Students met for 20 hours over the course of 6 weeks to

learn the coding scheme and practice coding. Coders then applied the tool to 20 non-randomly

selected videos during the 2 final weeks of training. Inter-rater reliability was computed as the

average percentage agreement on individual variables. Potter and Levine-Donnerstein (1999)

suggest using simple inter-rater agreement instead of other statistical approaches for accessing

reliability, arguing that with a high number of coders, reliability tests like Krippendorff's alpha

penalize one coder's disagreement when coding bivariate indicators. Other studies using a large

number of coders have utilized a similar approach (e.g., Malik & Wojdynski 2014; Fritz & Paul,

2017). After a 6-week training process, each student was assigned 10 to 20 videos a week to

code. Students were asked to send an email to the trainers if they were unsure about how to code

a scene or had additional questions.

Coding Schema

Each video was coded for a variety of manifest content, ranging from duration of video to

acts of aggression. For this study, we analyzed depictions of sexual behaviors and physical

sexual aggression.

      Sexual Objectification and Aggression. Objectification occurs when a woman's body is

used as a thing, particularly for male pleasure (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). For this study,

indicators of objectification include the following two depictions: facial ejaculations, defined as

external ejaculation by the male partner on the female partner's body (chest and above), and

stripping, defined as when women strip or pose for the camera. Coders for both the Pornhub and

Xvideo samples reached 97.9% agreement on the facial ejaculation indicator. For the stripping

measure, coders reached 99.2% (Pornhub) and 98.5% (Xvideos) agreement. As Fredrickson and

Roberts (1997) noted, aggression can also be considered a direct route to objectification and therefore was also analyzed in this study. Physical aggression was defined as any action appearing to cause or potentially causing physical harm to another person ranging from spanking to choking to hair pulling to mutilation. Importantly, harmful intent of the perpetrator is not a requirement of aggression so that consented acts of aggression (including those in BDSM—bondage, domination, sadism, and masochism—scenes) were coded as a depiction of an act of aggression. This meant aggression was coded for depiction and as a potential script—and not as intent or with the subjective experience of the performers. When averaged across all types of aggression, coders reached between 97.6% (Xvideos) and 98.8% (Pornhub) agreement on aggression codes. Additionally, all acts of aggression were coded as who was the target and who was the perpetrator, with the potential for a person to be both target and perpetrator if, for example, a person spanked themselves. For this study, only acts of aggression from men against women, which made up more than 90% of all acts of aggression, were analyzed.

Sexual Behavior. In order to explore the depicted physical relationships between partners, we analyzed sexual behaviors between male and female partners. For this study, we coded and analyzed the following sexual behaviors: kissing, fellatio, cunnilingus, vaginal sex, and anal sex. Coders reached between 91% and 100% agreement on the sexual behavior measures. A complete list of coded indicators, their operalizations, and the corresponding reliabilities can be found in Table 2.

<center>**Results**</center>

In order to answer our research questions, we performed Pearson's Chi-Squared to compare the frequency of our measures between black and white women, black and white men,

and the four different racial combinations. We examined the adjusted residuals when there were

four categories in order to interpret which category had larger or smaller counts than expected.

Objectification and Aggression Indicators for Black Women

The first research question asked if black women are depicted as more objectified in

comparison to white women. Chi-square analyses indicate no statistically significant differences

regarding indicators of objectification when comparing depictions of white and black females

(see Table 3). Specifically, facial ejaculations were depicted in 22.0% of scenes that included

black women, compared to 20.6% of scenes with white women (χ^2 (2, 1,741) = .13, p = .72).

Further, black women stripped in 17.8% of coded scenes, compared to 14.7% of scenes featuring

white women (χ^2 (2, 1,741) = .82, p = .37). Part b of research question 1 asked if black women

are portrayed as receiving aggression more than white women in pornography. Black women

(50.8%) were significantly more often depicted as the targets of aggression compared to white

women (36.0%) (χ^2 (2, n= 1,741) = 10.37, p < .001). Additionally, a further analysis shows,

black women (39.8 %) were specifically more likely to be spanked than white women (24.8%)

(χ^2 (2, n=1,741) = 13.07, p < .001).

Depiction of Black Men in Pornography

Research question two asked about the portrayal of sexual aggression and intimacy,

specifically kissing, from black men in pornography. Black men (47.3%) were significantly more

likely to be depicted as aggressive towards women when compared to white men (35.3%) (χ^2 (2,

n=1,741) = 13.50, p < .001). In terms of specific acts of aggression, black men were depicted

spanking women in 36.7% of scenes compared to just 23.9% of scenes featuring white men

(χ^2(2, n=1,741) = 18.79, p < .001). Black men were also depicted pulling women's hair (9% of

scenes) significantly more than white men (5% of scenes) (χ^2 (2, n=1,741) = 6.38, p < .01). In

terms of the primary indicator of intimacy, black men were significantly less likely to kiss a female sexual partner (18.0% of scenes) than were white men (27.5% of scenes) (χ^2 (2, n= 1,741) = 10.20, $p < .001$). All results can be found in Table 3.

Depiction of Black, White, and Interracial Couples: Aggression and Sexual Behaviors

Research question three asked if the level of depicted physical aggression varied depending on the racial makeup of the actors (black couples, white couples, black women with white men, and white women with black men). Results indicate significant differences between the percentage of scenes depicting aggression based on the racial make-up of participants (χ^2 (4, n=1,741) = 18.82, p < .001) (see Table 4). Analyses of adjusted residuals indicate depictions of couples featuring a black man and woman (54.1%) were significantly more likely to include the portrayal of aggression towards the woman than were depictions featuring a white man and woman (34.8%).

The second part of research question three asked whether level of intimacy (demonstrated through kissing) would differ in relation to the racial composition of couple dyads. Results suggest significantly different levels of depictions of kissing in relation to the racial make-up of sexual dyads (χ^2 (4, 1,741) = 12.24, $p < .01$). Analysis of residuals indicates kissing was significantly less likely to be depicted between couples consisting of a black man and a black woman (13%) or a black man and a white woman (200%) than those consisting of a black woman and a white man (33%) or a white man and white woman (27%).

Finally, research question four considered whether there are differences in the frequency with which certain sexual behaviors are depicted based on the racial composition of sexual dyads. There were no differences between different racial combinations of dyads for any of the

sexual behaviors examined including fellatio, cunnilingus, vaginal sex, and anal sex. All results

can be found on Table 4.

Discussion

Overall, the results from our analysis suggest there are damaging stereotypical portrayals

of Black women and men in pornography. Black women are more often depicted as the target of

aggression, while Black men were portrayed more often as the perpetrators of aggression.

Additionally, Black couples are more likely to be portrayed as aggressive and lacking intimacy.

These findings have implications for Black men and women's sexual behaviors, relationships,

and health as well as for interracial interactions and the reinforcement of harmful stereotypes.

Black Women as Beaten Objects

Looking at measures of facial ejaculation and stripping, we did not find Black women

were more objectified than White women. About 20 percent of scenes, however, did feature

external ejaculation, suggesting a script in pornography of women being objects being used for

male pleasure or to display the aftermath of male pleasure. The percentage of external

ejaculations was lower than a previous content analysis, which found when a mainstream scene

from Pornhub contained a male orgasm, 83% those scenes include the external ejaculation (Fritz

and Paul, 2017). Notably, this analysis only examined Pornhub scenes while our sample

overrepresented Xvideo scenes which are shorter than Pornhub scenes, often ending before male

orgasm. In full videos containing male orgasm, external ejaculations may be featured more;

however, it appears that both Black and White women are objectified in this manner at similar

levels. Additionally, around 18% of scenes featured women stripping, whereas there were no

reported scenes of men stripping or posing, suggesting this type of objectification is gendered.

Women, not men, present themselves for male pleasure via stripping. Notably, this type of

objectification has found its way into popular culture as noted by Davis & Tucker-Brown's (2013) interview data of young black women. Stripping is not just reserved for pornography but has become popular in music videos and other areas of media. Given the general rise of pornification in society, it is perhaps not surprising that both Black and White women are objectified. As noted in the opening passage from Alice Walker, Black and White women are both objects; they are both depicted as mere bodies instead of people in pornography.

Notably, however, this study was not designed to specifically code for the stereotype of Black women as Jezebels. The nuance of such a construct was out of the scope of this large-scale project. There are characteristics of the Jezebel construct that were not examined such as sexual assertiveness. West (1995) defines the Jezebel construct as a "seductive, hypersexual, exploiter of men's weaknesses," (p. 462) suggesting both sexual objectification as well as sexual assertiveness if not aggressiveness. Displays of sexual assertiveness are generally hard to code given the lack of communication in pornography and it is challenging to achieve reliability among a high number of coders with this large sample. It may be that Black women are objectified differently in pornography and perhaps do conform to a Jezebel stereotype, being both seductive and sexualized. Future studies could take a more in-depth and perhaps thematic approach to coding in order to analyze the portrayal of Black women in pornography. Additionally, more work is needed to examine sexual assertiveness and especially consent issues in pornography.

The study did find that Black women were the target of aggression more often than White women which was similar to the studies from the 1990s but different from the recent Shor and Golriz (2019) study of race in pornography. Notably, Shor and Golriz included "forceful penetration" as part of their aggression definition. While we agree with this inclusion, we did not

include this in our code, as we had difficulty getting reliability on a similar code with our high number of coders; therefore, our study may have underestimated the depictions of aggression. For example, Zhou and Paul (2016), who also did not code for forceful penetration, found low levels of depicted aggression against Asian women; this potentially could stem from a lack of including depictions of forceful penetration, which according to Shor and Golriz (2019) are prevalent in pornography with Asian women. This speaks to the fact that type of aggression may also be important to understand qualitative differences in aggression. For example, our results suggest spanking was the most common form of aggression for Black women to receive. Spanking is defined as open hand contact to the buttocks, an area on Black women that is sexualized and fetishized by black male artists (Miller-Young, 2008). While the harmful sexual script for Asian women may be to be demure, innocent young girls who do not want sexual intercourse (and therefore receive forceful penetration), the harmful sexual script for Black women may be of importance and fetishization of the buttocks during sex. Finally, the depiction of Black women being the target of aggression may have deeper implications for their physical wellbeing. Black women, along with Native American women, are at greater risk for being murdered by intimate partners (Petrosky et al., 2017). While we are not suggesting that pornography is causing the death of Black women, we are suggesting that the sexual script of higher levels of aggression in pornography against Black women creates a societal context that devalues Black female bodies, putting Black women at higher risk for death by an intimate partner than other groups of women.

Black Men as Aggressors

Potentially as important as the depiction of Black women as beaten objects, is the portrayal of Black men as the aggressor. Similar to previous research, our study found black men

were more likely to be depicted as perpetrating aggression against their sexual partners, and particularly shown spanking or pulling the hair of their sexual partners. Outside of pornography, research suggests that men of color are often portrayed as violent and criminal in the news and reality TV (for review see: Oliver, 2003) According to social categorization theory, Black men, like Black women conforming to the Jezebel stereotype, may conform to the expected role as the sexually aggressive or violent man. This has negative implications for the mental health of Black men (for review: Williams & Williams-Morris, 2000), as well as for the partners and families of Black men.

Implications for Black Couples

In addition to violence, Black men in pornography were portrayed as kissing their partners less, and Black couples in general were depicted kissing less. Notably, no other sexual behavior differences were noted. Given the previously mentioned fetishization of Black women's butts, we did not find higher rates of anal sex for Black couples; nor were there differences in oral sex or penile-vaginal intercourse. This seems to suggest that the main difference in the depiction of Black couples is a lack of kissing and potentially intimacy, which was found in previous studies as well. This reinforcement of negative stereotypes of detached and aggressive sex for Black couples, may lead to sexual and relationship dissatisfaction. Research finds that men's porn use is related to lower sexual and relationship quality; although the results differ when examining women's use of porn use (Poulsen, Busby, & Galovan, 2013). Research has not yet examined how race may impact the connection between Black couples' use of pornography and relationship satisfaction. The harmful stereotype of the aggressive and cold Black sexual relationship could be potentially even more damaging given the lack of other healthy representations of black couples in media.

Despite some evidence of the effect of pornography on Black women and men, the aggressive depictions of Black men and women does not necessarily mean that black consumers are learning this message of aggressive sexual behavior. For example, Brown et al.'s (2006) study of Black and white adolescents found that media diet seemed to have a different impact depending on race. While White adolescents who consumed more media than their peers were more likely to have early sexual debuts, Black adolescents were less impacted by media consumption. With Black young people, peer and parent sexual norms predicted sexual behavior better than media consumption (Brown, L'Engle, Pardun, Guo, Kenneavy, & Jackson, 2006). It may be that media consumption impacts social learning differently within different communities or that specific media selection may impact social learning of behaviors. Future studies could examine the interaction between pornography and social norms in communities of color.

Interracial Interactions

Notably this study did not find increased aggression between interracial couples, like previous research found. This study suggests a more defined script of detached aggressive sex for black men and women. Given that this stereotype is also present in popular media such as music videos and magazines, even individuals who do not consume pornography may acquire this script resulting in negative mental health outcomes. Even if individuals do not engage in these behaviors, research suggests that being aware that others may hold negative stereotypes about your group identity may lead to depression (Jerald, Cole, et al., 2017). Beyond these negative outcomes for Black women and men, there are implications for others who may negatively stereotype and then discriminate Black individuals. For example, one study found in an experiment with 182 undergraduates that those primed with the Jezebel stereotype were faster to identify a Black female job candidate with sexual terms, potentially sexualizing a professional

job applicant. (Brown Givens & Monahan, 2005). Finally, for homogenous groups who lack real world experience with Black people, these effects may be even stronger and potentially damaging. The effect of harmful stereotypes of Black women and men may be even stronger in the absence of real-world experience with people of color.

   Limitations. As mentioned previously, a significant limitation of the current study is the disproportionate number of scenes featuring White women compared to those featuring Black women. Future studies in this area should include a larger number of scenes featuring Black women in order to confirm the current findings. Additionally, this analysis is a shallow measure of both objectification and aggression. In order to analyze a large sample size, we relied on a large number of coders who were only able to reliably code manifest variables such as "spanking" or "stripping." They were not able to code consent, intent of actors, level of aggression, or other portrayals such as the Jezebel stereotype, which leaves the data and interpretation of the data flat. Beyond the constraints of the data, there are also general limitations of content analyses of pornography, and of the portrayal of black women in particular. First, the intersection of the identities of race and gender is not a two-dimensional construct; it also involves the intersection of sexuality, power, and politics. As Jordan-Zachery (2007) describes, studies of intersectionality need to be acts of liberation and are best explored with conversations. This study does not achieve that goal. It is a flat view of a complex multi-dimensional idea. Miller-Young (2010) explored black women in pornography by immersing herself in the culture and talking to black female performers. Her work concludes that black women in porn use the industry as means of gaining personal autonomy, but also that the industry devalues black women's bodies even as the performers struggle to harness control. As such, she is able to articulate the messy, complex nature of sex work in a way that this paper

cannot. This paper can only offer a glimpse into the on-screen depiction of black women, not the experience of the performer nor the experience of the consumer.

Conclusion

This study opened with a quotation from Alice Walker, who some consider a staunch anti-porn advocate. Readers may assume this study is also anti-porn. It is a challenge often in scholarship not to personally take a stance or to be forcibly put into a pro/anti camp by others. To acknowledge some of the negative aspects of pornography and its depiction of race and gender, is often assumed to put research in the anti-camp. We contend, however, that this study was not conducted through the lens of anti/pro but through the lens of curiosity. Nash (2014) wrote of moving away from the protectionist framework and towards an interpretive framework when analyzing pornography, of moving towards an analysis centered on subjectivity. In her article, Nash quotes Laura Kipnis's (1998) vital work: "Pornography isn't viewed as having complexity because its audience isn't viewed as having complexity" (p. 177). We would ask readers to consume this study with an interpretive mind; understanding that pornography, despite its easy dismissal by some, is quite complex.

Although an analysis of the depiction of black women in pornography may only give us a one-dimensional look at a complicated intersection of race, gender, and power, it is valuable to acknowledge that there are still significant inequalities and stereotypes depicted in pornography. Black women are still the target of aggression more often than White women. Black men still are more often the perpetrator. These depictions may have implications for consumers; media literacy programs need to expand to teach consumers about the harmful racial stereotypes they consume in pornography as well as in mass media. More research needs to examine the impact of pornography on black couples. As researchers we need to incorporate race as an important

point of intersection as we examine the impact of media on sexual attitudes and behaviors.

Finally, future research should examine how these sexual stereotypes in pornography may

impact sex workers in the industry, particularly how the industry treats Black bodies. As

scholars, we have a responsibility to examine the intersection of identity with media production,

consumption, and effects.

Ethical Declaration

There are no known potential conflicts of interest, financial or otherwise. This project did not receive outside funding.

This research did not involve human participants and therefore no IRB approval or informed consent was necessary.

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Table 1

Sample Size by Website and Category

	Xvideos	Pornhub	Total
Black couples	44	17	61
White couples	1158	271	1428
Black women with white men	47	10	57
White women with black men	170	25	195

Table 2

Codes and Reliabilities for Indicators

Code	Definition	Reliability Pornhub	Reliability Xvideos
Facial ejaculation	Anytime a man ejaculates on a woman's breasts, chest, face, or mouth	97.9%	97.9%
Stripping	Includes sexually alluring dance, strip tease or posing. When a person dances, moves, or displays themselves, optionally taking off their clothes while moving, for the purpose of sexually arousing the camera or another person either shown or not shown.	99.2%	98.5%
Physical Aggression	Any action appearing to cause or attempting to cause physical harm to oneself or another person.	98.8%	97.6%
Kissing	Mouth to mouth contact either with mouths closed or open-mouth kissing.	100.0%	95.8%
Cunnilingus	Any instance in which a mouth (lips, tongue, and/or teeth) stimulate the female genitals. Includes the entire vulva for females.	100.0%	92.7%
Fellatio	Any instance in which a mouth (lips, tongue, and/or teeth) stimulate the male genitals. Includes the testicles/scrotal sack for males.	100.0%	91.1%
Vaginal Sex	Penetration of the vagina by a penis	100.0%	93.0%
Anal Sex	Penetration of the anus/rectum by a penis	100.0%	94.3%

Table 3

Comparison of the Depiction of Black and White Women in Pornography

	Black Women	White Women
Frequency of Objectification Measures		
Facial Ejaculation	22% (26)	21% (335)
Female Stripping	18% (21)	15% (239)
Physical Aggression Against Women**	51% (60)	36% (585)
	Black Men	**White Men**
Physical Aggression Against Women**	47% (121)	35% (524)
Kissing **	18% (46)	28% (408)

*** $p < .001$*
Sample sizes are as follows: black women (118), white women (1,624 scenes), black men (256), and white men (1486)
Note: Significance tests were corrected using the False Discovery Rate (FDR) also known as the Benjamini-Hochberg procedure for controlling false discovery rates (Benjamini and Hochberg, 1995).

Table 4

Comparison of Aggression and Sexual Behaviors Dependent on Racial Makeup of Couples

	Black Woman and Man	Black Woman and White Man	White Women and Black Man	White Women and White Man
Physical Aggression Male to Female**	54% (33)[a]	47% (27)	45% (88)	35% (497)[b]
Kiss*	13% (8)[b]	33% (19)	20% (38)[b]	27% (389)[a]
Fellatio	77% (47)	67% (38)	67% (131)	69% (981)
Cunnilingus	33% (19)	30% (17)	23% (44)	30% (426)
Vaginal Sex	77% (47)	63% (36)	70% (137)	66% (946)
Anal Sex	16% (10)	16% (9)	18% (35)	19% (277)

Note: Significance tests were corrected using the False Discovery Rate (FDR) also known as the Benjamini-Hochberg procedure for controlling false discovery rates (Benjamini and Hochberg, 1995).
[a] indicates that a category had significantly *more* depictions according to the adjusted residuals
[b] indicates that a category had significantly *fewer* depictions according to the adjusted residuals
** *p < .001*
* *p < .01*
Sample size is as follows: White couple (1,429), Black couple (61), Black Female/White Male (57), and White Female/ Black Male(195)