PORNOGRAPHY USE AND SATISFACTION WITH ROMANTIC PARTNERSHIPS

A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HISTORICAL STUDIES

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

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DECEMBER 2022

ABSTRACT

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This thesis was designed to examine the relationship between sex, frequency of pornography use, and satisfaction with romantic partnerships. Two hypotheses were tested. Hypothesis 1 states that controlling for other factors, male respondents who report higher levels of pornography use will report lower levels of relationship satisfaction than male respondents who report lower levels of pornography use. Hypothesis 2 states that controlling for other factors, female respondents who report higher levels of pornography use will report lower levels of partnership satisfaction than female respondents who report lower levels of pornography use. Females and males who reported viewing pornography were slightly less satisfied with their partnerships than those who use it less or who do not view porn at all. African American and Hispanic participants reported less partnership satisfaction than Caucasian and Asian participants. Implications are discussed.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Sexualization exists in many forms of media, such as movies, magazines, and the internet. Since sexual intimacy is generally of private and personal relevance, how does opening that private domain of sexuality within a monogamous romantic relationship to sexual representations affect those within the relationship and the relationship itself? Is there a link between viewing pornography and satisfaction with romantic partnerships? If anything, what does pornography use say about one's satisfaction with a romantic relationship and romantic partner?

Pornography use has been studied in the context of romantic relationships including with married individuals (Mann, Sidman, and Starr 1973), long-term partners (Bridges, Bergner, and Hesson-McInnis 2003), cohabiting partners (Daneback, Træen, and Månsson 2009) and other romantic partnerships (Bridges and Morokoff 2010). Most of this research has taken place in the field of psychology. These studies have found an association between porn-viewing and more accepting attitudes toward porn (Mann et al. 1973; Bridges et al. 2003; Daneback et al. 2009; Bridges and Morokoff 2010). Female partners have tended to express a feeling of betrayal and/or feeling distress due to their male partners' pornography use (Bridges et al. 2003). Daneback et al. 2009 found that where couples used porn together, there was more openness about discussing sexual topics; however, when partners used porn in isolation, males had more problems with arousal difficulty and females had problems with negative self-perceptions. There was also found to be an association between higher frequency of Sexually Stimulating Media (SSM) use in

males and lower sexual satisfaction in males (Bridges and Morokoff 2010); interestingly, this same study found a relationship between higher frequency of SSM use in females and higher sexual satisfaction in male partners (Bridges and Morokoff 2010).

There is a continuing need for sociological researchers to explore the impact of pornography use with male and female respondents who are in romantic relationships, in order to address the possible impact of pornography use on perspectives toward their monogamous commitments.

This thesis relies on Merriam-Webster's definition of pornography as a base upon which to discuss the term throughout this paper: "the depiction of erotic behavior (as in pictures or writing) intended to cause sexual excitement" (Merriam-Webster 2020). For the purpose of this thesis, "pornography" refers to depictions of erotic behavior in images, writing, or film (which falls into the category of "pictures," which is mentioned in the Merriam-Webster definition—as film is composed of moving pictures). Relationship satisfaction is defined as: "…the subjective evaluation of one's relationship. Relationship satisfaction is not a property of a relationship; it is a subjective experience and opinion…" (Keizer 2014). One of the challenges in studying pornography use is the problem of definition. Sociologists, feminist scholars, and other scholars have clearly pointed out that pornography is a much more nuanced and complex phenomenon than traditional psychological definitions indicate (Sontag [1969] 2009). Author Susan Sontag explains that pornography possesses an essential element of transgression:

> That discourse one might call the poetry of transgression is also knowledge. He who transgresses not only breaks a rule. He goes somewhere that the others are not; and he knows something the others don't know.... (1969/2009:71)

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Pornography, whether it is seen as a praiseworthy and artistic expression of sexuality, or as a crude expression of lust, obliterates all rules and standards, including a standard of one individual relating with another individual through a sexually monogamous commitment.

RATIONALE

This study will add to the existing literature on pornography use by individuals who are in romantic relationships and to the literature on pornography use and relationship satisfaction, particularly from a sociological perspective and to the field of Sociology. This study adds the dimensions of sex (female/male), race/ethnicity, and religiosity to research on the impact of pornography on relationship satisfaction. This study specifically adds to the sociological literature on pornography use and relationship satisfaction. Additionally, the findings may have practical implications in such fields as marriage and family therapy.

STRUCTURE OF THESIS

Chapter 2 reviews related literature, including previous findings on the social and psychological impacts of pornography use. It concludes with an enumeration of the research questions. Chapter 3 describes the methodology including the data, sample, independent, dependent, and control variables, and the data analysis. Chapter 4 presents the findings. Chapter 5 summarizes key findings, discusses implications, limitations, and offers recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

PORNOGRAPHY AND ROMANTIC PARTNERSHIPS

This chapter reviews literature relevant to pornography and sexual intimacy. The first section reviews literature concerning the evolutionary, biological, and experiential elements of sexual intimacy. The second section discusses the implications of viewing sexual depictions of those outside of the romantic relationship (i.e., viewing pornographic content). The third section reviews literature on pornography use and relational satisfaction. The fourth section details how I will address previous limitations in the literature, the theoretical framework I will use and the hypotheses to be tested in this study.

The Evolutionary, Biological, and Experiential Aspects of Sexual Intimacy

Hazan and Zeifman (1999:350) stated that oxytocin releases at orgasm during sexual intercourse and that this release provides the male and female a sense of "well-being in the arms of the partner." The chapter explores the stage of a male and female 'falling in love' and the later stage after moving beyond the falling in love phase and loving each other on a day-to-day basis. Through sexual intimacy and the intense tension release that occurs at orgasm (and release of oxytocin), accompanied by the close physical presence of the lover, and this scenario repeated over and over, the mind of the individual forms an association between their partner and a soothing and calming sense, providing a sense of security and a strong bond with that partner. In the context of pair bonding, it provides an anchor for emotional and physical health and stability for both partners, upon which offspring can be anchored as well (Fletcher et al. 2015). This bond-formation and comforting association establishes a relationship to depend upon as each

partner of the pair faces the unstable circumstances of life; this bond provides a source from which to draw support when life's circumstance may require it and empowers the members of the pair to explore the world around them with a sense of support and security. Pair-bonding provides a stable system for meeting life's challenges and surviving them, a bond which manifests itself in the institution of marriage.

Pornography and Sexual Intimacy

Pornographic content impacts the viewer when he or she is watching other individuals who are glamorized and prepared to look good for their role in the pornographic content and who are consciously acting out a scripted sexual encounter, whether in still images or film. The porn viewer is then experiencing right along with the actors what the actors seem to be experiencing, since pornography is a planned performance rather than a private expression of love. As the viewer watches pornographic films, for example, they can easily be influenced by the actors' behaviors, and though a viewer cannot fully know how much of what is seen is real and genuine, or a staged performance, it is presented as reality (this also includes the porn stars' physical appearance). Therefore, viewers can possibly have a disturbed and faulty body-image because of the bodies they see on display within pornographic films (this applies to pornographic images as well). Watching pornography has the potential to impact a couple's sex life. Without pornographic videos and images, couples create their own sexual expressions of their love for each other. This would be a private and intimate aspect of their relationship, but with pornography there are others who are sharing their artificial on-camera or real-life (in the case of homemade movies uploaded online) 'sex lives' with viewers. There are possible comparison effects that can occur, such as comparison of actors' appearances, which are prepared to be on

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camera with temporary and permanent cosmetic applications and camera-manipulations; the sexual experience itself (which may be genuine or an act done for a wage, and which is often unrealistic); and possible dramatized levels of excitement in pornographic films. Whether realistic or unrealistic, pornographic images and films are prepared for viewing and can easily create a comparison effect between the pornographic material and a couple's real-life sexuality and sex life, as sexual intimacy is definitely a very intimate and private aspect of committed romantic relationships.

Since oxytocin is a bonding hormone and a love hormone, which strengthens the bond between the individuals involved in that sexual experience, if a person is viewing pornographic material and experiencing sexual climax with that material, what is happening with this bonding process that oxytocin helps to facilitate between real-life sexual partners? Human beings sexually bonding with each other, such as those who are married to each other, is beneficial for them psychologically, relationally, etc., as this bonding strengthens their love relationship. But what benefit is there when a man or woman in a couple relationship or both partners of a couple relationship experience the release of that bonding/love hormone while they are experiencing an encounter with pornography? Is it beneficial to create a bond or tie to the act of viewing various others engage in sex (whether genuine or purely scripted) or to the actors in porn films; does porn consumption, the involvement of the porn viewer with the porn film and porn actors in such an intimate way—which is simultaneously void of love (between the viewer and porn actor)— benefit the viewer, or the viewer's romantic relationship?

Watson (2017) found some effect of pornography use on relational satisfaction. More specifically, he examined the possible mediating role of attachment style (secure, preoccupied, fearful, and dismissive styles) in the relationship between pornography use and relational satisfaction. He had expected that attachment style may mediate the effect of pornography use on relational satisfaction. He found no direct effect of attachment style on partners' relationship satisfaction. His study found that couples who watched pornography in isolation reported lower relationship satisfaction. Szymanski and Stewart-Richardson (2014) found a relationship between the frequency of pornography use and "problematic" pornography use such as reported addiction to pornography.

Research has also found associations between pornography use and distress generally. Grubbs and Perry (2019) found links between internet pornography use and: higher levels of distress overall, higher levels of distress in cases of moral incongruence concerning internet pornography use, more occurrences of perceived addiction to internet pornography use, and more occurrences of reporting of problems that are related to respondents' internet pornography use. A 2014 study conducted by Muusses, Kerkhof, and Finkenauer showed the effects of pornography use among newly married couples. They found no correlation between wives' use of sexually explicit internet materials (SEIM) with husbands' levels of sexual satisfaction, but husbands' levels of sexual satisfaction were correlated with wives' lowered SEIM use after 1 year, and husbands' levels of SEIM use was also reciprocally and negatively correlated with husbands' adjustment—researchers defined "relationship adjustment," stating, "One of the most widely used constructs to denote relationship quality is relationship adjustment, which consists of

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relationship satisfaction, consensus, cohesion and expression of affection (Spanier 1976)" (Muusses et al. 2014:1).

In a study of pornography use and its relationship to affection deprivation and depression, Hesse and Floyd (2019) found that higher levels of pornography consumption strengthened the connection between affection deprivation and depression. Similarly, a review of pornography use and relational dysfunctions by Dwulit and Rzymski (2019) found evidence of an association between pornography use and lower levels of sexual satisfaction. Bridges and Morokoff (2010) found that higher frequency of pornography use by females was correlated with higher sexual and relationship satisfaction for their male partners but higher frequency of porn consumption by males was correlated with a lower sexual and relationship satisfaction for those males.

Grubbs and his colleagues (2018) had found that the negative effects of pornography use, such as feeling addicted, may be due not to the use of pornography itself but may be due to individuals feeling a sense of "moral incongruence" between what they feel they should do (not view pornography) versus what they are actually doing (viewing pornography; Grubbs et al. 2018).

Perry (2020) examined studies dealing with the impact of pornography on relationship quality. Perry found that, overall, pornography use has a negative correlation with relationship quality for females and males, and for married and unmarried couples. Earlier, Bridges and his colleagues found that about a third of women surveyed were extremely troubled by their partners' pornography use and frequency of use (Bridges et al. 2003).

Rasmussen (2016) argued that pornography use has the effect of decreasing family stability, as those who consume pornography even together as a couple, exhibit behavior harmful

to their relationship—that is, they are more likely to be unfaithful compared to couples whose

members do not view pornography. This is consistent with Perry (2017), who studied

pornography use and marriage stability (marital status) over a 6-year period and found that

marriages in which pornography use occurred also had more than twice the rate of divorce

compared to marriages without pornography use.

Limitations of Previous Research on Pornography

Research on religiosity and pornography use has examined several issues, including

religiosity's impact on internet pornography use specifically (Abell, Steembergh and Boivin

2006; Baltazar et al. 2010; Short, Kasper, and Wetterneck 2014), religiosity's impact on

pornography use (Nelson, Padilla-Walker, and Carroll 2010), and the relationship between

spousal religiosity and pornography use (Perry 2016). Perry noted that relatively few studies

have examined closely the connection between religiosity, pornography use, and intimate

relationships.

Perry (2017) noted that research on pornography consumption and relationships has been

plagued by inconsistent findings, the use of non-representative samples, and incorrectly specified

measures. As Newstrom and Harris (2016) also noted, much of the research has been descriptive

and exploratory in nature. In addition, they noted that it has suffered from a variety of

methodological problems, including problems with consistency in the level of analysis and the

units of observation. A continued concern has been variation in the definitions of pornography

used by researchers (Short et al. 2012); this can impact methodological choices, which can in

turn account for the inconsistent findings. A limitation of much of the research on pornography

and relationships is that it has tended to be either atheoretical or inconsistent in its use of theory (Newstrom and Harris 2016).

Additionally, Perry (2017) has argued that because of these persistent limitations, studies have also produced inconsistent findings with reference to the role of sex in pornography use by those who are in romantic relationships. This literature has only peripherally examined the impact of religion on pornography use by those in romantic relationships (Perry 2017). The role of race in the pornography and relationship literature has also received somewhat limited attention. Studies on the role of race have focused largely on issues such as racial differences in pornography use and most recently on the moderating effects of gender and religion on racial trends in pornography use over time (Perry and Schleifer 2019). Finally, studies have largely been conducted by psychologists, with comparatively less attention given by sociological researchers.

This study addresses these limitations by using a nationally representative dataset, a standardized definition of pornography, and by including measures of race/ethnicity and religiosity as control variables. To identify sex differences in the relationship between frequency of pornography use and measures of relationship satisfaction, this study will conduct separate analyses by sex (female/male).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for this study is symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionism argues that individuals respond to situations based on the meaning that they attribute to them (Blumer 1969). A symbolic interactionist perspective suggests that males and females ascribe particular meaning to their use of pornography in the context of intimate

relationships and that researchers can better understand the impact of pornography use by understanding the social meaning of pornography use by men and women. Poulsen, Busby, and Galovan (2012) previously used symbolic interactionism to contextualize their study of pornography users and the links between pornography use and couple outcomes, such as satisfaction.

HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses will be tested in this study: 1.) Controlling for other factors, male respondents who report higher levels of pornography use will report lower levels of relationship satisfaction than male respondents who report lower levels of pornography use; 2.) Controlling for other factors, female respondents who report higher levels of pornography use will report lower levels of relationship satisfaction than female respondents who report lower levels of pornography use. Hypotheses 1 and 2 are suggested because Perry (2016), Brown et al. (2017), and Cooper and Klein (2018) found that respondents who report higher levels of pornography use report lower levels of relationship satisfaction.

CHAPTER III

DATA AND METHODS

Chapter 3 begins with a description of the data and sample. Then, a little information about the sample and how it was collected is given, after which there is a description of the coding for all variables—dependent, independent, and control. Finally, a brief description of the analyses is provided.

DATA

Data will be drawn from the 2006 Portraits of American Life Survey (PALS). Data will be employed concerning pornography use and attitudes toward respondents' marital/cohabiting relationships, as well as basic demographic information on the age, sex (female/male), and race/ethnicity of respondents.

SAMPLE AND DATA COLLECTION

PALS is an American survey conducted by the Association of Religion Data Archives (Emerson and Sikkink 2006). It is designed to be a nationally representative dataset, but it does not use a typical simple random sampling design. The investigators sought to over-sample ethnic and racial minorities. Sampling involved statisticians selecting 60 'primary sampling units' categorized by zip codes. Primary sampling units were selected based on their representativeness of the nation's population characteristics and with the aid of U.S. census data. PALS set out to find 2,600 participating households out of an initial sampling frame of 10,320 households nationwide. The data were collected via in-person interviews of one adult per household for households that agreed to participate: survey respondents number 2,610 in total, going slightly beyond PALS' sample-size goal (Emerson and Sikkink 2006).

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VARIABLES

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable is Partnership Satisfaction. It is measured by an index consisting

of three variables. These are Happiness in marriage/relationship, Satisfaction with love and

affection from spouse/partner, and Sexual satisfaction with spouse/partner. Happiness in

marriage/relationship, is measured by one item, "All things considered, how would you describe

your marriage/relationship? Would you say it is:" This is coded 1 = Completely unhappy, 2 =

Mostly unhappy, 3 = Somewhat unhappy, and 4 = Mostly happy, and 5 = Completely happy.

Satisfaction with love and affection from spouse/partner, is measured by the item, "How satisfied

are you with the love and affection you receive from your spouse/partner?" This is coded, 1 =

Completely dissatisfied, 2 = Somewhat dissatisfied, 3 = Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 4 =

Somewhat satisfied, and 5 = Completely satisfied. Sexual satisfaction with spouse/partner, is

measured with this item, "How satisfied are you with your sex life with your spouse/partner?"

with responses coded, 1 = Completely dissatisfied, 2 = Somewhat dissatisfied, 3 = Neither

satisfied nor dissatisfied, 4 = Somewhat satisfied, and 5 = Completely satisfied. Higher scores

indicate greater satisfaction with the relationship. The index was calculated by adding the three

variables together. This index has a Cronbach's alpha of .874, which indicates a very good level

of reliability.

Independent Variable

The independent variable is Frequency of Pornography Use. Frequency of Pornography

Use asks, "In the past twelve months, how often have you viewed pornographic materials?" and

is coded 1 = Once a day or more, 2 = A few times a week, 3 = Once a week, 4 = Two or three times a month, 5 = Once a month, 6 = A few times, 7 = Once or twice, and 8 = Never.

Control Variables

There are four control variables. The control variables are Age, Sex, Race, and two measures of religiosity. Age asks for "Respondent's age" with options for ages 18 through 79 and the last option of "80 or higher" all coded by the age value itself (i.e. 18 years old coded as "18"). Sex is a variable in the 2006 wave of the PALS dataset that is labeled: HR_GEND and is measured by responses to the item "sex," where respondents choose either 1 = Male or 2 = Female to indicate their sex. Race asks for "Respondent's race," and is coded 1 = Caucasian, 2 = African American, 3 = Hispanic, 4 = Asian, and 5 = Native American. Lastly, religiosity is measured by responses to two variables: CA_1, and RM_1. The first variable, CA_1, is a measure of Religious Affiliation, and the second variable is a measure of the Importance of Religious Faith. CA_1 (Religious Affiliation) asks, "Are you currently involved in, affiliated with, or a member of a religious congregation or other place of worship? By congregation, I mean a church, temple, synagogue, mosque, or other place of worship," with responses coded 1 = Yes, and 2 = No. RM_1 (Importance of Religious Faith) asks, "How important is religion or religious faith to you personally?," with responses coded 1 = Not at all important, 2 = Somewhat important, 3 = Very important, 4 = Extremely important, and 5 = By far the most important part of your life.

DATA ANALYSIS

The hypotheses will be addressed using regression analysis. Descriptive statistics will be generated to describe the participants. There will be two separate regression analyses conducted

for sex to explore possible sex differences in the relationship between Frequency of Pornography Use and the outcome variables. Regression analyses was conducted for the five racial categories mentioned above, comparing levels of pornography use for each racial category. Regression analyses was conducted for the two religiosity variables mentioned above, also to compare levels of pornography use among differing levels of religiosity. The 25th version of SPSS software was used for these analyses.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the analysis. The first section presents descriptive statistics and characteristics of participants. The second section discusses diagnostics for the variables used in the analysis. The third section presents the results of the analyses with reference to the hypotheses.

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Table 1 summarizes characteristics of the participants. Table 1 indicates that most participants (59 %) were female, the largest single percentage (49.5 %) were Caucasian, and most participants were in their early 40s (mean age of 43.3). While religion was very important to most respondents (65.4 % viewed religion as very important, extremely important, or the most important part of their lives), interestingly less than half (44.3 %) of the respondents reported that they were affiliated with a church.

Table 1. Characteristics of Participants

Variable	n	%
Mean Age	43.6	16.4
Sex		
Female	1545	59.2
Male	1065	40.8
Race/Ethnicity		
Caucasian	1292	49.5
Hispanic	555	21.3
African American	543	20.8
Asian	202	7.7
Native American	18	0.7

Variable	n	%
Religiosity: Religious Affiliation (CA_1)		
Yes	1155	44.3
No	1454	55.7
Don't Know	1	0.0
Religiosity: Importance of Religion (RM_1)		
Refused	1	0
Don't Know	6	0.2
Not at All Important	254	9.7
Somewhat Important	638	24.5
Very Important	828	31.7
Extremely Important	468	17.9
Most Important Part of Life	413	15.8

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for the variables used in the analysis. Partnership Satisfaction is measured on a scale from -21 to 17. The Partnership Satisfaction score of 13.10 indicates that respondents report a relatively high level of satisfaction with their relationships. Frequency of Pornography Use ranges from Never (1) to Once a day or more (8). The mean score for Frequency of Pornography Use (.913) indicates that self-reported pornography use is not common among the respondents. The first religiosity measure (CA_1: Religious Affiliation) is measured from Yes (1) to No (2). The mean of 1.56 for the first religiosity measure (Religious Affiliation) indicates that most are not affiliated with a particular church. Importance of Religion (RM_1) is measured on a scale from Not at all important (1) to, By far the most important part of your life (5). The mean of 3.04 indicates that most report that religion is very important for them.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Variables Used in the Analysis

Variables	Mean	SD
Dependent Variable		
Partnership Satisfaction	13.102	5.774
Independent Variables		
ADV_3 Frequency of Pornography Use	.913	1.65
Control Variables		
Age	43.6	16.38
CA_1 Religiosity (Religious Affiliation)	1.56	.508
RM_1 Religiosity (Importance of Religion)	3.04	1.264

Table 3 reports correlations for each of the variables used in the analysis. This table indicates a negative correlation between Partnership Satisfaction and Frequency of Pornography Use. Partnership Satisfaction was also negatively correlated with Age and Religious Affiliation (CA_1), while Frequency of Pornography Use was found to be negatively correlated with Age and Importance of Religious Faith (RM_1). Importance of Religious Faith (RM_1) has a positive relationship with on Partnership Satisfaction.

Table 3. Correlations for Variables Used

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Partnership Satisf.	1.0						
Frequency of Porn Use	-.102**	1					
HR_GEND	.025	.383**	1				
HR_AGE	-.101**	-.241**	-.032	1			
RACE_ALL	-.002	-.008	.008	-.196**	1		
CA_1	-.053*	.163**	.122**	-.127**	.090**	1	
RM_1	.110**	-.228**	-.138**	.099**	.011	-.386**	1

Note: * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

REGRESSION DIAGNOSTICS

The correlation matrix was examined for evidence of multicollinearity. Table 3 does not indicate the presence of multicollinearity. In addition, the variables were examined for evidence of skewness. Tests for skewness reveal the Partnership Satisfaction index variable to be significantly negatively skewed (-3.89). This is due to the fact that the vast majority of participants reported high levels of satisfaction with each of the components of relationship satisfaction (physical affection received, sex life, and their relationship as a whole). Log transformation and Box Cox transformation were used to attempt to correct the severity of the skewness in the data. Both transformations failed to correct the skewness beyond the initial value of -3.89. Hence, the findings should be interpreted with this in mind.

As a whole, the data are negatively skewed, with participants being very religious overall, with most reporting satisfying partnerships, and with significant percentages not reporting pornography use in the previous year. Given these characteristics of the data, the findings also should be interpreted with these issues in mind.

HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 states that controlling for other factors, male respondents who report higher levels of pornography use will report lower levels of relationship satisfaction than male respondents who report lower levels of pornography use. Table 4 presents the regression analyses for males of all races. Model 1 presents the impact of Frequency of Pornography Use for all races. Model 2 presents the results when the controls are added. The F-Test statistics indicate that the models are statistically significant. The relatively weak adjusted R-squareds

(.01) indicate that the model accounts for only about 1 % of the variance in Partnership

Satisfaction between the male respondents.

Model 1 reveals that, all other things being equal, males who view pornography are

slightly less satisfied with their partnerships than males who use it less or who do not view

pornography (B = -.102, p < .001). Model 2 includes the original independent and dependent

variables, with the controls for Age, Race, Religious Affiliation (CA_1), and Importance of

Religious Faith (RM_1) introduced. Table 4 indicates that even with the controls added, males

who use pornography are still less satisfied with their partnerships (B = -.113, p < .001) than

those who report less frequent or no pornography use. Further, Table 4 indicates that there is a

slight negative relationship between Age and Partnership Satisfaction (B = -.145, p < .001),

indicating that older male participants report somewhat lower levels of satisfaction than younger

male participants. At the same time, there is a modest positive effect of Importance of Religious

Faith (RM_1) on Partnership Satisfaction (B = .094, p < .05). Interestingly, the second

component of religiosity, Religious Affiliation (CA_1), has no significant relationship with

Partnership Satisfaction.

Table 4. Regression Results for Males

	Model 1		Model 2	
Predictors	**B**	**p**	**B**	**p**
Constant		.000		.000
Frequency of Porn Use	-.102	.000	-.113	.000
Age			-.145	.000
Race			-.031	.254
CA_1 Religiosity			-.014	.640

	Model 1		Model 2	
Predictors	**B**	**p**	**B**	**p**
RM_1 Religiosity			.094	.002
n	1355		1355	
R²	.010		.045	
Adj. R²	.010		.040	
F-test	14.149		11.670	

Table 5 presents regression results for Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, and Asian males. The purpose of these regressions is to identify possible effects of different racial and ethnic categories on Partnership Satisfaction. There are eight models presented. Model 1 presents results for Caucasian males. Model 2 presents results for Caucasian males with the control variables added. Model 3 presents results for African American males. Model 4 presents results for African American males with the control variables added. Model 5 presents results for Hispanic males. Model 6 presents results for Hispanic males with the control variables added. Finally, Model 7 presents results for Asian males and Model 8 presents results for Asian males with the control variables added. The F-tests indicate that each of the models were statistically significant. The relatively low R-squareds indicate that on average, the models are accounting for between 1 and 4 percent of the variation in Partnership Satisfaction across the racial and ethnic groups.

For Model 1, the results show a modest negative relationship between Frequency of Pornography Use and Partnership Satisfaction for Caucasian males (B = -.131, p < .001). Model 2 adds the control variables. With the control variables added, Frequency of Pornography Use is

still negatively related to Partnership Satisfaction, except that the relationship is somewhat stronger (B = -.152, p < .001).

Model 2 also indicates that older male Caucasians report slightly lower levels of Partnership Satisfaction than younger male Caucasians (B = -.163, p < .001). Religious affiliation has a modest positive relationship with satisfaction (B = .106, p < .001), suggesting that those who are more committed to religion report somewhat more satisfying partnerships.

Model 3 examines the impact of Frequency of Pornography Use on Partnership Satisfaction among African American males. As was the case with Caucasians, Frequency of Pornography Use has a modest negative relationship (B = -.130, p < .001) with Partnership Satisfaction. African American males report slightly less satisfaction with partnerships (B = -.066, p < .05). Model 4 suggests that Frequency of Pornography Use has a somewhat stronger negative relationship (B = -.145, p < .001) and age also has a modest negative relationship (B = -.151, p < .001) with Partnership Satisfaction. As was the case with Caucasian males, religiosity has a modest positive relationship (B = .108, p < .001) with Partnership Satisfaction.

Model 5 reports the relationship between Frequency of Pornography Use and Partnership Satisfaction for Hispanic males. The effects are very similar to those for Caucasian and African American males, in that there is a modest negative relationship (B = -.131, p < .001) between Frequency of Porn Use and Partnership Satisfaction. Model 6 also indicates a slight negative relationship between Frequency of Pornography Use and Partnership Satisfaction (B = -.150, p < .001). Age continues to have a modest negative relationship with Partnership Satisfaction, as older Hispanic males report somewhat less satisfied with their partnerships (B = -.152, p < .001). As was the case with Caucasian and African American males, Hispanic males for whom religion

is more important report somewhat more satisfaction with their partnerships (B = .098, p < .001) than those for whom religion is less important.

Finally, Model 7 examines the relationship between Frequency of Pornography Use and Partnership Satisfaction for Asian males. As was the case with White, African American, and Hispanic males, there is a modest negative relationship between Frequency of Pornography Use and Partnership Satisfaction (B = -.130, p < .001). Model 8 indicates that the addition of the control variables strengthens the negative relationship between Frequency of Pornography Use and Partnership Satisfaction, such that there is a slight negative relationship (B = -.146, p < .001). When taking the control variables into account, there is a modest negative relationship between Age and Partnership Satisfaction (B = -.143, p < 001). This same relationship was seen for Caucasian males, African American males, and Hispanic males as well. As was the case for Caucasian males, African American males, and Hispanic males, Asian males who were more religious reported slightly greater Partnership Satisfaction (B = .097, p < .001) than those who were less religious.

Table 5. Regression Results for Males: Other Races

	Caucasian Males				African Am. Males				Hispanic Males				Asian Males			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6		Model 7		Model 8	
Predictors	B	p	B	p	B	p	B	p	B	p	B	p	B	p	B	p
Constant		.000		<.001		.000		<.001		.000		<.001		.000		<.001
Freq. of Porn Use	-.131	<.001	-.152	<.001	-.130	<.001	-.145	<.001	-.131	<.001	-.150	<.001	-.130	<.001	-.146	<.001
Age			-.163	<.001			-.151	<.001			-.152	<.001			-.143	<.001
Cauc. Dummy	.037	.176	.079	.004												
Afr. Am. Dummy					-.066	.015	-.091	<.001								
Hispanic Dummy									-.016	.548	-.040	.140				
Asian Dummy													.040	.135	.037	.166
CA_1 Religiosity			-.016	.590			-.025	.390			-.017	.564			-.022	.455

	Caucasian Males				African Am. Males				Hispanic Males				Asian Males			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6		Model 7		Model 8	
Predictors	B	p	B	p	B	p	B	p	B	p	B	p	B	p	B	p
RM_1 Religiosity			.106	<.001			.108	<.001			.098	<.001			.097	<.001
n	1292		1292		543		543		555		555		202		202	
Adj. R²	.014		.045		.017		.047		.013		.041		.015		.041	
F-test	7.54		11.670		8.935		12.210		7.046		10.594		7.680		10.550	

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 states that controlling for other factors, female respondents who report higher levels of pornography use will report lower levels of relationship satisfaction than female respondents who report lower levels of pornography use. Table 6 presents the regression analysis for females of all races. Model 1 presents the impact of Frequency of Pornography Use for all races. Model 2 presents the results when the controls are added. The F-tests indicate that both of the models are statistically significant, while the models explain a relatively modest amount of the variation in Partnership Satisfaction among female respondents of all races. More specifically, Model 1 explains 1 % of the variation and Model 2 explains 3.4 % of the variation in Partnership Satisfaction among women of all races.

Model 1 reveals that females who report higher levels of pornography use report somewhat lower levels of Partnership Satisfaction than female who report lower levels of pornography use (B = -.102, p < .001). Model 2 indicates that females who report higher levels of pornography use report lower levels of Partnership Satisfaction. In fact, this relationship is strengthened (B = -.113, p < .005). As was the case for male respondents, Model 2 indicates that older female respondents report lower levels of Partnership Satisfaction (B of -.145, p < .001), all other things being equal. Those who report that religious faith is more important to them report somewhat higher levels of Partnership Satisfaction (B = .094, p < .05).

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Table 6. Regression Results for Females All Races

	Model 1		Model 2	
Predictors	**B**	**p**	**B**	**p**
Constant		.000		.000
Freq. of Porn Use	-.102	.000	-.113	.000
Age			-.145	.000
Race			-.031	.254
CA_1 Relig.			-.014	.640
RM_1 Relig.			.094	.002
n	2610		2610	
Adj. R2	.010		.034	
F-test	14.149		10.429	

Table 7 presents regression results for Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, and Asian females. The purpose of these regressions is to identify possible effects of different racial and ethnic categories on relationship satisfaction. There are eight models presented. Model 1 presents results for Caucasian females. Model 2 presents results for Caucasian females with the control variables added. Model 3 presents results for African American females. Model 4 presents results for African American females with the control variables added. Model 5 presents results for Hispanic females. Model 6 presents results for Hispanic females with the control variables added. Lastly, Model 7 presents results for Asian females and Model 8 presents results for Asian females with the control variables added. The F-tests indicate that each model is statistically

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significant. The adjusted R-squareds for each model indicate that the models explain between 1.4 % (Caucasian females) and 4.7 % (African American females) of the variation in Partnership Satisfaction.

In Model 1, the results show a modest negative relationship between Frequency of Pornography Use and Partnership Satisfaction for Caucasian females (B = -.131, p < .001). Model 2 indicates that with the addition of the controls the negative relationship between Frequency of Pornography Use and Partnership Satisfaction is somewhat stronger (B = -.152, p < .001).

Model 2 also indicates that older female Caucasians report slightly lower levels of satisfaction (B = -.163, p < .001). This model also indicates that those who report greater Importance of Religious Faith (RM_1) report slightly higher levels of Partnership Satisfaction (B =.106, p < .001).

Model 3 reports findings for African American females. This model indicates that as was the case with Caucasians, Frequency of Pornography Use has a modest negative relationship (B = -.130, p < .001) with Partnership Satisfaction. Model 4 examines African American females with the addition of the controls. Model 4 shows that with the controls added, the negative relationship between Frequency of Pornography Use and Partnership Satisfaction is even stronger (B = -.145, p < .001). In addition, Age also has a modest negative relationship (B = -.151, p < .001) with Partnership Satisfaction. As was the case with Caucasian females, Importance of Religious Faith (RM_1) has a modest positive relationship with Partnership Satisfaction among African American females. African American females who are more religious are slightly more satisfied with their partnerships (B = .108, p < .001). Overall, Table 7

indicates that African American females had lower levels of Partnership Satisfaction, compared with other races.

Model 5 reports the relationship between Frequency of Porn Use and Partnership Satisfaction for Hispanic females. As it was for Caucasian and African American females, there is a slight negative relationship between Frequency of Porn Use and Partnership Satisfaction among Hispanic females (B = -.131, p < .001).

Model 6 examines Hispanic females with the addition of controls. Model 6 shows that with the controls added, the negative relationship between Frequency of Porn Use and Partnership Satisfaction is even stronger (B = -.150, p < .001). Age continues to have a modest negative relationship with Partnership Satisfaction; as the value for Age increases, older female Hispanics are less satisfied with their romantic partnerships (B = -.152, p < .001). As was the case with Caucasian and African American females, Hispanic females for whom religion is more important report somewhat more satisfaction with their partnerships (B = .098, p < .001) than those for whom religion is less important.

Finally, for Asian females, Model 7 again reveals a negative relationship between Frequency of Pornography Use and Partnership Satisfaction for Asian females. As was the case with Caucasian, African American, and Hispanic females, there is a modest negative relationship between Frequency of Pornography Use and Partnership Satisfaction for Asian females (B = -.130, p < .001). Model 8 shows that with the controls added, the negative relationship between Frequency of Porn Use and Partnership Satisfaction is somewhat stronger (B = -.146, p < .001). When taking the control variables into account, there is a modest negative relationship between Age and Partnership Satisfaction (B = -.143, p < 001). This same relationship was seen for

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Caucasian, African American, and Hispanic females as well. As was the case for Caucasian females, African American females, and Hispanic females, Asian females who were more religious reported slightly greater Partnership Satisfaction (B = .097, $p < .001$) than those who were less religious, all other things being equal.

Table 7. Regression Results for Females: Other Races

| Predictors | Caucasian Females | | | | African Am. Females | | | | Hispanic Females | | | | Asian Females | | | |
| | Model 1 | | Model 2 | | Model 3 | | Model 4 | | Model 5 | | Model 6 | | Model 7 | | Model 8 | |
	B	p	B	p	B	p	B	p	B	p	B	p	B	p	B	p
Constant		<.001		<.001		<.001		<.001		<.001		<.001		<.001		<.001
Freq. of Porn Use	-.131	<.001	-.152	<.001	-.130	<.001	-.145	<.001	-.131	<.001	-.150	<.001	-.130	<.001	-.146	<.001
Age			-.163	<.001			-.151	<.001			-.152	<.001			-.143	<.001
Cauc. Dummy	.037	.176	.079	.004												
Afr. Am. Dummy					-.066	.015	-.091	.002								
Hispanic Dummy									-.016	.548	-.040	.140				
Asian Dummy													.040	.135	.037	.166
Relig. (CA_1)			-.016	.590			-.025	.390			-.017	.564			-.022	.455

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Predictors	Caucasian Females				African Am. Females				Hispanic Females				Asian Females			
	Model 1		**Model 2**		**Model 3**		**Model 4**		**Model 5**		**Model 6**		**Model 7**		**Model 8**	
	B	**p**	**B**	**p**	**B**	**p**	**B**	**p**	**B**	**p**	**B**	**p**	**B**	**p**	**B**	**p**
Relig. (RM_1)			.106	<.001			.108	<.001			.098	<.001			.097	<.001
n	1292		1292	543			543	555			555	202			202	
Adj. R²	.014		.040	.017			.047	.013			.041	.015			.041	
F-test	14.149		10.473	8.94			12.21	7.05			10.59	7.68			10.55	

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

SUMMARY

The purpose of this thesis was to examine the relationship between frequency of pornography use and satisfaction with romantic relationships, controlling for the effects of sex, race, two dimensions of religiosity, and age. This was accomplished through an analysis of survey data on individuals who are currently in romantic relationships, using the Portraits of American Life Survey (Emerson and Sikkink 2006).

Two hypotheses were tested: 1.) Controlling for other factors, male respondents who report higher levels of pornography use will report lower levels of relationship satisfaction than male respondents who report lower levels of pornography use, and 2.) Controlling for other factors, female respondents who report higher levels of pornography use will report lower levels of relationship satisfaction than female respondents who report lower levels of pornography use. These hypotheses were derived from research by Perry (2016), Brown et al. (2017), and Cooper and Klein (2018).

In regard to the first hypothesis, I found that all other things being equal, males who view pornography were slightly less satisfied with their partnerships than males who use it less or who do not view porn (B = -.102, p < .001). I found that even with the controls added, males who use pornography are still less satisfied with their partnerships (B = -.113, p < .001) than those who report less frequent or no pornography use. I also found that there is a slight negative relationship between Age and Partnership Satisfaction (B = -.145, p < .001), and that there is a modest positive effect of Importance of Religious Faith (RM_1) on Partnership Satisfaction (B =.094, p

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< .05). The control variable Race also has a modest effect on the dependent variable, Partnership Satisfaction. Overall, the racial categories, African American and Hispanic, have a negative effect on Partnership Satisfaction, contrasting with positive effects for Caucasian and Asian racial categories. The effect of Race among African Americans without the other controls of Sex and Age added (B = -.066) is only strengthened after adding these other controls (B = -.091). The effect of Race among Hispanics without the other controls of Sex and Age added (B = -.016) is only strengthened (B = -.040) after adding these other controls. In regard to the second hypothesis, I found that females who view pornography are less satisfied with their partnerships than females who use it less or who do not view porn (B = -.102, p < .001). I also found that there is a slight negative relationship between Age and Partnership Satisfaction (B of -.145, p < .001), and that there is a modest positive effect of Importance of Religious Faith (RM_1) on Partnership Satisfaction (B = .094, p < .05).

Results are remarkably similar across females and males. Though results may tempt one to assume a causal relationship between pornography consumption and partnership satisfaction, these results uncover a negative correlation between porn consumption and partnership satisfaction and does not identify a causal factor. Low partnership satisfaction could possibly cause an increase in porn consumption, or greater porn consumption could possibly cause a lower level of partnership satisfaction. Though, it is also possible that there are other variables to consider which were excluded in this study. A final possibility is that there is a reciprocal relationship between pornography consumption and partnership satisfaction, with those who have a lower level of partnership satisfaction subsequently consuming more pornography and those who consume greater levels of pornography having resultingly lowered levels of

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partnership satisfaction. Based on the dataset in this study, I am not able to make a more definite conclusion other than this: males and females who consume pornography in greater frequency also have a lowered level of partnership satisfaction compared with those who either consume pornography in lower frequency or no frequency at all.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Overall, the sample contained mostly female participants (59 %), most were Caucasian (49.5 %), and most (55.7 %) were not affiliated with a church (CA_1). Religion was very important to the majority of the participants, such that 65.4 % of the respondents rated religion as very important, extremely important, or the most important part of their lives.

From the perspective of symbolic interactionism, individuals respond to situations based on the meaning which they attribute to them (Blumer 1969). As noted, Importance of Religious Faith and lower Frequency and/or no Frequency of Pornography Use are predictive of higher ratings of partnership satisfaction. These findings indicate that those who view pornography more frequently also feel that their partnerships are less satisfactory than those who view pornography less frequently or not at all. The findings also indicate that those who do not view pornography or who view pornography less frequently also feel that their partnerships are more satisfactory than those who view pornography more frequently. Additionally, the findings suggest that those who consider religious faith to be important or the most important part of their lives also feel that their partnerships are more satisfactory than those who do not consider their faith to be very important in their lives. Those who are viewing pornography frequently and/or at all may view their pornography consumption as associated with lower satisfaction with their romantic partnerships. Those who do not view pornography or who view porn less frequently

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may view their behavior as being associated with greater satisfaction with their romantic partnerships. This study sought to understand pornography use and partnership satisfaction, and the most significant and solid finding in this thesis is that, where there is pornography consumption by someone in a romantic partnership, there is also less partnership satisfaction compared to romantic partnerships which have less or no pornography consumption—there appears to be a correlation between the two factors; this is the broad sociological point I draw from this study.

LIMITATIONS

The first and most obvious limitation is that I cannot infer a causal relationship between pornography consumption and partnership satisfaction or determine the direction of a possible causal relationship, whether increased pornography consumption stems from lower levels of partnership satisfaction or whether lower levels of partnerships satisfaction stems from greater frequency of pornography consumption. Additionally, those who consider religious faith as an important, very important, or the most important part of their lives may consider pornography use as incompatible with their religious values and with the sanctity of their romantic partnership, and therefore, it is a possibility that they would report lower levels and/or abstinence from pornography use. Construct measurements will be limited due to a limited number of indicators for each construct. Hence, all the dimensions of the constructs may not be captured fully. The data being from a secondary data source, limits the precision of measurement of the desired variables. For example, I was unable to control for the cases of solitary versus joint pornography use within a romantic relationship, as the data did not contain a measure of the setting of pornography use. I was limited to the variables used in the analyses derived from the

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PALS (Emerson and Sikkink 2006) dataset in regard to their bearing on the pornography use frequency and partnership satisfaction relationship, and I am unable to say whether there are other excluded variables which are nevertheless germane to this relationship. Pornography is a concept that is subject to multiple interpretations by respondents. Depending on the respondents' understandings of pornography, their responses to questions concerning frequency of pornography use could vary. Some of the variables, such as the measure of sexual satisfaction, have a significant number of missing values. The sample of respondents from PALS (Emerson and Sikkink 2006) has a majority of female respondents, which may skew the results. The sample is one that is highly satisfied with their romantic partnerships overall, rather than a sample of individuals with varied satisfaction levels, which also affects the results of these analyses.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Future studies could include questions such as the ones used here, examining frequency of use, reasons for porn use or abstinence from porn (asking this may grant researchers a greater assurance about the honesty of respondents' reports of their frequency of use), importance of religious faith, sex of respondent, race of respondent, and age of respondent. Additionally, future studies should seek more nationally representative samples, such as the PALS (Emerson and Sikkink 2006) dataset, and an updated sample to bring this research up-to-date with a greater representation of African American and Hispanic respondents who had significant negative relationships with Partnership Satisfaction levels and who numbered much fewer than their Caucasian counterpart by several hundred respondents. Future researchers could also go beyond a national sample and profitably examine these questions in cross national research, which may

shed light on the role of religion in shaping American attitudes about pornography use and romantic relationships.

Further sociological research on this subject would greatly benefit from qualitative interviews addressing the role and impact of pornography use on perceived relationship satisfaction by creating surveys with a more robust measurement of "partnership satisfaction" by allowing respondents to individually verbalize their satisfaction levels with their romantic partnerships. In these types of future studies, sociological researchers could also have the opportunity to ask participants about their perceptions relating to the link between their pornography consumption and partnership satisfaction; researchers could examine individuals with varying levels of partnership satisfaction and varying levels of pornography consumption. In this type of study that allows for a more robust survey measurement of partnership satisfaction and for qualitative data coupled with quantitative data, it may be possible to arrive closer toward uncovering the type of relationship—causal and/or reciprocal—that exists between pornography consumption and partnership satisfaction. With such studies containing more robust measurements of partnership satisfaction, researchers can also use path analysis to further clarify which relationships exist, how significant they are, and which ones are the most significant.

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