#### **ORIGINAL PAPER**



# Gender, Race, and Aggression in Mainstream Pornography

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#### Abstract

The role of aggression in pornographic videos has been at the heart of many theoretical debates and empirical studies over the last four decades, with rates of reported aggression ranging widely. However, the interaction between gender and race in the production of aggressive pornographic contents remains understudied and undertheorized. We conducted a study of 172 popular free Internet pornographic videos, exploring gender and racial interactions and the depictions of men and women from various ethnic and racial groups in online pornography. Contrary to our theoretical expectations and to the findings of previous research, we found that videos featuring Black women were *less* likely to depict aggression than those featuring White women, while videos featuring Asian and Latina women were more likely to depict aggression. Our findings call for a reconceptualization of the role of race and ethnicity in pornography.

Keywords Pornography · Aggression · Violence · Race · Gender

## Introduction

The issue of aggression in pornography has created a divide among feminist scholars. While some have argued that pornography is almost always violent, leading to misogyny and sexual aggression against women (Dines, Jensen, & Russo, 1998; Dworkin, 1994; Jensen, 2007; Paul, 2005), others suggest that pornography offers a field full of contradictory, multilayered, and complex representations, which are often unharmful and can even be beneficial (Strossen, 1995; Watson & Smith, 2012; Willis, 1994). Previous estimates of the prevalence of aggression in rental and Internet pornographic videos have varied greatly, ranging from about 2% to almost 90% of all videos (see our discussion below regarding this difference in reported aggression rates).

Still, one area where theoretical and empirical research remains relatively scarce is the study of race and ethnicity, and that of the interaction between gender and race in pornographic materials. Notable feminist race scholars, such as Hill Collins (2000), have argued that pornography exemplifies the interlocking relationships between gender and race and that mainstream (White) feminism has often ignored the ways in which race and

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In the current study, we offer the first comprehensive theoretical discussion and empirical analysis of the interaction between gender and major racial and ethnic categories in North America, focusing on White, Black, Asian, and Latino/Latina male and female performers. We examine the ways in which the interaction between gender and race/ethnicity influences the content of Internet pornographic materials, in particular expressions of aggression and affection. Our study is also the first to offer various measures of aggression, based on differing definitions, trying to address ongoing debates in the literature over the "correct" way to measure aggression in content analyses of sexually explicit materials (Bridges, Wosnitzer, Scharrer, Sun, & Liberman, 2010; McKee, 2015).

#### **Literature Review**

Previous research has looked at aggressive content in pornographic magazines, books, movies, video covers, and Internet videos. Estimates of the amount of aggression in these media vary greatly, ranging from 1.9 (McKee, 2005) to 88.8% (Bridges

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et al., 2010). Previous research, up until 2010, looked almost exclusively at magazines and books (Barron & Kimmel, 2000; Dietz & Sears, 1988; Malamuth & Spinner, 1980; Scott & Cuvelier, 1993; Smith, 1976; Winick, 1985), at online discussion boards (Harmon & Boeringer, 1997; Mehta & Plaza, 1997; Micheal & Plaza, 1997; Rimm, 1995), or at rented videos (Barron & Kimmel, 2000; Bridges et al., 2010; Brosius, Weaver, & Staab, 1993; Cowan & Campbell, 1994; Cowan, Lee, Levy, & Snyder, 1988; Dietz & Sears, 1988; McKee, 2005; Monk-Turner & Purcell, 1999). These media have substantial differences from free Internet pornography in terms of accessibility, affordability, and anonymity, which may affect both the content and the identity of potential users. Only during the last 8 years, however, have studies begun to examine more systematically the content of free Internet pornographic videos and the prevalence of aggression in them (Gorman, Monk-Turner, & Fish, 2010; Klaassen & Peter, 2015; Zhou & Paul, 2016). We therefore still know relatively little about the content of these videos (Vannier, Currie, & O'Sullivan, 2014).

Furthermore, most previous studies examined women as a monolithic group of victims, paying little attention to differences among women and among men and to the interactions among them. In particular, the role of race and ethnicity in shaping the practices and principles of the adult entertainment industry remains undertheorized and understudied (Bernardi, 2006; Brooks & Hebert, 2006; Miller-Young, 2010, 2014; Shimizu, 2007). Hill Collins (2000) argued that we must conceptualize pornography as an example of the interlocking nature of race, gender, and class oppression. Dines (2006) noted that although racial differences have traditionally been defined and coded through gender, previous feminist analyses of porn have often excluded race, as well as economic and social inequalities. Brooks (2010), who studied the exotic dance industry, also identified a void in the theoretical analyses of racial and sexual hierarchies within sex industries. Finally, Pyke and Johnson (2003) suggested that this research paucity extends beyond the analysis of sexually explicit materials and sex work, as little empirical work has integrated the doing of gender with the study of race.

Indeed, a review of previous systematic analyses of pornographic content shows that most of them have neglected the role of race and ethnicity, with a few notable exceptions. Smith's (1976) analysis of paperback "adult-only" books showed that non-White ethnicities were almost completely absent. Winick (1985) similarly found that only about one percent of pornographic magazine content featured non-White women. Brosius et al. (1993), who examined 50 pornographic videotapes, noted an increase in the prevalence of African and Asian actors over the years. However, they did not examine the effect of race or ethnicity on aggressive pornographic content. Cowan and Campbell (1994) examined 54 rental videos of White and Black performers. They found that interracial combinations yielded more aggressive acts than homogenous ones. White men performed more acts of aggression against Black women than against White women, while Black men performed more acts of aggression against White women than against Black women. Monk-Turner and Purcell (1999) also looked at Black and White performers in 40 videocassettes, finding that Black women experienced more aggression from both White and Black men than was the case for White women. The latter experienced the least amount of aggression when paired with a Black man. Finally, Zhou and Paul (2016) examined 170 Internet videos appearing in the "Asian" category. They found that these videos included a lower mean number of aggressive acts compared with videos from other categories (e.g., "Blonde," "teen," "cumshot," and "big tits").

While these previous studies serve as important landmarks in our understanding of the role of race and ethnicity in pornographic sexual aggression, they share a number of shortcomings. First, they all defined aggression quite broadly and did not consider the issue of consent in their definition (see more in our "Method" section). Second, they used either a convenience or random sample of videos rather than a sample of more highly watched videos, putting in question the amount of exposure that these videos actually received (and therefore their cultural impact). Furthermore, Cowan and Campbell (1994) and Monk-Turner and Purcell (1999) relied on a sample of rented videos, which likely differs significantly in terms of audience, accessibility, length, and production from more recent pornographic materials available on the web. Finally, all three previous studies focused on one visible minority group (either Black men and women or Asian women) and did not make comparisons between different minority groups and the various gender and racial interactions among them.

The current study thus offers the first comprehensive theoretical discussion and empirical analysis of the interaction between gender and various major racial and ethnic categories. We examine the association between these interactions and various practices and behaviors in popular Internet pornography, focusing on aggression and degradation on the one hand, and expressions of affection and pleasure on the other hand.

# Theoretical Framework and Research Hypotheses: Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Aggression

Previous analyses of pornographic materials have often focused primarily on female performers and the acts done to them. Male performers, their identities, and differences among them remain invisible in many of these analyses. Following Dines (2006), we argue that a comprehensive gendered approach must take into account both "fuckers" and "fuckees," as well as their diverging racial and ethnic categorizations. While heterosexual pornography almost categorically defines all men as "fuckers" and all women as "fuckees," this may have very different meanings and consequences for White men and women and for minority men and women. We must therefore pay closer attention to the interaction of gender and race/ethnicity and to various couplings between men and women from different racial and ethnic groups.

## Visible Minority Men in the Media and in Porn

Masculinity scholars have long suggested that hegemonic (White) masculinity and sexuality are in constant negotiation with the masculinity of Blacks and other racial and ethnic minorities (Bordo, 1999; Connell, 1995; Shor, 2008; Shor & Yonay, 2010, 2011, 2014). Hill Collins (2004) argued that Black masculinity is a fluid category, in that any man of color can become marked as Black when failing to conform to the disciplinary practices of White masculinity. Over the last few decades, a considerable body of scholarly literature has examined the media representation of Black men. Black men have been defined by White culture as the ultimate idealized "other," failing to meet just about any standard of "normal" White masculinity (Snead & MacCabe, 1994). They have been portrayed as irresponsible and lacking, and as pimps who engage in abnormal and dirty sexual practices (Dines, 2006). In the context of aggression, Black men have long been associated in public opinion with violence and criminality (Chiricos, Welch, & Gertz, 2004; Sigelman & Tuch, 1996; Sniderman & Thomas, 1993), largely fueled by their portrayal in American media as being disproportionally engaged in criminal and violent activities (Gerbner, 2003; Glassner, 1999; Hughey & Hernandez, 2013; Tukachinsky, Mastro, & Tarchi, 2015).

More specific to sexuality, Black men are often believed to be sexual predators and rapists (Welch, 2007). Various scholars have traced the roots of these perceptions to slavery and the historical construction of Black men as sexual beasts: hypersexual and crazy savages with an uncontrollable sexual desire for White women (Cowan & Campbell, 1994; Dines, 2003; Gardner, 1980; Williams, 2010). According to Dines (2006), pornography is the one genre that treats all bodies, but in particular Black men's bodies unapologetically, without the restraints of political correctness. The genre promises audiences that these bodies will be out-of-control and reveal the inner savage in the form of a (violent) pimp with an enormous penis, a thug, a rapist, or a gorilla.

Hispanic/Latino men and Asian men have traditionally been absent from both mainstream media (Brooks & Hebert, 2006; Tukachinsky et al., 2015) and pornography (Dines, 2006), and thus largely also from the academic literature that analyzes mass media. When Latin men do appear on mainstream television shows in recent years, their representations tend to be quite positive, but they are also hypersexualized (Tukachinsky et al., 2015). Furthermore, Latino men are frequently perceived and portrayed as low status criminals with a potential for violence (Vasquez, 2010). In contrast, Asian men are often both feminized and desexualized in Western media (Chen, 1996; Kramer, 2016). Films and shows often mock Asians' lack of sexual prowess and adequacy, presenting them as weak and emasculated by White men, unable to satisfy women, and thus unworthy of both Asian and White women (Brooks & Hebert, 2006). These common portrayals lead us to expect the following:

**H1** Videos featuring Black male performers will have higher levels of male aggression compared with videos featuring White male performers.

**H2** Videos featuring Latino male performers will have higher levels of male aggression compared with videos featuring White male performers.

**H3** Videos featuring Asian male performers will have lower levels of male aggression compared with videos featuring White male performers.

# Visible Minority Women in the Media and in Pornography

The majority of the previous literature on media representations of minorities has focused on women, in particular Black women. The work of Black feminist scholars and activists such as Hill Collins and bell hooks has outlined and challenged the social images of Black women in America as aggressive, domineering, and unfeminine. Feminist scholars have highlighted the stereotypical portrayals of Black women in various media as mammies, matriarchs, welfare mothers, tragic mulattoes, and Jezebels (Hill Collins, 2000, 2004; hooks, 1992, 1994; West, 1995). These stereotypes both reflect and distort the ways in which Black women look at themselves and the ways in which others view them (Hudson, 1998). The Jezebel image is especially prominent in multiple media representations of Black women, including film, television, and music videos (Bordo, 2003; Brooks & Hebert, 2006; Hill Collins, 2000; hooks, 1992; Turner, 2011), as well as in pornography (Dines, 2006). This imagery, which originated during slavery, is one of a "bad Black girl," who is seductive, hypersexual, lascivious, promiscuous, and exploits men's weaknesses. Her lewd and wanton behavior, often equated to that of an animal in heat, provokes oppression, sexual exploitation, and sexual assault (including rape), designed to tame her by brutalizing her into submission.

Aggression may also be more common in videos featuring Black female performers because of Black women's lower status within the sex industry. Brooks (2010) reported less demand for dark-skin exotic dancers, who suffer from stereotypes and marginalization. Consequently, Black dancers are required to work harder for their money and adopt practices that are more dangerous in order to remain in the industry. They also report suffering more harassment and violence and a lower sense of security. Similarly, Miller-Young (2010, 2014) and Reece (2015) argued that Black women are especially devalued (more so than other women of color) in the porn industry, suffering from lower status lower demand and lower salaries. Consequently, they are usually relegated to limited categories and required to perform scenes that are viewed as more degrading, involving a wider variety of sex acts. Indeed, empirical studies of Black women in pornography found that they suffer from more aggression compared with their White counterparts (Cowan & Campbell, 1994; Monk-Turner & Purcell, 1999).

As is the case with men, the literature on Latina and Asian women in the media and in porn is more limited (Brooks, 2010), and representations of both Latina and Asian women remain relatively rare on television and in film (Tukachinsky et al., 2015). This absence highlights the fact that the pornography industry is one of the few media where Latina and Asian women have relatively higher visibility and points to the possible importance of this industry in shaping and reproducing stereotypes about women from these groups. Media depictions of Latina women have been somewhat similar to those of Black women, although usually not as threatening (Brooks, 2010; Hill Collins, 2004; Vasquez, 2010). In the few films and music videos where they do receive a more substantial role, they are usually portrayed as exotic seductresses and animalistic hypersexualized spitfires, with an emphasis on their physical attributes, such as breasts, hips, and buttocks (Gomez, 2008; Holtzman, 2014; Molina Guzman & Valdivia, 2004). No previous study has looked specifically at Latina women in pornography.

Finally, the representation of Asian women in the media, and specifically in pornography, has received some scholarly attention. Tajima (1989), who studied the historical images of Asian women in American media, argued that they were mostly depicted using one of two stereotypes: A "Dragon Lady" or a "Lotus Blossom." The first stereotype (Dragon Lady) is of a woman who is sexy, exotic, attractive, and actively seductive, but also cunning and deceitful. The second (Lotus Blossom) is of a good, innocent, childlike, docile, passive, and submissive doll, eager to please her man (see also Hagedron, 1997; Nakamatsu, 2005; Uchida, 1998). These stereotypes are also dominant in pornographic depictions of Asian women (Shimizu, 2007). Zhou and Paul (2016), who compared online pornographic videos from the "Asian Women" category to other videos, found that the former had a significantly lower mean number of aggressive acts per scene. They concluded that Asian women were treated less aggressively in porn and are less objectified and therefore that their stereotype is closer to "Lotus Blossom" than it is to "Dragon Lady."

In conclusion, the theoretical and empirical literature presented in this section may lead us to expect the following hierarchy in terms of porn violence: Videos including Black women will have the highest rates of aggression, followed by those including Latina women, White women, and finally Asian women (who will suffer from the lowest rates of aggression).

**H4** Videos featuring Black female performers will have higher levels of male aggression compared with videos featuring White female performers.

**H5** Videos featuring Latina female performers will have higher levels of male aggression in comparison with videos featuring White female performers, but lower levels of aggression compared with videos including Black female performers.

**H6** Videos featuring Asian female performers will have lower levels of male aggression compared with videos featuring White female performers.

# Method

## Sample

#### **Sampling Method**

We coded mainstream videos from Pornhub, the world's top adult Web site according to Alexa Internet Inc., and the 60th most visited site on the Internet as of 2016, with more than 60 million daily visits (van der Linde, 2016). Similar to other recent analyses (Bridges et al., 2010; Klaassen & Peter, 2015; McKee, 2005; Shor, in press; Shor & Seida, 2018), we sought to analyze the most watched videos from each of our predefined categories, rather than employing convenience or random sampling methods. This strategy was designed to increase generalizability and explore the porn content that is most likely to be watched by wide audiences (and therefore have a potentially larger cultural impact). Hence, all of the videos in our sample received at least two million visits.

#### Purposive Sampling for Racial/Ethnic Diversity

Most previous content analyses of pornography were not able to reach substantial variation in race/ethnicity, either because they targeted the most watched or rented videos (Bridges et al., 2010; Klaassen & Peter, 2015; McKee, 2005) or because they used convenience or random sampling techniques (Gorman et al., 2010; Monk-Turner & Purcell, 1999). We therefore chose to employ a purposive sampling technique. We first sampled 50 videos from Pornhub's general all-time most watched list. As most of the videos on this list included sexual interactions between a White (North American) man and a White (North American) woman, we sought to increase representation for other racial groups and the sexual interactions among them. We therefore purposively sampled additional all-time most watched videos from each of the following Pornhub categories: "Interracial" (25 videos), "Ebony" (52 videos), "Asian/Japanese" (35 videos), and "Latina" (19 videos), as well as "Gay" (25 videos). In total, this preliminary sampling resulted in a pool of 206 coded videos.

## **Exclusion Criteria and Final Sample**

We excluded from the current analysis all videos that did not include women (all 25 videos from the "Gay" category) or did not include men (4 videos), as we focus here on violence of men against women. We also excluded videos containing more than two participants (5 videos). This process resulted in a final sample of 172 videos, including at least 25 videos for each of the following racial/ethnic combinations: White man with White woman, White man with Black woman, Black man with White woman, Black man with Black woman, Asian woman (any partner), and Latina woman (any partner). Other racial combinations (e.g., Asian man with White woman or Latino man with Black woman) were not accessible through Pornhub categories of the most watched videos.

Table 1 presents key descriptive statistics for our various variables. All 172 videos in the final sample were uploaded to Pornhub between 2000 and 2016. Almost 95% of these videos were produced professionally, and their length was between about 3 min and 87 min. Table 1 also presents statistics on the racial composition of our sample. The majority of male performers were White. Women were more evenly distributed between the racial/ethnic categories, with 37.2% White (81.6% in the "All" category), 27.9% Black, 15.7% Latina, and 17.4% Asian. As for racial/ethnic combinations, the only combinations with at least eight occurrences (4.7% of the sample) were the following: White men with any of the four main racial/ethnic categories of women, Black men with either White or Black women, Asian men with Asian women, and Latino men with Latina women.

## Measure

## Aggression/Violence

McKee (2005, 2015) discussed at length various methodological and conceptual issues related to the definition of aggression in content analyses of sexually explicit materials (SEM). McKee argued that while most former analyses of SEM have dismissed consent in their definition of aggression, this omission leads to problems in understanding the relationship between SEM and

#### Table 1 Descriptive statistics

	All videos ( $n = 172$ )	"All" most viewed $(n=49)$	Specific categories $(n=123)$
General video characteristics			
Amateur video (%)	5.2	12.2	2.4
Video duration (min): Avg. Duration (min-max)	16.9 (2.7-87.0)	15.4 (2.7–41.3)	17.5 (3.0-87.0)
Number of views (millions): Avg. views (min-max)	13.4 (2.4–116.7)	26.1 (4.5-116.7)	8.4 (2.4–24.2)
Year uploaded to Web site: Avg. year (min-max)	2010.9 (2000–2016)	2011.2 (2008–2015)	2010.8 (2000-2016)
Race/ethnicity			
Men			
White (%)	55.2	87.8	42.3
Black (%)	29.7	8.2	38.2
Latino/Latina (%)	4.7	4.1	4.9
Asian (%)	9.9	0.0	13.8
Middle Eastern (%)	0.6	0.0	0.8
Women			
White (%)	37.2	81.6	19.5
Black (%)	27.9	0.0	39.0
Latino/Latina (%)	15.7	16.3	15.5
Asian (%)	17.4	0.0	24.4
Middle Eastern (%)	1.2	2.0	0.8
Racial composition			
White man with White woman (%)	21.5	73.5	0.8
White man with Black woman (%)	15.1	0.0	21.1
White man with Asian woman (%)	7.6	0.0	10.6
White man with Latina woman (%)	10.5	12.2	9.8
Black man with White woman (%)	15.1	6.1	18.7
Black man with Black woman (%)	12.2	0.0	17.1
Asian man with Asian woman (%)	9.3	0.0	13.0
Latin man with Latina woman (%)	4.7	4.1	4.9
Other (%)	4.0	4.1	4.0

healthy sexual development. McKee therefore advocated for a careful inspection of the interactions in SEM, treating consent as an ongoing process, which considers the entirety of the sexual interaction and takes into account both physical and verbal expressions of consent.

While McKee's insights are important for our understanding and treatment of aggression in porn, the majority of former content analyses in this field have used a much broader definition of aggression, one that does not focus on consent (Barron & Kimmel, 2000; Bridges et al., 2010; Cowan & Campbell, 1994; Cowan et al., 1988; Gorman et al., 2010; Klaassen & Peter, 2015; Malamuth & Spinner, 1980; Monk-Turner & Purcell, 1999; Scott & Cuvelier, 1993). Bridges et al. summarized the rationale for employing a broader and more inclusive definition, claiming that the genre of pornography often requires performers to express enjoyment following just about any act or situation. Considering these powerful expectations, they argued, almost no act would be coded as aggressive under a definition that requires a target to clearly show displeasure, rendering sexual aggression invisible. Bridges et al. (2010) therefore defined aggression as "any purposeful action causing physical or psychological harm to oneself or another person, whereby psychological harm is understood as assaulting another verbally or nonverbally" (p. 1072).

Recognizing the merits of both approaches, in the present study we adopted two different operational measurements of aggression. The first, in line with Bridges et al. (2010) and most other previous studies, focused on the acts themselves and on the apparent intent to cause harm. Following this definition (henceforth: "physical aggression: visible"), we coded the following acts as physically aggressive: (1) biting; (2) pinching; (3) kicking; (4) pulling hair; (5) hitting of the face; (6) hitting of the body; (7) choking; (8) forced gagging; (9) spanking; (10) sadomasochism; (11) rough handling (e.g., pushing, shoving, tossing, shaking); and (12) forceful penetration (vaginal or anal) with penis, hand, or another object, with an apparent intent to cause pain/discomfort. We also noted the duration of each of these acts relative to the duration of the entire video. Next, in line with McKee's (2015) conceptualization of aggression (henceforth: "physical aggression: nonconsensual"), we watched carefully for both verbal and physical cues for lack of consent. These could include either explicit verbal requests to stop or avoid a certain act, nonverbal signs of resistance, attempts to avoid the act, or evident unhappiness at being in the situation or performing a certain act, which were nevertheless ignored by the other party. Whenever such verbal or nonverbal cues appeared, we coded the video as containing nonconsensual aggression.

We also paid special attention to the title of the video, which contains important information and serves as a major marketing tool. For each video, we determined whether the title suggests aggression. Examples of titles suggesting aggression are "Gigantic Cock Rips Skinny Bitch" and "Teeny Booper Kidnapped by Huge Black Cock." Examples of more neutral titles include "Stunning MILF Has the Most Spectacular Tits" and "Office Asian Fuck." Finally, we also noted the occurrence of affection (e.g., kissing, caressing, face stroking, and sweet-talking) and women's pleasure responses and displays.

#### Race/Ethnicity

Our sampling strategy sought to capture a wide variety of racial/ ethnic groups and the various interactions among them. While we clearly recognize that racial and ethnic categorizations are social constructions, rather than biological categories, these social constructions have a significant impact on social realities. In other words, the ways in which viewers perceive the race or ethnicity of performers and the typical stereotypes associated with them affect the perception and often also the treatment of the corresponding ethnic and racial groups in everyday life. We used the following cues in determining performers' race/ ethnicity: (1) the titles of videos, (2) the categories in which videos were classified (e.g., "Ebony"), (3) the tags awarded to each video (e.g., "Asian," "Ebony," "Czech," "Brunette," and "Latina"), and (4) the physical appearance of performers (in cases where the video did not otherwise indicate race or ethnicity). The first three indicators (title, category, and tag) are important because even if the performer is not actually what the title or tag suggests (e.g., a "Muslim Middle Eastern" who is actually portrayed by a White American-born woman), the title, category, and tag serve as an important part of the fantasy marketed to viewers. We were able to categorize all 354 participants into one of the following racial/ethnic categories: Caucasian American, Caucasian European, light-skinned Middle Eastern, dark-skinned Middle Eastern, Black (Afro-American), biracial or light-skinned Black, Latino/Latina, South-East Asian, and East Asian. Since many of these initial categories included very few observations, we collapsed them in the final analyses into four major categories: White (including light-skinned Middle Eastern), Black (including light-skinned Black), Latino/Latina, and Asian.

#### Covariates

We also coded information for four theoretically important covariates: (1) whether the video was amateur or professional; (2) the duration of the video; (3) the number of views the videos received; and (4) the year in which the video was uploaded. We coded videos as *amateur* relying primarily on the tags associated with them (labeling them as "amateur"). Theoretically, one might expect amateur videos to contain less aggressive and degrading acts (and more affectionate acts), as (female) performers should have more control and autonomy. We also controlled in our multivariate regression analyses for video duration (in minutes), assuming that longer videos would have a higher likelihood of presenting aggressive acts, simply because they contain more sexual content. On the other hand, we expected the number of views (in millions) to be negatively associated with aggression, as more popular videos may be less likely to portray esoteric sexual activities. Finally, we control for the year in which the video was uploaded to Pornhub, in order to assess potential temporal changes in the content of pornographic videos over the years.

# Coding

The two female coders were students with good familiarity of sexually explicit materials from previous research projects. They both coded all of the videos in the sample separately and then met to compare their coding. The coders first met several times with the project leader (the first author), who trained them in the method and coding scheme. Before coding from the actual sample, they each coded separately five trial videos. The research team then met to discuss the coding and resolve unclear issues. Next, the coders continued to code together all 206 videos. Finally, the project leader watched all of the videos to ascertain coding accuracy, paying special attention to the coding of aggression.

Inter-coder agreement between students' coding and the project leader's coding was high, with 94.42% agreement for aggressive titles, 89.59% agreement for visible aggression, and 96.28% agreement for nonconsensual aggression. In the few cases where we encountered disagreements over the interpretation of content, the entire team met to discuss the issues and reached a resolution for the video in question. While previous studies often used "scene" or "character" as their unit of analysis (Bridges et al., 2010; Cowan & Campbell, 1994; Klaassen & Peter, 2015; McKee, 2005), we chose to use the entire video as our unit of analysis, in order to prevent overrepresentation for longer videos. We should note, however, that most of the videos in our sample only consisted of one sex scene.

# Results

# **Overall Aggression and Pleasure Responses**

In line with previous research, we found that men were much more likely to perform aggressive or degrading acts than were women. A total of 43% of the videos in our sample included visible physical aggression (not considering consent in the definition). When adopting a more restrictive definition of aggression, one that considers lack of consent as a key element (McKee, 2015), the ratio of aggression in our sample dropped considerably to 15.1% (16 videos). Furthermore, even videos that included aggressive acts were not entirely aggressive. On average, visibly aggressive acts constituted about 20% of these videos, while the rest of the video often included sexual acts that were not aggressive and sometimes even affectionate (e.g., kissing and caressing). The most common forms of aggression and degradation were forced gagging (24.4%), forceful vaginal penetration (20.4%), spanking (13.4%), and rough handling (12.8%). Other acts that may be considered degrading, such as ejaculation on face (22.1%) or in mouth (29.1%), were also quite common.

## **Racial/Ethnic Categorizations and Aggression**

Table 2 shows the percentage of videos including women and men from each racial/ethnic category, which (1) had a title that suggests aggression, (2) included visible physical aggression, and (3) included nonconsensual physical aggression. Only three groups of men (Caucasian American, Black, and East Asian) appeared in at least five videos. Of these, Black men were most likely to appear in videos with titles that suggest aggression (32.7%). In line with our first two hypotheses (H1 and H2), more than half (53.3%) of the videos with Black men and half (50.0%) of the videos featuring Latino men portrayed visible aggression, compared with about one-third of the videos for White men. However, in contrast to our preliminary expectations (H3), Asian men were the most likely to appear in videos depicting aggression (more than two-thirds of the videos including Asian men exhibited visible aggression). Asian men were also the most likely to appear in videos where nonconsensual aggression occurred (43.8% of the videos including Asian men).

As for women, Table 2 shows that the sample included four groups of race/ethnicity that appeared in at least 25 videos: White, Black, Latina, and Asian. Of these, White and Black women were less likely to appear in videos showing visible aggression (about one-third of the videos for each of these groups). While these findings confirm our preliminary expectations for White women, they are quite surprising for Black women, as we expected women from this group to suffer the highest rate of aggression (H4). More in line with our preliminary predictions (H5), more than half (51.9%) of the videos containing Latina women depicted visible aggression. Finally, again in complete contrast to our expectations (H6), aggression was present in three quarters of the videos containing Asian women, a much higher rate than for any other group of women in our study. Videos featuring Asian women were also most likely to include nonconsensual violence (more than one-third of these videos, compared to about 14% for White women).

In Tables 3 and 4, we present logistic regression and OLS models for the following dependent variables: (1) title aggression, (2) visible aggression, (3) the weight of aggression in the video, (4) nonconsensual aggression, and (5) displays of affection. Table 3 presents mostly odds ratios for the effects of gender and race/ethnicity. Model 1 shows that videos featuring a Black man were four times more likely to receive an aggressive title than those featuring a White man. Black men were also three times more likely to appear in videos depicting visible male aggression (Model 2) and more likely to appear in videos with

	Ν		Title suggests a	suggests aggression	Aggression: visible	sible	Aggression: nonconsensual	nconsensual	Physical affection	uc
	Men	Women	Men (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Race/ethnicity										
All	172	172	16.2	16.2	43.0	43.0	15.1	15.1	12.2	12.2
Caucasian American	76	63	9.3	23.8	33.0	30.2	7.2	14.3	14.4	11.1
Caucasian European	2	2	0.0	0.0	100.0	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Light-skinned Middle Eastern	1	1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Dark-skinned Middle Eastern	I	1	I	0.0	Ι	0.0	I	0.0	I	0.0
Black (Afro-American)	49	42	32.7	9.5	53.1	33.3	22.5	9.5	10.2	11.9
Biracial/light-skinned Black	2	9	0.0	33.3	0.0	66.7	0.0	16.7	0.0	16.7
Latino/Latina	4	27	0.0	11.1	50.0	51.9	0.0	7.4	50.0	22.2
South-East Asian	1	2	0.0	0.0	100.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
East Asian	16	28	18.8	14.3	68.8	75.0	43.8	35.7	6.3	3.6
Visible minority status										
White	66	69	$9.1^{**}$	23.1^	$34.3^{**}$	$30.8^{*}$	8.1**	13.9	14.1	10.8
Visible minority	73	108	$26.0^{**}$	12.1^	54.8**	50.5*	24.7**	15.9	9.6	13.1
Chi-square test (p value)			8.84 (0.003)	3.06 (0.060)	7.17 (0.007)	$6.40\ (0.011)$	9.00 (0.003)	0.13 (0.717)	0.81 (0.367)	0.20 (0.653)
$^{h}p$ < .10; $^{*}p$ < .05; $^{**}p$ < .01; $^{***}p$ < .001	<i>p</i> <.001									

 Table 2
 Race, affection, and aggression against women

a higher percentage of aggression as a share of the entire video than White men were (Model 3). Latino and Asian men were also much more likely to appear in videos with a higher share of aggression when compared with White men. Videos featuring Latina and Asian women were about five times more likely to include visible aggression than videos featuring White women, but this was not the case for Black women. In fact, examining the predictors of nonconsensual aggression (Model 4 of the table) showed that Black women were about four times *less* likely to be the recipients of aggression compared with White women. Black women were also much more likely to be the recipients of affection from men compared with White women (Model 5).

Finally, Table 4 presents mostly odds ratios for the effects of various racial/ethnic interactions on our measures of aggression. Model 1 of the table shows that videos including an interaction between a Black man and a White woman were considerably more likely to receive a title that suggests aggression. These videos were also much more likely to present visual aggression (Model 2). Nonconsensual aggression in videos including this combination (Black man and White woman) was also higher than in videos including a White man and a White woman, but the difference was not statistically significant (Model 4). However, when comparing the interaction of a Black man and White woman or a Black man with a Black woman, the difference was statistically significant (p < .05), with nonconsensual aggression four

times more likely in the videos including a Black man and a White woman (results not presented in the table). These findings suggest that while Black men are generally portrayed as more aggressive, this was only the case when they were paired with a White woman.

Model 2 of Table 4 also shows that videos containing other diverse racial/ethnic interactions were more likely to include visible aggression compared with videos including an all-White ensemble. This includes videos depicting a White man with an Asian woman, a White man with a Latina woman, an Asian man with an Asian woman, and a Latino man with a Latina woman (the last two combinations were also more likely to include aggression as a major part of the video, as shown in Model 3). Surprisingly, the only interactions that were not more likely to include visible aggression (compared with those including an all-White duo) were those including a Black woman with either a White or a Black man. In addition, Black women (with either a White or a Black partner) were also more likely to receive affection from their partners compared with White women whose partner was a White man (p < .01; Model 5).

# Discussion

This study is the first to examine systematically the ways in which the interaction between gender and various racial and ethnic categories in online pornographic videos affects different measures of aggression and affection. We found a number of

Table 3 Logistic regression and OLS: Predictors of aggression against women by gender and race

	Model 1: Title sug- gests aggression	Model 2: Aggres- sion (visual)	Model 3: % of video showing aggression (OLS)	Model 4: Aggression (nonconsensual)	Model 5: Physical affec- tion
Race/ethnicity: Men					
White	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference
Black	4.29** (2.69)	3.21* (2.45)	7.52* (2.05)	2.59 (1.33)	0.94 (-0.07)
Latino	Omitted	1.69 (0.54)	25.13** (3.12)	1.11 (0.07)	1.74 (0.50)
Asian	2.49 (0.82)	1.17 (0.18)	23.65*** (3.58)	1.74 (0.64)	5.69 (0.77)
Race/ethnicity: Women					
White	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference
Black	0.37 (-1.64)	0.75 (-0.59)	1.47 (0.37)	0.23* (-2.05)	7.53* (2.18)
Latina	1.09 (0.11)	4.91* (2.38)	0.1 (0.02)	3.09 (0.75)	4.18^ (1.68)
Asian	0.47 (-0.76)	5.14* (2.23)	8.09 (1.40)	1.07 (0.07)	0.44 (-0.36)
Controls					
Amateur video	0.98 (-0.02)	Omitted	-4.06 (-0.54)	Omitted	16.71** (2.78)
Video duration (min)	1.04** (2.59)	1.02 (1.29)	-0.17 (-1.45)	1.03 (1.58)	1.01 (0.57)
Number of views (millions)	1.01 (0.31)	0.91** (-2.87)	-0.19 (-1.31)	0.73** (-2.80)	1.10** (2.68)
Year uploaded to Web site	0.95 (-0.73)	1.02 (0.30)	-0.12 (-0.24)	0.86^ (-1.81)	1.13 (1.11)
N videos	164	163	172	163	172

^ p < .10; \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001

Models 1-2 and 4-5 present the results of a logistic regression, with odds ratio coefficients and two-tailed *t* statistics in parentheses. Model 3 present the results of an OLS regression, with unstandardized regression coefficients and two-tailed *t* statistics in parentheses

Table 4	Logistic regression and	OLS: Predictors	of aggression	against women	by racial combinations
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	Model 1: Title sug- gests aggression	Model 2: Aggres- sion (visual)	Model 3: % of video showing aggression (OLS)	Model 4: Aggression (nonconsensual)	Model 5: Physical affec- tion
Race/ethnicity					
White man with White woman	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference
White man with Black woman	0.78 (-0.19)	1.42 (0.46)	-2.20 (-0.37)	0.36 (-0.74)	8.79^ (1.89)
White man with Asian woman	1.04 (0.03)	9.01* (2.42)	6.73 (0.97)	1.53 (0.32)	Omitted
White man with Latina woman	1.91 (0.73)	6.70* (2.47)	-0.50 (-0.09)	4.91 (0.91)	4.70^ (1.70)
Black man with White woman	10.98** (2.85)	5.99* (2.45)	4.88 (0.89)	5.28 (1.37)	1.20 (0.14)
Black man with Black woman	3.02 (1.13)	2.37 (1.04)	7.58 (1.20)	0.58 (-0.39)	8.13^ (1.81)
Asian man with Asian woman	2.76 (0.93)	6.45* (2.07)	28.75*** (4.24)	2.53 (0.72)	3.28 (0.82)
Latino man with Latina woman	Omitted	12.06* (2.50)	23.97** (3.12)	5.36 (1.02)	7.74^ (1.73)
Controls					
Amateur video	1.02 (0.02)	Omitted	-4.52 (-0.59)	Omitted	16.56** (2.77)
Video duration (min)	1.04** (2.75)	1.02 (1.37)	-0.16 (-1.39)	1.04^ (1.82)	1.01 (0.56)
Number of views (millions)	1.04 (1.33)	0.91** (-2.68)	-0.33 (-1.64)	0.72** (-2.88)	1.10** (2.69)
Year uploaded to Web site	0.93 (-0.88)	0.99 (-0.21)	-0.29 (-0.54)	0.80* (-2.30)	1.14 (1.19)
N videos	157	157	165	157	157

p < .1; \*p < .05; \*\*p < .01; \*\*\*p < .001

Models 1–2 and 4–5 present the results of a logistic regression, with odds ratio coefficients and two-tailed t statistics in parentheses. Model 3 presents the results of an OLS regression, with unstandardized regression coefficients and two-tailed t statistics in parentheses

important tendencies, some of them surprising. First, 43% of all videos depicted visible aggression. This figure is considerably lower when compared with the findings of Bridges et al. (2010), who reported that nearly 90% of the most watched rented videos were aggressive. It is closer to Klaassen and Peter's (2015) findings that about 37% of all Internet videos contained physically violent acts.

As for race/ethnicity, confirming our preliminary expectations and the results of previous studies, we found that Black and Latino men were more likely to use aggression compared with White men. This finding is in line with the common media portrayal and public image of Black and Latino men as sexual beasts—violent and hypersexualized. Such representations affect public opinion and the stereotypical images of Black and Latino men. Tukachinsky et al. (2015) found that televised representations of Black men as sexual characters increased viewers' negative attitudes toward Blacks (let alone, when such sexual representations are aggressive, as they often are in pornography).

More surprisingly, we also found that videos featuring Asian men were significantly more likely to portray male aggression. In fact, this was the group most likely to engage in both visible and nonconsensual aggression. This finding appears to contradict common Western media images of Asian men as weak, effeminate, and nonaggressive. However, the videos featuring Asian men were not produced by Western production companies (which almost invariably exclude Asian men from their productions). In fact, all of these videos were products of the Japanese adult entertainment industry, which has unique characteristics that distinguish it from Western pornography. This industry includes notable and popular genres that often portray women as victims and men as molesters and abusers, such as *reipu* (rape), *kankin* (imprisonment), and *chikan* (a molester on the train) (Wong & Yau, 2012).

As for women, perhaps the most surprising finding of our study was that Black female performers were the least likely group of women to suffer from nonconsensual aggression and were also more likely to be the recipients of affectionate acts from either White or Black male partners. These findings stand in contrast to the extensive literature on the media representation of Black women (Brooks & Hebert, 2006; Hill Collins, 2000; hooks, 1992) and more specifically the literature on Black women in the sex industry (Brooks, 2010; Miller-Young, 2010, 2014; Reece, 2015). They also contradict the findings of previous research on rental pornographic videos, which reported that Black women were more likely to suffer from aggression (Cowan & Campbell, 1994; Monk-Turner & Purcell, 1999).

One possible explanation for this discrepancy is that the common image of Black women in the sex industry is simply wrong. This conclusion is similar to that of Parrott and Titcomb Parrott (2015), who studied television crime-based dramas and found that White female television characters were, in fact, more likely to be the victims of crime and violence than Black women were. Another possible explanation for the surprising reduced aggression toward Black women is that by focusing on highly watched videos, we were not able to fully explore the relationship between gender, race, and aggression. In other words, it is possible that in videos that are less popular Black women suffer from greater levels of aggression. These videos are less likely to

include successful and well-known performers, and therefore it may be that it is there that the disadvantages of Black women in the sex industry are manifested.

While Black female performers were not more likely to suffer from aggression, videos featuring Latina and Asian performers did include a higher rate of aggression compared with those featuring White (or Black) female performers. This finding is especially counterintuitive with respect to Asian female performers, as they seem to stand in contrast with both previous literature about the most common media images of Asian women (Hagedron, 1997; Nakamatsu, 2005; Uchida, 1998) and the recent study by Zhou and Paul (2016) on aggression toward Asian women in pornographic videos. Furthermore, this finding cannot be attributed to differing norms in various porn industries, as Asian female performers were likely to suffer from aggression in both Japanese- and Western-produced videos (in fact, even slightly more so in the latter).

One possible explanation for this finding would be that the female performers in Asian videos are actually more likely to follow the "Dragon Lady" stereotype (seductive, cunning, deceitful, and deviant, requiring taming through aggression) than the "Lotus Blossom" one. However, this was not our impression when watching the videos. Asian women in the large majority of the videos were passive, submissive, or eager to please, and certainly not more defiant than women from other racial groups. This means that Asian women are likely to suffer from greater aggression despite their relative passivity, and perhaps even because of it. Their lack of resistance is perceived as encouragement, and even when they do show discomfort or pain, these are likely to be ignored. This conclusion is in line with Gossett and Byrne's (2002) study of Internet rape sites, which found an overrepresentation of Asian women. It is also pursuant to the arguments of feminist scholars who linked the stereotypes of Asian women as passive doll-like "fucking machines" (Nowrojee & Silliman, 1997, p. 78) to sexual violence and a greater vulnerability to being mistreated by men who view them as easy targets (Pyke & Johnson, 2003; Zia, 1997).

Our findings highlight the need for rethinking the theoretical and empirical literature on the media representation of visible minority women. This literature has predominantly concentrated on Black women (Brooks & Hebert, 2006), paying relatively little attention to Latina and Asian women (partly because of their poor overall representation in American media). Yet, at least in the field of porn, it appears that the latter two groups actually suffer from greater levels of aggression, including nonconsensual aggression. The importance and influence of such negative pornographic representations (violent men; women who are routinely brutalized and humiliated) is further highlighted by the scarcity of alternative representations of Latin and Asian men and women in other media (Tukachinsky et al., 2015). Our findings point to a possible shift in the representation and status of Black women in pornography, which merits further scholarly attention. In addition, future research should seek to uncover the conditions

leading to the greater aggression toward Latina and Asian women in pornography. This research should also explore the experiences of Latina and Asian performers through ethnographic research and interviews, similar to the research conducted with Black women (Brooks, 2010; Miller-Young, 2010, 2014).

A final research finding that merits close inspection and discussion was the higher rates of aggression in the interaction of Black men with White women. Videos depicting this interaction tended to include not only a higher rate of visible physical aggression, but also a higher rate of titles that suggest aggressive behavior. Such titles foster a fantasy, even if this fantasy is not realized in the video. It is therefore interesting to ask why porn viewers, the majority of whom are White men (Anthony, 2012; Gorman et al., 2010; Hald & Stulhofer, 2016; Kimmel, 2008), enjoy videos that contain the fantasy or actual realization of aggressive acts conducted by Black men against White women. Dines (2003, 2006) offered one possible answer for this question. Dines argued that in pornography whiteness is a burden, as it requires restraint and self-control. Videos containing hypersexual Black men are liberating, because they provide White viewers with an opportunity to vicariously dispense with their Whiteness, lose control, and connect with animalistic urges.

Still, one may wonder why the videos containing a Black male performer with a White female performer were especially aggressive (as a fantasy, but also often in practice). Here, we may turn to the work of feminist scholars like Kimmel (2008) and Paul (2005), who interviewed young American men (mostly White) about their porn watching habits. These young men describe a world in which they feel powerless. Their access to sex, which they feel entitled to, is habitually blocked, primarily by young White women who deny them access to their bodies. This leads the men to feel frustrated and angry with these women for withholding sex. In this atmosphere, pornography serves as reassurance that women are indeed available, but also as a way of getting off while getting even, a site where women get what they "deserve." Seen in this light, the appeal of Black men and White women videos becomes clearer. What better way is there to punish these young women than to have them violated (preferably aggressively) by Black violent beasts? By being "required" or "forced" to have sex with these Black brutes (or get "blacked," as some video titles proclaim), they are "put back in their place," restoring the gendered balance of power and White men's sense of lost privilege and entitlement.

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