

**INFLUENCE OF PORNOGRAPHY USE AND ACCEPTANCE
TYPOLOGY ON SAME-SEX COUPLE RELATIONSHIP AND SEXUAL
SATISFACTION**

by

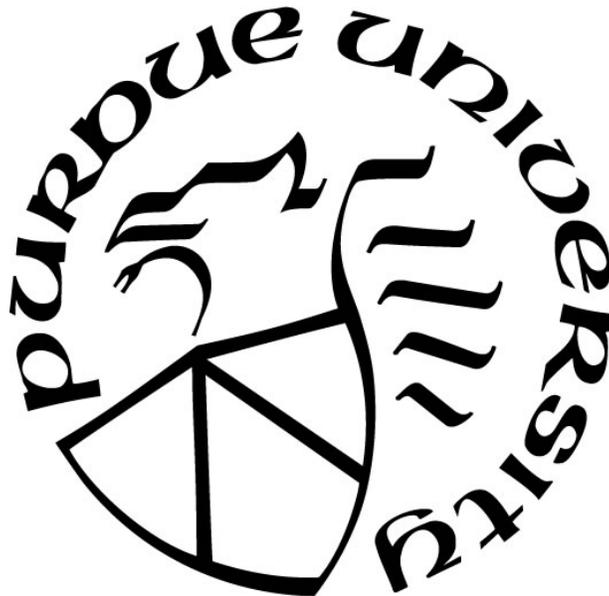
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*This is dedicated to everyone without the privilege to freely explore and express their sexuality.
May we find peace in challenging oppressive constructs that place limitations on the forms of
intimate encounters with our loved ones that are deemed acceptable.*

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ABSTRACT

This quantitative study sought to expand upon research surrounding the influence pornography use has on relationship and sexual satisfaction for gays and lesbians. Previous literature has primarily focused on the couple outcomes associated with pornography use for heterosexual romantic relationships. This research was conducted and conceptualized through the lens of queer and minority stress theory. It was hypothesized that amount of shared pornography use would be positively associated with relationship and sexual satisfaction for same-sex couples. Additionally, it was hypothesized that the relationship between amount of shared pornography use and relationship as well as sexual satisfaction for same-sex couples will be more strongly positively associated for a high level of acceptance of pornography use. Lastly, it was hypothesized that the relationship between the amount of shared pornography use and level of relationship as well as sexual satisfaction will be more strongly positively associated for women than men. Five of the six hypotheses were not statistically significant. The relationship between amount of shared pornography use and level of sexual satisfaction was strongly positively associated for higher levels of acceptance of pornography use. In addition, higher levels of acceptance of pornography use were related to higher levels of relationship satisfaction. Regarding control variables, relationship status was found to be significantly associated with relationship satisfaction. Participants who reported being either engaged or married indicated higher satisfaction with the current state of their romantic relationship than participants who were dating or cohabitating. Strengths and limitations, clinical implications, and future directions for research are explored.

CHAPTER 1: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Pornography is readily accessible in the United States, primarily as a result of the recent spike in technological advancements (Albright, 2008; Buzzell, 2005). Over 80% of Americans have access to the Internet on their mobile devices, and with mobile versions of websites a standard in current technology it stands to reason that many people are accessing and viewing pornography with ease through these devices (Pew Research Center, 2019). A majority of websites with sexually explicit material are free to access, making pornography easier for the public to view than ever before (Downing et al., 2017; French & Hamilton, 2018). Worldwide, visits to pornographic sites make up approximately 13% of all Internet traffic (Ogas & Gaddam, 2011), with the United States repeatedly coming in first place for having the highest daily traffic (MindGeek, 2018).

Accurately estimating the frequency of pornography use among Americans seems to be more difficult than accessing sexually explicit material in this day and age. This conundrum appears to be primarily due to the existing controversy and stigma around pornography use, especially while in a romantic relationship (Poulsen et al., 2013). However, in the United States, it is estimated that slightly above 45% of men and slightly above 15% of women purposefully view pornography within a given 7-day period (Regnerus et al., 2016). Time and again, previous research reports pornography use to be significantly higher among men than women, even after taking level of commitment into consideration (Carroll et al., 2017). Women who view pornography at the same rate as men are more likely to state that such sexually explicit content was viewed with their romantic partner present, whereas the same is not true for men (Maddox et al., 2011). Men appeared to view pornography at higher rates alone than with a partner (Carroll et al., 2017; Hald, 2006).

Gender differences in the rate of pornography use might be exaggerated because past studies focused primarily on men's pornography use in order to determine the impact that the presence of sexually explicit material has on a wide range of couple outcomes (Poulsen et al., 2013). Not to mention, previous research examining the potential influence pornography use may have on romantic relationships has predominantly focused on heterosexual couples (Newstrom & Harris, 2016). The number of same-sex couples in the United States will likely continue to increase following the legalization of same-sex marriages in 2015, with a growing number of same-sex couples living together (Cao et al., 2017). However, it is currently unclear to what extent research

conducted on heterosexual couples is applicable to same-sex couples. The influence pornography use has on level of relationship and sexual satisfaction for same-sex couples must be given attention in order to address the existing gap in the research. Since most research is conducted with heterosexual couples, the results of these studies cannot be applied in an isomorphic manner. The aim of this current study is to explore the potential role that pornography use can have on same-sex couples.

Previous research also appears to have mixed findings when it comes to the influence pornography can have on the level of relationship and sexual satisfaction among couples. Lack of clarity on the couple outcomes associated with the presence of sexually explicit material suggests that more research needs to be conducted, especially with non-heterosexual couples. Minimal research on the influence pornography use can have on same-sex couples calls for a sense of urgency in rethinking the accuracy of what society has labeled as healthy when it comes to the use of sexually explicit material while in a romantic relationship. Societal views cannot be completely ignored when investigating the relationship between pornography use and couple outcomes. It is important for future research on same-sex couples to adopt a framework that defines itself in opposition with complying to social norms not in opposition of heterosexuality (Warner, 1993).

A portion of the population views pornography as non-normative, which increases stigma; however, for some pornography use can be positive. Turning to sexually explicit material to normalize sexual desires might be a potential benefit that pornography can provide same-sex couples by promoting sexual expression, which is linked to instilling physical, mental, and emotional well-being through enhancing self-exploration (Knoble & Linville, 2012). Pornography use can potentially serve as an aid in enhancing sexual exploration by optimizing opportunities to obtain pleasure and possibly transforming the existing expectations around what should occur within the context of a romantic relationship. Sexual minorities are defined by dominant heterosexual norms, which contribute to an oppressed identity that causes an individual to experience heightened distress (Cao et al., 2017). Pornography can empower individuals to delve into as well as respond to their sexuality. Approaching this study from a queer theoretical framework is a way to gain a better understanding of unique ways in which sexuality can influence couple outcomes among the historically oppressed.

CHAPTER 2: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM

Pornography Use

There appears to be great variation in what constitutes “pornography” within the existing literature (Ashton et al., 2018; Campbell & Kohut, 2017). The lack of agreement in what the term entails supports the notion that the definition of pornography is highly dependent on surrounding contextual factors and individual preferences (Willoughby & Busby, 2016). This element can partially explain the inconsistencies in how pornography has been defined over the years, and contributes to the difficulty in accurately reporting the frequency at which pornography is viewed within the United States. This study sought out to address this concern by providing participants with a concrete definition of pornography. More specifically, “pornography” was defined as “material that typically intends to arouse the viewer and depicts nudity or sexual activity” (Rasmussem, 2016, p. 175).

Wéry and Billieux (2016) focused solely on participants’ use of pornographic videos and photographs. For this study, the purpose of viewing sexually explicit material was to achieve sexual gratification from doing so since seeking pleasure was deemed to be one of the largest reasons for engaging in pornography use (Wéry & Billieux, 2016). Participants were instructed to keep this definition in mind when reflecting on their pornography use within the context of their romantic relationship in order to optimize consistency and limit confusion around what elements are comprised by the term pornography. Downing et al. (2017) have provided evidence showing that gay and bisexual men view sexually explicit material at significantly higher rates than heterosexual men do, yet research examining pornography use by sexual minorities has been primarily absent in academic literature.

Gender and Pornography Use

The finding that men engage in pornography use more often than women is consistent in the research (Albright, 2008; Carroll et al., 2017, Willoughby et al., 2016). Carroll et al. (2008) provides evidence that young adults might have the largest gender gap of all age groups, with approximately only 10% of young adult men indicating that they have not viewed sexually explicit material within the last year, in contrast to slightly fewer than 70% of young adult women. Almost

half of the young adult men who reported viewing pornography revealed doing so at a minimum of once a week, while only 5% of young adult women viewed pornography that often. Cooper et al. (2002) revealed that men's weekly pornography usage was more than double that of women; approximately 3 hours per week compared to 1.5 hours per week. While men make up a majority of the consumers of pornography, the percentage of women who intentionally view pornography has grown considerably over the past decade (French & Hamilton, 2018; Price et al., 2016). However, this spike in women's pornography use is largely ignored in research, with the majority of studies focusing on men's pornography use (Wright et al., 2013). Since few studies regarding pornography use include women, one cannot fully understand the true rate of women's use of sexually explicit material. The minimal research that does exist reveals that women in the United States who frequently view pornography tend to be relatively young, do not identify with a religious affiliation, and are non-White (Poulsen et al., 2013; Wright et al., 2013).

Lower rates of pornography use among women compared to men might be partially attributed to the heightened stigma society places on women who view pornography (French & Hamilton, 2018). More specifically, the dominant discourse suggests that women should strive to be perceived as innocent and pure, and sexually explicit material is often portrayed as quite the opposite in American Western culture. On the other hand, higher rates of pornography use among men than women may be partly due to the heightened pressure placed on men to be enticed by the sexual images seen in mainstream pornography (French & Hamilton, 2018). However, this frame of logic is flawed when taking into consideration sexual minorities due to its emphasis on heteronormativity. The current gender roles upheld within society do not openly discuss what is expected of men who identify as gay and women who identify as lesbian, resulting in minimal knowledge on how such gender roles and associated expectations have an influence on reported rates of pornography use.

Similarly, very little research has focused on fully understanding the experiences women have with pornography, and it cannot be assumed that their experiences will be similar to men's. (Ashton et al., 2018; Borgogna et al., 2018). Gender differences appear to exist beyond the frequency of pornography use. Pornography use might be positively associated with women's sexual quality whereas men's pornography use was negatively associated with men's and women's sexual quality, suggesting that women can benefit from exposure to sexually explicit material (Poulsen et al., 2013). The type of pornography also appears to have an influence on the degree to

which sexually explicit material has been shown to enhance an individual's sexual experiences, with pornography with an increase in female-centric elements seen as having a positive outcome on women's sex life and their perception of men (French & Hamilton, 2018). Pornography tends to be viewed as either objectifying or empowering women with little area in between (Fritz & Paul, 2017). In regard to sexual objectification, Feminists support the notion that mainstream pornography is created for the "male gaze," which insinuates that women exist in relation to men and their duty is to fulfill men's sexual desires (Wright et al., 2015). In regard to sexual empowerment, feminist pornography has been created to instill a sex positive perspective on sexually explicit material through the development of content that depicts genuine female pleasure and self-expression (French & Hamilton, 2018). Ashton et al., (2018) found that women frequently make comparisons between their own bodies and the bodies of those who are in the sexually explicit material, both positive and negative. Women who viewed themselves positively after watching pornography seemed to do so after being exposed to a variation of body types that differed from the body image commonly idealized in the popular media. Women who viewed themselves negatively after watching pornography often doubted their worthiness of attention, partly contributing to the level of distress present in the context of a romantic relationship (Bridges et al., 2003). Heteronormativity upholds the assumption that women in sexually explicit material are designed to meet the sexual demands of men, mostly ignoring the existence of women who are sexually and romantically attracted to other women and men who are sexually and romantically attracted to other men (Butler, 2004).

There seems to be a stark difference between the way heterosexual women view pornography and heterosexual men view pornography (Bridges & Morokoff, 2011). Societal expectations and gender stereotypes around pornography use might increase the likelihood of women perceiving their exposure to sexually explicit material as unacceptable (Mattebo et al., 2012). When viewing pornography, women usually place an emphasis on determining the degree of authenticity in the pleasure the actors are experiencing (Parvez, 2006). Women seem to prefer sexually explicit material with higher degrees of emotional authenticity, supporting their value on establishing emotional intimacy during their sexual interactions. More specifically, women seem to be highly aware of pornography actors' facial expressions and often note actors' perceived level of comfort (Shaw, 1999). Sexually explicit material identified as unrealistic was seen to minimize the level of enjoyment that women experienced (McCutcheon & Bishop, 2015; Parvez, 2006).

Women also have been found to masturbate at lower rates than men when viewing pornography, suggesting that the purpose of looking at sexually explicit material might be different for women than it is for men (Štulhofer et al., 2012). More specifically, women may be viewing pornography as a result of their partners' interest in doing so. This suggests that men and women might be viewing pornography for different reasons, with women desiring to enhance sexual intimacy and men primarily seeking sexual pleasure. In fact, an individual must act in accordance with norms upheld by heteronormativity, which increases the likelihood of women being portrayed as being highly focused on others and men being perceived as highly focused on self (Butler, 2004).

Perceived Negative implications of Pornography Use

Popular media has played a large role in the controversy around the way in which pornography is viewed within society. Montgomery-Graham et al. (2015) identified five themes found in media discussions that elaborated on couple outcomes associated with pornography use: 1) pornography addiction; 2) benefits pornography has on sexual relationships; 3) pornography as a form of infidelity; 4) perceptions of inadequacy from pornography use; and 5) alteration of expectations around sexual conduct from viewing pornography. The portrayal of these themes in the media did not accurately align with the academic literature on the topic. For a long period of time the media and other pop culture references generally were negatively focused on pornography use; this had a more profound impact on the perception of pornography than did research, as it was disseminated to a much larger audience (Montgomery-Graham et al., 2015). Despite the heterosexual nature associated with making comparisons in pornography use among men and women, it is important to be mindful of the reoccurring theme that exists within previous research. Currently, it is relatively unclear how an individual's sexual orientation may influence the couple outcomes associated with pornography consumption.

Oftentimes, pornography is used recreationally and is not associated with individual impairment or distress (Daspe, 2018). However, as previously stated, pornography use has been casted in a negative light, popularizing research that aligns with such perspectives. A significant amount of past research on pornography use employed a negative outlook and viewed the behavior as either incredibly addictive or damaging to a person's development or functioning (Grubbs, et al., 2015; Zitzman & Butler, 2009). Research on pornography use initially looked into determining the influence exposure to sexually explicit material had on a given individual's likelihood of

engaging in aggressive behavior (Bowen, 1987; Fisher & Kohut, 2017). Stack et al. (2004) revealed that not identifying with a particular religious affiliation (i.e., identifies as atheist or agnostic) and being unhappy in a romantic relationship were two of the most salient characteristics seen in individuals who frequently watch pornography. Another study looked at frequency of Internet pornography use as positively correlated to individuals' level of narcissism, presenting implications around the impact pornographic material has on developing egocentric tendencies (Kasper et al., 2015). This negative outlook on pornography use places sexual minorities who view sexually explicit material in a unique position. Gays and lesbians often endure high rates of stigmatization for their sexual orientation, regardless of the public's knowledge of their pornography use. It begs the question around whether sexually explicit material can be viewed as a healthy outlet for gays and lesbians. Pornography use can possibly enhance exposure to forms of sexuality that are highly tabooed in the real world; normalizing behavior society deems as abnormal (Fritz, & Paul, 2017). It might also be able to promote a sense of inclusion in demonstrating that their sexual desires are valid, suggesting that being able to identify with a subculture can alleviate potential feelings of shame and guilt (Downing et al., 2017). Being able to assist gays and lesbians with this element of their life can have positive lasting consequences on the couple dynamic.

Pornography Use in a Relationship

Pornography use is not limited to individuals who are single (Bridges & Morokoff, 2011). Pornography use is increasingly viewed as a relational concern, which can partially explain research examining the relationship between sexually explicit material and relationship quality among heterosexual couples (Carroll et al., 2017; Newstrom & Harris, 2016; Rasmussem, 2016). The presence of pornography use in the context of a romantic relationship has been shown to either deteriorate or enhance the overall degree of intimacy (Ashton et al., 2008). Pornography has been perceived simultaneously as a form of oppression and liberation amongst couples (Das, 2013). There are a multitude of factors that contribute to this, which will be explored in detail.

The negative outcomes associated with pornography use within heterosexual romantic relationships is commonly represented in research (Zitzman & Butler, 2009). Lack of knowledge of romantic partner's pornography use can potentially result in higher rates of relationship satisfaction, but lower levels of sexual satisfaction. In fact, frequent pornography use is often

deemed as being harmful to an individual, as well as to his or her romantic relationship, causing and/or intensifying intrapersonal and interpersonal distress (Rasmussem, 2016; Willoughby & Leonhardt, 2018). Finding out a partner's private use of pornography often resulted in negatively viewing one's self, one's partner, and their romantic relationship (Bridges et al., 2003). Pornography use has been seen to alter the perception of partner's level of attractiveness and to encourage unfaithfulness as a result of viewing alternative relationship dynamics (Braithwaite et al., 2015). Women began to question their romantic partner's fidelity to the relationship when their partners' pornography usage was initially hidden from them (Zitzman & Butler, 2009). Women were fearful that their partners were preoccupied with the sexually explicit material while being intimate, often perceiving men as emotionally absent (Parvez, 2006). Women's concerns regarding their perceived inability to meet their partners' standards caused them to experience difficulty viewing themselves positively (Benjamin & Tlusten, 2010). Additionally, there is evidence that level of commitment can have an impact on women's degree of distress brought on from knowledge of their partner's pornography usage, with married women being less accepting of such behavior than women who are not married to their romantic partner (Bridges et al., 2003). This notion suggests that women's degree of investment in the romantic relationship might alter the perception she has on her partners' intentional exposure to sexually explicit material.

There are also some positive outcomes associated with pornography use in heterosexual romantic relationships, especially when taking specific couple dynamics into consideration (Daneback et al., 2009; Poulsen et al., 2013). Mutual rates of pornography use as well as shared pornography use has been found to enhance sexual communication and exploration. Kohut et al. (2018) noted that couples in which both engage in individual pornography use might find more commonality among their sexual interests, preferences, and values than couples where one partner watches pornography and the other partner does not. Pornography use can also increase level of comfort around effectively communicating sexual needs and desires to one's romantic partner (Kohut et al., 2018). This increase in similarities between romantic partner's might be increasingly valuable for same-sex couples who frequently encounter institutional forms of discrimination based on their sexual orientation.

Couples in which one romantic partner viewed pornography independently and the other did not was associated with higher rates of closed off sexual communication and lower rates of closeness than in couples where both romantic partners viewed pornography alone (Kohut et al.,

2018). Additionally, couples where each romantic partner watches approximately the same amount of pornography individually did not differ from couples where neither romantic partner individually watched pornography in terms of reported openness around sexual communication and relationship closeness (Kohut et al., 2018). This strengthens the notion that the amount of pornography viewed while in a relationship is less detrimental than the incongruent degrees of pornography use between partners. Therefore, the discrepancy in pornography use between romantic partners seems to decrease the likelihood of reaping the benefits of pornography use while in a romantic relationship. The mixed results represented in research on the relationship between pornography use and couple outcomes stress the importance of conducting research to discover what is contributing to such disparities.

Shared Pornography Use

In this study, “individual pornography use” is defined as the frequency sexually explicit material is viewed by an individual alone with the intention of causing sexual arousal whereas “shared pornography use” is defined as the frequency sexually explicit material is viewed by an individual and his or her romantic partner with the intention of causing sexual arousal. It appears that the manner in which pornography is viewed may have an influence on the overall impact such use has on a given relationship (Hare et al., 2015, Poulsen et al., 2013). Maddox et al. (2011) revealed that significantly more men than women view pornography without their romantic partner present. However, viewing pornography while in a relationship is allegedly best done in the presence of one’s romantic partner. Individuals who view pornography with their romantic partner indicated having an open sexual communication pattern and reported greater relationship closeness than couples who did not (Kohut et al., 2018). Viewing pornography with one’s romantic partner can be seen as an opportunity to introduce new sexual activities within the relationship as well as increase sexual arousal (Hare et al., 2015). Viewing pornographic content together has also been shown to temporarily increase the rate of sexual activity (Mann et al., 1973). Individuals who solely watched pornography with their romantic partners’ present appeared to be more dedicated to their relationship and were more sexually satisfied than those who viewed such content alone (Maddox et al., 2011).

From a queer theoretical framework, sexuality is socially constructed (de Souza et al., 2016). Being able to view content that aligns with lesbian and gay couples’ sexual interests might

be able to challenge the dominant discourse, bringing into question what is deemed as normal, hence acceptable within society (Numer & Gahagan, 2009). Therefore, this sexually explicit material can serve as a way for same-sex couples to explore their sexual preferences while minimizing the interference of external stimuli from getting in the way. Using pornography with one's romantic partner can aid in developing a shared understanding among like-minded individuals, which can be viewed as an attempt to combat the difficulties associated with living in a heteronormative society (Chevrette, 2013). From the perspective of minority stress theory, the discrimination and prejudice that gays and lesbians experience on a daily basis is bound to take a toll on the quality of their romantic relationships (Lea et al., 2014). Viewing sexually explicit material in the company of one's romantic partner can promote a sex positive stance that can create a safe space between the two partners to provide insight around their sexual needs and desires. Exposure to a wide array of forms of sexual expression might be able to enhance the sexual experience of the couple unit, which can assist in making each partner feel like their needs and desires are valuable and worthy (Das, 2013).

Level of Acceptance of Pornography Use

“Level of acceptance of pornography use” is defined as an individual's attitudes and belief system around the use of sexually explicit material to initiate sexual arousal. It is important to keep in mind that an individual's mindset around pornography use is not dependent on the amount of time he or she views pornography, which is why pornography use and level of acceptance of pornography was examined separately in this study. The percentage of Americans that perceive pornography consumption as acceptable is continuing to grow (ElHage, 2018). However, there is a noticeable gender gap in terms of the level of acceptance of pornography; men have higher acceptance rates (Carroll et al., 2017). A large majority of heterosexual couples had different personal levels of acceptance of pornography, usually the female partner was less accepting of the sexually explicit material than the male partner (Willoughby et al., 2016). Nearly 70% of young adult men and 50% of young adult women believe that watching sexually explicit material is acceptable, which might be a possible explanation for the spike in pornography use within this age group (Carroll et al., 2008). In regard to pornography use within the context of a romantic relationship, couples who were dating viewed pornography more frequently and were more accepting of pornography use than individuals who were either engaged or married (Carroll et al.,

2017). Also, Olmstead et al. (2013) indicated that about one-fourth of men and women viewed pornography use as unacceptable when in a committed relationship. These results suggest that a couple's relationship status might influence the existing outcomes of pornography use, due to the varying differing degrees of acceptance.

There has been an emphasis placed on moral incongruence as a possible explanation for the negative outcomes that pornography use can potentially have on the individual consuming pornography, as well as his or her romantic partner (Perry & Whitehead, 2019). Grubbs et al. (2019) defined moral incongruence as "the experience of engaging in activities that violate one's deeply held moral values" (p. 398). Pornography consumers' individual perception of their exposure to sexually explicit material appeared to be associated with higher levels of distress than the actual behavior itself (Grubbs et al., 2015). Vaillancourt-Morel and Bergeron (2019) bring attention to the shortcomings around the existing research; primarily ignoring possible elements aside from religiosity that might be having an influence on the development of moral incongruence in individuals who view pornography. There is evidence suggesting that attitudes toward pornography use might be dependent on contextual factors, such as partner's opinions around exposure to sexually explicit material (Grubbs et al., 2015; Perry & Whitehead, 2019; Vaillancourt-Morel & Bergeron, 2019).

Bridges and colleagues (2003) found that about one-third of women attributed highly negative meanings to their partners' pornography use. There is reason to believe that the difference in moral approval of pornography between two romantic partners may potentially increase the likelihood of viewing pornography use as problematic behavior (Olmstead et al., 2013, Zitzman & Butler, 2009). Knowledge of one's partner upholding negative attitudes toward pornography is likely going to result in the pornography consumer hiding his or her use. The element of secrecy in the relationship can have disastrous consequences (Szymanski et al., 2015). Finding out about a partner's pornography use can lead to a sense of betrayal, uncertainty around the current state of the romantic relationship, and viewing one's self as inadequate (Bergner & Bridges, 2002; Zitzman & Butler, 2009). Individuals' continual pornography use after knowledge of their partner's disapproval can lead to the development of moral incongruence due to the increasing need of the partner watching pornography to hide their use from their partner. The secret use can lead to feelings of guilt and shame in the individual viewing pornography (Vaillancourt-Morel & Bergeron, 2019).

Therefore, not surprisingly, level of acceptance of pornography use has been found to be associated with level of relationship satisfaction (Maas et al., 2018). More specifically, an increase in pornography use is associated with less relationship satisfaction for men and women who reported a low level of acceptance of pornography use. Since women consistently appear to watch pornography at significantly lower rates than men, and find the content to be generally less acceptable than men, women who identify as lesbian who view pornography while in a romantic relationship might acquire a higher degree of moral incongruence than men who identify as gay do. If pornography use is present in the relationship, the probability of both female partners having a high level of acceptance of pornography use is low. Therefore, women's acceptance of pornography might be seen as more essential for experiencing the benefits of pornography within lesbian couples as compared to gay couples. Oftentimes, sexual minorities have to keep an element of their sexuality a secret from the public; suggesting that attempting to keep their pornography use confidential can possibly intensify the already existing degree of distress. From a queer theory framework, the society in which we live feels the need to place labels on constructs and these labels seem to impact how individuals interpret the world around them. Therefore, there is reason to believe that labeling pornography as "bad" and/or "unhealthy" will have negative implications on the couple unit. Upholding such labels limits room for sexual exploration to take place in the context of the relationship.

Same-Sex Couples

Gays and lesbians may undergo unique stressors as a result of their sexual orientation, which can have an influence on the overall degree of satisfaction that exists within the context of their romantic relationships (Belous & Wampler, 2016). This notion brings into question how applicable research on opposite-sex couples is to individuals in a romantic relationship with a member of the same-sex. Psychological distress can weaken the stability of same-sex romantic relationships, due to the societal pressure individuals who identify as lesbian or gay are subjected to in a primarily heteronormative world (Meyer, 2003). However, these specific stressors have been shown to improve same-sex couples' level of commitment to one another, fostering a deep connection as a result of frequently having to rely on them as their primary source of support (Frost, 2011).

At times it can be problematic to compare and contrast sexual minority relationships with heterosexual relationships (Chevrette, 2013). More specifically, comparing a historically marginalized group with a privileged group suggests that heterosexual relationships are the ideal relationship type (Elia, 2003). It is difficult to compare two groups that have not been equally represented in society; the privileged versus the oppressed. Kurdek (1991) stated that gay and lesbian couples have more similarities with heterosexual couples than differences. Although, at times, making comparisons between these two groups can possibly contribute to an overemphasis on similarities that are not always reflective of research findings. This is certainly important to be mindful of when reflecting on the reported similarities and differences below, suggesting that comparisons should not be taken at face value.

Gottman et al. (2003) found out that gay and lesbian couples were better able to address conflict than heterosexual couples, due to their willingness to use a positive tone throughout. It has also been shown that same-sex couples are less likely to engage in a pursue-withdraw communication pattern as an attempt to resolve conflict and are more inclined to propose effective solutions and accommodations. The reason why gay men and lesbian women might be better at handling conflict is due to the level of importance they tend to place on maintaining equality. Same-sex couples usually experience fewer differences around power and status than heterosexual couples, despite disagreeing about similar issues (Kurdek, 2005). This notion insinuates that gay and lesbian couples must be addressing their conflict differently. However, previous romantic partners are more likely to remain a part of their social network, suggesting a plausible cause for elements of jealousy and bitterness to exist which might influence the frequency of conflict (Kurdek, 1988).

Bridge et al. (2019) indicated that sexual minority men and women tend to report significantly lower self-esteem than heterosexual men and women. Additionally, sexual minorities tend to receive less support from their family members than heterosexual individuals do (Homberg & Blair, 2016). The degree of support they receive can have an influence on the process of coming-out. More specifically, disclosing sexual orientation has been found to lead to a high degree of satisfaction with their chosen partner (Jordan & Deluty, 2000). "Fusion" is a term specifically used to describe the close-knit relationship that many lesbians have with their partner (Ackbar & Senn, 2010). The term is frequently associated with negative connotations that hint at the idea that same-sex relationships do not possess the accurate amount of autonomy that relationships deemed as

“healthy” tend to possess. Greene et al. (1999) discredited this concept after concluding that individuals who possess higher rates of fusion within their romantic relationship reported increased levels of relationship satisfaction.

Relationship Satisfaction

Relationship satisfaction is defined as “an interpersonal evaluation of the positivity of feelings for one's partner and attraction to the relationship” (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993, p. 175). Relationship satisfaction has been found to be positively associated with sexual desire (Brezsnyak & Whisman, 2004). The correlation between relationship satisfaction and sexual desire might be partially supported by the notion that individuals who are satisfied with the quality of their romantic relationship are more likely to be close to their partner, increasing their wish to be intimate (Muise et al., 2019). Another possible explanation for this correlation is that individuals may use their low sexual desire as an indicator of the quality of relationship, becoming unsatisfied with what they are receiving within the romantic relationship (Smith et al., 2011). Cooper et al. (2018) indicated that relationship satisfaction decreased as stress increased and relationship satisfaction increased as rate of sexual activity increased, revealing that sexual activity can serve as a way to limit the negative impact stress can have on the quality of the romantic relationship. Limiting the degree of stress among same-sex couples appears to be extremely vital among the stability and quality of their relationship, since sexual minorities have been found to experience high rates of stress on a daily basis while living in a primarily heteronormative society (Rostosky et al., 2007). As previously stated, sexual activity can potentially alleviate distress, suggesting that same-sex couples might be able to benefit from viewing sexually explicit material more than heterosexual couples who are not forced to endure the same number of stressors as a result of their sexual orientation accurately aligning with societal norms.

Relationship satisfaction is a combination of the outlook of benefits, costs, as well as one's standards around what a healthy relationship looks like for both same-sex as well as heterosexual couples (Kurdek, 1991). The only perceived difference between lesbians and gays concerning relationship satisfaction was the number of benefits stated, with lesbians recalling more. This is evidence in support of women potentially placing a higher value on their interpersonal relationships with others than men, which might be due to societal norms in regard to gender. Minority stress does not appear to be directly related to relationship satisfaction, whereas trust

does (Kamen, 2011). More specifically, trust was an important component in determining level of relationship satisfaction for individuals who encountered frequent discrimination. Same-sex couples often have low levels of social support (Frost, 2011) and are stigmatized for identifying as a sexual minority, such stressors can drastically hinder relationship satisfaction (Belous & Wampler, 2016). Lesbian women and gay men's level of emotional adjustment was positively associated with level of social support. However, partners' discrepancies were seen as a predictor of lower relationship satisfaction for lesbian women (Rosenthal & Starks, 2015).

Conflict is seen as a major cost to remaining in a romantic relationship, and is experienced by all couples at some point. Lesbian women and gay men were not seen to differ in primary areas of conflict (Kurdek, 1994). Conflict around issues of power was seen as an indicator of lower levels of relationship satisfaction a year later (Kurdek, 1994). Heterosexual couples disagreed more frequently about social issues than same-sex couples and same-sex couples disagreed more frequently about distrust than heterosexual couples. The rate that same-sex and heterosexual couples documented experiencing conflict around power and intimacy was seen to be positively associated with degree of dissatisfaction with the current state of the romantic relationship (Kurdek, 1994). Effective conflict resolution and communication between romantic partners, regardless of sexual orientation, was seen as the two predictive factors in achieving a high level of relationship satisfaction (Diemer et al., 2004). It appears that same-sex couples are about equivalently satisfied within their romantic relationships as heterosexual couples (Kurdek, 2001).

Cramer (2004) found evidence suggesting that amount of emotional support within a romantic relationship might have a larger influence in determining the level of relationship satisfaction than the amount of conflict that exists. Discrepancies in desire was associated with lower sexual satisfaction for women and lower relationship satisfaction for men, suggesting that factors that go into establishing satisfaction might be dependent on gender (Mark & Murray, 2012). Length of relationship has been found to be positively associated with degree of inaccuracy in women depicting their partners' desire for them to look slimmer, suggesting that women might associate lack of newness with lack of sexual interest (Markey & Markey, 2006). Muise et al. (2019) mentioned that trying new things with a romantic partner has been seen to be positively associated with sexual desire, which was then associated with an increase in the level of relationship satisfaction. Additionally, being sexually satisfied within a romantic relationship is

most likely going to be able to increase each partner's satisfaction with the current state of the relationship (Smith et al., 2011).

Coffelt and Hess (2014) sought to determine the impact sexual disclosure has on romantic relationships. They were able to conclude that relationship satisfaction was positively associated with sexual disclosure. Therefore, ability to communicate about sexually related topics is seen to be a predictor of sexual as well as relationship satisfaction (Montesi et al., 2011). Hiding sexual information from one's partner can become highly detrimental to the overall quality of the romantic relationship. Women who disclosed sexual problems to their partners had greater relationship satisfaction than women who did not, which may indicate that disclosing is associated with a heightened desire to work toward improving their sexual functioning (Merwin et al., 2017). Self-disclosure might be able to positively contribute to an individual's overall functioning by strengthening intimacy and/or setting time aside to make the necessary accommodations to address the existence of sexual difficulties (Merwin et al., 2017).

As previously mentioned, same-sex couples are predisposed to face additional challenges due to the minority stress they experience. Pepping et al. (2019) revealed that internalized heterosexism was negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction because those with more internalized heterosexism are more likely to conceal their sexual orientation. Identity affirmation was seen as playing a protective role on relationship quality, with higher rates of relationship satisfaction among individuals who felt a strong sense of belonging to their sexual identity. Additionally, an increase in minority stressors was associated with a decrease in relationship satisfaction. Szymanski and Hilton (2013) stated that internalized heterosexism was positively associated with fear of intimacy and negatively associated with relationship quality. Also, internalized heterosexism appeared to increase the likelihood of fear of intimacy, which has a negative influence on overall relationship quality among gay men.

Relationship Satisfaction and Pornography Use

The majority of research examining the impact pornography use has on heterosexual romantic relationships is negative, revealing a decrease in overall relationship satisfaction (Guidry et al., 2019; Perry & Whitehead, 2019). Resch and Alderson (2014) examined how men's pornography use influences women's relationship satisfaction, specifically looking into degree of honesty regarding pornography use, as well as mutual use. Men's honesty about their pornography

use was positively associated with women's relationship satisfaction and negatively associated with women's level of distress. Essentially, lack of honesty about pornography use resulted in a significant drop in level of relationship satisfaction. Additionally, couples who disclosed mutual use showed lower levels of distress than those who did not. The results of this study support the notion that being transparent about pornography use can potentially counteract the negative feelings associated with partner's use of sexually explicit material. Same-sex couples might even place a higher degree of importance on transparency than heterosexual couples due to the difficulties they encounter with coming out as a sexual minority (Cooper et al., 2018).

Willoughby et al. (2016) were able to partially explain the varying differences in couple outcomes of pornography use. Frequency of heterosexual partner's pornography use was seen as having an impact on the romantic relationship, with significant differences in rates of use between partners resulting in lower levels of relationship satisfaction, stability, and effective communication. Carroll et al. (2017) stated that level of acceptance of pornography use might be a large contributing factor in determining the couple outcomes associated with the use of sexually explicit material. Level of acceptance of pornography use has been shown to play a factor in level of relationship satisfaction, suggesting a positive correlation between acceptance and relationship satisfaction (Willoughby et al., 2016). Among heterosexual couples, pornography use for men was associated with low relationship satisfaction for men, whereas pornography use for women was associated with high relationship satisfaction for men (Bridges & Morokoff, 2011). The reason attributed to the difference in relationship satisfaction was dependent on the purpose for viewing sexually explicit material. More specifically, women indicated mainly watching pornography as a component of being intimate with their partner and men indicated mainly watching pornography to masturbate. Bridges and Morokoff (2011) also revealed that level of relational satisfaction was higher among couples who engaged in shared pornography use compared to individual pornography use.

Recently, longitudinal studies were carried out to examine the impact pornography use has on heterosexual couples' stability over time (Perry & Davis, 2017; Perry & Schleifer, 2018). Perry and Schleifer (2018) indicated that the time frame in which an individual initially begins viewing pornography can be used to predict the likelihood of his or her romantic relationship coming to an end. More specifically, starting to use pornography within one's marriage nearly doubled the possibility of a married heterosexual couple divorcing. Level of commitment does not appear to

make a significant difference in the rate of the termination of romantic relationships following the use of pornography. This pattern also exists for heterosexual couples who are not married (Perry & Davis, 2017). Within these romantic relationships, relationship quality suffered with the presence of pornography use, supporting the notion that frequent exposure to pornography increases the likelihood of the relationship dissolving.

Sexual Satisfaction

“Sexual satisfaction” is defined as an individual’s perception regarding his or her erotic stimulation in response to intimate interactions with one’s partner (Wright et al., 2019). The majority of research aimed at better understanding the elements that contribute to level of sexual satisfaction among couples focus on heterosexual romantic relationships (Haning et al., 2007). MacNeil and Byers (2009) explored the influence sexual self-disclosure can have on sexual satisfaction for heterosexual couples. They concluded that mutual self-disclosure increased relationship satisfaction, leading to higher level of sexual satisfaction. High rates of sexual communication have been shown to increase women’s orgasm frequency as well as improved relationship and sexual satisfaction in both men and women (Jones et al., 2017). High orgasm likelihood and low degree of conflict appear to be two factors that contribute to being highly sexually satisfied in a long-term romantic relationship (Haning et al., 2007). Stress has been found to be negatively associated with frequency of sexual activity in a romantic relationship. Bodenmann (2010) concluded that a high rate of stress on a daily basis is associated with a low degree of sexual activity, suggesting the presence of stress is associated with lower levels of sexual satisfaction. Holmberg (2010) revealed that women’s level of sexual satisfaction was a strong predictor of relational wellbeing and mental health regardless of sexual orientation.

Regardless of sexual orientation, women desire to be sexually satisfied when in a relationship, which was previously seen as more important for men (Nicholas, 2004). Lesbian couples that experienced a concern around discrepancies in sexual desire were engaging in sexual activity less frequently and rated lower on levels of sexual satisfaction than lesbian couples who did not experience the same concern (Bridges & Horne, 2007). Shepler et al. (2018) revealed that sexual anxiety, relationship commitment, body image, and identity pride were four factors that were able to predict level of sexual satisfaction for sexual minorities. Relationship commitment was a key predictor for women’s sexual satisfaction but not men’s (Shepler et al., 2018). These

results indicate that lesbian women and gay men's sexual satisfaction is dependent on a combination of components that are unique to their specific needs in addition to those that seem to also be applicable to individuals who identify as heterosexual.

Sexual Satisfaction and Pornography Use

Using pornography as a couple has been found to be related to higher rates of sexual satisfaction (Willoughby & Leonhardt, 2018). However, there appears to be a gender difference in terms of the impact pornography use has on level of sexual satisfaction for heterosexual couples in romantic relationships (Poulsen et al., 2013). More specifically, women's pornography use was positively correlated with her level of sexual satisfaction, whereas men's pornography use was negatively correlated with his as well as his partner's sexual satisfaction. The study supports the notion that pornography use is not a consequence of a sense of sexual dissatisfaction for women, whereas it might be for men. Muusses et al. (2015) sought out to investigate the negative correlation between observing sexually explicit material and overall quality of one's heterosexual romantic relationship. They desired to determine if pornography use caused relationship deterioration or if relationship deterioration caused pornography use. The results revealed that men's sexual satisfaction was associated with a reduction in their partner's pornography use, whereas women's pornography use did not have an impact on their partner's level of sexual satisfaction. This study highlights the gender difference that exists around what it means to view sexually explicit material while in a romantic relationship, bringing into question the meaning associated with pornography use among same-sex couples.

Previous research has shown that the amount of pornography consumed can influence overall level of sexual satisfaction, with low rates appearing to be harmless (Muusses et al., 2015; Poulsen et al., 2013). Interestingly, viewing pornography more than once a month has the potential to reduce the level of sexual satisfaction in heterosexual romantic relationships, suggesting a negative correlation between frequency of pornography use and level of sexual satisfaction even after taking gender into consideration (Wright et al., 2018; Wright et al., 2019). Frequency of pornography use had a stronger association with being perceived as out of control behavior when relationship and sexual satisfaction were low (Daspe, 2018). Theiss (2011) found that poor sexual communication had a negative impact on level of sexual satisfaction for couples. Moderation must be taken into consideration when self-disclosing sexual information in order to prevent being

unsatisfied within the romantic relationship (Coffelt & Hess, 2014). Women feel higher rates of intimacy when discussing their sexual preferences than men do, improving women's level of sexual satisfaction and not affecting the level of sexual satisfaction of men (Theiss, 2011).

Willoughby and Leonhardt (2018) revealed that gender can play a factor in determining the influence pornography use has on the degree of sexual desire and sexual satisfaction among heterosexual couples. Men's pornography use appears to be more detrimental to the level of relationship satisfaction than women's pornography use (Willoughby & Leonhardt, 2018). More specifically, male's exposure to sexually explicit material has been shown to be negatively associated with partner's sexual satisfaction whereas women's pornography use has been found to be positively associated with their level of sexual desire. Miller et al. (2019) provided evidence in support for wanting to engage in sexual behavior like that seen in pornography as a way to strengthen sexual satisfaction by encouraging sexual variation.

The type of pornography used might alter the influence the sexually explicit material has on couple outcomes (Fritz & Paul, 2017). Male-centric pornography prioritizes men's pleasure by focusing on sexual activities that regard men as dominant. Female-centric pornography tends to bring attention to women's state of arousal and mutual sexual pleasure through the use of enhancing the portrayal of genuine intimacy between the actors involved. French and Hamilton (2018) concluded that female-centric pornography has been reported to increase the rate of women's arousal and frequency of sexual behavior, hinting at the type of pornography that might be favorable for women. The elements found in female-centric pornography appeared to be helpful in promoting sexual activities with one's partner. Men were less inclined to identify positive effects of pornography. A possible explanation for this is that pornography use, regardless of specific category, has been found to decrease desire to engage in sexual activities with one's partner for men and as a method to improve sexual encounters with one's partner for women, which has implications for same-sex couples (Parvez, 2006).

Theoretical Framework

Previous research exploring the impact pornography use has on romantic relationships has been viewed through various theoretical lenses, generally not sticking with a single framework as a standard in the field. Symbolic interactionism theory has been used to discuss research in academia around the outcomes associated with pornography use when considering individual

reasoning and rationalization (Miller et al., 2013). This theory essentially declares that individuals interpret the world in which they live in by attributing meaning to surrounding stimuli. The meaning ascribed to stimuli is subjective in nature and is thought to be primarily dependent on existing societal constructs. These created guidelines largely impact a given individual's behavior by giving rise to social scripts that the public in a particular area abides by. These scripts present a framework for individuals to refer to during their interactions with others. Therefore, this theory would support the notion that the use of pornography in a romantic relationship is going to be heavily influenced by the meaning each partner ascribes to such content.

Another framework that has been periodically used in research is sexual script theory (Ruvalcaba & Eaton, 2019). This theory suggests that there are a set of expectations that men and women are required to follow during their intimate interactions with others. These expectations are innately embedded in a cultural context that give rise to norms that become deemed as guidelines on how individuals should behave in a sexual and/or romantic setting. This theory would suggest that exposure to sexually explicit material would have an influence on what an individual anticipates occurring during a sexual experience, potentially contributing to the existence of unrealistic standards.

Queer Theory

Since the focus of this study is on uncovering the influence pornography use can have on same-sex couples, it is important to divert from the theoretical frameworks that are commonly seen within existing research due to primarily focusing on heterosexual individuals. Queer theory is a relatively new framework that attempts to break free from the distress that is brought on by societal norms that limit self-expression (McDonald, 2015). This theory came about as a result of political and social activism to deemphasize heterosexual as well as perceived traditional familial and personal roles. In regard to the academic realm, queer theory was initially applied to research on gender and sexuality. Theorists from this framework do not believe in the use of labels and stand by the assumption that people within society interact in a way that either goes against or acts in accordance with existing norms (Fassinger, 2017). Heteronormativity is a key construct of queer theory, which is the idea that heterosexuality is the ideal sexual orientation. This construct is perceived to be highly integrated in each individual's everyday lives through the use of societal pressure to abide by social norms. Lesbians and gays can experience difficulties with making

meaning of the world around them when it contradicts with their self-identity. Taking the time to question the current constructs in place can have a significant influence on improving daily life for sexual minorities by challenging various elements that are contributing to worldviews that increase the likelihood of individuals experiencing discrimination, stigmatization, and prejudice based on their sexual orientation.

Approaching this study from a queer theoretical perspective places an emphasis on questioning the multitude of ways in which societal norms restrict the number of possibilities around identifying, relating, and organizing surrounding constructs (de Souza et al., 2016). Queer theory attempts to make sense of how specific categories have become viewed as stable categories. As soon as a child is brought into this world, heterosexual norms began introducing the symbolic process of how to act, behave, and think. Essentially, gender is not the product of choice, but rather the consequence of the existing norms in place, known as the concept of gender performativity (Butler, 2004). There are regulations inherently placed on individuals as a result of existing constructs around gender and sexuality. Another crucial element ingrained within queer theory is what is known as the heterosexual matrix, which accounts for the assumptions that are based on visual cues (Butler, 1999). These assumptions give rise to binary categories, such as male versus female and masculine versus feminine; with little variation to no room for variation in between. Individuals who conform to the norms deep-rooted in the heterosexual matrix are perceived positively by others, whereas those who do not abide by such norms are not (Butler, 1999).

This theoretical approach conceptualizes gender and sexuality as cultural, fluid, and unstable. Butler (2004) proposes that the categories in and of itself are not an issue, but rejects the use of them due to the very nature of implying a fixed label. Since these binary constructs are the product of historical and cultural shifts within society, they are always changing. Additionally, the categories that individuals fall into often coexist, causing it to be extremely difficult to presume the influence each identity has on an individual's life. Specifically pertaining to this study, an individual who identifies as a woman and a lesbian will find it to be difficult to view the world around her through the lens of a woman without taking into consideration her sexual orientation, and vice versa. Variations exist within each category and it is important for them to be acknowledged. The United States' predominantly patriarchal society has largely contributed to suppressing communication and conversations on topics related to sexuality (Das, 2013). Lack of affirmative environments to converse about sexual desire and pleasure has made it extremely

difficult for marginalized communities to talk openly about their pornography use. Queer theory supports the notion that "nothing is natural, nothing is normal" (Weedon, 1999, p. 73).

Minority Stress Theory

Minority Stress Theory was developed by Ilan Meyer as an attempt to bring attention to the additional pressure that individuals who identify as lesbian and gay face in a relatively heteronormative society. Sexual minorities have been found to experience high rates of mental health concerns. Minority stress theory examines the impact stigmatization, internalized homophobia, and prejudice that sexual minorities often encounter (Meyer, 2003). These elements place lesbians and gays at a disadvantage. There is evidence of sexual minorities having a higher risk of suicidal ideation, as well as actual suicide attempts than heterosexual individuals (Belsler, 2019). Research supporting Meyer's minority stress theory shows evidence of individuals attracted to members of the same sex reported increased rates of suicidality, depression, anxiety, and abusing substances as compared to peers that are attracted to members of the opposite sex (Becker et al., 2014). There is an increased rate of depressive and anxiety disorders among lesbian and gay individuals compared to their heterosexual peers. (Bostwick et al., 2014).

Minority stress theory can serve as a helpful conceptual framework for better understanding the possibly detrimental effects heterosexism can have on individuals in same-sex romantic relationships (Meyer, 2003). This theory upholds the notion that individuals who identify with an oppressed group are at a higher risk for experiencing excessive stress as a result of their minority status, potentially leading to a wide array of mental and physical health problems. Meyer (2003) identified minority stress composed of both external and internalized stress processes. External minority stressors include experiences of discrimination, prejudice, rejection, harassment, and violence based on minority status. Internal minority stressors include internalized heterosexism (sexual minority's internalization of negative attitudes as a result of constant exposure to heterosexist attitudes, beliefs, messages, and institutions), concealing sexual orientation, and feelings of isolation/rejection for sexual minority identity.

Minority stress can appear in a multitude of facets (Lea et al., 2014). This notion suggests that individuals who identify as lesbian and gay often experience distress within their daily interactions. When dealing with high rates of stress, same-sex couples are faced with the difficult decision with how to overcome such hardships. Rostosky et al. (2007) revealed that the most

common methods of handling minority stress have been to choose to either hide or publicly support their romantic relationship with a member of the same-sex as well as attempting to find a source of social support within their community. An individual's openness of his or her sexual orientation was connected to improved mental health for women who identified as a sexual minority (Jordan & Deluty, 2000).

Walch et al. (2016) examined the influence sexual minorities perception of discrimination can have on an individual's wellbeing. Increased perception of discrimination was related to one's mental and physical health. Increased discrimination resulted in increased physical health problems but the relationship between discrimination and mental health was explained by the presence of internalized homophobia (Walch et al., 2016). Individuals who identified as lesbian or gay reported lower levels of mental and physical health than individuals who identified as heterosexual. A high amount of minority stressors and low degree of coping resources revealed lower levels of mental health. In turn, low levels of mental health were able to foreshadow lower levels of physical health (Shilo & Mor, 2014). The external stigma of gay men had a stronger association with depressive symptoms for those who reported a higher degree of masculinity than for those who reported a higher degree of femininity (Pachankis et al., 2018). Velez et al. (2017) provided evidence that heterosexist discrimination, assumptions of stigma, and minimal rates of disclosure were connected to increasingly poor mental health. These individuals reported increased levels of distress and lower degree of overall wellbeing.

Same-sex couples are predisposed to experience a high degree of stigmatization for their sexual orientation, causing stress-like responses that are characterized as minority stress (Frost et al., 2015). Individuals who are discriminated against for their sexual orientation often are forced to endure a constant state of distress that can increase the likelihood of developing physical and mental health problems over time. Consistent bouts of stress can lead to moderate levels of chronic stress, which can cause a multitude of mental and physical hardships (Velez et al., 2017). Frost et al. (2015) examined the influence minority stress has on the lesbians and gays physical health. There was an increased likelihood of individuals who identify as a sexual minority encountering a prejudice event within the last year, suggesting this as a possible explanation for the reported lower rate in adequate physical health. Kuyper and Fokkema (2011) revealed that sexual minorities who had high levels of internalized homonegativity and received frequent negative reactions from

others for their attraction to members of the same-sex appeared to report more mental health problems.

Approaching this study from a queer theoretical perspective while taking into consideration the major tenants of minority stress theory provided the researchers with an opportunity to better understand the influence that pornography use can have on same-sex romantic relationships by acknowledging and attempting to challenge surrounding constructs in place that predetermine what is deemed appropriate. These socially constructed forms of sex and sexuality are based on the customs that exist within the dominate heteronormative society, which ultimately forces individuals who do not align with such practices to face obstacles that impede self-expression and increase the level of distress of an individual who identifies as a sexual minority on a consistent basis. Since research on sexual minorities' experience with pornography use in a relational setting is severely lacking, it is important to explore the influence sexually explicit material has on couple dynamics among gay and lesbian relationships from an alternative perspective than what has been done in the past.

Additionally, the stigma that same-sex couples experience might impact the components that contribute to overall level of relationship and sexual satisfaction among sexual minorities. First, gays and lesbians might place an emphasis on obtaining emotional support from their romantic partner since sexual minorities are often discriminated against as a result of their sexual orientation. There is reason to believe that living in a heteronormative world is going to increase the likelihood of individuals who identify as gay or lesbian taking into consideration the degree in which they feel supported by their romantic partner when perceiving how satisfied they are with the current state of their relationship. The lack of external support gays and lesbians receive is likely going to increase the importance of feeling heard and understood by one's romantic partner.

Second, determining the extent to which gays and lesbians feel proud to be a sexual minority might also be an important factor when examining relationship and sexual satisfaction for same-sex couples, with higher levels of pride positively associated with higher levels of satisfaction (Shepler et al., 2018). Same-sex couples are increasingly inclined to experience heightened distress in the presence of internalized homophobia. Gays and lesbians have been found to conceal their sexual orientation from the public as an attempt to address discrepancies in who an individual is with the societal messages that inform someone of who he or she ought to be. Previous research has revealed that feeling the need to hide one's sexual orientation has been found

to lead to negative couple outcomes (Bridge et al., 2019). More specifically, coming to terms with accepting one's own sexual orientation is going to limit the existence of negative emotions from interfering with feeling satisfied within the romantic relationship.

Third, gays and lesbians are at an increased risk for experiencing mental and health problems based on the discrimination that they are forced to frequently endure. It appears to be vital for same-sex couples to feel comfortable being themselves without the pressure to conform to existing societal norms in order to feel satisfied within their current romantic relationship. Sexual minorities would highly benefit from ensuring that the same-sex couple unit is able to create a safe space for each partners' needs to be met. Being predisposed to additional barriers based on their sexual orientation strengthens the need for same-sex couples to effectively communicate their needs and desires as an attempt to limit the interference of mental and physical health problem, ultimately reducing the level of relationship and/or sexual satisfaction that exists within same-sex couples.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Two hierarchical linear regressions were used to test the following research questions. The associated hypotheses were concluded based on the results.

Research Question One

Does amount of shared pornography use influence relationship satisfaction for same-sex couples?

Hypothesis One

Amount of shared pornography use will be positively associated with relationship satisfaction for same-sex couples.

Research Question Two

Does level of acceptance of pornography use moderate the relationship between amount of shared pornography use and level of relationship satisfaction for same-sex couples?

Hypothesis Two

The relationship between amount of shared pornography use and relationship satisfaction for same-sex couples will be more strongly positively associated for a high level of acceptance of pornography use.

Research Question Three

Does gender moderate the relationship between the amount of shared pornography use and level of relationship satisfaction for same-sex couples?

Hypothesis Three

The relationship between the amount of shared pornography use and level of relationship satisfaction will be more strongly positively associated for women than men.

Research Question Four

Does the amount of shared pornography influence sexual satisfaction for same-sex couples?

Hypothesis Four

Amount of shared pornography use will be positively associated with sexual satisfaction for same-sex couples.

Research Question Five

Does level of acceptance of pornography use moderate the relationship between amount of shared pornography use and level of sexual satisfaction for same-sex couples?

Hypothesis Five

The relationship between amount of shared pornography use and sexual satisfaction for same-sex couples will be more strongly positively associated for a high level of acceptance of pornography use.

Research Question Six

Does gender moderate the relationship between amount of shared pornography use and level of sexual satisfaction for same-sex couples?

Hypothesis Six

The relationship between amount of shared pornography and level of sexual satisfaction will be more strongly positively associated for women than men.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Participants

In order to be eligible for this study participants had to be: a) at least 18 years old, b) involved in a monogamous romantic relationship with a member of the same sex for at least 6 months, c) self-identified as a gay or lesbian, d) identified with the same gender as the one assigned at birth, and e) a current resident of the United States. Individuals were excluded from the study if any of these five requirements were not met. Due to inconsistencies in what “pornography” entails, there will likely be a wide range of interpretations around this term, so a standard definition was provided for them, the same that was used in the examining the literature “*material that typically intends to arouse the viewer and depicts nudity or sexual activity.*” Participants who have not watched pornography within the last 6 months skipped the questions concerning their pornography use.

A hierarchical linear regression analysis was used to examine the data and test the hypotheses. In order to have sufficient power with an alpha level of .05, this study required at least 107 participants to be involved (Cohen, 1992). In an effort to ensure complete data is gathered, a grand total of 200 subjects were recruited.

Control Variables and Other Variables

For the purpose of this study, four control variables were included in the survey. These variables consisted of age, length of relationship, gender, and relationship status. Age was controlled for because pornography is more acceptable by young adults than any other age group (Carroll et al., 2008). Length of relationship was controlled for since previous studies have shown that pornography is more accepted earlier in the relationships (Olmstead et al., 2013). Gender was controlled for since men have been found to be more accepting and watch pornography more often than women (Albright, 2008; Carroll et al., 2017, Willoughby et al., 2016). Relationship status was controlled for because individuals who are engaged or married show lower levels of acceptance than those who are single or in a relationship without marriage (Bridges et al., 2003; Carroll et al., 2017). Other variables were included in the survey for further insight around demographic information but were not viewed as control variables. These variables consisted of

sexual orientation, racial or ethnic group, religious affiliation, employment status, annual income, and highest level of education.

Procedure

For this study, Qualtrics was the external online survey tool used for creating and managing the survey. The researcher displayed the survey on Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) to acquire the sample. MTurk is a website that provides an opportunity for individuals to access and complete surveys for a small financial compensation (Burnham et al., 2018). Prior to recruiting subjects through MTurk, the researchers applied for approval through Purdue University's Institutional Review Board. Each individual that participated in this study through MTurk was compensated a small fee, 40 cents, for completing the survey. The survey took approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete. The data was collected in the beginning of June, 2020. The researchers used convenience sampling when collecting data in order to increase the likelihood of meeting the minimum requirement of complete cases necessary to be able to accurately run significance tests.

Online Data Collection

Collecting data through an online platform is accompanied with a fair share of advantages and disadvantages (Teschner & Gimpel, 2018). Providing access to the survey online allowed the researcher to collect data at a faster rate. Additionally, the survey was able to be dispersed to more diverse demographics than what would be able to be attained from collecting data specifically in a single region. Another advantage of collecting data online, through MTurk, is that the survey can be completed in the comfort of the respondents' house. This element is an extremely important component given the nature of the study's topic, usage of pornography. The convenience sample technique can be a great starting place for the researcher to gain a better idea of how readily available the target population is represented on MTurk.

A limitation of collecting data through MTurk is that the researcher will only be able to acquire responses from individuals who have an MTurk workers account. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge and remain aware of the biases that can occur from collecting data through this online platform. The general population tends to be unemployed at lower rates, more religious, and have received less education than MTurk workers (Goodman et al., 2013). This is something

to be mindful of since the responses are only able to be generalized to those who were a part of the sample.

Measures

This study includes a demographic questionnaire, pornography use questionnaire, the Gay and Lesbian Relationship Satisfaction Scale, the New Sexual Satisfaction Scale (NSSS), and the Attitudes Toward Pornography Scale.

Demographic Questionnaire

The participants were asked to identify their age, length of relationship, sexual orientation, gender, relationship status, racial or ethnic group, religious affiliation, employment status, annual income, and highest level of education.

Pornography Use Questionnaire

The participants were asked to indicate when the last was that they watched pornography, how often do they usually watch pornography, the device they most commonly use to access sexually explicit material, the length of a typical viewing session, the frequency in which they tend to engage in sexual activities while watching pornography, and the pornographic category they view the most. The participants reported the answers to these questions for both individual pornography use, as well as shared pornography use. Participants were also asked their level of awareness regarding their romantic partner's knowledge of their individual pornography use.

Shared Pornography Use

Amount of shared pornography use was measured by asking participants “on average, how often do you watch pornography with your partner?” They were instructed to choose between the following options: 1) more than once a day, 2) more than once a week, 3) more than once a month, and 4) less than once a month. Participants were encouraged to indicate the number of times they watch pornography for the timeframe that they selected.

Gay and Lesbian Relationship Satisfaction Scale (GLRSS)

In order to measure level of relationship satisfaction, the Gay and Lesbian Relationship Satisfaction Scale (GLRSS) was used (Belous & Wampler, 2016). This scale consisted of 24 items that are measured on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from zero (strongly disagree) to seven (strongly agree). This scale is comprised of two subscales, GLRSS Relationship Satisfaction and GLRSS Social Support. Participants are instructed to identify the extent to which they agree with each statement. The scale addresses an individual's perception of his or her relationship while taking into account the degree of social support received. Examples from the relationship satisfaction component of the scale consisted of "my mate has the qualities I want in a partner" and "I often tell my partner that I love him/her. Examples from the social support component of the scale consisted of "my family would support our decision to adopt or have children" and "I have a strong support system that accepts me as I am." When scoring this scale, the numbers selected are added together, except a handful of reverse score items. Scores above the mean indicate higher rates of relationship satisfaction and support. Additionally, the GLRSS has an internal consistency of ($\alpha = .82$) for the full scale. The relationship satisfaction subscale has an internal consistency of ($\alpha = .83$) and the social support subscale as an internal consistency of ($\alpha = .72$). A copy of the scale can be found in Appendix A.

New Sexual Satisfaction Scale (NSSS)

In order to measure level of sexual satisfaction, the New Sexual Satisfaction Scale (NSSS) was used (Štulhofer, et al., 2010). This scale consisted of 20 items that are measured on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from one (not at all satisfied) to five (extremely satisfied). It measures level of sexual satisfaction based on self (ego-centered) and other (partner and sexual activity-centered). Examples from the ego-centered component of the scale consisted of "the way I sexually react to my partner," "my mood after sexual activity," and "the frequency of my orgasms." Examples from the partner and sexual activity-centered component of the scale consisted of "my partner's sexual creativity," "the variety of my sexual activities," and "the way my partner takes care of my sexual needs." When scoring this scale, the first 10 are added up and represent ego-centered component whereas the last 10 are added up and represent the sexual activity-centered component. Additionally, the NSSS has an internal consistency of ($\alpha = .94-.96$) for the full scale. The ego-

centered subscale has an internal consistency of ($\alpha = .91-.93$) and the partner and sexual activity-centered subscale as an internal consistency of ($\alpha = .90-.94$). The internal consistency for the short version, 20-item questionnaire, is ($\alpha = .90-.93$). A copy of the scale can be found in Appendix A.

Attitudes Toward Pornography Scale

In order to measure level of acceptance of pornography use, the Attitudes Toward Pornography Scale was used (Whatley & Brock, 2018). The original scale consists of a total of 78 items that are used to address how pornography is perceived; however, this particular study used a subset of 20 items. Participants were instructed to identify the extent to which they agree with each statement. Each item is measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from one (strongly disagree) to seven (strongly agree). Examples from the scale consisted of “viewing pornography makes people expect more from their partners,” “people who create pornography have low self-esteem,” and “viewing pornography together helps strengthen a sexual relationship.” Additionally, this scale has a Cronbach’s alpha ranging from .84 to .87. A copy of the scale can be found in Appendix A.

Data Analysis

This study contains two independent variables and two dependent variables. Level of acceptance of pornography use and amount of shared pornography use are the two independent variables. Level of relationship satisfaction and level of sexual satisfaction are the two dependent variables. The researcher ran two hierarchical linear regressions to answer the questions outlined in this particular study.

In order to answer question one, two, and three, a hierarchical linear regression was conducted. The dependent variable was level of relationship satisfaction. The independent variables in the first model of the hierarchical linear regression consisted of amount of shared pornography use and level of acceptance of pornography use. The researcher controlled for age, length of relationship, gender, and relationship status. To test for the moderators, the interaction between level of acceptance of pornography use and amount of shared pornography use and the interaction between gender and amount of shared pornography use were observed in the second

model of this hierarchical linear regression. The researcher performed a standard screening analysis and look for outliers, missing data, unusual means, and unmet assumptions.

In order to answer questions four, five, and six another hierarchical linear regression was conducted. The dependent variable was level of sexual satisfaction. The independent variables in the second hierarchical linear regression consisted of amount of shared pornography use and level of acceptance of pornography use. The researcher controlled for age, length of relationship, gender, and relationship status. To test for the moderators, the interaction between level of acceptance of pornography use and amount of shared pornography use and the interaction between gender and amount of shared pornography use were observed in the second model of this hierarchical linear regression. The researcher performed a standard screening analysis and look for outliers, missing data, unusual means, and unmet assumptions.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

Data Screening

A total of 651 participants viewed the survey via MTurk. Out of the 618 participants who consented to participate in the survey, 199 participants completed the survey and met the following five requirements: a) a minimum age of 18 years old, b) current involvement in a monogamous romantic relationship with a member of the same sex for at least 6 months, c) self-identify as a gay or lesbian, d) identify with the same gender as the one assigned at birth, and e) current resident of the United States. Thirty-eight participants were excluded for at least one of the following reasons: 1) multiple missing answers or missing answers to questions essential to analyses, or 2) inconsistent patterns to answering questions. In the final analysis, 161 participants were included, which was approximately 25% of the participants who originally viewed the survey.

Before conducting the analyses, all data were screened for statistical assumptions, outliers, and normality via SPSS. There were no missing data. However, there were a total of seven out-of-bounds data. More specifically, the interaction between gender and amount of shared pornography use had two outliers, length of romantic relationship had three outliers, and relationship satisfaction had two outliers. There appeared to be no valid reason to exclude the outliers from the final analysis. An analysis of the pairwise plots indicated linearity and homoscedasticity of the continuous variables. Significant skewness was found in a handful of variables. GLSS score had a skewness of .994 (SE = .191), Attitudes Toward Pornography score had a skewness of 1.04 (SE = .191), the interaction between level of acceptance of pornography use and amount of shared pornography use had a skewness of 1.031 (SE = .191), the interaction between gender and amount of shared pornography use had a skewness of .603 (SE = .191), length of current romantic relationship had a skewness of 1.639 (SE = .191), and age had a skewness of .854 (SE = .191). No variables had significant kurtosis. Since this data was reasonably distributed and homogenous, data transformation was not necessary with very little to be gained from doing transforming data at this time (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012).

Description of Sample

The participants' ages ranged from 19 years old to 57 years old, and most of the participants (60.9%) were between the ages of 25 and 35 years old. Ninety-seven participants identified as male (60.2%) and sixty-four participants identified as female (39.8%). 101 participants identified as gay (62.7%) and 60 participants identified as lesbian (37.3%). Four women self-identified as gay. As indicated in Table 4, well over half of the participants identified as White (73.9%), with the remaining participants identifying as Black or African American (10.6%), Asian culture (8.7%), Latinx (3.7%), American Indian, Alaska Native, or Native American (1.9%), and Multiethnic/Racial (1.2%).

Table 1: Age of Participants

Age (N=161)	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
	19	57	33.17	8.229

Table 2: Gender of Participants

Gender (N=161)	Frequency	Percentage
Male	97	60.2%
Female	64	39.8%

Table 3: Sexual Orientation

Sexual Orientation (N=161)	Frequency	Percentage
Gay	101	62.7%
Lesbian	60	37.3%

Table 4: Race and Ethnicity of Participants

Race/Ethnicity Identity (N=161)	Frequency	Percentage
Asian Culture	14	8.7%
American Indian, Alaska Native, or Native American	3	1.9%
Black or African American	17	10.6%
Latin(x)	6	3.7%
Multiethnic/Racial Identities	2	1.2%
White	119	73.9%

The following demographic variables inquired about participants' highest level of education completed, annual income, current employment status, and religious affiliation. As seen in Table 5, approximately 76% of participants completed either a four-year or six-year degree. Two participants did not provide an answer regarding their annual income. For those that did, there appears to be great variation among participants' annual income, with approximately 25% making under \$30,000 a year, 41% making somewhere between \$30,000-60,000 a year, approximately 17% making somewhere between \$60,000-80,000, and 16% making over \$80,000. As seen in Table 7, the majority of the participants (81.1%) were employed full time. In terms of religious affiliation, over half of participants (59.6%) identified as Catholic, with the remaining participants identifying as Agnostic (16.1%), Atheist (8.7%), Protestant (7.5%), Spiritualist and Wiccan (6.2%), and Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism (1.8%).

Table 5: Highest Level of Education Completed

Highest Level of Completed Education (N=161)	Frequency	Percentage
Less than a High School Diploma	2	1.2%
High School Diploma/GED	7	4.3%
Some College	15	9.3%
Associates Degree	12	7.5%
Bachelors Degree	80	49.7%
Masters Degree	42	26.1%
MD/DPT/JD/PhD or Equivalent Degree	2	1.2%
Trade School Certification	1	0.6%

Table 6: Annual Income of Participants

Annual Income (N=161)	Frequency	Percentage
Less than \$10,000	8	5%
\$10,000 to \$19,999	11	6.8%
\$20,000 to \$29,999	22	13.7%
\$30,000 to \$39,000	16	9.9%
\$40,000 to \$49,999	24	14.9%
\$50,000 to \$59,999	26	16.1%
\$60,000 to \$69,999	10	6.2%
\$70,000 to \$79,000	18	11.2%
\$80,000 to \$89,000	6	3.7%
\$90,000 to \$99,000	8	5%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	9	5.6%
More than \$150,000	3	1.9%

Table 7: Current Employment Status

Current Employment Status (N=159)	Frequency	Percentage
Employed full time (35 or more hours per week)	129	81.1%
Employed part time (up to 34 hours per week)	20	12.6%
Unemployed and currently looking for work	3	1.9%
Unemployed and not currently looking for work	1	0.6%
Full time student, employed full time (35 or more hours per week)	1	0.6%
Full time student, employed part time (up to 34 hours per week)	3	1.9%
Full time student, not employed	2	1.3%

Table 8: Religious Affiliation of Participants

Religious Affiliation (N=161)	Frequency	Percentage
Atheism	14	8.7%
Agnostic	26	16.1%
Buddhism	1	0.6%
Catholic	96	59.6%
Islam	1	0.6%
Judaism	1	0.6%
Protestant	12	7.5%
Spiritualist	8	5%
Wiccan	2	1.2%

The following demographic variables inquired about participants' current relationship status, length of current romantic relationship, and amount of pornography use. As indicated in table 9, sixty-seven participants were dating their romantic partner (41.6%), sixty-two participants were married to their romantic partner (38.5%), seventeen participants were cohabitating with their romantic partner (10.6%), and fifteen participants were engaged to their romantic partner (9.3%). Six months was the minimum length of time that an individual had been with their romantic partner and about fifteen years was the maximum length of time, with a mean of approximately 4 years and a standard deviation of approximately 3 years. As seen in Table 11, the majority of participants have watched pornography within their romantic relationship at some time during the last six months (93.2%).

Table 9: Current Relationship Status

Current Relationship Status (N=161)	Frequency	Percentage
Dating	67	41.6%
Engaged	15	9.3%
Married	62	38.5%
Cohabitating	17	10.6%

Table 10: Length of Current Romantic Relationship in Months

Length of Current Romantic Relationship (N=161)	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
	6	186	45.47	40.046

Table 11: Pornography Use Among Participants

Pornography Use (N=161)	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	150	93.2%
No	11	6.8%

Since 11 participants indicated that they had not used pornography in the last six months, only 150 participants provided information pertaining to their individual pornography use. More specifically, participants revealed the last time they used pornography, the frequency of pornography use, device commonly used, duration of typical viewing session, frequency of masturbation, and romantic partner’s knowledge of pornography use. As seen in Table 12, sixty participants stated that they last viewed pornography alone less than a week ago (40%), with the remaining participants viewing pornography approximately a week ago (28.7%), two weeks ago (16.7%), three weeks ago (5.3%), and a month ago (9.3%). Nearly half of participants (48%) indicated that they view pornography more than once a week, with the remaining participants reporting using pornography more than once a day (20%), more than once a month (18.7%), and less than once a month (13.3%). When watching pornography alone, the majority of participants indicated commonly using a smartphone or a computer (88.7%). There appeared to be some variation in the average length of a typical viewing session, with 88 participants spending somewhere between 5 to 20 minutes (58.7%). Over half of participants indicated always or almost always masturbating when watching pornography alone (53.4%). The majority of participants (86.7%) indicated that their romantic partner knows about their individual pornography usage.

Table 12: Alone Pornography Use Among Participants

Last Time Participants Used Pornography Alone (N=150)	Frequency	Percentage
Less than a week ago	60	40%
A week ago	43	28.7%
Two weeks ago	25	16.7%
Three weeks ago	8	5.3%
A month ago	14	9.3%
Frequency of Individual Pornography Use (N=150)	Frequency	Percentage
More than once a day	30	20%
More than once a week	72	48%
More than once a month	28	18.7%
Less than once a month	20	13.3%
Device Commonly Used (N=150)	Frequency	Percentage
Computer	63	42%
Smartphone	70	46.7%
Tablet	14	9.3%
Television	3	2%
Length(Duration) of Typical Viewing Session (N=150)	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 5 minutes	7	4.7%
Between 5 to 10 minutes	25	16.7%
Between 10 to 15 minutes	33	22%
Between 15 to 20 minutes	30	20%
Between 20 to 25 minutes	15	10%
Between 25 to 30 minutes	18	12%
Between 30 to 35 minutes	11	7.3%
Between 35 to 40 minutes	6	4%
Between 40 to 45 minutes	4	2.7%
More than 1 hour	1	0.7%
Frequency of Masturbation (N=150)	Frequency	Percentage
Always	40	26.7%
Almost always	40	26.7%
More than half the time	27	18%
About half the time	21	14%
Less than half the time	9	6%
Rarely	13	8.7%

Table 12 continued

Romantic Partner's Knowledge of Use Alone (N=150)	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	130	86.7%
No	10	6.7%
Unsure	10	6.7%

When it comes to shared pornography use, 80.7% of participants reported watching pornography with their romantic partner. Since 29 participants indicated that they had not used pornography with their romantic partner in the last six months, only 121 participants provided information pertaining to their shared pornography use. More specifically, participants revealed the last time that they used pornography with their romantic partner, the frequency of pornography use, device commonly used, duration of typical viewing session, and frequency of sexual activities while watching pornography with their romantic partner. As seen in Table 13, 91 participants stated that they last viewed pornography with their romantic partner sometime within the last two weeks (75.2%). Forty-nine participants (40.5%) indicated that they view pornography more than once a week, with the remaining participants reporting using pornography more than once a month (28.1%), less than once a month (17.4%), and more than once a day (14%). When watching pornography with their romantic partner, 55 participants indicated commonly using a computer (45.5%), with the remaining participants indicated using a smartphone (33.9%), a television (13.2%), and a tablet (7.4%). There seems to be even more variation in the average length of a typical viewing session for shared pornography use, with seventy-four participants spending somewhere between 10 to 30 minutes (61.2%). Over half of participants indicated always or almost always engaging in sexual activities when watching pornography with their romantic partner (52.1%).

Table 13: Shared Pornography Use Among Participants

Shared Pornography Use (N=150)	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	121	80.7%
No	29	19.3%
Last Time Participants Used Pornography with Romantic Partner (N=121)	Frequency	Percentage
Less than a week ago	26	21.5%
A week ago	34	28.1%
Two weeks ago	31	25.6%
Three weeks ago	13	10.7%
A month ago	15	12.4%
Two months ago	1	0.8%
Three months ago	1	0.8%
Frequency of Shared Pornography Use (N=121)	Frequency	Percentage
More than once a day	17	14%
More than once a week	49	40.5%
More than once a month	34	28.1%
Less than once a month	21	17.4%
Device Commonly Used (N=121)	Frequency	Percentage
Computer	55	45.5%
Smartphone	41	33.9%
Tablet	9	7.4%
Television	16	13.2%
Length(Duration) of Typical Viewing Session (N=121)	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 5 minutes	3	2.5%
Between 5 to 10 minutes	11	9.1%
Between 10 to 15 minutes	20	16.5%
Between 15 to 20 minutes	18	14.9%
Between 20 to 25 minutes	14	11.6%
Between 25 to 30 minutes	22	18.2%
Between 30 to 35 minutes	21	17.4%
Between 35 to 40 minutes	2	1.7%
Between 40 to 45 minutes	5	4.1%
Between 45 to 50 minutes	2	1.7%
More than 1 hour	3	2.5%

Table 13 continued

Frequency of Sexual Activities while Engaging in Shared Pornography Use (N=121)	Frequency	Percentage
Always	37	30.6%
Almost always	26	21.5%
More than half the time	30	24.8%
About half the time	19	15.7%
Less than half the time	4	3.3%
Rarely	5	4.1%

Forty-nine participants indicated that they watch pornography around the same amount of time individually as they do with their romantic partner (40.5%). Concerning estimated frequencies of individual pornography use, participants who indicated watching pornography on a daily basis did so from 1 to 6 times a day ($M = 2.30$, $SD = 1.236$), participants who indicated watching pornography on a weekly basis did so from 1 to 15 times a week ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 2.599$), participants who indicated watching pornography on a monthly basis did so from 1 to 23 times a month ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 4.735$), participants who indicated watching pornography less than once a month did so from 1 to 42 times in the last six months ($M = 6.95$, $SD = 10.792$). As for estimated frequencies of shared pornography use, participants who indicated watching pornography on a daily basis ranged from doing so 1 to 5 times a day ($M = 2$, $SD = .935$), participants who indicated watching pornography on a weekly basis ranged from doing so 1 to 15 times a week ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 3.020$), participants who indicated watching pornography on a monthly basis ranged from doing so 1 to 20 times a month ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 4.981$), participants who indicated watching pornography less than once a month ranged from doing so 1 to 20 times in the last six months ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 4.463$).

Table 14: Percentage of Total Pornography Use Participants View with Partner

Percentage of Pornography Used with Partner (N=121)	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 25%	19	15.7%
25%	20	16.5%
50%	49	40.5%
75%	29	24%
100%	4	3.3%

Table 15: Estimated Frequencies of Individual Pornography Use

Frequency of Individual Pornography Use (N=150)	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Times per day (N=30)	1	6	2.30	1.236
Times per week (N=72)	1	15	3.58	2.599
Times per month (N=28)	1	23	4.27	4.735
Times in last six months (N=20)	1	42	6.95	10.792

Table 16: Estimated Frequencies of Shared Pornography Use

Frequency of Shared Pornography Use (N=121)	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Times per day (N=17)	1	5	2	.935
Times per week (N=49)	1	15	3.59	3.020
Times per month (N=34)	1	20	4.09	4.981
Times in last six months (N=21)	1	20	3.71	4.463

Instrumentation

The instruments used in this study were the Gay and Lesbian Relationship Satisfaction Scale (GLRSS), the New Sexual Satisfaction Scale (NSSS), and the Attitudes Toward Pornography Scale. The minimum, maximum, mean, standard deviation, and Cronbach's alpha of each scale are listed in Table 17 below (see Table 17).

Table 17: Instruments and Descriptive Statistics

Scales	# of items	Possible Range	Observed Range	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Reported Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha from this study
Gay and Lesbian Relationship Satisfaction Scale (GLRSS)	24	0-144	57-144	161	91.47	16.061	.82	.863
New Sexual Satisfaction Scale (NSSS)	20	20-100	48-100	161	76.03	12.521	.90-.93	.934
Attitudes Toward Pornography Scale	20	20-140	68-140	161	92.51	18.897	.84-.87	.904

Correlations

Pearson correlation analyses were run on continuous variables to assess for possible relationships (N = 161). Shared pornography use and level of sexual satisfaction were significantly correlated ($r = .158, p < 0.05$). Shared pornography use and acceptance of pornography use were significantly correlated ($r = -.176, p < 0.05$). Shared pornography use and age were significantly correlated ($r = .157, p < 0.05$). Shared pornography use was significantly correlated with the interaction between acceptance of pornography use and shared pornography use ($r = -.244, p < 0.01$). Shared pornography use was significantly correlated with the interaction between gender and shared pornography use ($r = .856, p < 0.01$). Level of relationship satisfaction and level of sexual satisfaction were significantly correlated ($r = .697, p < 0.01$). Level of relationship satisfaction and acceptance of pornography use were significantly correlated ($r = .572, p < 0.01$). Level of relationship satisfaction was significantly correlated with the interaction between

acceptance of pornography use and shared pornography use ($r = .536, p < 0.01$). Level of sexual satisfaction and acceptance of pornography use were significantly correlated ($r = .417, p < 0.01$). Level of sexual satisfaction is significantly correlated with the interaction between acceptance of pornography use and shared pornography use ($r = .407, p < 0.01$). Acceptance of pornography use was significantly correlated with the interaction between acceptance of pornography use and shared pornography use ($r = .829, p < 0.01$). Acceptance of pornography use was significantly correlated with the interaction between gender and shared pornography use ($r = -.157, p < 0.05$). Age and length of relationship were significantly correlated ($r = .311, p < 0.01$). Length of relationship was significantly correlated with the interaction between acceptance of pornography use and shared pornography use ($r = -.163, p < 0.05$). The interaction between acceptance of pornography use and shared pornography use was significantly correlated with the interaction between gender and shared pornography use ($r = -.228, p < 0.01$).

Table 18: Correlations

	Shared Pornography Use	Level of Relationship Satisfaction	Level of Sexual Satisfaction	Acceptance of Pornography Use	Age	Length of Relationship	Acceptance of Pornography Use/Shared Pornography Use	Gender/Shared Pornography Use
Shared Pornography Use								
Level of Relationship Satisfaction	-.003			-.176*	.157*	.026	-.244**	.856**
Level of Sexual Satisfaction	.158*			.572**	-.044	-.082	.536**	.031
Acceptance of Pornography Use	-.003	.697**		.417**	.040	-.112	.407**	.147
Age	.158*	.697**	.417**					
Length of Relationship	-.176*	.572**	.417**		-.122	-.064	.829**	-.157*
Acceptance of Pornography Use/Shared Pornography Use	-.244**	.536**	.407**	.829**				
Gender/Shared Pornography Use	.856**	.031	.147	-.157*	.141			

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Analysis of Research Questions 1, 2 and 3

In this analysis, two hierarchical linear regressions were run to address the six research questions stated above. In order to address hypotheses one, two, and three a hierarchical linear regression analysis was used. In this analysis, the first model consisted of shared pornography use and acceptance of pornography use along with four control variables. The control variables included age, length of relationship, gender, and relationship status. The second model consisted of all these variables stated above in addition to the two interaction terms, the interaction between acceptance of pornography use and shared pornography use as well as the interaction between gender and shared pornography use. Level of relationship satisfaction was the dependent variable for this hierarchical linear regression.

The regression indicated that model 1 was significant, $F(8, 152) = 12.872, p < .001$. The correlation coefficient between the predictors and the outcome variable was $R = .636$ with an *adjusted* R^2 value of .372. This reveals that shared pornography use and acceptance of pornography use, when paired with the control variables, account for 37.2% of the variance in relationship satisfaction in same-sex couples. The regression indicated that model 2 was also significant, $F(10, 150) = 10.781, p < .001$. The correlation coefficient between the predictors and the outcome variable was $R = .647$ with an *adjusted* R^2 value of .379. This reveals that the variables mentioned above in addition to the interaction between acceptance of pornography use and shared pornography use as well as the interaction between gender and shared pornography use account for 37.9% of the variance in sexual satisfaction in same-sex couples.

In addition to the hypotheses discussed in detail below, the analysis revealed a positive relationship between acceptance of pornography use and relationship satisfaction, $p < .001$. As for the control variables included in this analysis, relationship status was the only variable that was significant. More specifically, it appears that level of relationship satisfaction is higher among participants who are married, $p = .015$, compared to participants who are dating.

Table 19. DV: Relationship Satisfaction

Model 1	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	31.312	7.653		4.091	.000
Shared Pornography Use	.855	.770	.072	1.109	.269
Acceptance of Pornography Use	.592	.063	.697	9.387	.000**
Gender	3.843	2.080	.117	1.848	.067
Age	.046	.131	.023	.347	.729
Length of Relationship	-.039	.029	-.097	-1.338	.183
Cohabiting (as compared to Dating)	-5.214	3.877	-.100	-1.345	.181
Engaged (as compared to Dating)	6.752	3.684	.123	1.833	.069
Married (as compared to Dating)	6.215	2.528	.189	2.459	.015*
Model 2	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	43.302	10.844		3.993	.000
Shared Pornography Use	2.691	2.237	.228	1.203	.231
Acceptance of Pornography Use	.445	.106	.523	4.188	.000**
Gender	6.025	3.511	.184	1.716	.088
Age	.050	.131	.026	.387	.699
Length of Relationship	-.031	.029	-.078	-1.065	.289
Cohabiting (as compared to Dating)	-4.163	3.909	-.080	-1.605	.289
Engaged (as compared to Dating)	7.606	3.691	.138	2.061	.041*
Married (as compared to Dating)	6.163	2.514	.187	2.452	.015*
Acceptance of Pornography Use/Shared Pornography Use	1.514	.881	.202	1.717	.088
Gender/Shared Pornography Use	-1.157	1.509	-.158	-.766	.445

*p < .05, **p < .001

Hypothesis One

Hypothesis one stated that the amount of shared pornography use would be positively associated with relationship satisfaction for same-sex couples. Statistical significance was not found for the independent variable of amount of shared pornography use ($t = 1.12, p > .05$). This suggests that the amount of shared pornography use was not significantly associated with relationship satisfaction for same-sex couples.

Hypothesis Two

Hypothesis two stated that the relationship between amount of shared pornography use and relationship satisfaction for same-sex couples would be more strongly positively associated for a high level of acceptance of pornography use. Statistical significance was not found for the independent variables of amount of shared pornography use as well as the interaction between level of acceptance of pornography use and amount of shared pornography use ($t = 1.72, p > .05$). This suggests that the relationship between amount of shared pornography use and relationship satisfaction for same-sex couples was not significantly more strongly positively associated for a high level of acceptance of pornography use.

Hypothesis Three

Hypothesis three stated that the relationship between the amount of shared pornography use and level of relationship satisfaction would be more strongly positively associated for women than men. Statistical significance was not found for the independent variables of amount of shared pornography use, gender, and the interaction between gender and amount of shared pornography use ($t = -.766, p > .05$). This suggests that the relationship between the amount of shared pornography use and level of relationship satisfaction was not significantly more strongly positively associated for women than men.

Additional Findings

In this study, level of acceptance of pornography use was significantly positively associated with level of relationship satisfaction ($t = 9.39, p < .01$). The statistical significance found for the

independent variable of level of acceptance of pornography use suggests that higher levels of acceptance of pornography use were related to higher levels of relationship satisfaction.

Analysis of Research Questions 4, 5 and 6

In order to address hypothesis four, five, and six a hierarchical linear regression analysis was used. In this analysis, the first model consisted of shared pornography use and acceptance of pornography use along with four control variables. The control variables included age, length of relationship, gender, and relationship status. The second model consisted of all these variables stated above in addition to the two interaction terms, the interaction between acceptance of pornography use and shared pornography use as well as the interaction between gender and shared pornography use. Level of sexual satisfaction was the dependent variable for this hierarchical linear regression.

The regression indicated that model 1 was significant, $F(8, 152) = 6.462, p < .001$. The correlation coefficient between the predictors and the outcome variable was $R = .504$ with an *adjusted* R^2 value of .215. This reveals that shared pornography use and acceptance of pornography use, when paired with the control variables, account for 21.5% of the variance in sexual satisfaction in same-sex couples. The regression indicated that model 2 was also significant, $F(10, 150) = 5.718, p < .001$. The correlation coefficient between the predictors and the outcome variable was $R = .525$ with an *adjusted* R^2 value of .228. This reveals that the variables mentioned above in addition to the interaction between acceptance of pornography use and shared pornography use as well as the interaction between gender and shared pornography use account for 22.8% of the variance in sexual satisfaction in same-sex couples.

In addition to the hypotheses discussed in detail below, the analysis revealed a positive relationship between level of acceptance of pornography use and level of sexual satisfaction, $p < .001$. None of the control variables included in this analysis were significant.

Table 20. DV: Sexual Satisfaction

Model 1	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	39.796	6.675		5.962	.000
Shared Pornography Use	2.057	.672	.223	3.062	.003*

Table 20 continued

Acceptance of Pornography Use	.304	.055	.459	5.526	.000**
Gender	1.959	1.814	.077	1.080	.282
Age	.156	.114	.102	1.360	.176
Length of Relationship	-.036	.025	-.114	-1.413	.160
Cohabiting (as compared to Dating)	-.546	3.382	-.013	-.161	.872
Engaged (as compared to Dating)	2.005	3.213	.047	.624	.534
Married (as compared to Dating)	-.593	2.205	-.023	-.269	.788
Model 2	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	52.884	9.430		5.608	.000
Shared Pornography Use	3.114	1.945	.338	1.601	.111
Acceptance of Pornography Use	.150	.092	.226	1.621	.107
Gender	3.075	3.053	.121	1.007	.315
Age	.158	.114	.104	1.396	.165
Length of Relationship	-.027	.025	-.088	-1.078	.283
Cohabiting (as compared to Dating)	.579	3.400	.014	.170	.865
Engaged (as compared to Dating)	2.798	3.210	.065	.872	.385
Married (as compared to Dating)	-.634	2.186	-.025	-.290	.772
Acceptance of Pornography Use/Shared Pornography Use	1.586	.767	.272	2.069	.040*
Gender/Shared Pornography Use	-.590	1.313	-.103	-.449	.654

*p < .05, **p < .001

Hypothesis Four

Hypothesis four stated that the amount of shared pornography use would be positively associated with sexual satisfaction for same-sex couples. Statistical significance was found for the independent variable of amount of shared pornography use ($t = 3.06, p < .05$). This suggests that the amount of shared pornography use was significantly associated with sexual satisfaction for same-sex couples.

Hypothesis Five

Hypothesis five stated that the relationship between amount of shared pornography use and sexual satisfaction for same-sex couples would be more strongly positively associated for a high level of acceptance of pornography use. Statistical significance was found for the interaction between level of acceptance of pornography use ($t = 2.07, p < .05$). This suggests that the relationship between amount of shared pornography use and sexual satisfaction for same-sex couples was significantly more strongly positively associated for a high level of acceptance of pornography use.

Since the interaction between level of acceptance of pornography use and amount of shared pornography use was significant, a post-hoc analysis was conducted. The post-hoc test was done using PROCESS through SPSS, testing the moderator at one standard deviation below the mean, at the mean, and one standard deviation above the mean. When level of acceptance of pornography use is low, there is not a significant relationship between amount of shared pornography use and level of sexual satisfaction, $b = .8212, 95\% \text{ CI } [-1.0078, 2.6501], t = .8871, p > .05$. At the mean value of level of acceptance of pornography use, there is a significant positive relationship between level of amount of shared pornography use and level of sexual satisfaction, $b = 2.4316, 95\% \text{ CI } [1.1046, 3.7586], t = 3.6203, p < .001$. When level of acceptance of pornography use is high, there is a significant positive relationship between amount of shared pornography use and level of sexual satisfaction, $b = .40420, 95\% \text{ CI } [1.8508, 6.2332], t = 3.6445, p < .001$. As suggested in the results mentioned above, the relationship between level of sexual satisfaction and amount of shared pornography only emerges among participants with average or greater levels of acceptance of pornography.

Hypothesis Six

Hypothesis six stated that the relationship between the amount of shared pornography use and level of sexual satisfaction would be more strongly positively associated for women than men. Statistical significance was not found for the independent variables of amount of shared pornography use, gender, and the interaction between gender and amount of shared pornography use ($t = -.449, p > .05$). This suggests that the relationship between the amount of shared pornography use and level of sexual satisfaction was not significantly more strongly positively associated for women than men.

Additional Findings

In this study, level of acceptance of pornography use was significantly positively associated with level of sexual satisfaction ($t = 5.53, p < .01$). The statistical significance found for the independent variable of level of acceptance of pornography use suggests that higher levels of acceptance of pornography use were related to higher levels of sexual satisfaction.

Results Conclusion

Following the completion of the data analyses, the results of this study found support for hypotheses four and five. This suggests that higher amounts of shared pornography use were related to higher levels of sexual satisfaction. Also, it seems that mid to high levels of acceptance of pornography use can strengthen the positive relationship between amount of shared pornography use and level of sexual satisfaction for same-sex couples. In addition, level of acceptance of pornography use was significantly positively associated with level of relationship satisfaction and level of sexual satisfaction. The results further support the notion that the presence of sexually explicit material will likely be connected to positive couple outcomes if pornography is used with one's romantic partner and is deemed acceptable within the relationship.

The analyses also explored the relationship of four control variables with each of the two dependent variables, relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction. The first analysis used to test hypotheses one, two, and three did find a statistically significant relationship among the control variable relationship status and the dependent variable of relationship satisfaction. More specifically, participants who indicated that they were married were significantly more satisfied

with the current state of their romantic relationship than participants who reported dating, engaged, or cohabitating ($t = 2.46, p > .05$).

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the potential role pornography use has on relationship and sexual satisfaction for individuals in a romantic relationship with a member of the same sex. In addition, this study sought to examine (1) the relationship between the amount of shared pornography use and reported couple outcomes, (2) the degree in which the level of acceptance of pornography use alters the relationship between the amount of pornography use and couple outcomes, and (3) to which extent does gender have an influence on the relationship between amount of shared pornography use and reported couple outcomes. This research was conceptualized through the lens of queer theory as well as minority stress theory. Queer theory supports the notion that an individual's ideas around sex and sexuality are socially constructed, which are always evolving based off of the surrounding stimuli. Minority stress theory suggests that individuals who identify as gay or lesbian experience additional stressors due to their sexual orientation as a result of living in a heteronormative society.

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to identify the influence amount of shared pornography use, interaction between level of acceptance of pornography use and amount of shared pornography use, as well as interaction between gender and amount of shared pornography use has on relationship satisfaction. Another multiple regression analysis was conducted to identify the influence amount of shared pornography use, interaction between level of acceptance of pornography use and amount of shared pornography use, as well as interaction between gender and amount of shared pornography use has on sexual satisfaction. The remaining discussion will address the findings of this research in more detail and provide potential explanations for the results. The strengths and limitations of this research, clinical implications, and considerations for future research will be acknowledged and reflected upon.

Influence Shared Pornography Use has on Couple Outcomes

This study proposed that individuals who watch higher rates of pornography with their romantic partners would have a higher likelihood of being satisfied with the current state of their relationship. This study also predicted that individuals who watch higher rates of pornography with their romantic partners would have a higher likelihood of being sexually satisfied within their

romantic relationship. The second hypothesis stated here was significantly supported, which suggests that amount of shared pornography use is positively associated with level of sexual satisfaction.

Previous research on the influence shared pornography use has on couple outcomes has revealed positive findings. More specifically, shared pornography use has been found to be associated with higher rates of sexual satisfaction (Maddox et al., 2011; Willoughby & Leonhardt, 2018). Also, Bridges and Morokoff (2011) concluded that level of relational satisfaction was higher among couples who viewed pornography with their partners than those who viewed pornography on their own.

Relationship Satisfaction

However, in this study, determining the amount of shared pornography use does not take into account the amount of individual pornography use. It is possible that individuals who watch a high degree of pornography with their romantic partner watch even more pornography on their own, which might counteract the possible benefits that shared pornography use might have on the existing level of relationship satisfaction. Research has shown that frequent individual pornography use is associated with heightened levels of relationship distress (Rasmussem, 2016; Willoughby & Leonhardt, 2018, Zitzman & Butler, 2009). Sexually explicit material might negatively interfere with intimate moments (Parvez, 2006) and the knowledge of partner's pornography use may result in viewing one's self as inadequate when upholding the perception that he or she cannot meet the standards of their romantic partner (Benjamin & Tlusten, 2010).

Additionally, the researchers are unaware of the amount of pornography each participant's romantic partner engages in. Previous research has shown that discrepancies in frequency of pornography use between romantic partners can have a negative influence on couple outcomes, such as low levels of relationship satisfaction, stability, and effective communication (Willoughby et al., 2016). Not to mention, pornography use has not been found to drastically improve the state of an already failed relationship. There were 139 participants in this study (86.3%) that obtained a score on the Gay and Lesbian Relationship Satisfaction Scale that is indicative of possible deficits, with 71 participants (44.1%) scoring more than one standard deviation below the anticipated mean. More specifically, an individual who watches pornography with their romantic partner is most likely not going to see the positive elements of doing so when they are not satisfied in the

relationship. Individuals are less likely going to be transparent about their pornography use if they are experiencing distress within the current state of their relationship, which has been shown to be associated with low levels of relationship satisfaction (Resch & Alderson, 2014). There are a multitude of problems that could lead to low levels of relationship satisfaction that cannot be addressed by watching pornography with their romantic partner.

Sexual Satisfaction

On the other hand, the results of this study support the notion upheld in previous research that suggests that watching pornography with one's romantic partner is positively related to higher levels of sexual satisfaction. Hare et al. (2015) has shown that viewing pornography with one's partner can serve as a tool to incorporate novel sexual experiences within the romantic relationship as well as enhance sexual arousal. These reported benefits of shared pornography use have also been found to be associated with improving levels of sexual satisfaction while in a romantic relationship (Maddox et al., 2011). Another source revealed that shared pornography use was associated with an open sexual communication pattern and heightened rates of closeness (Kohut et al., 2018). Engaging in shared pornography use is also likely to increase an individual's comfort level in self-disclosing his or her sexual needs and desires to one's partner (Theiss, 2011). Being able to talk openly about sexual interests and preferences is likely going to lead to higher levels of sexual satisfaction in a romantic relationship.

Influence Level of Acceptance of Pornography has on Couple Outcomes

This study anticipated that the relationship between amount of shared pornography use and relationship satisfaction would be stronger for individuals who are highly accepting of pornography use. This hypothesis was not statistically supported. This study also presumed that the relationship between amount of shared pornography use and sexual satisfaction would be stronger for individuals who are highly accepting of pornography use. This hypothesis was statistically supported.

Individuals in the United States are becoming increasingly more accepting of pornography use (ElHage, 2018), with higher rates among men (Olmstead et al., 2013). A number of studies have shown that level of acceptance is an important component in determining the influence that

pornography use can have on a romantic relationship (Maas et al., 2018; Willoughby et al., 2016). More specifically, previous research has shown that being less accepting of pornography use is associated with a decreased likelihood of benefiting from viewing pornography with one's romantic partner (Grubbs et al., 2015). Perception of pornography had a crucial influence on degree of distress associated with watching sexually explicit material.

Vaillancourt-Morel and Bergeron (2019) suggested that attitudes around pornography use may be partially based on romantic partner's acceptance of the presence of sexually explicit material, suggesting that participants who reported a high level of acceptance of pornography use are currently in a romantic relationship with an individual who is approximately equally as accepting. Level of acceptance of pornography use might be especially important for sexual minorities when watching pornography with their romantic partner due to the emphasis that gays and lesbians place on their partner as a source of support (Frost, 2011). Coming from a queer theoretical framework, upholding negative labels around pornography use is going to have an unfavorable outcome on the couple unit.

Relationship Satisfaction

In this study, higher levels of acceptance of pornography use were related to higher levels of relationship satisfaction which has been supported by studies conducted in the past. Previous research has revealed that level of acceptance of pornography use is positively associated with level of relationship satisfaction (Maas et al., 2018; Willoughby et al., 2016). A reported benefit of shared pornography use, incorporating new elements into the romantic relationship, has been shown to enhance sexual desire which was found to be a predictor of increasing relationship satisfaction (Muisse et al., 2019). Also, Coffelt and Hess (2014) concluded that sexual disclosure was positively correlated with relationship satisfaction, which is more likely seems to occur in romantic relationships when pornography use is accepted within the relationship.

However, in this study, level of acceptance of pornography use did not significantly alter the relationship between shared pornography use and relationship satisfaction. A potential explanation for this inconsistency could be due to the components that contribute to the level of relationship satisfaction when in a romantic relationship: perceived benefits, costs, as well as standards of a healthy relationship (Kurdek, 1991). The results in Byers' (2005) longitudinal study revealed that level of relationship satisfaction predicted level of sexual satisfaction, whereas level

of sexual satisfaction did not predict relationship satisfaction. These two studies suggest that despite the reported advantages of watching pornography with one's romantic partner when level of acceptance of sexually explicit material is high, these positive outcomes might not be able to account for all of the components needed in a relationship to be satisfied. Sexual satisfaction appears to be only one contributing factor to overall relationship satisfaction.

Gays and lesbians are inclined to experience high rates of psychological distress as a result of living in a heteronormative society, which has been found to weaken the stability of their romantic relationships (Meyer, 2003). For example, Cramer (2004) concluded that emotional support was an important contributing factor in overall level of relationship satisfaction. Lesbians and gays often receive low levels of social support, which can have a negative impact on degree of relationship satisfaction (Belous & Wampler, 2016; Frost, 2011). Also, conflict around power and intimacy was seen to increase the likelihood of not being satisfied in the romantic relationship (Kurdek, 1994). Improving sexual communication, enhancing sexual exploration, and promoting sexual variation are more so associated with a heightened degree of sexual satisfaction than of relationship satisfaction.

Sexual Satisfaction

This study supported the notion that the relationship between amount of shared pornography use and sexual satisfaction for same-sex couples would be strongly positively associated for a high level of acceptance of pornography use. In other words, there was a stronger relationship between shared pornography use and sexual satisfaction when level of acceptance of pornography was high. Being sexually satisfied in a romantic relationship is an important component for individuals (Nicholas, 2004). Previous research has revealed that mutual self-disclosure was associated with higher levels of sexual satisfaction (MacNeil & Byers, 2009). In fact, research has shown that being able to have an open sexual communication style increased the likelihood of being sexually satisfied in an individual's romantic relationship (Jones et al., 2017; Montesi et al., 2011). Theiss (2011) also concluded that poor communication was associated with low levels of sexual satisfaction. The benefits acquired from viewing pornography with one's romantic partner seem to be optimized when the sexually explicit material is accepted.

Therefore, level of acceptance of pornography appears to be important factor in determining the influence shared pornography use has on couple outcomes for gays and lesbians.

When pornography use is accepted within the romantic relationship, shared pornography use will likely be able to create a safe space that encourages sexual discovery while simultaneously limiting interference of shame and guilt.

The Gender of Pornography User and Couple Outcomes

This study reasoned that the positive relationship between the amount of shared pornography use and level of relationship satisfaction would be stronger for women than men. This study also inferred that the positive relationship between the amount of shared pornography use and level of sexual satisfaction would be stronger for women than men. Neither hypothesis was statistically supported, which suggests that established gender differences that existing among heterosexual couples might not exist among same-sex couples.

Gender differences are clearly outlined in existing research, with men viewing pornography at higher rates (Albright, 2008; Carroll et al., 2017, Willoughby et al., 2016) and being generally more accepting of sexually explicit material than women (Mattebo et al., 2012). Also, women and men tend to view pornography for different reasons, with women seeking exposure to sexually explicit material primarily as a method of enhancing intimacy and men primarily seeking exposure to sexually explicit material for sexual pleasure (Bridges & Morokoff, 2011; Štulhofer et al., 2012). These gender differences seen in past research conducted on this topic might not have been replicated in this particular study as a consequence of (1) the high degree of stigma placed on women viewing sexually explicit material (French & Hamilton, 2018), (2) the underrepresentation of women in many research samples (Wright et al., 2013), and (3) the lack of inclusion of sexual minorities in research.

First, the current social constructs in place tend to look down upon women's freedom of sexual exploration, which can drastically hinder women's comfort level in disclosing information as well as acting in a manner that goes against the societal expectations that are placed on women. More specifically, women who identify as heterosexual might refrain from being honest about their pornography use or not view sexually explicit material all together out of the negative ramifications associated with doing so. However, there is reason to believe that women who identify as a sexual minority might not feel the same degree of pressure to abide by traditional gender norms around pornography as a result of the discrimination that they receive on a daily basis due to their sexual orientation. Individuals who identify as lesbian and gay, regardless of

gender, might obtain similar outcomes of using pornography in the context of one's romantic relationship, such as normalizing sexual preferences and exploring sexual interests (de Souza et al., 2016).

Second, women's experiences with pornography have just recently started receiving attention in research, however, there is limited focus on including women in the sample unless it is to better understand the impact their romantic partner's pornography use has on them (Ashton et al., 2018; Borgogna et al., 2018). Previous research has shown that there has been a spike in the number of women who are intentionally watching sexually explicit material over the years (French & Hamilton, 2018; Price et al., 2016), but the amount of research on women's pornography use has not increased at the same pace (Wright et al., 2013). The absence of women appearing in research on this topic can be seen as a method of strengthening the existence of traditional gender differences.

Third, research conducted on this topic has not extensively explored the implications of pornography use for individuals who identify as a sexual minority. Despite Kurdek (1991) revealing that gay and lesbian couples have more similarities with heterosexual couples than differences, it is difficult to assess for the accuracy of these reported comparisons. It can be problematic to compare a historically marginalized group, lesbian and gay individuals, with a privileged group, heterosexual individuals (Chevrette, 2013). Since these two groups have not been equally represented in society there are certainly limitations associated with making the assumption that results derived from heterosexual women would be applicable to lesbian women and heterosexual men would be applicable to gay men. The results of this study question the extent to which identifying as a sexual minority might have an influence on the likelihood of replicating previously supported gender differences.

It is possible that the gender differences were not present in this study as a result of the sexual orientation of the participants in this particular sample. As previously mentioned, the majority of existing research on this topic has focused on individuals who identify as heterosexual. Researchers remain relatively unaware of the couple outcomes associated with viewing pornography while in a romantic relationship among gays and lesbians. Gender dynamics might work differently among same-sex couples.

Control Variables

The association between relationship status and relationship satisfaction yielded significant results. In this study, participants who reported being married indicated higher satisfaction with the current state of their romantic relationship than those participants who were dating, engaged, or cohabitating. This finding is consistent with previous research stating that married individuals have been found to report being more satisfied with the current state of their romantic relationship than their unmarried counterparts (Burgoyne, 2012; Moore et al., 2001). Additionally, relationship status has been found to be associated with an individual's degree of wellbeing, with level of commitment having a positive relationship with perceived level of wellbeing (Soons & Liebroer, 2008). This evidence can help explain why participants who identified as married in this study reported higher levels of relationship satisfaction. Married couples also appear to be more likely to report trusting their romantic partner to remain faithful than couples who are not married (Pew Research Center, 2019).

Sexual minorities may base relationship satisfaction on a multitude of factors that might be partially due to the institutional barriers that have prevented gays and lesbians from being perceived as being in a legitimate, committed relationship (Belous & Wampler, 2016). The obstacles that same-sex couples have been forced to face may contribute to higher levels of relationship satisfaction when engaged or married to their romantic partner. Living in a heteronormative world has certainly increased the level of difficulty associated with same-sex couples being able to commemorate their commitment to one another in the same manner as heterosexual couples have done for centuries. Not to mention, individuals who are married have been found to report higher levels of commitment to romantic relationship (Wilcox et al., 2019). Therefore, upholding a relationship status of married might be seen as a way to decrease the ambiguity that exists among same-sex couples by increasing the likelihood of gay and lesbian romantic relationships to be deemed as acceptable in society.

Strengths and Limitations

There are a handful of noteworthy strengths. This study brings unique and insightful considerations to the existing research on couple outcomes associated with pornography use. A significant strength of this study is its contribution to the research field. This study was able to 1)

expand upon current knowledge of gay and lesbian relationship dynamics, 2) further our understanding of the influence varying degrees of shared pornography use and level of acceptance of pornography use has on relationship and sexual satisfaction, and 3) use the main tenants of queer and minority stress theory for the basis of conceptualizing the reported findings. An additional strength to acknowledge in this study is the number of participants recruited ($n = 161$). Based on the proposed data analysis, only 107 participants were needed to have sufficient power and the number of participants included in this study surpassed this requirement.

This study is able to present interesting findings in a research area that is lacking. Previous research has not sought out to appropriately address the influence that shared pornography use has on lesbians and gays' relationship and sexual satisfaction. Additionally, the interaction between level of acceptance of pornography use and amount of shared pornography use has not been studied. This study was able to touch upon uncharted territory, placing a degree of importance on continuing to hone in on the couple outcomes associated with sexual minorities' use of sexually explicit material. Contrary to previous findings, there was no gender difference in the reported strength between the amount of shared pornography use and level of relationship as well as sexual satisfaction. This study was also able to shed light on the significance of an individual's level of acceptance of pornography use when exploring the relationship between amount of shared pornography use and level of sexual satisfaction, with higher levels of acceptance positively associated with higher levels of satisfaction.

Another strength of this study is its ability to provide a fresh prospective on the presence of pornography in a romantic relationship. Approaching this study from a queer and stress minority theoretical lens provided room to challenge traditional, heteronormative assumptions that have historically been associated with pornography use. The labels commonly placed on viewing sexually explicit material increases the level of difficulty in conducting research aimed at uncovering possible benefits related to the use of pornography in the context of romantic relationships. This study represents an attempt to break free of the heteronormative pressure that exists to conform to established societal norms around sex and sexuality, with the hopes of being able to assist same-sex couples who experience a heightened level of distress as a result of prejudice and discrimination. This study was able to get one step closer to viewing the relational outcome associated with pornography use among members of the systemically oppressed.

However, there are several limitations that are worth acknowledging that might have an impact on the overall results. One limitation of the current study is that the sample solely focused on cisgender sexual minorities that identified as gay and lesbian, excluding a large portion of individuals from the LGBTQ+ community. Future research may consider including all sexual orientations and gender identification in order to obtain a thorough representation of the LGBTQ+ community. Another limitation of this study is that the sample is rather homogenous. In terms of demographics, 73.9% of the participants identified as white, 49.7% have a Bachelors degree, 81.1% are employed full time, and 59.6% identified as Catholic. Furthermore, this highly religious sample might not be an accurate representation of gay and lesbian couples in the real world.

An additional limitation of this study has to do with selection effect. More specifically, level of acceptance of pornography use was slightly higher in this study than what might commonly be seen within the general population. A potential reason for this may be that individuals who are less accepting of pornography use were not interested in taking the survey in the first place. Furthermore, since all the information was self-reported, it is possible that participants' responses varied in accuracy (Wright, 2006). For example, participants might overgeneralize how satisfied or unsatisfied they are with the current state of their relationship, simply basing their responses on their last interaction with their romantic partner.

It is important to recognize that this was a cross-sectional study, meaning that the results are limited to identifying the influence pornography use has on couple outcomes at one point in time. Couple outcomes around pornography use will likely change over time. As stated previously, pornography is difficult to define due to the wide range of existing interpretations (Ashton, et al., 2018). The researchers attempted to limit confusion around what constitutes as "pornography" by providing a definition for the participants to refer to, however, the broad definition might differ from their individual definition, potentially affecting the accuracy of the results. Also, a limitation of this study is that participants' romantic partners were not included, which limited the assumptions that could be made about same-sex couples. Future studies would benefit from including both romantic partners in the sample in order to be able to better understand how the presence of pornography has an influence on gay and lesbian romantic relationships.

Another limitation is that more men (60.2%) than women (39.8%) participated in this study, despite there being more female MTurk workers than male (Burnham et al., 2018). The reason for a higher number of men participating in this study than women might be due to society perceiving

sexually explicit material to be predominately created for men. Lastly, it would have been beneficial to ask a few more demographic questions around participants' pornography use in order to better understand what factors contributed to the couple outcomes, such as indicating the purpose of watching sexually explicit material, perception of out of control behavior, and changes in frequency of use over time.

Clinical Implications

As pornography continues to become increasingly easier to access with technological developments, one can predict that sexually explicit material will appear to some degree within the context of a romantic relationship (Poulsen et al., 2013). Longstanding research has brought attention to the poor outcomes commonly associated with pornography use when in a romantic relationship (Rasmussem, 2016; Willoughby & Leonhardt, 2018). However, studies such as this one has begun to challenge the negative assumptions associated with viewing sexually explicit material while in a committed relationship. Consequently, it is important for clinicians to be aware of the research on the influence that pornography use can have on couple outcomes.

Couples will frequently come to therapy stating that their unsatisfied with the current state of their romantic relationship and clinicians will need to explore the reasons attributed to this lack of satisfaction. It is quite common for individuals to express issues around sex and intimacy, often reporting concerns around this topic existing for a significant period of time. Problems around intimacy have been found to account for fifty to seventy percent of couples' dissatisfaction with the relationship, indicating that low levels of sexual satisfaction may be a threat to the stability of the romantic relationship (McCarthy, 2015). Individuals might indicate feeling unheard by their partner or that their partner does not understand them like they used to. Regardless of the presentation of the initial problem that brought the couple into therapy in the first place, it is beneficial for clinicians to approach each case with intersectionality in mind (Buehler, 2016). For example, what is the sexual orientation of each romantic partner? Do they identify from different ethnic backgrounds? Do they share the same religious beliefs? Once clinicians become aware of the multiple identities that each partner possesses, they should spend a significant amount of time discussing the impact that falling into a specific category and/or feeling defined by a particular label has on a given individual as well as the romantic relationship. Couples would benefit from

having the space to share their experiences in attempting to navigate around existing limitations, working toward constructing their preferred identities by challenging existing societal constructs.

Clinicians working with couples can help their clients find out if they might benefit from incorporating pornography into their relationship by assessing the following: (1) frequency of each partner's individual pornography use, (2) frequency of shared pornography use, and (3) attitudes and beliefs around pornography. It would be best to complete these assessments with each partner separately in order to create a safe space to optimize honesty. According to the results of this study, couples might be able to enhance their level of sexual satisfaction by watching pornography together as long as they are accepting of sexually explicit material. Clinicians should spend time reflecting on their own views around the presence of pornography while in a romantic relationship to ensure that they do not let their own opinions interfere with the possibility of integrating sexually explicit material into interventions for clients.

This study also supports clinicians having a conversation with clients about the potential benefits that pornography can provide the couple unit while leaving plenty of time to assess for their comfort level. The clinician should attempt to break down and process societal norms and expectations around one's sexuality that might be hindering their sexual experiences. There are a handful of potential interventions that clinicians can incorporate into sessions with clients. For example, time can be spent exploring sexual interests and preferences, simultaneously normalizing fetishes deemed as abnormal by society. Clinicians can introduce the importance of setting boundaries around shared pornography use, such as acknowledging pornographic categories that are off limit potentially due to being seen as a trigger or simply perceived as a turn off. A conversation can take place around the existing power dynamics that might spontaneously appear during a couple's interactions during or after exposure to sexually explicit material.

Future Directions

The present study aimed to obtain a better understanding of the impact pornography use can have on same-sex romantic relationships by examining the influence watching sexually explicit material with an individual's romantic partner has on relationship and sexual satisfaction, taking level of acceptance of pornography use and gender into consideration. There are a wide range of possibilities for future studies due to the limited research that exists on this topic. Future research could certainly benefit from continued exploration of the couple outcomes associated with

pornography use for members of the LGBTQ+ community, in addition to only individuals who identify as gay or lesbian. At this point in time, researchers are relatively unaware of how sexual orientation or gender identification have an influence on the reported advantages and disadvantages of pornography use. Future studies should think about exploring the degree to which sexual orientation plays a factor in couple outcomes of pornography use. For example, researchers can compare lesbian, gay, and heterosexual couples to find out if sexual orientation has a significant influence on the couple outcomes associated with pornography use.

Additionally, researchers can focus on looking into the impact pornography use has on other couple outcomes aside from relationship and sexual satisfaction, such as effective communication or level of commitment. It would also be helpful to find out more information around the impact specific pornographic categories has on couple outcomes when viewing sexually explicit material with one's romantic partner. There is also room for future research to assess the couple outcomes of individuals who engage in pornography use with those who do not view pornography within the context of their romantic relationship. It would be interesting to find out if an individual's personal definition of pornography has an influence on reported couple outcomes.

Future studies should attempt to collect data on both romantic partners. As stated previously, this would be able to provide a better understanding of how pornography use impacts both romantic partners. Furthermore, designing a longitudinal study would be able to provide insight around the experiences same-sex couples have with pornography over various points in the romantic relationship. This type of study would allow researchers to be able to determine how components such as length of relationship and age have an impact on pornography use when in a romantic relationship. Similarly, there is clearly a need for qualitative data to be collated when it comes to future research on this topic. Due to the oppression innately instilled within same-sex couples, their voice is not accurately represented in existing research. It would be beneficial to conduct a qualitative study, interviewing both partners to assess the ways in which sexually explicit material appears in their relationship.

Conclusion

This study explored the relationship between shared pornography use and relationship and sexual satisfaction, the interaction between level of acceptance of pornography use and amount of

shared pornography use, as well as the interaction between gender and amount of shared pornography use. The results of this study revealed that amount of shared pornography use was positively associated with level of sexual satisfaction. This study also was able to conclude that a mid to high level of acceptance of pornography use strengthened the relationship between amount of shared pornography use and sexual satisfaction for same-sex couples. Future studies should consider expanding on the presence of sexually explicit material in the context of same-sex romantic relationships from a systemic perspective. It is important for clinicians to be aware and recognize how higher levels of acceptance of pornography use can possibly lead to sexual liberation.

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APPENDIX A. RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Influence Pornography Use has on Same-Sex Couple Outcomes

Anne B. Edwards, PhD and Tori A. DiBona, BA

Department of Behavioral Sciences

Purdue University

Key Information

Please take time to review this information carefully. This is a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary which means that you may choose not to participate at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may ask questions to the researchers about the study whenever you would like. If you decide to take part in the study, you will be asked to sign this form, be sure you understand what you will do and any possible risks or benefits.

What is the purpose of this study?

This study looks at the influence pornography use has on relationship and sexual satisfaction among same-sex couples. It also takes shared pornography use and attitudes toward pornography into consideration when examining such couple outcomes. The data for the research project will be collected until October or until the number of participants needed have completed the survey.

You are being asked to participate in a study designed by Dr. Anne B. Edwards and Tori A. DiBona of Purdue University. We would like to enroll 200 people in this study. We want to understand how the presence of pornography use may influence relationship and sexual satisfaction within the context of your romantic relationship.

What will I do if I choose to be in this study?

If you choose to participate, you acknowledge that you are a minimum age of 18 years old, currently involved in a monogamous romantic relationship with a member of the same sex for at least 6 months, self-identify as a gay or lesbian, identify with the same gender as the one assigned at birth, and current resident of the United States. You will be instructed to complete a

survey asking about your pornography use, relationship satisfaction, sexual satisfaction, and attitudes toward pornography. These questions reflect your experience using pornography on your own as well as with your romantic partner, relationship satisfaction, sexual satisfaction, and attitudes toward pornography. You are free to not answer any particular questions if they make you feel uncomfortable, or withdraw your participation at any time without penalty.

How long will I be in the study?

The survey should take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

What are the possible risks or discomforts?

There are no greater risks present during the completion of the survey than you would encounter in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological exams or tests. Breach of confidentiality is always a risk with data, but we will take precautions to minimize this risk as described in the confidentiality section. Only the researchers will access the data from this study and no personally identifying information will be collected during the study.

The questions may also make you feel uncomfortable and may result in emotional distress. To minimize this risk, you can choose to not answer any given question on the survey. You can go to https://www.aamft.org/Directories/Find_a_Therapist.aspx or <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists> to find someone to speak to about any distress that may come of participating in this survey.

Are there potential benefits?

You will not directly benefit from this study. You will have a chance to take part in research, and your participation may, thus, contribute to the scientific understanding of couple outcomes of pornography use.

Will I receive payment or other incentive?

You will receive payment of 40 cents for participating in this research project, so long as you meet the study inclusion criteria and you complete all relevant questions in the survey.

According to the rules of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), payments that are made to you as a result of your participation in a study may be considered taxable income.

Are there costs to me for participation?

There are no anticipated costs to participate in this research project.

Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?

There is no personally identifying information on this survey; all responses will remain anonymous and will be used only in combination with the responses of other participants in this and related studies. Additionally, you may choose to not answer particular questions or to withdraw your participation at any time, without penalty. All data gathered in this study will be accessed by the researchers. The data file will be used for preparation of research reports related to this study and kept for a period of three years after publication of any articles related to this study. The project's research records may be reviewed by departments at Purdue University responsible for regulatory and research oversight. In addition, IP addresses will not be linked to identifying information.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate. If you agree to participate, you may withdraw your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Who can I contact if I have questions about the study?

If you have questions, comments, or concerns about this research project, you can talk to one of the researchers. Please contact Dr. Anne B. Edwards at abedward@pnw.edu or Tori A. DiBona at tdibona@pnw.edu. Dr. Anne B. Edwards should be your first point of contact.

To report anonymously via Purdue's Hotline see www.purdue.edu/hotline.

If you have questions about your rights while taking part in the study or have concerns about the treatment of research participants, please call the Human Research Protection Program at (765) 494-5942, email (irb@purdue.edu) or write to:

Human Research Protection Program - Purdue University
Ernest C. Young Hall, Room 1032
155 S. Grant St.
West Lafayette, IN 47907-2114

Documentation of Informed Consent

I have had the opportunity to read this consent form and have the research study explained. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research study, and my questions have been answered. I am prepared to participate in the research study described above.

I certify that I am a minimum age of 18 years old, currently involved in a monogamous romantic relationship with a member of the same sex for at least 6 months, self-identify as a gay or lesbian, identify with the same gender as the one assigned at birth, and current resident of the United States, and agree to participate in this study.

- Yes. I certify that I am a minimum age of 18 years old, currently involved in a monogamous romantic relationship with a member of the same sex for at least 6 months, self-identify as a gay or lesbian, identify with the same gender as the one assigned at birth, and current resident of the United States, and agree to participate in this study.

- No. I do not certify that I am a minimum age of 18 years old, currently involved in a monogamous romantic relationship with a member of the same sex for at least 6 months, self-identify as a gay or lesbian, identify with the same gender as the one assigned at birth, and current resident of the United States, and agree to participate in this study.

APPENDIX B. SURVEY

Q1. How old are you?

- 17 years old or younger
- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21
- 22
- 23
- 24
- 25
- 26
- 27
- 28
- 29
- 30
- 31
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- 70
- 71
- 72
- 73
- 74
- 75
- 76
- 77
- 78
- 79
- 80
- Prefer not to answer

Skip To: End of survey if “How old are you? = 17 years old or younger”

Skip To: End of Survey If “How old are you? = Prefer not to answer”

Q2. Are you currently in a romantic relationship with a member of the same sex?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer

Skip To: End of survey if “Are you currently in a romantic relationship with a member of the same sex? = No”

Skip To: End of survey if “Are you currently in a romantic relationship with a member of the same sex? = Prefer not to answer”

Q3. Have you been with your romantic partner for at least 6 months?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer

Skip To: End of survey if “Have you been with your romantic partner for at least 6 months? = No”

Skip To: End of survey if “Have you been with your romantic partner for at least 6 months? = Prefer not to answer”

Q4. How long have you been with your current romantic partner?

Years _____

Months _____

Q5. Are you in a monogamous relationship?

Yes

No

Prefer not to answer

Skip To: End of survey if “Are you in a monogamous relationship? = No”

Skip To: End of survey if “Are you in a monogamous relationship? = Prefer not to answer”

Q6. How would you describe your sexual orientation?

- Lesbian
- Gay
- Bisexual
- Pansexual
- Asexual
- Queer
- Other
- Prefer not to answer

Skip To: End of survey if “How would you describe your sexual orientation? = Bisexual”

Skip To: End of survey if “How would you describe your sexual orientation? = Pansexual”

Skip To: End of survey if “How would you describe your sexual orientation? = Asexual”

Skip To: End of survey if “How would you describe your sexual orientation? = Queer”

Skip To: End of survey if “How would you describe your sexual orientation? = Other”

Skip To: End of survey if “How would you describe your sexual orientation? = Prefer not to answer”

Q7. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other, please specify _____

Q8. Is the gender identity you have now the one you were assigned to at birth?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer

Skip To: End of survey if “Is the gender identity you have now the one you were assigned to at birth? = No”

Skip To: End of survey if “Is the gender identity you have now the one you were assigned to at birth? = Prefer not to answer”

Q9. What is your current relationship status?

- Dating
- Engaged
- Married
- Cohabiting
- Other, please specify _____

Q10. Please select one of the following ethnic groups that most accurately represents you.

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian Culture
- Black or African American
- Latin(x)
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- White
- Multiethnic/Racial Identities
- Other, please specify _____

Q11. What is your religious affiliation?

- Agnostic
- Atheism
- Buddhism
- Catholic
- Islam
- Judaism
- Mormon/LDS
- Protestant
- Spiritualist
- Other, please specify _____

Q12. What is your current employment status?

- Employed full time (35 or more hours per week)
- Employed part time (up to 34 hours per week)
- Unemployed and currently looking for work
- Unemployed and not currently looking for work
- Full time student, employed full time (35 or more hours per week)
- Full time student, employed part time (up to 34 hours per week)
- Full time student, not employed
- Part time student, not employed
- Retired
- Unable to work
- Other

Q13. What is your annual income?

- Less than \$10,000

- \$10,000 to \$19,999
- \$20,000 to \$29,999
- \$30,000 to \$39,000
- \$40,000 to \$49,999
- \$50,000 to \$59,999
- \$60,000 to \$69,999
- \$70,000 to \$79,000
- \$80,000 to \$89,000
- \$90,000 to \$99,000
- \$100,000 to \$149,999
- More than \$150,000

Q14. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

- Less than a High School Diploma
- High School Diploma/GED
- Some College
- Associates Degree
- Bachelors Degree
- Masters Degree
- MD/DPT/JD/PhD or Equivalent Degree
- Trade School Certification

Q15. What is your personal definition of pornography?

Thank you for answering the previous question on your definition of pornography. For the purpose of standardizing the results of this survey, pornography will be defined as "sexually explicit material intended to cause arousal."

Q16. Have you watched pornography in your current relationship within the last 6 months?

- Yes
- No

Skip To: Q35 if “Have you watched pornography in your current relationship within the last 6 months? = No”

Q17. When is the last time you watched pornography by yourself?

- Less than a week ago
- A week ago
- Two weeks ago
- Three weeks ago
- A month ago
- Other, please specify _____

Q18. On average, how often do you watch pornography by yourself?

- More than once a day. Please indicate the number of times per day in the box.
- More than once a week. Please indicate the number of times per week in the box.
- More than once a month. Please indicate the number of times per month in the box.
- Less than once a month. Please indicate the number of times in the last 6 months in the box.

Q19. What device do you most commonly use to access pornographic material when watching by yourself?

- Smartphone
- Tablet
- Computer
- Television
- Other device, please specify _____

Q20. When you watch pornography by yourself, how long does a typical viewing session last?

- Less than 5 minutes
- Between 5 to 10 minutes
- Between 10 to 15 minutes
- Between 15 and 20 minutes
- Between 20 and 25 minutes
- Between 25 and 30 minutes
- Between 30 and 35 minutes
- Between 35 and 40 minutes
- Between 40 and 45 minutes
- Between 45 and 50 minutes
- Between 50 and 55 minutes
- Between 50 to 60 minutes
- More than 1 hour

Q21. How often do you masturbate while watching pornography by yourself?

- Always
- Almost always
- More than half of the time
- About half of the time
- Less than half of the time
- Rarely
- Never

Q22. Does your partner know you watch pornography by yourself?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure
- Other, please specify _____

Q23. Have you watched pornography in your current relationship with your partner?

- Yes

- No

Skip To: Q31 if “Have you watched pornography in your current relationship with your partner?
= No”

Q24. When is the last time you watched pornography with your partner?

- Less than a week ago
- A week ago
- Two weeks ago
- Three weeks ago
- A month ago
- Other, please specify _____

Q25. On average, how often do you watch pornography with your partner?

More than once a day. Please indicate the number of times per day in the box.

More than once a week. Please indicate the number of times per week in the box.

More than once a month. Please indicate the number of times per month in the box.

Less than once a month. Please indicate the number of times in the last 6 months in the box.

Q26. Out of all of the pornography that you consume, what percentage do you consume with your partner?

- Less than 25%
- 25%
- 50%
- 75%
- 100%
- Other, please specify _____

Q27. What device do you most commonly use to access pornographic material with your partner?

- Smartphone
- Tablet
- Computer
- Television
- Other device, please specify _____

Q28. When you watch pornography with your partner, how long does a typical viewing session last?

- Less than 5 minutes
- Between 5 to 10 minutes
- Between 10 to 15 minutes
- Between 15 to 20 minutes
- Between 20 to 25 minutes
- Between 25 to 30 minutes
- Between 30 to 35 minutes
- Between 35 to 40 minutes
- Between 40 to 45 minutes

- Between 45 to 50 minutes
- Between 50 to 55 minutes
- Between 55 to 60 minutes
- More than 1 hour

Q29. How often do you engage in sexual activities while watching pornography with your partner?

- Always
- Almost always
- More than half of the time
- About half of the time
- Less than half of the time
- Rarely
- Never

Q30. When viewing pornography with your partner, what "category" do you most commonly view?

Q31. When watching pornography by yourself, what "category" do you most commonly view?

Q32. What pornography website do you most commonly use?

Q33. Do you pay for access to pornography?

- Yes
- No

Skip To: Q35 if “Do you pay for access to pornography? = No”

Q34. On average, how much do you pay monthly for access to pornography?

Couples often have good and not-so-good moments in their relationship. This measure has been developed to get an objective point of view of your relationship. Thinking about your relationship with your partner, please mark your agreement with each statement on the scale below.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Q35. There are some things about my partner that I do not like	<input type="radio"/>						
Q36. I wish my partner enjoyed more of the activities that I do	<input type="radio"/>						
Q37. My mate has the qualities I want in a partner	<input type="radio"/>						
Q38. My partner and I share the same values and goals in life	<input type="radio"/>						
Q39. My partner and I have an active social life	<input type="radio"/>						
Q40. My partner's sociability adds a positive aspect to our relationship	<input type="radio"/>						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Q41. If there is one thing that my partner and I are good at, it's talking about our feelings with each other	<input type="radio"/>						

Q42. Our differences of opinion lead to shouting matches

Q43. I would lie to my partner if I thought it would "keep the peace"

Q44. During our arguments, I never put down my partner's point of view

Q45. When there is a difference of opinion, we try to talk it out rather than fight

Q46. We always do something to mark a special day in our relationship, like an anniversary

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Neutral Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree

Q47. I often tell my partner that I love him/her

Q48. Sometimes sex with my partner seems more like work than play to me

Q49. I always seem to be in the mood for sex when my partner is

Q50. My partner sometimes turns away from my sexual advances

Q51. My family accepts my relationship with my partner

Q52. My partner's family accepts our relationship

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Q53. My family would support our decision to adopt or have children	<input type="radio"/>						
Q54. My partner's family would support our decision to adopt or have children	<input type="radio"/>						
Q55. I feel as though my relationship is generally accepted by my friends	<input type="radio"/>						
Q56. I have a strong support system that accepts me as I am	<input type="radio"/>						
Q57. I have told my co-workers about my sexual orientation/attraction	<input type="radio"/>						
Q58. Most of my family members know about my sexual orientation/attraction	<input type="radio"/>						

Thinking about your sex life during the last six months, please rate your satisfaction with the following aspects.

	Not at All Satisfied	A Little Satisfied	Moderately Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Extremely Satisfied
Q59. The intensity of my sexual arousal	<input type="radio"/>				
Q60. The quality of my orgasms	<input type="radio"/>				
Q61. My "letting go" and surrender to sexual pleasure during sex	<input type="radio"/>				
Q62. My focus/concentration during sexual activity	<input type="radio"/>				
Q63. The way I sexually react to my partner	<input type="radio"/>				
	Not at All Satisfied	A Little Satisfied	Moderately Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Extremely Satisfied
Q64. My body's sexual functioning	<input type="radio"/>				
Q65. My emotional opening up in sex	<input type="radio"/>				
Q66. My mood after sexual activity	<input type="radio"/>				
Q67. The frequency of my orgasms	<input type="radio"/>				
Q68. The pleasure I provide to my partner	<input type="radio"/>				

	Not at All Satisfied	A Little Satisfied	Moderately Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Extremely Satisfied
Q69. The balance between what I give and receive in sex	<input type="radio"/>				
Q70. My partner's emotional opening up during sex	<input type="radio"/>				
Q71. My partner's initiation of sexual activity	<input type="radio"/>				
Q72. My partner's ability to orgasm	<input type="radio"/>				
Q73. My partner's surrender to sexual pleasure ('letting go')	<input type="radio"/>				

	Not at All Satisfied	A Little Satisfied	Moderately Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Extremely Satisfied
Q74. The way my partner takes care of my sexual needs	<input type="radio"/>				
Q75. My partner's sexual creativity	<input type="radio"/>				
Q76. My partner's sexual availability	<input type="radio"/>				
Q77. The variety of my sexual activities	<input type="radio"/>				
Q78. The frequency of my sexual activity	<input type="radio"/>				

Please identify the extent to which you agree with each statement below.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Q79. Viewing pornography is a fun way to relieve stress	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q80. Individuals who engage in pornography are unsuccessful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q81. Someone can learn new things from viewing pornography	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q82. Those who view pornography have low self-esteem	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q83. Pornography can help foster intimacy in a relationship	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Q84. Pornography leads to rape	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q85. Viewing pornography together helps strengthen a sexual relationship

Q86. People in pornography do not have college degrees

Q87. Pornography is a form of entertainment

Q88. People associated in the pornography industry are more likely to have had an STD

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree

Q89. Pornography can be a normal, healthy part of a person's daily routine

Q90. Viewing pornography makes people expect more from their partners

Q91. Viewing pornography can be a healthy way to explore one's sexuality

Q92. People who create pornography have low self-esteem

Q93. Viewing pornography with a significant other can spice up your sex life

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree

Q94. Viewing pornography causes sexual aggression in relationships

Q95. Viewing pornography is okay in moderation

Q96. People in pornography are not well-educated

Q97. I don't mind others looking at pornography

Q98. People
who view
pornography
are sexually
unfulfilled by
their partner

