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Exploring Mentions of Pornography in Popular Television Shows

A. Lucia Pollock

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

Exploring Mentions of Pornography in Popular Television Shows

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Master of Arts

While pornography has become highly accessible, another way in which pornography is present in media is through discussion in movies and television shows, which is often framed through casual reference, by way of a joke, or in a teasing manner. A content analysis of 55 episodes that reference pornography—looking specifically at the framing of pornography in individual scenes—provides valuable insight into the media ecosystem surrounding pornography and its potential impact on adolescents. Using cultivation analysis and framing theory as a theoretical basis, this study analyzes the inclusion of the terms, “porn,” “porno,” and “pornography” in popular television shows.

Keywords: pornography, portrayals, media effects, cultivation analysis, media consumption, framing, adolescents

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Table of Contents

TITLE	i
ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Tables	vi
Table 1: <i>Descriptive Statistics Within Each Episode</i>	vi
List of Figures	vii
Figure 1: <i>Release Year of Episodes</i>	vii
Popular Media & Pornography	1
Literature Review	4
Definition of Pornography	4
Erotica and Pornography	6
United States Law and Pornography	7
Effects of Pornography	9
Accessibility of Pornography	11
Cultural Normativity of Pornography	12
Valence	13
Sexualization of Content on Television	14
Regulation of Mature Content: Increased Social Acceptance of Sexualized Media	15
Theoretical Framework	18
Cultivation Analysis	19
Framing Theory	21
Current Study	24
Method	25
Sample	25
Coding Procedures	28
Variables of Interest	29
References To Pornography	29
Valence	30
Cultural Normativity	31
Social Context	31
Tone	32
Intercoder Reliability	33

Data Analysis	33
Results	34
Episode Descriptives	34
Scene Frequencies: References to Pornography & Terminology Influence	35
Scene Valence: Social Grouping & Responses	38
Cultural Normativity: Genre, Setting & Acceptance	39
Character Frequencies: Representation and Social Context	40
Tone: Character Roles & Age	40
Discussion	42
References to Pornography: Terminology, Acceptance & Rejection	43
Valence: Social Grouping & Responses	43
Cultural Normativity: Genre & Acceptance	44
Social Context: Representation & Implications	45
Tone: Character Roles & Framing	46
Conclusion	47
References	50
Appendix 1: Codebook	69
Appendix 2: Definition List	78

List of Tables

Table 1: <i>Descriptive Statistics Within Each Episode</i>	27
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List of Figures

Figure 1: <i>Release Year of Episodes</i>	28
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Popular Media & Pornography

Introduction

Media is deeply intertwined in our lives from childhood and can influence every facet of life, from defining successes or failures to clothing choices, or even what individuals should desire to achieve (Kellner, 2011). Popular media, or the media that a large portion of the population consumes, is highly influential on societal standards and culture. While popular culture was traditionally defined as what was found in written literature, popular culture has greatly expanded into widely consumed “electronically mediated culture” (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 1994, p.5). As explained by cultivation analysis scholars, media not only represents and guides society, but it also “reflect[s]—and cultivate[s]—dominant cultural ideologies” (Signorelli et al., 2019, p. 117). Therefore, the content included within popular media not only influences audiences but can also be influenced based on current cultural values and ideals. Popular media can venture beyond values; it has the potential to shape society’s perspective on how to approach and interpret the world around us (Kellner, 2011).

The digitization of media has not only heightened the overall accessibility of media but has also made the process of creating and disseminating new content easier (Waldfoegel, 2017). Popular media can now be found on a variety of platforms and in many formats, such as reels on Instagram, posts on Facebook, television shows on Netflix, movies on Hulu, music on Spotify, games on a Nintendo Switch, or books on Audible. The average adult spends over 11 hours a day between these and other platforms. Television alone, both streamed and traditional, accounts for more than four of those hours (Nielsen, 2020). Accounting for over a third of the time people spend with media, television plays a very specific role in establishing social values. Even when the average time spent watching television was 3 hours in the 1980s, Hawkins and Pingree

(1982) identified television as a significant influence on culture - both as a reinforcement of current ideas as well as a sustaining agent for budding concepts. Poepsel (2017) even calls television, “the most culturally influential medium in human history” (p. 51). As a result, the content included in television is an important avenue of study.

Over the years, sexualized content has increased in both traditional and streamed movies and television. A content analysis of a randomized selection of television shows from 1997–1998 and 2001–2002 showed that not only had visual depictions of sexualized content increased, but so had the discussion of sexual topics. Roughly 70% of the television programs included either visual or verbal depictions of sexual content (Kunkel et al., 2007). Additionally, pornography is more regularly discussed in public than in previous years (Attwood & Smith, 2014) and has become increasingly present within television shows (Shuying, 2006). Renowned journalist and pornography researcher Pamela Paul (2010) explains that TV and video games regularly integrate pornography. She further asserts that, “the aesthetics, values, and standards of pornography have seeped into mainstream popular culture” (2010, p.1). For instance, popular television shows such as *House M.D.*, *NCIS*, *Friends*, *Supernatural*, and *New Girl* contain scenes in which pornography is casually mentioned, although it’s not visually shown.

Pornography use amongst adults (Short et al., 2012; Short et al., 2015) and adolescents has risen in recent years (Lewczuk et al., 2019; Short, et al., 2012). The average age of first exposure to pornography is 11 (Ropelato, 2007); however, by age 14, almost 80% of teens have viewed pornographic content (Dwulit & Rzymiski, 2019). Bitfender, a parental internet control business, conducted a study and found that 10-year-olds make up for 10% of the visitors to porn sites (Muresan, 2016). However, a national survey of adolescents showed that 28% of older teens (14–17) intentionally seek pornographic media compared to only 8% of young teens (10–13). On

average, adolescents who consume pornographic media do so once per week (Dwulit & Rzymiski, 2019). Similarly, emerging adults who view pornography most often do so 1–2 times a week (Carroll et al., 2008).

Given that pornography use has increased over the years (Lewczuk et al., 2019), it is important to understand the impacts surrounding its consumption and associated cultural norms. According to Attwood and Smith (2014), pornography “is becoming an important part of increasing numbers of people's lives” (p.2). Kingston et al. (2009) name three specific areas pornography can potentially influence: arousal, attitudes, and behavior. Exposure to pornography and other sexualized media affects self-representation (Vandenbosch et al., 2015), self-image, relationships (Albright, 2008), and sexual satisfaction in relationships (Dwulit & Rzymiski, 2019). Further, pornography exposure also increases the likelihood of engaging in high-risk sexual activities (Braun-Courville & Rojas, 2009), substance abuse, and delinquent behavior (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2005). Viewers of pornography are also more likely to report a higher sexual self-efficacy, which in turn, has a positive correlation with producing and sharing sexually explicit user-generated content (Sirianni & Vishwanath, 2012). Consequently, a positive correlation exists between pornographic content consumption rates and its discussion and usage amongst peer groups (Weber et al., 2012).

The impacts of pornography use can vary depending upon the consumers' perspectives and previous experiences (Martyniuk & Štulhofer, 2018). Environmental factors, such as cultural settings, home settings, and peer groups, also have an impact on pornography's influence on any given individual (Kingston et al., 2009). A longitudinal study found that religiosity and culture can also impact pornography use and sexual permissiveness (Martyniuk & Štulhofer, 2018).

Interestingly, the effects of sexualized media are likewise dependent on how realistic the viewer perceived the content to be (Peter & Valkenburg, 2006)

While many are exposed (deliberately or involuntarily) to pornographic content, popular television shows also discuss and normalize pornography, as previously mentioned. These shows can include dialogue that portrays pornography in a positive, negative, or neutral tone. Such discussion is frequently framed through casual reference, by way of a joke, or in a teasing manner. Given the lack of literature on the framing of pornography in popular television shows, this topic warrants thorough investigation. Using framing theory and cultivation analysis as a foundation, this study analyzes popular television shows' portrayal of pornography.

Literature Review

To provide a framework for the present research's objective, I first outline a historical overview of the emergence of pornography and related definitions, discuss literature related to pornography and consumption effects, and provide a synthesis of literature addressing pornography on television and increasing cultural acceptance. This background provides context to my grounding of the study in cultivation analysis and framing theory.

Definition of Pornography

The history of pornography is not easily traced, in part because of disagreements about the definition of pornography (Gubar & Hoff, 1989). The first discovery of pornographic depictions were found in the ancient art of Greece and Italy (Eberstadt & Layden, 2010). Archeological digs of the ancient Italian city Pompeii illustrated explicit content of the era in 79 AD. According to academic scholar Walter Kendrick (1996), the term pornography was not introduced to the English vernacular until after 1755. The first dictionary definition appeared in 1857 as "a description of prostitutes or of prostitution, as a matter of public hygiene." (Kendrick,

1996, p. 1). This definition was derived from the Greek term “pornographos” or “writing about prostitutes” (Kendrick, 1996, p. 1). Since this first dictionary definition, pornography has evolved, not only in definition but also in manifestation.

While pornographic content has a complicated history, it has always been present in visual media; from ancient art to modern photography, it has been seen for hundreds of years. Accompanying the evolution of technology, the ease of accessing and disseminating pornographic content have expanded. Zurcher (2016) explains that the evolution of pornography dissemination and access has gone “from magazines and adult books, to the VCR, now to on-demand cable services, internet content, and popular video games” (p. 17). These innovations have influenced how pornography is disseminated. As various advances in technology and platforms are used to consume pornography, it is understandable as to how definitions of pornography become ambiguous. One study stated, “there are almost as many definitions for sexually explicit material as there are individuals who have studied it” (Owens et al., 2012, p. 103).

As technology advances access and production of pornographic content surges, such transitions result in new fields of study. Today, pornography has become more prominent, and academic study of the topic has increased. However, since studies related to pornography are often considered sensitive in nature, there was not an academic journal dedicated to the topic until recently. Nonetheless, in 2014, *Porn Studies* was specifically created due to the increase in discussion, conflict, and scrutiny which pornography has received in recent years. The journal’s founder believed there needed to be a dedicated space for academic research focused on pornography (Attwood & Smith, 2014). The journal’s introductory article explains:

There is no doubt that there has been extensive interest in pornography for considerable time; this journal does not mark the beginning of a nascent field. What it does mark is the beginning, we hope, of new conversations, of new ways of conceptualizing the terrain. (Attwood & Smith, 2014, p. 5)

The study of pornography is evolving; however, there are many aspects of pornography use and its effects that remain undocumented.

Erotica and Pornography

Academic studies regularly separate pornography into two categories: pornography and erotica. One definition of *pornography* includes the following:

Material that features explicit sexual behavior and nudity in a context frequently characterized by depictions of one character exerting physical or psychological dominance over another. Sometimes, this type of material contains explicit violence that is shown along with explicit sexuality. (Sparks, 2012, p. 137)

Erotica is defined as “material that features explicit sexual content in the absence of violence and without the overt power dynamics that appear in pornography” (Sparks, 2012, p. 137). Whereas both definitions are based upon explicit media, the distinction between the two is reliant upon the relationship between those involved. However, this is just one example (though often referenced) of differentiating definitions.

Academic studies either do not include a definition or provide a vague operational definition that allows for individual’s personal interpretation when defining pornography. One systematic review assessing 313 peer-reviewed studies on pornography found that only 20% of the studies provided a definition (Marshall & Miller, 2019). Another study evaluating research on internet

pornography found that only 16% of studies provided definitions for pornography (Short et al., 2012). The incongruity between definitions or absence of an operational definition “makes it difficult to determine differences across studies and complicates the utility of analyses” (Short et al., 2012, p. 21). Still, one systematic review of pornography studies that analyzed the definitions provided in 58 studies found 5 dominant definitory themes. The majority of the definitions were based upon the content of the pornography, such as depictions of genitalia or individuals engaging in intercourse. The second most common type was similar to the first; however, those definitions included not only content but also the user’s intention. The third definition category was unique as the parameters were based upon exclusion. For example, material showing unclothed individuals who were not engaged in “sexually explicit behavior” (Marshall & Miller, p.171) was not considered pornographic. The fourth type was based upon the medium used, and the fifth was dependent solely upon the intended use. (Marshall & Miller, 2019).

United States Law and Pornography

While academic definitions of pornography are incongruent, United States law is not. Federal law in the United States has established clear guidelines on pornography. The Communications Act of 1934 laid the groundwork for the establishment of the Federal Communications Commission (Federal Communications Commission, 2021). The FCC was created to help monitor and regulate public communications, such as radio, satellite, television, and cable (Gobetz, 2021). The FCC separates inappropriate content (including pornography) into three categories: obscene, indecent, and profane. As defined by the FCC, profane content “includes ‘grossly offensive’ language that is considered a public nuisance.” Indecent content “portrays sexual or excretory organs or activities in a way that does not meet the three-prong test for obscenity,” and obscene content “must appeal to an average person's prurient interest; depict

or describe sexual conduct in a ‘patently offensive’ way; and, taken as a whole, lack serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value” (SLAPS) (Federal Communications Commission, 2021, p. 1). The three-pronged test for indecent content, also called the Miller test, as it originated from the 1971 Miller vs. California case, was established by the Supreme Court to determine if the content is obscene (Main, 1986). Only obscene content is not protected by the Constitution's First Amendment. Any content that meets the criteria outlined in the three-prong test and is deemed obscene is illegal to distribute across state or international borders (U.S. Department of Justice, 2020).

The United States Constitution allows for the distribution and ownership of many types of pornography by adults; however, content including minors is one of the variations which is excluded. Furthermore, the U.S. government has made many strides to protect children. Efforts include monitoring and enforcing “restrictions on Internet porn traffic by arguing that juveniles or minors (18 years or less) are automatically exposed to and harmed by pornographic images” (Jacobs, 2010, p. 69). Peer-to-peer networks (P2P) are of a specific area of concern as they have become a large contributor for illegal pornography distribution, including child pornography. In 2003, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) conducted a study in partnership with the Customs Cybersmuggling Center of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to analyze the accessibility of pornographic content containing minors. Data were gathered on KaZaA (a then-popular P2P network). The analysis showed a significant increase in content containing child pornography compared to previous years. Their search also showed that pornography was likely to be associated with keywords commonly used by children—such as cartoons and celebrities—putting children at high risk for unintentional exposure (Koontz, 2003). According to United States Code, Section 1466 of Title 18, it is illegal “to knowingly produce, distribute, receive, or

possess with intent to transfer or distribute visual representations, such as drawings, cartoons, or paintings that appear to depict minors engaged in sexually explicit conduct and are deemed obscene” (U.S. Department of Justice, 2020, para 7).

Although researchers, governments, and dictionaries have sought to define pornography, there still remains a lack of agreement. The history of the attempts to define pornographic media is of interest to this study as it provides insight into the evolution of the topic and provides context. However, as this study looks at the framing of pornography (specifically the discussion surrounding the use of term), rather than pornographic content itself, there is no operational definition that will be used for this study. The terminology used when referencing pornography (porn, porno, pornography) in tandem with the tone used by characters, valence in the scene, and the cultural normativity perpetuated is the primary interest as these variables explore the framing of pornography in popular television. As this study contains a wide variety of television shows, including various genres and years, content and context are the fundamental concerns rather than how each show defines pornography.

Effects of Pornography

Adolescents’ viewing of sexualized and pornographic media has varied impacts. Studies show that it affects self-representation (Vandenbosch et al., 2015), self-image, relationships (Albright, 2008), and involvement in high-risk sexual activities (Braun-Courville & Rojas, 2009). In tandem, Baams et al. (2015) found a direct positive correlation between sexual permissiveness and engaging with sexualized media. Pornography consumption also negatively influences family functions and marital relationships (Paolucci-Addone et al., 2000). A meta-analysis of the effects of pornography in relation to sexual aggression found a positive correlation between pornography consumers, specifically regular users, and sexual aggression

(Wright et al., 2016). However, prior to this study, Linz & Malamuth (1993) and Malamuth & Putpitan (2007) state that it does not impact sexual aggression. Given the high number of studies included in the meta-analysis, the “consensus among scholars” (Wright et al., 2016, p. 201) provides substantial evidence that there is a correlation.

Intentional pornography exposure increases the likelihood of substance abuse and delinquent behavior (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2005). Additionally, pornography use decreases sexual satisfaction and overall quality of romantic relationships, and it escalates the need for sexual stimuli (Dwulit & Rzymiski, 2019). Ward et al. (2015) found that males who view pornographic media are more likely to objectify women. Another study done by Peter and Valkenburg (2007) found similar conclusions in a mixed-gender study, showing that exposure to sexualized media increases adolescents’ perception of women as sex objects.

Concerning perceived effects of pornography, Hald and Malamuth (2008) found that women report fewer positive effects than men. However, for both genders, the impacts of pornography use vary based upon sexual history. Self-reported effects of pornography include lower sexual satisfaction and an increased need for sexual catalysts. Individuals with a Body Mass Index higher than 25 kg/m² also disclosed lower relationship quality, correlated with the consumption of pornography (Dwulit & Rzymiski, 2019). A follow-up study, based upon Hald and Malamuth (2008) found that of the individuals who viewed pornography, 41% do not believe that it influences their sex lives. Of those participants who report that it does affect their sex life, 33% reported positive effects and 25% reported mixed or negative effects (Koletić et al., 2021). Further, a study evaluating perceived impacts of pornography consumption found that many adolescents believe pornography negatively impacts sexual performance, social relationships, mental health, and even childhood and adolescent development (Dwulit &

Rzyski, 2019). Interestingly, another study found that of the adolescents who consume pornographic media, over 57% of females and 42% of males are embarrassed about it (Dwulit & Rzyski, 2019).

Accessibility of Pornography

The development and advancement of technologies, such as the internet and mobile devices, has added to the accessibility of pornography (Casanova et al., 2009). The invention and widespread use of smartphones has also played a significant role in the ease of sharing and distributing “intimate media” (Stokes, 2014). Between the years of 2004 to 2016, Google Trends reported that the number of web searches containing the word “porn” increased almost every year (Google, 2019). Even though searches for the term “porn” have decreased annually since 2016, searches for the term “Pornhub” have continually risen (Google, 2019). A survey of college students showed that over 93% of males and 62% of females were exposed to internet pornography before the age of 14 (Sabina et al., 2008). Similarly, another study found that up to 70% of respondents reported accidental exposure to pornography while online (Flood, 2007). Accordingly, Ropelato (2007) reports that 90% of children (ages 8-16) have been exposed to pornography online, most of which happened while doing homework (Ropelato, 2007). With the easy accessibility of pornography, exposure is not always purposeful. Ybarra and colleagues (2011) found that 42% of adolescents, ages 12 to 18, have unwillingly been exposed to pornography online. Similarly, Accordingly, a 2012 study states that “pornography is an everyday reality” (Weber et al., 2012).

The invention of the smartphone has added to the easy accessibility of sexual content (Stokes, 2014). According to Statista, the smartphone market still has significant potential for growth, which is evident due to the continual rising sales (Holst, 2019). A longitudinal analysis

found that amongst the platforms most commonly used to access sexualized media and information (books, magazines, television, radio, internet), television is one of the most frequently used by males, whereas books and magazines are the most common resource for females (Hawk et al., 2006). In fact, over 56% of adolescents report having used online pornography. Motivations for intentional pornography use include curiosity, seeking arousal, and a desire to learn about sex (Ševčíková & Daneback, 2014). Roughly 50% of those who view pornography discuss it with their friends (Ševčíková & Daneback, 2014), which can also increase consumption (Weber et al., 2012).

Cultural Normativity of Pornography

With the increased exposure and access to pornography, it is interesting to note the changes in attitudes toward pornography over the years. A 2018 national poll showed an increase in positive attitudes toward the moral acceptability of viewing pornography. From 2017 to 2018, acceptability went from 36% to 43%, which is the most drastic shift in attitude toward pornography since it began to be measured in 2011 (Dugan, 2018). Another survey amongst college students found a pornography acceptability rate of 67% for males and 49% for females (Carroll et al., 2008). The question remains: how has the viewing of pornography become more acceptable in one year's time than in the prior six years?

Some scholars believe that the easy accessibility of pornography has led to it being viewed as more socially acceptable (Cassanova et al., 2009). Paasonen (2009) states that “although porn may not have been as culturally visible in the period between the 1970s and its mainstreaming in the 2000s, its popularity certainly does not appear to be a recent phenomenon” (p. 587–588). Further, Haavio-Mannila and Kontula (2001), found that the early 1970s were filled with more pornography consumption than any preceding decade. However, it wasn't until

the 2000s that use has become more culturally accepted and thereby admitted by consumers (Paasonen, 2009). When adolescents were asked to debate the appropriateness and normality of pornography, all of the participants, minus one religious individual, agreed that pornography is “not a big deal.” When prompted to expound, participants responded that it “is much more tolerated (amongst the younger generation),” “everyone does it,” and “it’s normal” (Haggis & Mulholland, 20014, p. 60 – 61). The conversation further developed, and respondents talked about how easy it is to access because of the internet it is free, mentioning that it was normal to “Bluetooth it to each other during school and stuff” (Haggis & Mulholland, 20014, p.61).

Valence

The valence surrounding pornography helps clarify the cultural acceptability. Valence provides insight into the content being framed as positive or negative (Corbeil & Mckelvie, 2008) and how it affects emotional and material relationships, such as parent/child or peer rapport (Eyal & Finnerty, 2009). Bandura (2001), in reference to valence, additionally explains, “The same outcome can function as a reward or punisher depending on social comparison between observed and personally experienced outcomes” (p. 276). For example, in 2007, Kim Kardashian filmed a sex tape with a popular pornography studio, following which, Kim publicly sued the studio, though she privately dropped the lawsuit and bartered with the company to receive a portion of the generated revenue (Adams, 2007). Pornography, in this case, not only led to a material increase for Kim Kardashian but also an increase in positive sexualized fame (Sastre, 2013).

Aside from traditional pornography, the word “porn” is widely used in media, but not in conventional manners. The term “porn” is often used in reference to explain something that people are excited about or enthralled by but has no association with actual pornography. Reddit

is a user-generated content platform that allows users to interact with each other through comments, “upvotes,” and “downvotes.” This is done on various subreddits, which are threads or groupings of media content which can be visual (such as GIFs, videos, images) or through written forms such as personal anecdotes or varying types of questions). Many subreddits contain the term “porn” in their title. For example, “powerwashingporn” that shows videos or images of power washers impeccably cleaning something, “unixporn” that contains content of well-put-together Linux desktop environments, and “architectureporn,” which exhibits a variety of exquisite architectural projects, all demonstrate the comfort society feels with the term “porn.” While none of these subreddits are related to pornography, the use of the word “porn” in their title could imply the increasing comfort of users with the term. As explained by Williams (2014), the use of a “nickname” insinuates comfort and familiarity. In the case of Reddit, it also alludes to the understanding of the essence of pornography as well as the positive or acceptable perception Reddit users hold toward pornography.

Sexualization of Content on Television

Sexualized content is virtually impossible to evade. Hypersexualization can be found in innocent children’s toys, clothes, and games (Gunter, 2014) and even amongst young teens on television (Smith et al., 2012). Best (1998) explains that these things are subject to semiotic interpretation and analysis as they influence both cultural and social values. A recent study showed that young adults (16–23), regularly find that the television shows, internet sites, and magazines they interact with contain pornographic and erotic content, so much so that many of the participants stated that “it is everywhere” (Häggström-Nordin et al., 2020, p. 389). The inclusion of sexual content and messaging in television has increased significantly from 1997 to

2002. In fact, not only is it included within the shows, but it is often highlighted—viewers are now more likely to encounter sexualized media than in the 1990s (Kunkel et al., 2007).

While exposure to sexualized media via television has risen, researchers also see a paralleled rise in pornography (Boies, 2002; Lewczuk et al., 2018). Sexual portrayals of women are common on television (Smith et al., 2012), particularly in reality programs (Flynn et al., 2015), reality dating series (Ferris et al., 2007), and music videos (Ward et al., 2013). Given this, it is no surprise that the most common form of pornography consumption is through videos (Dwulit & Rzymiski, 2019). A content analysis of the top 100 grossing PG and PG-13 movies and first-time theatre debut G films released between 2006 and 2011 showed that 28% of females compared to 8% of males were shown in “sexy clothing,” and more than 26% of females and 8% of males were shown partially nude. Young adults (21yrs to 39yrs) were the most likely to be shown with some nudity (34%) or “sexy clothing” (37%); however, teens were not far behind, with over 31% being shown with “sexy clothing” or some nudity (Smith et al., 2012). Television shows with large adolescent audiences are more likely to include sexual content than other television programming. Popular adolescent programs include an average of 6.7 scenes with sexual reference per hour, compared to the average of 5.0 scenes per hour throughout the remainder of programs. Additionally, main characters in adolescent films are most commonly unmarried characters who engage in sexual activity (Wright, 2009).

Regulation of Mature Content: Increased Social Acceptance of Sexualized Media

Sexualized television content has been present since its conception. Ratings became a necessity as television became more widespread and sexualized content increased. Television was successfully transmitted for the first time in 1927 (Hofer, 1979), and that same year *Wings*, a World War I film, was awarded an Academy Award—the first Academy Award winner to

include nudity (Wolf, 2020). Only six years later, the first sex scene was seen on television in *Ecstasy*, a Czech drama (Roberts, 2017). The following year, in 1934, the first television censorship association was organized to maintain a degree of consistency in the industry. In 1922, William Hays sought to establish guidelines within the film community known as the Hays Code. Hays later founded the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA, MPAA as of 1945) in association with these censorship guidelines. The Hays code included guidance on content such as profanity and sex (Flinders Institute, 2021).

In 1934, the MPPDA began work with Joseph Breen, a film censorship advocate, and the National Legion of Decency (NLOD). NLOD was founded by the Catholic church and acted as a guide for establishing the decency of films. Ratings ranked from A to C. A: morally unobjectionable, B: morally objectionable, and C: condemned. In accordance with the previously established ranking standard, the MPPDA, NLOD, and Breen worked in tandem to create the Production Code Administration (PCA) which established guidelines for the entire film industry (Flinders Institute, 2021). The foundation of the PCA was to assure that “no picture shall be produced which will lower the moral standards of those who see it . . . The sympathy of the audience should never be thrown to the side of crime, wrong-doing, evil or sin” (Black, 1994, p. 305). All films produced under companies who were a part of the PCA were required to demonstrate that they were approved PCA films. Non-compliant members were given a \$25,000 fine (Flinders Institute, 2021).

While PCA dominated the film industry for years, some pushback occurred in the 1950s as critics claimed a cultural shift had outgrown the then-current industry standards. In 1954, the Code’s guidelines were adjusted slightly to allow for less restrictive language policies. However, problems continued to arise, and boundaries were continually being pushed (Simmons, 1997). In

1968, the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) became the dominating content moderator in the film industry. They created the Classification and Ratings Administration (CARA) which, though constantly evolving, remains the current film rating system. Its ratings inform parents and audiences of a movie's content rather than establishing restrictions and limitations for filmmakers (Motion Pictures Association, 2021). In 1996, Congress, MPAA, and the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) collectively established the TV Parental Guidelines - a voluntary rating system used to create "age and content-based ratings" (Media Bureau Chief, 2019, p. 2). Updated in 1998, the television ratings include:

TV-Y (all children); TV-Y7 (directed to older children - age 7 and older); TV-G (general audience); TV-PG (parental guidance suggested); TV-14 (parents strongly cautioned - may be unsuitable for children under 14); and TV-MA (mature audience only - may be unsuitable for children under 17) (Media Bureau Chief, 2019, p. 2-3).

Movie ratings, while similar, are labeled:

G (general audiences - all ages admitted); PG (parental guidance suggested - some material may not be suitable for children); PG-13 (parents strongly cautioned - some material may be inappropriate for children under 13); R (restricted - under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian); and NC-17 (no one 17 and under admitted) (Media Bureau Chief, 2019, p. 4).

Television is more widely accessible to audiences of all ages; therefore, specific guidelines are provided (i.e., requiring ratings to be shown for the first 15 seconds of the show and after each commercial) (Media Bureau Chief, 2019). Moreover, movies aired on television are

independently rated to reflect television requirements regardless of MPAA ratings established when the movie is released (TV Parental Guidelines Monitoring Board, 2021).

While guidelines have been established, the limits are continually pushed on how much language, sexual content, and violence can be included while a film or show still retains a lower rating (Flemming, 2000, as cited in Gentile, 2008). Of the top-grossing films in 2016, over 55% of them were rated PG-13, though the most common age group to attend movies in theatre were ages 18 through 24 (MPAA, 2017). Further, a 2009 content analysis found an increase in mature material in every rating category, resulting in a “ratings creep.” (Potts & Belden 2009). Leone & Osborn (2004) further identified not only an increase in the production of PG-13 films but also an increase in adult content within PG-13 movies. Thompson and Yokota (2004) found inconsistencies in the identification of mature content included in PG-13 movies, classifying many more instances of mature content than identified by the MPAA. The rise in mature content at all levels and the discrepancies between ratings and content pose a difficult situation for parents as ratings were created to aid parents and adolescents in finding age-appropriate movies and television (Iannotta, 2008).

Theoretical Framework

Two theories regularly used in sexualized content research are cultivation analysis and framing. Cultivation analysis takes this a step further and will provide insight into the potential repercussions of how the discussion of pornography can impact audiences and their perceptions. Framing is a useful theory as it explains the construction of the messages. In this specific case, it will provide insight into how pornography is portrayed throughout discussions in popular television shows.

Cultivation Analysis

Cultivation analysis is a commonly used theory in communication research (Bryant & Miron, 2006). Originally posited by George Gerbner in 1975, cultivation analysis examines how repeated media exposure influences the perceptions of consumers (Gerbner et al., 1986). The theory initially focused on television exposure and examined general messaging across programs (Gerbner, 1998), though it has since evolved to look at specific genres within various mediums: books, music, and assorted formats of visual media (such as television and film).

Cultivation analysis divides media consumption into three categories: light viewers (those who watch less than 2 hours per day), medium viewers (consumers of 2 to 4 hours daily), and heavy viewers (anyone who watches more than 4 hours per day). According to cultivation analysis, heavy viewers are more likely to be cultivated by media messages than light and medium viewers (Gerbner et al., 1986). Due to the increased amount of media consumption in recent years (Watson, 2019), one could argue that cultivation analysis is becoming an increasingly valuable theory in communication research.

Cultivation analysis has effectively provided a framework to understand salient topics such as race (Busselle & Crandall, 2010), rape (Kahlor & Eastin, 2011; Kahlor & Morrison, 2007), body dissatisfaction and self-esteem (VanVonderen & Kinnally, 2012), and romantic ideologies (Hefner & Wilson, 2013). As cultivation analysis investigates perceptions due to repeated media exposure (Gerbner 1998), its application to this study provides intriguing insight. For instance, the average adolescent spends over six hours a day consuming media (Twenge et al., 2019). According to cultivation analysis, one could categorize the average adolescent as a heavy consumer; consequently, the average adolescent is more susceptible to the messages portrayed in the media.

Morgan and Shanahan (1997) suggest that cultivation analysis should be strictly applied to messaging and not genre. Conversely, Cohen and Weimann (2000) conducted a study looking at genres—in tandem with demographics (gender, age, and religiosity) and viewing habits—and the impact of specific messaging. They discovered that male viewers were more likely to be influenced by messaging surrounding police and crime, whereas females are more affected by interpersonal relationship messaging. Similar to Martyniuk and Štulhofer (2018), Cohen and Weimann also found that religious viewers are less likely to experience the effects of cultivation, as are young teens. Older teens (16+), however, are more likely to be susceptible to media messaging. Cultivating effects were dependent upon the audiences, rather than genres themselves. However, some genres were associated with general patterns. For example, those who consumed comedy had higher levels of trust and a more positive perception of the world, while those who viewed soap operas were less likely to trust others. Sports viewers were more likely to have a “fear of being victimized” (Cohen & Weimann, 2000, p. 108).

Given the highly stimulating nature of sexually explicit material, pornographic media may have a stronger influence on an individual’s perception of their environment than other forms of entertainment examined by Cohen and Weimann (2000) (i.e., comedy, soap operas, and sports). Cultivation analysis is regularly used in pornography and sexualized media studies. Adolescents who consume sexualized content are more likely to engage in sexual behavior (Brown, 1991; Brown et al., 2005; L’Engle et al., 2006). A seminal study on viewing pornography found that pornography consumption decreases sympathy for females, specifically victims of rape (Zillmann & Bryant, 1982). Following this study, Multiple researchers found that viewing pornography led to an increased acceptance of gender and sexual stereotypes, such as viewing women as sex objects (e.g., Peter & Valkenburg, 2007; Ward & Friedman, 2006). While

media can influence consumers, it is important to note that factors vary based on an individual's experience. For example, cultural backgrounds, such as religiosity (Cohen & Weimann, 2000; Martyniuk & Štulhofer, 2018) and political affiliation (Wright, 2018), are associated with an individual's perception of pornographic media.

Framing Theory

In addition to cultivation analysis, framing is a useful theory to be applied to the study of pornography as it provides a clearer understanding of the construction of the messages. Framing theory originated in the field of sociology but has since been used in a variety of research areas (Druckman, 2001). Founded in 1972 by Anthropologist Gregory Bateson, framing, as defined by Bateson himself, is “a spatial and temporal bounding of a set of interactive messages” (Bateson, 1972, p. 197). Framing is a useful theory when it comes to analyzing television because it identifies “principles that are socially shared and persistent” and therefore helps consumers understand society (Reese, 2001, p. 11).

Druckman (2001) identified manners in which framing is modernly applied: “frames in communication” and “frames in thought” (p.228). Framing in communication is based upon “the words, images, phrases, and presentation styles that a speaker uses when relaying information to another” (p. 228), whereas framing in thought is “an individual's (cognitive) understanding of a given situation” (p. 228). To understand the framing of a message and identify which type of frame is being used, it is important to analyze four specific elements: the message sender, the message receiver, the informational content of the message, and the cultural environment into which the message is conveyed. The framing theory as used in media analysis can provide valuable insight as it identifies the topics of greater importance (Ardèvol-Abreu, 2015) and gives further understanding of implied significance and context (Entman, 1993).

Wording is an essential element of framing (Druckman, 2001). Regarding pornography, two reference terms are regularly used: porn and porno. Pornography scholar, Linda Williams (2014), explains the connotory difference between the use of porn versus pornography. “Pornography” is typically used in formal dialogue and negative, pro-censorship/anti-pornography ideologies. It is also used with critical approaches or scholarly analyses. Alternatively, “porn” is communicated in neutral and positive positions. Williams (2014) further explained that these variations in terminology imply that society has become more comfortable with pornographic media.

The framing of humor, valence, and tone within media reflects how topics are received. Humor, specifically, is an important element of media (Papacharissi, 2012), especially television (Cantor, 1976). Humor related to sexual topics is more often framed as friendly rather than contentious, whereas topics not sexual in nature are more likely to be framed as hostile when incorporated into humor (Suls & Gastoff, 1981). It is often assumed that sexual humor is more often appreciated by men; however, it is equally enjoyed by women (Mayer et al., 2019). Wolfstein (1954) posits that using humor to reference sexual topics allows for remarks to come across as merely humorous. In an analysis of popular teen media, Wal et al., (2020) found that sexual humor was included in nearly 60% of their sample. By genre, sexual humor was found most densely within talk shows (100%), comedy (71.1%), and reality television (70.4%). The valence and tone in context with humor provide insight into scene interpretation. Valence reveals how consequences of actions impact characters and their relationships (Eyal & Finnerty, 2009), and tone provides an understanding of what is being said within television scenes (Beullens & Schepers, 2013).

The social context wherein content takes place is also important to consider when analyzing the framing of media. When it comes to sexualized media, women are more likely to suffer negative consequences than men (Eyal & Finnerty, 2009). Women are additionally more likely to be shown in the media in “sexy clothing” than men, and when it comes to race, Black women are more likely to be framed as hypersexual than White women (Biefeld et al., 2021; Ward et al., 2013). On the contrary, Asians and Pacific Islanders are framed as less sexually desirable and are often stereotypically framed as extremely intelligent, wealthy, and “model minorities” (Deo et al., 2008, p.157). When it comes to age, people aged 21 to 39 are the most commonly sexualized group (Smith et al., 2012).

Framing in media can have an impact on more than simply perception; such portrayals can also impact intentions to act. Grube (1993) found that portrayals of alcohol in advertising increased positive sentiments toward drinking as well as the likelihood to participate in drinking. However, advertisements did not impact current alcohol usage or attitudes. In accordance, a 2016 study measured the effects of drinking scenes in movies and their impact on young viewers’ willingness to participate in consuming alcoholic beverages. Clips demonstrating both negative and positive outcomes were shown to participants. A positive correlation was found between the likelihood of participants’ willingness to drink following scenes with positive outcomes (Gibbons et al., 2016). This leads to the question: could similar findings manifest themselves in regard to pornography portrayals within the media? Ardèvol-Abreu (2015) argues that:

Framing is not focused . . . on accessibility, but on applicability, to the extent that the concepts connected in a message will also tend to connect with each other in the audience’s mind during the process of opinion-formation, which will subsequently influence attitudes and behaviours (p. 427)

Furthermore, the framing of content in popular television shows can influence the beliefs and actions of consumers and warrants investigation.

Van Den Bulck and associates (2008) looked at the framing of alcohol in a popular teen television show, *The OC*, and its potential effects on audiences. One of the primary focuses of the study was the social context (who is included in the scene and with whom) and how it impacts the framing and reception, or how the messages could potentially impact audience perceptions. This study similarly looks at social context and how it relates to conversations with mentions of pornography in popular television shows.

Current Study

A gap remains in the literature between the framing of pornography within popular media and the perceptions of pornography amongst media consumers. Similar effects have been explored relative to other topics, but never specific to pornography portrayals. Pornography itself is a heavily debated and relatively well-researched topic. Nonetheless, the portrayal of pornography within popular television shows has yet to be examined from a cultivation analysis and framing perspective. This study is unique in its contribution to the field of communications research. It aims to explore portrayals of pornography in adolescent media in context for a future effects-based investigation. Framing theory and cultivation analysis provide insight into how these portrayals are potentially impacting consumers and their views of the moral acceptability of pornography.

Using a quantitative content analysis, this study seeks to fill this gap and provides additional insight through the following research questions:

RQ1: How is pornography mentioned in popular television?

RQ2: What is the valence surrounding mentions of pornography?

RQ3: How does the framing of pornography perpetuate cultural normativity?

RQ4: What is the social context surrounding pornography mentions?

RQ5: Is the construct of pornography framed as positive, negative, mixed, or neutral (tone)?

Method

The purpose of this study is to better understand portrayals of pornography within popular television shows. The current literature has yet to evaluate portrayals of pornography within television, whether traditional or streamed. This study used a quantitative content analysis to examine how recent (2000–1990) well-liked, fictional, live-action television shows (with TV-PG and TV-14 ratings) frame conversations that mention pornography.

Sample

Data for this study were collected using the Internet Movie Database (IMDb) search engine. IMDb's search engine allows users to search through their database of quotes from television and movies. For the purposes of this study, the terms “porn,” “porno,” and “pornography” were searched to compose a large list of instances where the terms were used. Information, including quotes on IMDb, are provided by on-screen credits, press kits, official biographies, autobiographies, interviews, and contributors' comments, which can be made by anyone with an IMDb account. All information is reviewed and corrected as needed by IMDb moderators (IMDb Help, 2021). The quotes input by audience members are of particular interest because of the motive for which they were submitted. The IMDb Quotes overview page instructs users to include quotes that are “a single line that stands out from the dialog” (para 1) or are

“particularly memorable” (IMDb Quotes, 2021, para 6). Therefore, the quotes included stood out to the consumer who entered the quote. As such, the sample includes important references to pornography that warrant analysis.

This study’s sample consisted of 55 episodes selected from a compiled list of 309 television episodes (collected on March 9th, 2020). The initial list was created using IMDb’s search engine to identify television episodes that met inclusion criteria (i.e., fictional, live-action, released after 1990, with a rating of either TV-PG or TV-14) and contained the word “pornography,” “porno,” or “porn.” Any episodes with changed ratings from the original collection were excluded. Shows that were unavailable on Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hulu, or IMDb streaming platforms were also excluded from the list. The ratings for this sample were selected to analyze media that is marketed and rated specifically for young adults and children. Although individuals often consume media outside of their suggested age rating, this study chose to focus on content intended for younger audiences.

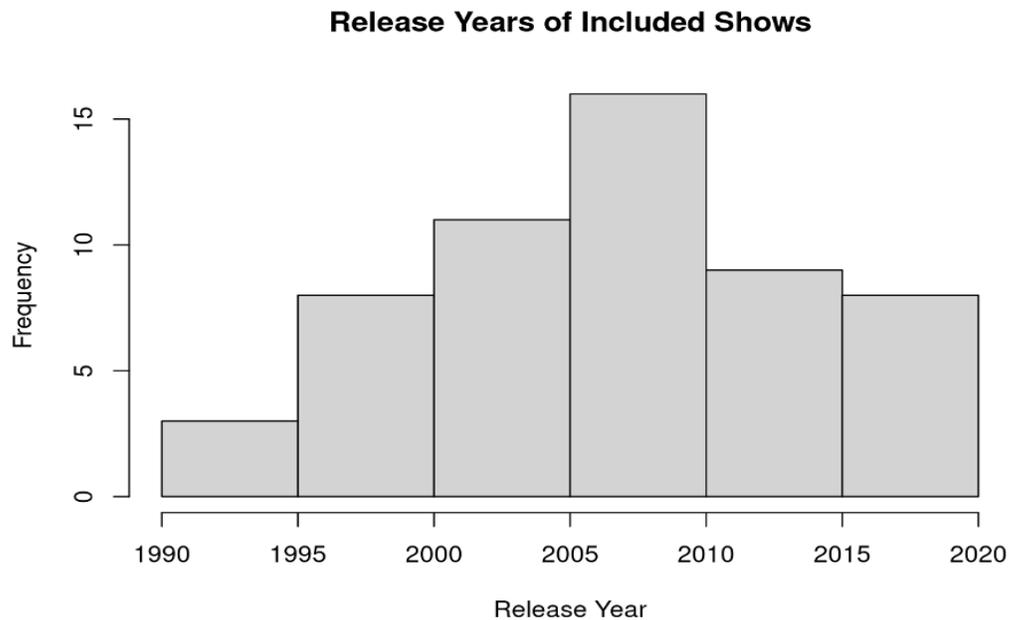
For the television shows that had multiple episodes on the list, the most popular episode (based on IMDb user-submitted ratings) on the list was selected. Episodes from the same show containing the same ratings were then evaluated by the number of user-submitted IMDb votes. The episode with the highest votes was then selected. This process produced a total of 55 episodes, resulting in 35 hours and 29 minutes of content that was coded. These parameters are in line with previously completed research. For instance, van Hoof et al. (2008) coded 40 episodes when studying portrayals of alcohol, Kim and Wells (2017) coded 45 episodes when looking at the portrayals of sexual messaging and alcohol on reality TV programs, and Roy and Harwood (1997) coded 30 hours of television programming to study portrayals of older adults in commercials.

Table 1: *Descriptive Statistics Within Each Episode*

Variable	<i>N</i>	%
Television Rating		
TV-PG	28	50.91%
TV-14	27	49.09%
Streaming Platform		
Amazon Prime	17	30.91%
Hulu	14	25.45%
IMDb TV	13	23.64%
Netflix	11	20.00%
Genre		
Action/Adventure	6	10.91%
Comedy/Sitcom	20	36.36%
Crime/Mystery	9	16.36%
Drama	16	29.09%
Sci-Fi/Fantasy	4	7.27%
Main Theme		
Other	48	87.27%
Pornography	7	12.73%

Note: $N = 55$. This table provides information on the number of occurrences of variables as well as percentages accounted for within the sample.

Figure 1: *Release Year of Episodes*



Note. $N = 55$. Within this sample, 2008 contained the highest number of pornography mentions.

Coding Procedures

The unit of analysis for this project was the individual scenes. As defined by Kunkel et al., (1999), this study defines a scene as “a sequence in which the place and time generally hold constant” (p. 14). Episodes that were released before the year 1990, were non-fictional, were not live-action, or had ratings other than TV-PG and TV-14 were excluded from the coding process. Individual television episodes were coded for their inclusion of the terms, “porn,” “porno,” and “pornography.” If a single episode contained multiple scenes that referenced pornography, each scene was coded separately. Additionally, scenes were coded based upon the characters who

mentioned or responded to the mention of pornography. The primary interests within each episode were individual scenes (specifically, the cultural normativity and valence within the scene) and characters in the scene (to assess depicted tone and social context).

Variables of Interest

Television episodes were analyzed for their framing of pornography using a coding sheet that was created for the purposes of this study, though all variables were founded upon previously established codebooks and definitions (Beullens & Schepers, 2013; Eyal & Finnerty, 2009; Roy & Harwood, 1997). This coding sheet was made up of 39 items, five open-ended (i.e., “Please explain the context wherein pornography was mentioned”) and 34 closed-ended questions (i.e. “Is the reference to pornography intended as serious or humorous?”). Each established variable included was present to help give a more robust understanding of the four primary interests in each scene. A detailed explanation of each of the variables of interest is included below.

References To Pornography

Following Williams’ (2014) ideology that using terms to reference pornography—other than the term pornography itself—demonstrates comfort with the topic, the terminology used when referencing pornography (porn, porno, or pornography) is of interest. In the episode “Tagumo Attacks!!!” (Season 4, Episode 5, November 19, 2018) of the popular show, *Legends of Tomorrow*, Zari Tomaz and Mick Rory are slow to arrive at a team meeting. When prompted about their sluggishness, Zari responds in a friendly tone that they were engaged in personal hobbies. Mick retorts that he “takes his porn seriously.” The team immediately moves into the meeting, unphased by the mention of pornography. Analyzing the framing of pornography, based

on the terminology used when mentioned, as well as comedic elements included, will provide further insight into how pornography is referenced in popular television.

Valence

Relational affects, visual depictions of pornography, and valence were observed to understanding the framing of pornography. “Valence, which refers to whether the content is positive or negative (pleasant or unpleasant)” (Corbeil & Mckelvie, 2008, p. 363), helps identify the emotional demeanor within each scene. An example of this is “The Looking Glass” in the show, *Being Human* (Season 2, Episode 5, February 7, 2010). Mitchell, a criminal, is falsely arrested. They list his prior arrests that he was not charged with in the hopes of manipulating him into doing the dirty work for the chief, but he refuses. Amongst his felonies, he was found flashing and in possession of child pornography. In this episode, the valence is negative in the scenes pornography is mentioned in as it is associated not only with illegal activities but also is used in the hopes of controlling an individual.

Eyal and Finnerty (2009) further identify the relational impacts of valence. They categorize this into five categories: effects on relationships with partners, with peers, between children and parents, with institutions, or with other material outcomes. An example of this is “All Apologies” in the series *Grounded for Life* (Season 4, Episode 15, January 30, 2004). In the episode, Sean and his wife, Claudia, are on an anniversary getaway when they decide to watch an adult film. Claudia realizes that the film was shot in their own home. They rush home to talk to Sean’s brother who had allowed it to be filmed. Throughout the episode there are many references to pornography, and based upon who was present in the scene, the valence is dynamic. The initial valence was positive as the couple talked about watching pornography together, though it shifts to negative when they realize the setting. The confrontations with Sean’s brother

are dominantly negative, though in some private conversations, it is positive. When their children find out, the scene is negative in valence as the parents explain pornography is inappropriate. Valence, especially in tandem with relational affects, provides an understanding of how the framing of pornography affects relationships and emotions within popular television.

Cultural Normativity

Over the years, pornography has become increasingly acceptable. McNair (2014) posits that it has become normalized within popular culture. Strahan and colleagues (2008) define cultural normativity by the value and judgment passed upon individuals based on appearance; however, this also can apply to participation in various activities. To analyze how this is represented within popular television, a number of variables were included.

One specific variable used to analyze cultural normativity was how comedy was used in reference to pornography. Suls and Gastoff (1981) identify that humor impacts how messages are sent and received. Interestingly, sexual humor is often more regularly present in talk shows, comedy, and reality television compared to other genres (Wal et al., 2020). Cohen and Weimann (2000) additionally show that various genres can influence consumers' perceptions. An example of this is in the popular comedy television show, *How I Met Your Mother*. In the episode “Slap Bet” (Season 2, Episode 9, November 20, 2006), a group of friends is teasing one of their peers about a secret that she has and won't tell them. In jolly banter they joke that she was a porn star. This episode uses pornography—almost solely using the term porn—as the comical backbone of the plot.

Social Context

When evaluating pornography consumption, it is important to evaluate the social context surrounding it. This “includes demographics such as age, gender and sexual orientation”

(McCormack & Wignall, 2016, p. 979). Roy and Harwood (1997) additionally affirm that factors such as age and social groupings, as well as the physical settings wherein the scene takes place, are important elements of analyzing social context. Moulin-Stožek (2019) further expounds that “social context influences individuals, and . . . individuals may influence their social context” (p.36); therefore, character roles were also included to better understand pornography portrayals in relation to the social context within each show. An example of this is “The Freshman” in the series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (Season 4, Episode 1, October 5, 1999). Buffy is speaking to one of her peers, Eddie, who mentions a pornographic novel, and she responds that she does not use pornography, but she quickly rephrases that and says she is trying to “cut back.” In this case, Buffy is trying to match the response of her peer to reflect a similar sentiment.

Tone

Beullens and Schepers (2013) used tone to analyze the framing of alcohol, both in how it was mentioned and responded to. Similarly, this study uses tone to analyze how characters mention and respond to the mention of pornography. Based on Kim (2018), tone is defined as the manner in which pornography is depicted (positive, negative, or neutral/mixed). Using example statements from Beullens and Schepers (2013) and variables included in Kim (2018), the manner in which characters mention pornography was evaluated. An example of this is “The Prince in the Plastic” in the show *Bones* (Season 7, Episode 3, November 17, 2011). A specialized FBI team works together to solve murders. Searching for a suspect, they go through a victim’s computer. There is an absence of incriminating content, among which they list pornography and gambling. While pornography is mentioned in association with disfavored habits, the surrounding discussion between the colleagues suggests neutrality.

Intercoder Reliability

To achieve intercoder reliability, two independent coders participated in two hours of training prior to data collection. Each variable was discussed, and coders coded multiple episodes together (not from the sample but similar in nature). After participating in the training session, coders each coded a random selection of 12 episodes. The episodes were selected from a list of episodes from the same television shows included in the sample that met the same parameters (mentions “porn,” “porno,” or “pornography;” live-action; and rated TV-PG or TV-14) but were not included in the study’s final sample. Any discrepancies during the initial coding process were discussed and resolved. Interrater reliability for this study was calculated using Krippendorff’s α (1970). The output data from the trial sample met intercoder reliability for all variables with Krippendorff’s α over .7, which is considered satisfactory. After intercoder reliability was met with the initial sample, each coder was given 12 episodes from the study's sample (21% of the sample). Intercoder reliability was also met, with 100% agreement on 32 variables. The remaining 5 variables all had satisfactory intercoder reliabilities (Visual Representation, $\alpha = .85$; Cultural Normativity, $\alpha = .89$; Sexual Activity, $\alpha = .89$; Character Role, $\alpha = .80$). Coding for this study was broken up into two sections. Scenes were studied as a whole, and then each character in the scene who either mentioned pornography or responded to the mention of pornography was individually coded.

Data Analysis

Following the analysis approach utilized by van Hoof and colleagues (2008), the data in this sample were analyzed using descriptive statistics and qualitative summaries. As the codebook for this study was broken into two sections, the analysis also follows this pattern. The first section of the codebook was based upon the scene as a whole; this encompasses the first two

primary variables of interest, valence, and cultural normativity. Frequencies and percentages (which were calculated using R Version 4.0.4) were reported as appropriate. Given that this study's aim is descriptive in nature, no statistical tests were conducted.

Results

The results of this study are presented in several sections. The first section provides information regarding episodes. Due to multiple scenes within episodes containing mentions of pornography, frequencies within episodes were separately evaluated to avoid the duplication of concrete variables. The second area of focus was scenes, which provided insight into the terminology used in reference to pornography, valence, and cultural normativity. The third, and final, area of interest was the characters, which contribute to the understanding of tone and social context. In analyzing each of these areas, primary themes emerged, including social grouping and responses and character roles and representation.

Episode Descriptives

The total number of episodes included in this sample was 55. Descriptive statistics for totals within the episodes are referenced in Table 1. Television rating was almost evenly split, with 50.91% being TV-PG ($n = 28$) and 49.09% being TV-14 ($n = 27$). Amazon Prime contained the highest portion of the sample (30.9%, $n = 17$), followed by Hulu (25.45%, $n = 14$), IMDb TV (23.64%, $n = 13$), and Netflix (20.0%, $n = 11$). Comedy was the most common genre within the sample (36%, $n = 20$). Drama was the second most common with just over 29% ($n = 16$), followed by Action/Adventure 10.9% ($n = 6$). The remaining genres were less than 10% of the sample. The main themes within the episodes were primarily based on other topics (87.27%, $n = 48$), but a small portion of the sample (12.73%, $n = 7$) included episodes based on pornography. Figure 1 shows a histogram of release years, the peak year being 2008. It is

important to note that this sample only includes the most popular episode that contains a mention of pornography.

Scene Frequencies: References to Pornography & Terminology Influence

RQ1 explored the terminology used in reference to pornography in popular television shows. In analyzing the framing surrounding the mentions of pornography, a pattern that was noted was how the valence surrounding the mention of pornography was heavily dependent upon which term was used to mention pornography. To analyze how terminology was used, this study further broke it down into episodes focused on pornography versus those that contained plots centered on other topics. Additionally, humor was analyzed to identify if pornography was used as a comedic relief or mentioned in a serious manner.

Each scene was individually analyzed to provide context. The total number of scenes contained in this sample was 71. This was due to multiple episodes (12.72%, $n = 7$) containing more than one scene that mentioned pornography; however, the majority of episodes (87.27%, $n = 48$) only contained one scene with a mention of pornography. Overall, pornography was briefly referenced (61.97%, $n = 44$) rather than discussed (38.03%, $n = 27$) within the episodes. For example, the following comments were made with no further discussion.

“Man, pizza guys are getting worse and worse-looking. Guess all the good ones went into porn” (Pierce Hawthorne, *Community*, Season 3, Episode 4, October 13, 2011).

“Oh, have I got your attention now? Good. Good, because you know what that means? No more two-hour lunch breaks. No more Xbox tournaments. No more porn” (Morgan, *Chuck*, Season 1, Episode 3, October 8, 2007).

Episodes with multiple mentions typically focused on pornography as the main theme. These episodes discussed pornography (69.57%, $n = 16$) versus briefly mentioning it (30.43%, $n = 7$). For example, in *Beverly Hills, 90210*, the episode “Speechless” contains 5 scenes with mentions of pornography. One of the characters rents out his house to a producer to film a movie and later finds out it is a pornography film. His friends support it, but he hides it from his girlfriend who eventually finds out and is not pleased.

Scenes often used more than one term to reference pornography. The percentages are unique in this case as they are representative of terminology as a whole, not per scene. Porn was the most commonly used term, with 50 references (70.42%), followed by porno (18.31%, $n = 13$), pornography (16.90%, $n = 12$), and other terms (7.04%, $n = 5$). “Other terms” included references such as “skin flick” and “adult entertainment.”

References to pornography using the term “porn” typically referenced as a concept (i.e., something addicting) or concrete material.

“Uh, not that I don't love thumbing through gay porn . . . I'm sorry, male clothing catalogs, but what am I doing here, bro?” (Justin Walker, *Brothers and Sisters*, Season 2, Episode 10, January 13, 2008)

“Steve, what are you and your porn 'stache doing here in our office?” (Shawn Spencer, *Psych*, Season 3, Episode 13, February 17, 2010)

“So, welcome to the nerd porn portion of our program. This is *the* most incredible data migration system I have ever seen. Al, I want this. I need this.” (Jay Lee, *Unforgettable*, Season 3, Episode 11, September 7, 2014)

When referencing pornography as a “porno,” it was common to use it in regard to pornography films or when mentioning pornography and money.

“Oh hey, you got the porno channel?” (Ira, *Mad About You*, Season 4, Episode 4, February 25, 1996)

“You could sell it online for big porno bucks!” (Alex Nuñez, *Degrassi*, Season 4, Episode 14, November 30, 2004)

When the term “pornography” was used, it was mentioned most often in a manner that conveyed either complete acceptance or complete disdain.

“This woman stands to have her entire career ruined because that man wants to take moments of intimacy between a husband and wife and make them into pornography.” (Barney Dowe, *LA. Law*, Season 4, Episode 14, February 22, 1990)

“Mm-hmm. I use it to store my pornography collection. Which reminds me, are you interested in earning a little extra money?” (Biederbeck, *Monk*, Season 1, Episode 14, July 26, 2002)

Pornography was most commonly mentioned in a humorous manner (59.15%, $n = 28$), compared to serious (26.76% $n = 19$) or mixed/neutral (14.05%, $n = 10$) tones. The most common mediums used (or joked about) to access pornography were TV/movies (28.17%, $n = 20$), online (18.31%, $n = 13$), or other means (14.08%, $n = 10$). On the other hand, 28 (39.44%) episodes did include any indications of the medium of the pornography. For example:

“Good open. But I see your Waldorf and raise you hunting for porn all over Manhattan.” (Grace Adler, *Will and Grace*, Season 2, Episode 6, November 23, 1999)

Scene Valence: Social Grouping & Responses

RQ2 sought to examine the valence within popular television shows. An emergent theme found in this analysis was the heavy influence of social groupings and context. While the majority of scenes contained negative valence, social groupings (such as familial presence versus friends) the scene further influences the emotional overtones within the scene. Scenes containing mentions of “pornography” were most commonly negative in valence (50.70%, $n = 36$), followed by neutral (38.03%, $n = 27$) and then positive (11.27%, $n = 8$). Therefore, in almost all cases, negative valence was the most common in almost all variables. Assessing the relational effect within the scenes, the majority of relationships were negatively impacted. Familial relationships were the highest with 75% ($n = 12$) negatively affected, 18.8% not affected/neutral ($n = 3$), and only 6.25% ($n = 8$) positively affected. Similarly, 71.4% of other characters (ex-spouses, lawyers, etc.) were negatively impacted and 28.6% ($n = 2$) were not affected/neutral. Peer relationships were also more commonly impacted negatively, with 44.8% ($n = 13$) containing negative valence, 41.4% ($n = 12$) not being affected/neutral, and 13.8% ($n = 4$) being positively impacted.

Visual depictions of pornography were not often shown within the scenes (77.46%, $n = 55$). However, when depicted, it was either from characters watching pornography together or showing it to each other (12.68%, $n = 9$), or by characters finding pornography in another character’s things, such as in their room, car, or on their computer (9.86%, $n = 7$). In 55.6% ($n = 5$) of the scenes where the viewing of pornography was social, the valence of the scene was neutral, whereas 33.3% ($n = 3$) of the scenes had negative valence and only 11.1% ($n = 1$) were positive. When pornography was found by another character, 57.1% of scenes ($n = 4$) were negative, 42.9% ($n = 3$) were neutral, and none were positive.

Cultural Normativity: Genre, Setting & Acceptance

RQ3 explored how pornography was framed to display cultural normativity. In analyzing the cultural acceptance or rejection of pornography, it became clear that genre and setting were highly influential on how pornography was framed. In current society, pornography is often a topic that traditional/structured settings steer away from (school, work, etc.) while private spaces are more widely regarded as an open space to speak about sensitive topics. Genre followed a similar trend with lighthearted genres (e.g., comedy) being more accepting of pornography versus traditionally serious genres (e.g., drama).

Cultural normativity displayed within the scenes was almost split between variables, though there were a higher number of scenes with neutral reactions to pornography mentions (36.62%, $n = 24$), compared to rejection (33.80%, $n = 24$) or acceptance (29.58%, $n = 21$). The cultural normativity that was depicted varied depending on the location of the scene. When pornography was mentioned in public spaces, it was most commonly mentioned in a manner that showed neutrality (55.6%, $n = 10$) or acceptance (27.8%, $n = 5$). Similarly, 37.9% ($n = 11$) of scenes that took place in living spaces were culturally framed as neutral; however, 31% ($n = 9$) of scenes were portrayed as culturally accepted or rejected. On the other hand, pornography discussed at work or school was rejected 40% ($n = 8$) of the time, neutral 35% ($n = 7$) of the time, and accepted only 25% ($n = 5$) of the time.

Genre also impacted the framing of how pornography was culturally depicted. Nearly 50% ($n = 14$) of comedies and sitcoms displayed neutral attitudes or acceptance (27.5%, $n = 8$) toward pornography. Sci-fi and fantasy shows also displayed acceptance 80% ($n = 4$) of the time, with no neutral depictions and with 20% ($n = 1$) rejection. The action and adventure genre was evenly split with 33.3% ($n = 2$) of episodes depicting acceptance, neutrality, and rejection. Crime

and mystery had 44.4% ($n = 4$) neutral episodes, 33.3% ($n = 3$) with rejection, and 22.2% ($n = 2$) with acceptance. Drama contained the highest number of rejected depictions, with 50.0% ($n = 11$), 27.3% ($n = 6$) neutral, and 22.7% ($n = 5$) accepted.

Character Frequencies: Representation and Social Context

RQ4 sought to examine the social context used within popular television shows in relation to the framing of pornography. Amongst the characters coded, 70.89% ($n = 112$) were males and 29.11% were females ($n = 46$). Over 86% of characters were White (86.71%, $n = 137$), with only 6.69% ($n = 11$) Black characters and 6.33% ($n = 10$) listed as others (i.e. Islanders and Asians). Piety was not present in 96.20% ($n = 162$) of characters; however, 3.80% ($n = 6$) did exude pious declarations or behaviors (such as attending church, praying, or expressing belief in Deity). The only religious conviction identified was Christianity. While the majority of characters (57.59%, $n = 91$) did not have their sexual activity identified, 26.58% ($n = 42$) were framed as average, 13.29% ($n = 21$) as extreme, and 2.53% ($n = 4$) as abstinent.

Tone: Character Roles & Age

RQ5 explored the tone used within popular television shows. As would be expected, the tone used to mention and respond to pornography varied greatly by character. Two of the primary influences were age (e.g., adolescents) and character role (e.g., familial). The tone used was most commonly neutral, with 44.6% ($n = 52$) of characters mentioning or responding to pornography neutrally, 33.4% ($n = 43$) negatively, and 24.0% ($n = 30$) positively. Adult characters were more likely to use a neutral (34.7%, $n = 51$) or negative tone (26.7%, $n = 42$).

“Oh, come on Chris. Really? They were making out in the garage, not shooting amateur porn.” (Kate Argent, *Teen Wolf*, Season 1, Episode 2, June 6, 2011)

“They downloaded something along with the hive ship plans. Aw, something like spyware - it's like my stupidly downloaded porn.” (Dr. Rodney McKay, *Stargate*, Season 3, Episode 1, July 14, 2006)

Underaged characters were more often positive (45.3%, $n = 5$) or neutral (18.2%, $n = 2$).

“Guys, guys. I've been trying to figure out what kind of genius I am, and I finally realized, I should go to the library. And you know what? You can get Internet porn there, and the librarians can't do anything about it! God, I love this country!” (Malcolm, *Malcolm in the Middle*, Season 5, Episode 19, May 2, 2004)

The relational role of characters also impacted character tone. Friends commonly responded positively (22.2%, $n = 14$) or neutrally (34.9%, $n = 22$).

“Oh, I slap-bet Marshall that you used to do porn” (Speaking to a friend) “Porn? I wish it was porn. It would be less embarrassing.” (Barney Stinson and Robin Scherbatky, *How I Met Your Mother*, Season 2, Episode 9, November 20, 2006)

“I love porn, bongs and bad words week!” (Tom Jackson, *Love My Way*, Season 1, Episode 3, November 29, 2004)

Familial roles, such as parents, children, or partners, and authority figures, like bosses or leaders were more likely to respond negatively (31.0%, $n = 13$) or neutrally (20.0%, $n = 2$).

“What does porno mean?” (Question directed at his father) “It means bad, Henry, very bad” (Henry and Sean Finnerty, *Grounded for Life*, Season 4, Episode 15, January 30, 2004)

“Every day it's something else with you. I don't know anything about you anymore. Who are you? What kind of life are you leading? Who knows what

you're doing? Maybe you're making porno films!" (Estelle Costanza, *Seinfeld*, Season 4, Episode 17, February 11, 1993)

Co-workers most often carried a neutral tone (38.9%, $n = 14$) or negative tone (27.8%, $n = 10$).

"I always thought you kept your porn in there" (Directed at a Co-Worker going through a book) "I move it around." (Nick Stokes and Greg Sanders, *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*, Season 2, Episode 7, November 8, 2001)

"Wow! You don't buy a server like that to look at online porn." (Speaking to a Coworker) No, you buy it to coordinate international business operations, that's what it's designed for." (Marshall Flinkman and Michael Vaughn, *Alias*, Season 4, Episode 3, January 12, 2005)

Minor characters were more likely to have a negative (31.1%, $n = 9$) or positive tone (25.0%, $n = 7$), while major characters used neutral (33.8%, $n = 44$) and negative (26.9%, $n = 35$) tones more commonly. Minor characters were more likely to have a negative (31.1%, $n = 9$) or positive tone (25.0%, $n = 7$), while major characters used neutral (33.8%, $n = 44$) and negative (26.9%, $n = 35$) tones more commonly.

Discussion

Technological advancements and current trends have not only altered the world's acceptance of pornography but have also created a uniquely accessible platform that normalizes it. Open discussion of, viewing of, and curiosity about ever-present sexuality now floods the media world subtly and overtly. The sample of this study is particularly insightful as it not only gives insight into the values of those who have written the script, with the assumed goal of pleasing the audience, but it also reflects the audience itself. All included episodes were

incorporated because an audience member found a pornography-related quote memorable and added it to the IMDb database (IMDb Quotes, 2021). Furthermore, this study's sample provides valuable insight into the values attached to mentions of pornography. The analysis demonstrates how pornography is framed in popular television, specifically the social context and the tone used when it is discussed and the cultural normalization of pornography.

References to Pornography: Terminology, Acceptance & Rejection

The first area this study sought to explore was the framing of pornography based upon terminology used to reference it. The majority of terms used in a scene were associated with negative valence. 'Porn' typically showed comfort, acceptance, or familiarity and was overall used in scenes that showed cultural acceptance. When the terms 'pornography' and 'porno' were used it was largely rejected in scenes. These findings are partially consistent with Williams (2014), who states that "I slipped into the use of both 'porn' and 'porno'... as if to say that after 10 years of study the object had been with us long enough to have a nickname that signals our new comfort with it" (p. 33). Overall, 'porn' was used in a manner that elicits comfort and familiarity, 'porno' and 'pornography' both were not. This finding suggests that the terminology used when referencing pornography can potentially provide background into how individuals feel about pornography.

Valence: Social Grouping & Responses

The second area this study sought to explore was the valence within scenes that mentioned pornography and how it influenced framing. It is important to first note that in this study's sample, the majority of scenes were negative in valence (50.7%) and around one-third were neutral (38.03%), leaving a small portion of the sample positive in valence (11.27%). This could be due to the high-stress situations taking place in scenes wherein pornography was

mentioned (e.g., crime scenes, the discovery of pornography amongst personal items, or arguments between characters). Following that pattern, almost all relationships were predominantly negatively affected in terms of valence, though some relationships were affected more than others. Three-quarters of familial relationships contained negative valence, while 44.8% of peer relationships were negative and 41.4% were neutral in valence.

These findings suggest that discussing pornography will result in negative outcomes when corresponding with family, whereas peers are more likely to respond neutrally. Following cultivation analysis, the repeated exposure to this messaging could influence the perceptions of consumers and cause them to shy away from speaking with family members about pornography. According to scholar Zurcher (2019), open communication between parents and children is essential when discussing pornography. The current media indicates to consumers, be it parents, partners, or children, that family is not a safe space to discuss pornography and therefore reduces the needed dialogue between family members about this important topic. While peers were almost as likely to respond neutrally as they were negatively, scenes with dialogue between peers were almost twice as likely to contain neutral valence than dialogue with family members, implying that peers are a more reliable place to discuss pornography. This is consistent with Ševčíková & Daneback (2014), who found that nearly half of pornography viewers discuss it amongst their friends.

Cultural Normativity: Genre & Acceptance

The second area this study sought to explore was how culturally acceptable pornography was framed. The results of this study suggests that the framing of pornography can be greatly dependent upon the genre. The genre of drama contained the second-highest number of pornography mentions, although, in drama, pornography was more commonly culturally

rejected. Sci-fi/fantasy was the only genre to predominantly frame pornography as culturally acceptable. Crime/mystery and comedy were the only genres that framed pornography predominantly neutrally. Comedy contained the highest number of mentions of pornography and most likely framed pornography as neutral or culturally acceptable. In almost all cases, pornography was mentioned in a comical manner, which is consistent with Wal et al. (2020) who found that sexual humor was overtly present in comedic shows. However, even outside of genre, humor was present more than half of the time when mentioning pornography. The presence of humor demonstrated cultural acceptance or neutrality. Scenes containing serious tones or a lack of humor when mentioning pornography more commonly framed pornography as culturally unacceptable.

The findings of this study certainly suggest that the framing of pornography may vary based upon genre. Holtzman and Sharpe (2014) state that “most comedies and dramas have reflected the standards, values, customs, lifestyles, family patterns, and physical manifestations [of television consumers]” (p. 313). It is possible that consumers who engage with certain genres do so because they represent their values and humor cadence, therefore not changing their perceptions but rather reinforcing them. The findings of Cohen & Weimann (2000), who found that genre does impact the perceptions of consumers, follow. The findings of this study could also suggest that the framing of pornography in each genre could influence the perceptions of consumers and their views of pornography, leading to more positive or negative views based upon which genre they consume.

Social Context: Representation & Implications

The fourth area this study sought to explore was the social context present within mentions of pornography. Character demographics were consistent with findings of other

studies. Riles et al. (2018) found that the vast majority of characters were white, with only a small number of characters of other races represented. Men were more represented than women (Sink & Mastro, 2017), and an extremely small portion of characters were pious (Clarke, 2005). While neither of the above studies were focused on pornography or sexualized media, it is interesting to note that the characters remained consistent with representation in unrelated topic areas. Studies have found that men engage more with sexualized media than females (Carroll et al., 2008; Sabina et al., 2008).

Studies have found that men engage more with sexualized media than females (Carroll et al., 2008; Sabina et al., 2008). The findings of this study indicate that males discuss pornography more often than females in this sample; however, this could be due to a higher base rate of males compared to females in television (Sink & Mastro, 2017). Nonetheless, the overrepresentation could convey to consumers that males are more prone to pornography viewing and discussion than females. Dwulit & Rzymiski (2019) found that females are more likely to show shame for consuming pornography than males. Males are also more likely to view pornography as acceptable than females (Carroll et al., 2008). This could all be due to the representation found within popular television and the discussions that take place by each gender.

Tone: Character Roles & Framing

The final area of interest in this study was the tone used by characters when referencing pornography. The characters in the coded episodes were predominantly adults (which could be a result of sample specifications), but minor-aged characters were represented. Adult characters in this study were more likely to speak about pornography negatively or neutrally, while minor-aged characters often spoke positively or neutrally about pornography. As television scripts are written by adults, it is possible that the scripts are written to reflect the perception of how adults

think adolescents regard pornography, rather than reflecting their actual views; however, Haggis and Mulholland (2014) did find that adolescents view pornography as culturally acceptable. Participants in their study stated that “pornography “is much more tolerated (amongst the younger generation)” and “everyone does it” (p.60–61). Based upon the commentary of adolescents in their study, it appears that the framing of cultural acceptance by minors on popular television shows is consistent with the views of adolescents. The framing of adolescents’ tones in regard to pornography therefore may either influence or reinforce the views of adolescents. This finding is of particular concern as studies have shown the negative impacts of pornography for adolescents, such as involvement in high-risk sexual activities (Braun-Courville & Rojas, 2009), lower sexual satisfaction (Dwuli & Rzymiski, 2019), substance abuse, delinquent behavior (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2005) and poor quality of romantic relationships (Dwuli & Rzymiski, 2019).

Conclusion

Based upon the literature and analysis of this study, it appears that the framing of pornography and characters who discussed it are consistent with consumer opinions. Signorelli et al. (2019) state that media not only represents and guides society, but it also “reflect[s]—and cultivate[s]—dominant cultural ideologies” (p. 117). While this study cannot conclude a causal impact, the framing within the television shows in this sample is in line with the opinions shown in other studies. This study overall suggests that pornography is heavily framed in popular television shows. While many of the findings are consistent with the manner in which pornography is discussed and treated outside of television (such as family using a negative tone when referencing pornography and pornography being negatively framed in school and work settings). This study shows that cultural normativity surrounding the different framing of pornography is dependent upon the genre and terminology used when referencing it.

One of the limitations of this study is the sample itself. The sample is based upon IMDb user-submitted quotes rather than a random sample of all episodes of a particular show or selection of shows. Not all episodes of television shows mention pornography; therefore, this was an effective method to evaluate pornography discussion despite the fact that it is not representative of all mentions of pornography. Additionally, only the most popular episode of each show was selected rather than a random sample. This was done to capture episodes that were well-known and liked to better capture what is widely accepted. While effective for this type of analysis, it would be of interest to conduct a content analysis with a broader perspective with a larger sample. This sample was also limited by episodes available on streaming platforms. Moreover, while the sample for this study looked specifically at references of pornography using the terms “porn,” “porno,” and “pornography,” other terms (es. ‘skin flick’ and ‘adult entertainment’) were present within the sample and were therefore noted. However, they were not included in the initial sample’s search as it would have broadened the sample and decreased the focus of the study.

In addition to a larger sample size, in the future, researchers may want to consider the framing of pornography in popular films. Including both films and television shows in the sample may provide additional insight into the framing of pornography in media. To better test the hypothesis that the framing of popular media impacts consumers, a study conducted using an experimental design may provide critical data into the effects of pornography framing and consumer attitudes towards pornography. Another possible avenue of study would be a survey to evaluate potential correlations between media consumption (such as genre), pornography use, and demographics.

While this study is small in sample, and therefore lacks significant statistical evidence, it provides compelling indications of how pornography is framed within popular media. The findings of this study propose that the valence, cultural normativity, social context, and tone are all influenced by the framing of pornography. Further analysis is needed to identify the effects of pornography framing on consumers and their perceptions.

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Appendix 1: Codebook

Note: This codebook reflects how the data was collected and initially analyzed; however, not all of the variables are represented in the study as many of the variables were combined upon completion of data analysis and collection to better reflect the findings and potential implications.

Coder _____

Date Coded _____

Show Title _____

Episode Title _____

Year _____

Show's Rating _____

Running time _____

Show's IMDb Rating _____

Streaming Platform _____

Primary genre of the television show? _____

Please list the first listed genre as shown on individual streaming platform

Time(s) Pornography is discussed _____

List time within the episode i.e., 10:30–13:42

Is the majority of the episode about pornography? (yes/no)

Yes = More than 50% of the episode must be focused on pornography

Transcribe the first sentences in which pornography is introduced _____

What term is used in reference to pornography?

- Porn
- Porno
- Pornography
- Other: (Please List _____)

(Verbal) How is the pornographic content portrayed? _____

Referenced

- Briefly: mentioned in passing (not discussed- topic is only mentioned 1–2 lines)
- Discussed: pornography, or the viewing of, is talked about (topic is talked about back and forth between 3 or more lines)

Are any of the characters asked if they have viewed/view pornographic media?

- Yes (Please list name)
- No

(Visual) How is the pornographic media represented in the scene? (If applicable)

- Mediated viewing
 - Social Group Viewing: viewing with multiple people
 - Person(s) shows other people
 - External Viewer: character finds the pornographic media on someone else's things (computer, magazine, etc.)
 - Solo Viewing: looking at pornographic media alone

- Other _____
- Medium
 - Cell Phone
 - Computer
 - Internet
 - Magazine
 - TV/Movie
 - Other _____
 - NA

What is the social context/physical setting(s) wherein pornography is mentioned?

- Living space (home/apartment, etc.)
- School
- Public Space (bar, restaurant, gym)
- Workspace (office/business)
- Outside/Urban/Yard
- Hospital/Care Taking Center
- Other: (Please List _____)

Is the reference intended as serious or humorous?

- Serious (the reference is serious in nature, not made as a joke or to make people laugh)

- Serious (the reference is made as a joke or in a manner that is made to evoke laughter from the audience. Lighthearted, having fun, or joking with other persons . . . or with an audience)
- Mixed (the reference includes both humorous and serious elements)

What is the valence (OVERALL) in which pornography is discussed/mentioned? (PICK ONE)

- (Positive) Happiness and excitement.
- (Negative) Distress, trauma, guilt, regret, shame, and discomfort
- (Neutral) Unclear/Mixed

In relation to the overall valence, how does the portrayal of pornography impact the characters?

- effects on the relationship with the partner (e.g., the characters become closer to one another or are torn apart)
- effects on relationships with peers (e.g., peer approval or rejection)
- effects on the relationship with a child or parent (e.g., approval or disownment)
- effects on the relationships with a family member (Not a parent or child!)
- Institutional reactions (e.g., reactions from organizations, schools, or religious groups, such as formal sanctions, accusation or conviction of a sex crime)
- material outcomes (e.g., either getting or losing gifts, money, or a promotion).
- Not known.

Does the inclusion of the term (discussed, questioned, or mentioned), imply an OVERALL acceptance of pornography? I.e., is it portrayed in a way that implies cultural normativity?

(“cultural norms: that one may be judged and valued in society based on one's” participation.)

- Acceptance (everybody does it, it's fine, etc.)
- Rejection (you shouldn't watch it, that's bad)
- Mixed (two dominant characters have differing views that leave viewers feeling ambiguous)
- Neutral (no reaction)

CHARACTER 1: (Character who first mentions pornography)

Name: _____

Gender: _____

Race: _____

White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, Other

Age: _____

Child (0–12), teen (13–17), adult (18–60), adult (25–60), elderly (61+), NA (animal or figure).

Piety: _____

(Only if very clearly depicted- Yes or No, if applicable, write religious affiliation. If unknown write unknown.)

- Belief (expressing belief in higher being)
- Practice (engaging in pious activities such as volunteering, attending church)
- Experience (relaying personal pious past experiences)
- Knowledge (familiarity with scriptures, practices, etc.)
- Consequences (avoiding behaviors, moral compass, etc.).

How would you describe this character's sexual activity? _____

Extreme (they sleep with multiple people), Average (they sleep with their person), Abstinent (they are rarely sexually active), NA/Unknown (not enough information is provided to make a conclusion)

Major or Minor Role: _____

Character Role: _____

- Authority Figure (boss, interviewer.)
- Familial Figure (parent, sibling, aunt)
- Romantic Interest (spouse, fiancé, GF/BF)
- Friend
- Co-Worker/Office Personnel
- Peer (acquaintance, may be enemies, some sort of established relationship)
- Other
- Unknown

What is the tone in which pornography is mentioned? _____

positive, negative, neutral

(a) primarily positive consequences (e.g., receiving peer approval, experiencing satisfaction).

(b) primarily negative consequences (e.g., feeling guilt, experiencing lower social stats, damaging a relationship with one's partner).

(c) neutral outcomes refer to the depiction of no clear consequences to the behavior; and

(d) mixed, including a balanced presentation of both positive and negative consequences, such that a viewer would leave the show feeling ambiguous.

CHARACTER 2: (Character who first verbally responds to the pornography reference)

Name: _____

Gender: _____

Race: _____

White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, Other

Age: _____

Child (0–12), teen (13–17), adult (18–60), adult (25–60), elderly (61+), NA (animal or figure).

Piety: _____

(Only if very clearly depicted- Yes or No, if applicable, write religious affiliation. If unknown write unknown.)

- Belief (expressing belief in higher being)
- Practice (engaging in pious activities such as volunteering, attending church)
- Experience (relaying personal pious past experiences)
- Knowledge (familiarity with scriptures, practices, etc.)
- Consequences (avoiding behaviors, moral compass, etc.).

How would you describe this character's sexual activity? _____

Extreme (they sleep with multiple people) Average (they sleep with their person), Abstinent (they are rarely sexually active), NA/Unknown (not enough information is provided to make a conclusion)

Major or Minor Role: _____

Character Role: _____

- Authority Figure (boss, interviewer.)
- Familial Figure (parent, sibling, aunt)
- Romantic Interest (spouse, fiancé, GF/BF)
- Friend
- Co-Worker/Office Personnel
- Peer (acquaintance, may be enemies, some sort of established relationship)
- Other
- Unknown

What is the tone in which pornography is mentioned? _____

positive, negative, neutral

(a) primarily positive consequences (e.g., receiving peer approval, experiencing satisfaction).

(b) primarily negative consequences (e.g., feeling guilt, experiencing lower social status, damaging a relationship with one's partner).

(c) neutral outcomes refer to the depiction of no clear consequences to the behavior; and

(d) mixed, including a balanced presentation of both positive and negative consequences, such that a viewer would leave the show feeling ambiguous.

Note: All characters were coded based upon the same variables/questions. Some episodes included up to six characters. Each were coded on the same criteria.

Appendix 2: Definition List

This process produced a total of 55 episodes, resulting in 35.48 hours of coding. These parameters are in line with previously completed research. For instance, van Hoof et al. (2008) coded 40 episodes when studying portrayals of alcohol, while Kim and Wells (2017) coded 45 episodes when looking at the portrayals of sexual messaging and alcohol on reality TV programs.

Valence:

What are the emotion characters in the show are displaying? (Based on Eyal & Finnerty, 2009)

1. Happiness and excitement.
2. Distress, trauma, guilt, regret, shame, and discomfort
3. Effects on self-esteem
 - Effects on the relationship with the partner (e.g., the characters become closer to one another or are torn apart)
 - Effects on relationships with peers (e.g., peer approval or rejection)
 - Effects on the relationship with a child or parent (e.g., approval or disownment)
 - Institutional reactions (e.g., reactions from organizations, schools, or religious groups, such as formal sanctions, accusation or conviction of a sex crime)
 - Material outcomes (e.g., either getting or losing gifts, money, or a promotion).
4. Not known.

Social Context:

How characters (who mention pornography) are portrayed with other age groups. (Based on Roy & Harwood, 1997)

- “How older characters were portrayed with other age groups. Characters were coded based on whether they were shown alone, just with other older individuals, just with children, or in a mix of age groups)”

Setting:

The location in which the characters are shown. (Based on Roy & Harwood, 1997)

- “Each character was coded based on the setting in which they were shown. Possible categories were in the home, outdoors, in a business, in a hospital/care-taking setting, or other”

Tone:

Is the discussion positive, negative, or neutral? Positive implies approval or encouragement; negative commentary would have comments of disapproval or include negative ramifications.

Neutral has no emotions or judgments included. Mixed have a combination of the above.

(Based on Beullens & Schepers, 2013)

Positive

- Receiving peer approval
- Experiencing satisfaction

Negative

- Feeling guilt
- Experiencing lower social status

- Damaging a relationship with one's partner

Neutral

- Outcomes refer to the depiction of no clear consequences to the behavior

Mixed

- Including a balanced presentation of both positive and negative consequences, such that a viewer would leave the show feeling ambiguous.

(Based on Beullens & Schepers 2013)

Positive

- “Great picture! Desperados for the win”
- “I feel like getting loaded tonight”
- “Nice! We will drink together tonight”

Negative

- “Outrageous, you’re not doing so well”
- “Drank way too much yesterday”
- “I told you to drink less”

Neutral

- “What are you drinking in that picture? I’ve been to that club too”
- “Going to the bar tonight”
- “Did you have a good time?”

Piety:

"The particular emphasis of this article on the concept of piety contributes to an understanding of the way that faith is revealed through different devotional practices aimed at creating religious virtues" (Isik, 2013)

Does the character engage in any religious practices? "Belief, practice, experience, knowledge, and consequences" (Clarke, 2005)

- "Engaging in ritual practices (attending services, lighting incense or candles, etc.)"
- "Devotional practices (scripture reading, prayer or meditation, etc.)"
- "Engaging in behaviors (giving to the poor, volunteering at a hospice, etc.)"
- "Avoiding behaviors (lying, drinking, etc.) as a consequence of her or his faith"
- "Inclusion of a moral compass that dissuades them from engaging in behaviors"