

ADULT ATTACHMENT STYLE AND USE OF PORNOGRAPHY  
AMONG INTIMATE ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

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By  
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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

ADULT ATTACHMENT STYLE AND USE OF PORNOGRAPHY AMONG  
INTIMATE ROMANTIC COUPLES

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my husband who has helped me gain a greater understanding of the value in applying secular knowledge. I also dedicate this thesis to my Thesis Chair who has supported me with my writing through her countless edits and motivated me to move forward.

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## ABSTRACT

The current study explored the relationship between adult attachment style, pornography use, and relationship satisfaction. Past research has shown that when couple members are honest about their pornography use, relationship satisfaction tends to be higher than when couple members lie about using pornography. The literature, however, has not investigated the relationship between adult attachment styles and the use of pornography. First, results of this study revealed a significant difference in relationship satisfaction between those who watched pornography alone *and* with a partner and the group who reported watching pornography just alone. Next, contrary to what was hypothesized, participants with a dismissive attachment style were not more likely to watch pornography alone than those with secure, preoccupied, or fearful attachment styles. Lastly, the data did not support the hypothesis that individuals with a secure attachment style would be less likely to use pornography than insecure individuals. Overall, while the results were not what was predicted, it does appear that pornography use can influence relationship satisfaction and, therefore, could be an important topic to bring up in clinical settings.

*Keywords:* pornography, attachment style, relationship satisfaction, adult attachment

## INTRODUCTION

More and more people are viewing and using pornography. It is estimated that 40 million to 100 million individuals use pornography in the United States and 40 million people reported that they visit online pornography sites regularly (Sirianni & Vishwanath, 2016). The growing consumer market is propelled by pornography being accessible, affordable, and providing anonymity (Copper, 1998; Cooper, Delmonico, & Burg, 2000; Delmonico, Griffin, & Carnes, 2001; Stack, Wasserman, & Kern, 2004; Wright, 2013; Zitman & Butler, 2009). For example, pornography can be easily accessed through many electronic devices (television, computer, phone, tablet, gaming systems, etc.) (Buzzell, 2005).

Because of the growing consumer market for pornography, there has been an increasing interest among those in the behavioral health profession to research the effects of pornography usage. Mental health professionals are likely work with individuals who are dealing with, or are affected by, pornography use. Researching the types of behaviors and personality traits associated with those who view pornography, and how viewing pornography influences satisfaction with romantic relationship may be applicable information.

One important predictor for pornography use may be adult attachment style. A human's early experiences with his or her primary caregiver are important for a variety of reasons; one of the most important being that these interactions form the basis of the attachment bond (Ainsworth & Marvin, 1995; Bowlby, 1973; Egeland & Farber, 1984). This bond is developed in early life, through repeated interactions with

a primary caregiver, and is believed to affect the individual's interactions with others across the lifespan (Bowlby, 1973). Thus, attachment theory may be used to explain how an individual's developmental history impacts his or her later interpersonal interaction style and behavior (Feeney & Noller, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Pistole, 1989).

Researchers have inquired what types of behaviors can attachment theory be used to predict. Hazan and Shaver (1987) being some of those researchers recognized that interpersonal relatedness patterns in adults are very similar to the attachment patterns researched in early development. They argued that adult romantic relationships are how the attachment behavioral system (i.e. attachment style) is maintained, and through their research Hazan and Shaver (1987) demonstrated that attachment style was correlated with reported experiences of romantic love.

### **Attachment Styles**

Four attachment categories for adults were developed based on the infant secure, anxious-ambivalent, and avoidant infant styles (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). *Securely* attached individuals find pleasure in seeking intimate relationships and have low anxiety about being abandoned and low avoidance. *Preoccupied* attached individuals feel higher levels of anxiety or discomfort compared to other attachment styles when being away from their intimate relationships and worry about being abandoned, thus low avoidance. *Fearfully* attached individuals feel high levels of anxiety and discomfort and have high avoidance. *Avoidantly* attached individuals report low levels of anxiety about being abandoned and report high levels of

avoidance, thus, these individuals are comfortable in forming intimate relationships but do not worry about being abandoned and report low levels of satisfaction in their relationship. These style demonstrate different interactions in romantic relationship.

**Secure.** *Securely* attachment individuals tend to report experiencing lower levels on both the anxiety and avoidance (Fraley & Shaver, 2000). Secure individuals report having higher levels of self-esteem and self-confidence, and tend to be more satisfied with their relationships compared to those with *insecure* attachment styles, specifically those who have *dismissive* attachment patterns (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Mikulincer et al., 2001; Pizzano, Sherblom, & Umphre, 2013). Securely attached couples report similar characteristics of longer lasting and more satisfying monogamous relationship (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Pizzano, Sherblom, & Umphre, 2013). Adults with secure attachment patterns adapt more easily to new settings and show more adaptive social skills such as cooperation and enthusiasm in their relationships than those with insecure attachment styles (Matas, Arend, & Sroufe, 1978).

Pizzano et al. (2013) examined communication styles and participants' attachment styles and found securely attached individuals communicated with their partner using more verbiage during stressful situations and reported, overall, more engagement with their partner than other attachment styles. In addition, other researchers found that those with securely attached partners report being more committed to their romantic partner than those with other attachment styles (Mikulincer et al., 2001).

**Preoccupied.** *Preoccupied* individuals report experiencing high levels of anxiety and low on the avoidance. When compared to the other attachment styles *preoccupied* individuals are more committed to their romantic partner and engage in de-escalating behaviors during stressful situations, such as taking responsibility for problems in the relationship and dedicating time to resolve argument (Pizzano et al., 2013). On the other hand, they also tend to neglect their partners at times (Pizzano et al., 2013; Simpson, Rholes, & Nelligan, 1992). *Preoccupied* individuals tend to be insecure, report lower self-esteem and self-confidence, and fear abandonment by their partner (Mikulincer et al., 2001). *Preoccupied* individual's tend to be nervously dependent on others' approval for their own self-esteem and preoccupation with seeking intimate relationships.

**Fearful.** *Fearful* attachment style is characterized by experiencing high levels of anxiety and avoidance. In their relationships, fearfully attached individuals avoid communication and will choose to retreat from confrontational situations where communication is imminent (Pizzano et al., 2013). Moreover, in stressful situations these people tend to display anger and helplessness towards their partner in attempt to defensively take control of the interaction and maintain the availability and attention of the partner (Mikulincer et al., 2001). Fearful attachment style was characterized by avoiding intimate relationships because of fear of not being accepted.

**Dismissive.** Individuals with a *dismissive* attachment style are characterized by experiencing high avoidance behaviors and low anxiety. Individuals with a *dismissive* attachment style are committed to their partner but report lower levels of

personal distress and empathy towards their partners during interpersonal conflict (Mikulincer et al, 2001). Furthermore, *dismissively* attachment individual engages in relatively little exploration of their partner, as shown by, less physical contact and averted eye gaze. However, compared to other insecure attachment styles (*fearful* and *preoccupied*), dismissive individuals engage in more de-escalating communication strategies, which may be an attempt to mask their distress. (Pizzano et al., 2013). Those with *dismissive* attachment style are those who do not seek intimate relationships because they were satisfied with their individuality and independence, and do not feel a need to develop intimate relationships. These attachment styles influence a variety of interactions within the couple system and may influence a couple's use of pornography.

### **Pornography Use Among Adult Romantic Couples**

The effects of pornography on adult romantic relationships has been researched. Zitzman and Butler's (2009) research on attachment bonds and pornography use among intimate, heterosexual married couples, in which males viewed pornography, suggested an overall sense of mistrust and change in attachment. Specifically, wives felt mistrust across established relationships (i.e. relationships with parents, siblings, friends) after finding out that their husbands viewed pornography. Furthermore, a change was found in wives' attachment style (interactions style used to bond with others) with her husband and decreased trust in their husband. Moreover, Zitzman and Butler (2009) suggest that pornography use changes secure attachment bonds due to the nature of pornography. Feeling secure

and trusting of your partner in a relationship are the main features of securely attached couples: hidden pornography use may be threatening to a relationship because it involves an extra-dyadic sexual experience.

Researchers have examined if watching pornography is associated with increases in extra-dyadic sexual behaviors and, therefore, increases the chances of harm done to a current romantic relationship (Delmonico, Griffin, & Carnes, 2001; Gwinn, Lambert, Fincham, & Maner, 2013; Manning, 2016; Mundolf, Allen, D'alessio, & Emmer-Sommers, 2007). Participants in monogamous relationships who reported watching pornography not only rated potential alternative mates higher in attractiveness and desirability than the control group that was not exposed to pornography, but also reported later in the study new extra-dyadic romantic behavior (kissing, sexual intimacy without intercourse, and sexual intercourse) (Gwinn et al., 2013). Participants who rated alternative mates more appealing after some time in being in a relationship were also more likely to watch pornography and engage in extra-dyadic romantic behaviors. Moreover, if they watched pornography they were more likely to rate potential alternative mates more attractive. Similarly, Gwinn, et al. (2013) clarified in this article that increased use of pornography is linked to participants reporting less emotional intimacy during sexual intercourse, changes in sexual behaviors, and emotional changes in the relationship, such as, feeling less love towards their romantic partner. As can be seen, there are some relational implications to watching pornography.

Honesty with a romantic partner regarding pornography seems can to be an indicator as to whether or not pornography use within a relationship will be viewed as harmful (Resch & Alderson, 2014). Heterosexual women whose partners were honest about their pornography use reported more relationship satisfaction and less distress than those whose partner was dishonest about their pornography use (Resch & Alderson, 2014). Within the same sample, there was no significant difference in distress scores between the women whose partner viewed pornography alone and the women who viewed pornography with their partner. Not trusting their partner affects relationship satisfaction.

### **Relationship Satisfaction and Pornography Use**

Research has indicated that those who viewed pornography reported a decline in the quality of their relationships with others (Gwinn et al., 2013). Similar research showed that as husbands' use of pornography increased, both husbands and wives reported a decline in satisfaction felt in their relationship, family relationships, work performance, and home atmosphere (Zitman & Butler, 2009). A study by Resch and Alderson (2014) found intimate couples honesty regarding pornography use to be a significant predictor of relationship satisfaction.

However, there are mixed results regarding how pornography use impacts relationship satisfaction. In one study, females who use pornography reported feeling significantly satisfied with their romantic relationship. The reason for significant satisfaction scores was not discussed by the researchers, but it should be noted a relatively small sample of women (2% of 300) watched pornography more than once

per week (Poulsen, Busby, & Galovan, 2013). Other research suggests that both men and women who view pornography report having less positive social interactions and lower relationship satisfaction, as compared to those who report not viewing pornography (Walsh, 1999).

With some research indicating pornography has an influence on relationship satisfaction, it is critical to define pornography. Researchers have had some difficulty reaching a consensus on how best to define pornography. For example, Carroll, et al. (2008) defined pornography as "media used or intended to increase sexual arousal" (p. 8). Another example, which was provided by Hald and Malamuth (2008), states the following definition for pornography:

Any kind of material aiming at creating or enhancing sexual feelings or thoughts in the recipient and, at the same time containing explicit exposure and/or descriptions of the genitals, and clear and explicit sexual acts, such as vaginal intercourse, anal intercourse, oral sex, masturbation, bondage, sadomasochism, rape, urine sex, animal sex, etc. (pp. 616)

Pornography being defined differently among researchers may be one of the possible reasons for inconsistency in pornography research results (Poulsen, Busby, & Galovan, 2013; Seen & Radtke, 1990). Generally, researchers agree that pornography is a concept used to describe sexually explicit material. Its content and the methods of accessing pornography have been used to define pornography. Pornography comes in a variety of mediums (e.g., magazines, films, internet) and typically display sexual acts or unclothed body parts. Some researchers asked

participants to write down a description of a pornographic scene that, to them, defined pornography (i.e., magazines, internet, videos) (Gwinn, et al. 2013). Pornographic images are designed to and are typically used to stimulate sexual arousal (Allen, 1991; Mundolf, Allen, D'Alessio, & Emmers-Sommer, 2007; Rosenberg & Kraus, 2014). For the purposes of the current study, pornography will be defined as "material designed to cause sexual arousal or sexual excitement" (Rosenberg & Kraus, 2014, p. 1014), as it is the definition used in the Sexual Behaviors and Pornography History Questionnaire, a measure that will be used in this study.

Historically, research on pornography has focused on its effects on people with severe psychological disorders or non-normative populations. Non-normative populations such as, people residing in mental health facilities, those who use pornography compulsively, and couples seeking counseling because their marriage is under duress due to pornography usage (Poulsen, Busby, & Galovan, 2013). Research with normative populations focused on the perception of pornography and found it was viewed as a form of deviant behavior, as it was believed to lead to a weaker integration into society (Stack, Wasserman, & Kern, 2004). According to Stack, Wasserman, and Kern (2004) those who view pornography reported weaker ties to their community, less engagement in religious and political institutions, and weaker marital relationships. Current research indicates that, although some people do develop a compulsion to consume pornography that can contribute to psychological distress, many people watch pornography without it impairing their ability to

maintain relationships and function in greater society (as referenced by Rosenberg & Kraus, 2014).

Mental health professionals are not the only ones interested in the impact pornography viewing has on a person's social integration, Wright (2013) investigated the use of pornography among men due to the increased concern from public interest groups, moralists, and public health researchers. Wright's (2013) study gathered data between 1973 and 2010 from individuals in the general population who consumed pornography. Results showed that pornography consumption was positively correlated with engaging in extramarital sex, having more sexual partners, and engaging in prostitution. Furthermore, Wright (2013) found an association between pornography consumption and positive attitudes towards teenage sex and adult premarital sex. Moreover, among both men and women, those who use pornography were more likely to have engaged in sexual behavior at an earlier age and have had more sexual partners than those who did not report the use of pornography (Poulsen et al., 2013; Walsh, 1999).

### **Gender Differences**

Researchers have explored gender differences in pornography consumption and found that a larger percentage of pornography consumers are males (Poulsen, Busby, & Galovan, 2013; Stack, Wasserman, & Kern, 2004). For example, in one sample of over 600 heterosexual couples, 73% of the males reported watching pornography more frequently than the females within the sample (Poulsen, Busby, & Galovan, 2013). Furthermore, within the same sample, it was found that these men,

on average, were three times more likely than women to watch pornography regularly (at least once a week).

Viewing pornography may have an effect on sexual arousal and emotional responses. Men reported being more sexually aroused by sexual stimuli, like pornography, than women (Laan & Both, 2008). Those who consumed pornography regularly reported having attachment-like (behavioral and emotional patterns) qualities to pornography (Rosenberg & Kraus, 2014). These researchers defined this kind of attachment to pornography as a persistent non-pathological interest in something participants valued. These researchers found that pornography viewing was positively correlated with participants not regularly seeking other non-sexual relationship activities as regularly, as compared to males who did not view pornography regularly. Lastly, participants reported a decrease in the interest they had in presenting themselves in positive ways to potential mates when there was an increase in pornography viewing. This is a concern for mental health professionals because quality of social integration has been shown to be a key indicator of an individual's well-being (Chopik & O'Brien, 2016).

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

Research exploring the relationship between adult attachment and pornography use has been sparse and the findings inconsistent, with most studies covered in the literature review focusing on the impact of pornography use on romantic relationships. For example, Zitzman, and Butler's (2009) research on attachment bonds and pornography use among intimate couples suggested an overall

sense of mistrust and change in attachment style, with those who were reportedly were securely attached having a change in their attachment style. Honesty regarding pornography use has been found to be a significant predictor of relationship satisfaction in intimate couples (Resch & Alderson, 2014). The stress produced from this threat may be severe enough that it negatively impacts the attachment bond (Manning, 2006; Olmstead, Negash, Pasley, & Ficham, 2013; Poulsen, Busby, & Galovan, 2013; Resch & Alderson, 2014; Zitman & Butler, 2009).

Research also suggests watching pornography is associated with increases in extra-dyadic sexual behaviors and is seen as a threat to the relationship, therefore, increasing the chances of harm done to a current romantic relationship and potentially, the attachment bond (Delmonico, Griffin, & Carnes, 2001; Gwin, Lambert, Fincham, & Maner, 2013; Manning, 2016; Mundolf, Allen, D'alessio, & Emmer-Sommers, 2007). The current research seeks to explore whether pornography use is related attachment style. I will also be exploring how relationship satisfaction is associated with pornography use.

The hypotheses of the present study are:

*Hypothesis 1.* Individuals who report watching pornography with their partner will report higher levels of relationship satisfaction than those who watch it alone.

*Hypothesis 2.* Individuals with a dismissive attachment style will be more likely to watch pornography alone as compared to secure, preoccupied, or fearful attachment styles.

*Hypothesis 3.* Individuals with a secure attachment style are less likely to use pornography than insecure individual.

## METHOD

### Participants

Adults ( $N = 171$ , 54% female, 46% males,  $M$  age = 35.37,  $SD = 10.19$  age range: 19-70 years) were recruited via Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). MTurk is an internet marketplace enabling researchers and businesses to collect data from those who subscribe as participant (i.e., "workers"). Inclusion criteria were that all participants must be over the age of 18 living in the United States of America. Participants received \$0.50 for participating in this study. There were an additional 25 responses collected, but these responses were removed from the data analysis due to either incomplete survey responses or participants dropping out of the study before completing it. Ninety-one responses were not utilized due to relationship status, the respondents who identified that they were single or in a non-serious relationship.

Participants were asked about their attachment style: 44% of participants identified as having secure attachment style, 28% identified as having fearful attachment style, 11% identified as having preoccupied attachment style, 18% identified as having dismissive attachment style.

When asked which race they identify with the most, 70% participants identified as Caucasian, 12% Asian, 9% Hispanic/Latino, 8% African American, one participant identified Native American, and another participant identified as Indian. When participants were asked which sexual orientation do they most identify with, 81% participants identified as heterosexual or straight, 6% gay, 6% lesbian, 6% bisexual, .6% asexual, and .6% demi sexual. Participants equaling 59% stated they

were married when asked their relationship status, and 41% dating, but serious (monogamous) relationship.

Through the Sexual Behaviors and Pornography History Questionnaire some participant characteristics were gathered regarding participants' sexual behaviors. The majority (79% of participants) responded "yes" when asked if they watched porn within the last 30 days; 21% participants responded no. When asked how often they watched pornography in a week 20% participants responded they watch pornography 0 times a week, 44% reporting 1 or 2 times a week, 18% 3 to 5 times a week, , and 18% 6+ times a week. When asked to identify the methods and participants were allowed to pick multiple means by which they watch porn, 85% participants responded to using the internet, 5% rented or purchased videos or DVDs, 43% utilized their phone, 8% used magazines or erotic books. Two participants stated other ways of gaining access to porn, such as, Roku, and my own work. 2% respondents reported they did not watch porn when asked the question what they used to watch pornography. Eighty-five percent of participants stated they watch pornography alone, 40% stated they watched pornography with a romantic partner, 3% watch pornography with a friend(s); .6% stated they watch pornography with a stranger; 1% watch pornography while on an online-date; 1% watch pornography with via webcam; and 1% of respondents stated they did not watch pornography at all.

A small portion of participants (1.2 % of participants) reported having received professional help, (i.e. seen a counselor, therapist, psychiatrist) for

pornography use. One respondent reported finding professional treatment for their pornography use helpful; one found professional treatment less helpful than helpful; and one participant found professional treatment more helpful than unhelpful. Nine participants stated they were interested in receiving help for their pornography use. Five participants stated their romantic partner (e.g., boyfriend/girlfriend, husband/wife, partner) advised them to receive professional help for their pornography use, and 4 participants were advised by a friend to seek professional help.

In total 96% of participants stated they were currently sexually active, 4% of participants stated they were not sexually active. The average number of sexual partners participants reported to have in their lifetime was  $M = 10.3$ . When asked if they have had two to three sexual partners in their lifetime 22%, 8% stated they have had over 30 sexual partners in their lifetime. The average age reported for the age of onset of pornography use was 32.8 years old ( $SD = 4.91$ ).

## **Materials**

### **Sexual Behaviors and Pornography History Questionnaire (SBPH-Q).**

The SBPH-Q was used to measure participants' pornography use (see Appendix B). The SBPH-Q was developed by Rosenberg and Kraus (2014) to assess common behaviors associated with pornography use and past sexual experiences. The SBPH-Q originally contained 34 items but only included 22 of them related to aspects of pornography use, including; frequency, duration of use, type of pornography, viewing pornography alone or with others, if treatment was sought, and views on treatment.

Examples of pornography use questions include; “*Have you watched porn in the last 30 days?*,” “*Please select all the methods you use to watch porn,*” and “*How old were you when you first became sexually aroused at the sight of porn?*” Participants were asked to respond in a variety of ways. Specifically, a Likert style response ranging from 0 (*Not at all*) to 7 (*Very Helpful*), dichotomous responses (*Yes or No*), categorical responses (*3 to 5 times, 6 to 10 times*), and multiple choice (*Select all that apply*).

This measure was developed and used with undergraduate males in attempt to establish a measure that can be used in a clinical setting to assess for clinically significant aspects of pornography use, initially used with a normative population. Sexual experiences are focused on data related to frequency and types of current and past sexual encounters (i.e., number of partners, sexually active status, frequency of intercourse with a given partner). No scoring guide is given by the authors of the SBPH-Q, it was developed as a questionnaire and not intended to be scored. I will run a chi square and a Fisher exact test using items in the SBPH, specifically, the items that ask participants how frequently they watch pornography and with whom they watch pornography with.

**The Relationships Questionnaire (RQ).** Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) revised Hazan and Shaver’s (1987) Three Category Measure by editing the descriptions of the three attachment styles (secure, anxious-ambivalent, avoidant) and adding a fourth attachment style, dismissing-avoidant, and naming the new measure the Relationship Questionnaire (See Appendix C). The RQ is a 4-item measure

designed to measure an adult's attachment style. The RQ asks participants to pick the descriptions that most closely describes them. Then participants are asked to rate how much each description describes them using a Likert style response scale, ranging from 1 (*Disagree Strongly*) to 7 (*Agree Strongly*). An example of one relationship description is; "*I am comfortable without close emotional relationships. It is very important to me to feel independent and self-sufficient, and I prefer not to depend on others or have others depend on me.*"

Scoring the measure consisted of finding which relationship style received the highest score. If two relationship styles are chosen equally, the questionnaire asks participants which one of the four relationship styles they identify with the most, thus, identifying the individual's attachment style. The questions asking participants which one of the four relationship styles they identify with the most was omitted in this study. When participants rated two or more styles equally; these responses were dropped from the analysis.

The validity of the measure is based on previous research validating the attachment dimensions (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). The RQ was initially developed with undergraduate students both male and female whom were in college long enough to form relationships and friendship couples to compare attachment scores. Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) developed the measure intended to be used with the general population.

**Investment Model Scale (IMS).** The IMS was developed by Rusbult, Martz, and Agnew (1998) to assess commitment level and dependence in romantic

relationships; dependence is measured by three subscales (satisfaction level, quality of alternatives, and investment size; see Appendix D). The Satisfaction Level Facet and Global Items from the IMS were used in the current study to measure couple satisfaction. The satisfaction subscale measured aspects of satisfaction such as; need for intimacy, need for companionship, and need for security. Participants were asked to respond to the first question using a Likert style response scale, ranging from 1 (*Don't Agree at All*) to 4 (*Agree Completely*). The first question of the facet items give examples of each construct in satisfaction in attempt to prepare participants for the global items. The following five questions are the global items and ask participants about satisfaction in their current relationship using Likert style responses scale, ranging from 0 (*Do Not Agree At All*) to 8 (*Agree Completely*). The average score of these responses is used to determine participants score for relationship satisfaction. The facet items are not utilized in the final analysis.

**Demographic Questionnaire.** A Demographic Questionnaire (see Appendix E) was created for the present study to gather information about each participant's age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, educational level, income, religious affiliation, and current relationship status.

### **Design**

The current study is a quasi-experimental study. The relationship between adult attachment style and pornography viewing behaviors was analyzed. Participants were asked about their attachment style (i.e. secure, preoccupied, fearful, or dismissing-avoidant). Participants were also asked about their pornography use.

Pornography was first defined to participants as material designed to cause sexual arousal or sexual excitement and later asked to identify their frequency of its use. Pornography was defined as the number of times participants watched pornography on an average week, with participants having the following options; 0, 1 to 2 times, 3 to 5 times, and 6 are more times. Participants were also asked about whom they watched pornography with (i.e. alone, alone and with a partner, with a partner). The relationship between relationship satisfaction and pornography use was also analyzed. Relationship satisfaction was measured based on whether participants felt that their partner fulfills their needs for intimacy, companionship, sexual needs, security, and emotional involvement. A univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine significant differences between relationship satisfaction and between watching pornography alone or with their partner or those who do both. A Fisher exact test was used to determine differences in pornography use among attachment styles. A chi square of independence was used to determine differences in the frequency of use of pornography between securely attached individuals and insecurely attached individuals.

### **Procedure**

All participants were presented with an informed consent upon accessing the survey link through Mturk. The informed consent listed possible risk and benefits in participating in this study, and it also informed participants that they could drop out of the study at any time. It was made clear in the informed consent that participants in the study would be asked about how they perceive themselves in relationships, as

well as questions about their pornography use and their sexual behaviors. Those participants that gave permission to proceed with the study were giving permission to access the study. Those who did decline to give consent were forwarded to debriefing form. Debriefing form informed participants on how to access mental health services if any harm was resulted from this study and were also given information regarding how to access mental health services for pornography use if needed. All material utilized for this study were reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at Stanislaus State University, Stanislaus. Certain questions were generated to have a forced response before participants could move on to the next item of the study. The forced questions included; all the items of the RQ, all the items on the IMS, and the relationship status question of the demographic questionnaire.

This study was posted on MTurk and a sample of American participants was recruited. Participants were offered \$0.50 for participating in the current study, the monetary credit was deposited into participants Amazon.com accounts, which allows them to purchase items on Amazon.com Marketplace for purchases. Those who chose to participate were re-directed to Qualtrics. Qualtrics presented all materials in the following order: informed consent, Sexual Behaviors and Pornography History Questionnaire, The Relationship Questionnaire (RQ), Satisfaction Level Facet and Global Items (IMS), Demographics Questionnaire, and Debriefing Form. Even if participants withdrew from the study, they received entitlements that were promised to

them in exchange for their participation, such as money credited to their MTurk account.

## RESULTS

To test the hypothesis that individuals who watch pornography with their partner and alone would be more likely to feel satisfied in their relationship than people who reported watching pornography *just* alone or *just* with their partner, a univariate analysis of variance was performed. Results revealed a significant difference in relationship satisfaction between those who watched it alone ( $M = 6.80$ ,  $SD = 0.19$ ), those who watched pornography with a romantic partner ( $M = 6.64$ ,  $SD = .43$ ), and those who watched with a romantic partner and alone ( $M = 7.604$ ,  $SD = .27$ ),  $F(2,162) = 3.455$ ,  $p = .035$ ). A Tukey's HSD post-hoc analysis revealed a significant difference ( $p = .04$ ) between those who watched pornography alone and with a partner group and the group who reported watching pornography just alone.

To test the hypothesis that individuals with a dismissive attachment style, as compared to individuals with secure, preoccupied or fearful attachment styles, would be more likely to watch pornography alone, a Fisher exact test was conducted. The test revealed a non-significant effect,  $\chi^2(2, N = 171) = 4.76$ ,  $p = .167$ . In other words, participants' attachment style did not predict whether or not they were likely to watch pornography alone.

To test the hypothesis that individuals with a secure attachment style would be less likely to use porn than insecure individuals, a chi-square test of independence was performed. The relation between these variables was not significant,  $\chi^2(2, N =$

152) = .332,  $p = .57$ . Contrary to expectations, securely attached participants were not less likely to use pornography than insecurely attached individuals.

## DISCUSSION

Results indicated that there was a significant difference between relationship satisfaction in individuals who watched pornography alone and with a partner, than individual who watched pornography with a partner or alone. Individuals who watched pornography with a partner and alone had the highest relationship satisfaction, perhaps because pornography use is not seen as a deviant behavior or is being discussed openly. These finding are consistent with literature regarding honesty with pornography in a relationship leading to be a significant predictor of relationship satisfaction in intimate couples (Resch & Alderson, 2014). Another aspect of relationship satisfaction is that both men and women who view pornography report having less positive social interactions and less satisfaction in their relationships as compared to those who report not viewing pornography (Walsh, 1999), this research resulted from the inference that pornography was viewed alone making this research difficult to apply within the context of a relationship.

Results indicated that there were no significant relationships between pornography use alone and attachment style. Gwinn, et al. (2013) found an increased use of pornography is linked to participants reporting less emotional intimacy during sexual intercourse, changes in sexual behaviors, and emotional changes in the relationship, such as, feeling less love towards their romantic partner, aspects of relationship styles. Feeling secure and trusting of your partner in a relationship are the main features of securely attached couples: hidden pornography use may be

threatening to a relationship because it involves an extra-dyadic sexual experience, and may be related to attachment style (Delmonico, Griffin, & Carnes, 2001; Gwin, Lambert, Fincham, & Maner, 2013; Manning, 2016; Mundolf, Allen, D'alessio, & Emmer-Sommers, 2007).

Lastly, results indicated that there was not significant relationship between the frequency of pornography use alone in securely or insecurely attached individuals. Zitzman, and Butler's (2009) research on attachment bonds and pornography use among intimate couples suggested an overall sense of mistrust and change in attachment style, with those who were reportedly initially securely attached becoming insecurely attached after finding out partner uses pornography. One can indirectly infer from this research that those who are insecure watch pornography just as much as securely attached individuals. This leave the question about the baseline of pornography viewing in individuals who entered a relationship with an already insecure attachment style and those whose attachment style has changed to insecure due to changes in attachment resulting from their partners pornography or extradyadic behaviors.

### **Limitations**

One of the limitations to this study was that the measure used for pornography use the SBPH-Q. This measure was developed for and used with undergraduate males in attempt to establish a measure that can be used in a clinical setting. This may not have been appropriate for a normative population. For example, the measure asks about seeking treatment for pornography use, which implies deviant behavior.

Another limitation may be that questions about pornography use and sexual behaviors may have led some participants to not respond honestly because of the nature of the topic. It may have been one of the reasons 25 participants did not complete the survey. Additionally, the name of the study was visible to the MTurk workers and made it clear that the study would ask participants about their sexual behaviors; this may have prevented some people from participating because of concerns about being asked questions about their sexual behaviors.

Additionally, the questions measuring the frequency of pornography use were assessed using a categorical question that resulted in this researcher combining two categories (6 to 10 times and 11+) into one category to determine statistical variations between pornography use and attachment style. Frequencies between the different categories in the original data revealed the majority of respondents reported to have watched pornography 1 or 2 times a week, or 3 to 5 times a week. This limited statistical analyses because specific details were lost.

Other measurement limitations include that this researcher omitted a question necessary to score the Relationship Questionnaire. Scoring the measure consisted of finding which relationship style received the highest score. If two relationship styles are chosen equally, the questionnaire asks participants which one of the four relationship styles they identify with the most, thus, identifying the individual's attachment style. The question asking participants which one of the four relationship styles they identify with the most was omitted in this study. When participants rated two or more styles equally; these responses were dropped from the analysis.

Finally, the majority (78%) of participants were heterosexual, making these results more applicable to the heterosexual population than homosexual or bisexual population. Participant characteristics may be representative of the general population, but not representative of the homosexual or bisexual populations, limiting the generalizability of the results.

### **Clinical Implications and Future Research**

For couples reporting pornography use and decreased relationship satisfaction pornography use may become focal point in treatment. Past research is concurrent with the results presented in this study, a couple's openness regarding their pornography use is associated with relationship satisfaction. When an individual in an intimate relationship hides the pornography use it changes the relationship dynamics and it may lead to decrease relationship satisfaction, higher ratings in alternative mates, extra dyadic behaviors, and a general mistrust in others. Future research may want to focus aspects of pornography use in healthy relationships, aspects such as the content, frequency, and how often they watch it alone versus with their partner.

Lastly, future research may want to investigate cultural differences in pornography use and romantic relationship. If investigating cultural differences one can analyze the participants values, beliefs, and social structure that may lead individuals to perceive pornography in variations of acceptable versus deviant behavior and in term how it impacts intimate relationships. It could be that in some cultures pornography use when an individual has a declared single relationship status

is acceptable but is seen as a deviant behavior within an intimate relationship, something else future research may want to investigate further to help bring clarity as to how pornography use may be clinically significant among various cultures and populations.

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## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A  
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

1. Summary: This research study will explore your relationship style and your sexual behaviors. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to answer survey questions that ask about how you perceive yourself in relationships, as well as questions about your pornography use and your sexual behaviors.
2. Your right to withdraw/discontinue: You are free to discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. You may also skip any survey questions that make you feel uncomfortable. Even if you withdraw from the study, you will receive any entitlements that have been promised to you in exchange for your participation, such as an experimental credit in MTurk.
3. Benefits: Participation in this research study does not guarantee any benefits to you. However, possible benefits include the fact that you may learn something about how research studies are conducted and you may learn something about this area of research (i.e., relationship styles and sexual behaviors).
4. Additional information: You will be given additional information about the study after your participation is complete.
5. Time commitment: If you agree to participate in the study, it may take up to 30 minutes to complete the survey.
6. Guarantee of Confidentiality: All data from this study will be kept from inappropriate disclosure and will be accessible only to the researchers and their faculty advisor. Data collected online will be stored on a password-protected website

and de-identified for analyses. Data printed on paper will be kept in a locked file cabinet, separate from consent forms, and all materials will be destroyed after 3 years. The researchers are not interested in anyone's individual responses, only the average responses of everyone in the study.

7. Risks: The present research is designed to reduce the possibility of any negative experiences as a result of participation. Risks to participants are kept to a minimum. However, if your participation in this study causes you any concerns, anxiety, or distress, please call 1-877-726-4727 to locate treatment services in your area and get general mental health information, or call Stanislaus County Mental Health Services at [www. Stanislausmhsa.com](http://www.Stanislausmhsa.com), 209-525-6247.

8. Researcher Contact Information: This research study is being conducted by Veronica M. Watson, psychology graduate student. The faculty supervisor is Dr. AnaMarie Guichard, Associate Professor, Department of Psychology and Child Development, California State University, Stanislaus. If you have questions or concerns about your participation in this study, you may contact the researcher through Dr. Guichard at (209) 667-3096.

9. Results of the Study: You may obtain information about the outcome of the study at the end of the year by contacting Dr. Guichard. You may also learn more about the results of the study retrieving Veronica M. Watson's thesis once published through the California State University, Stanislaus library at 1111 University Circle, Turlock, CA 95382.

10. Psychology Institutional Review Board Contact Information: If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of the Psychology Institutional Review Board of California State University Stanislaus, Dr. Kelly Cotter, at [kcotter@csustan.edu](mailto:kcotter@csustan.edu) or (209)513-9432.

11. Personal Copy of Consent Form: You may print (You will be provided with) a blank, unsigned copy of this consent form at the beginning of the study.

12. Verification of Adult Age: By clicking “I Agree” below (By signing below), you attest that you are 18 years old or older.

13. Verification of Informed Consent: By clicking “I Agree” below you are indicating that you have freely consented to participate in this research study.

## APPENDIX B

## SEXUAL BEHAVIORS AND PORNOGRAPHY HISTORY QUESTIONNAIRE

Directions: For the purposes of this study, pornography or porn (also known as sexually explicit material) is defined as material designed to cause sexual arousal or sexual excitement. Such materials generally show images of nudity or different types of sexual acts (e.g., vaginal sex, anal sex, oral sex, masturbation, group sex, bondage, etc).

1. Have you watched porn in the last 30 days?

Yes

No

2. In a typical or average week, approximately HOW MANY TIMES do you view porn?

0

1 or 2 times

3 to 5 times

6 to 10 times

11 +

3. Please select all the methods you use to watch porn.

Internet (e.g., websites, search engines, etc.)

Rented or purchased videos or DVDS?

Smart phone (e.g., iPhone, Blackberry, Droid, etc.)

Magazines or erotic books

Other \_\_\_\_\_

4. Are you with anyone when you watch porn? Select all that apply.

Alone

With a romantic partner (e.g., boyfriend/girlfriend, husband/wife, partner)

Friend(s)

Stranger(s)

Online date (e.g., craigslist, dating site, etc)

Person(s) via online webcam

Other \_\_\_\_\_

5. How old were you when you first saw porn? \_\_\_\_\_

6. How old were you when you first saw porn? \_\_\_\_\_

7. Have you ever received professional help for your porn use (i.e., seen a counselor, therapist, psychologist, etc.)?

Yes (forwarded to question 7a) OR No

7a. If yes, how helpful was the professional treatment you received?

0      1      2      3      4      5      6

Not At All

Very Helpful

Helpful

8. Would you like to get professional help for your porn use but have not yet done so?

Yes OR No

9. Has anyone ever recommended that you seek professional help because of your porn use? Yes OR No (forwarded to question 11)

10. Who was it?

Romantic partner (e.g., boyfriend/girlfriend, husband/wife, partner)

Friend(s)

Family member (s) (e.g., parents, siblings, etc.)

Religious or spiritual advisor (pastor, minister, priest, etc)

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### Sexual Behaviors

Directions: Please respond honestly to the following questions:

11. Are you currently sexually active?

Yes

No

12. During your entire life, with how many partners have you had sexual intercourse.

0      1      2-3      4-6      7-10      11-15      16-20      21-29

30+

13. With how many partners have you had sexual intercourse within the past year.

0      1      2-3      4-6      7-10      11-15      16-20      21-29

30+

14. With how many partners have you had sexual intercourse on one and only one occasion?

0      1      2-3      4-6      7-10      11-15      16-20      21-29

30+

## APPENDIX C

## THE RELATIONSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE

**Scale:**

Following are four general relationship styles that people often report. Place a checkmark next to the letter corresponding to the style that best describes you or is closest to the way you are.

\_\_\_ A. It is easy for me to become emotionally close to others. I am comfortable depending on them and having them depend on me. I don't worry about being alone or having others not accept me.

\_\_\_ B. I am uncomfortable getting close to others. I want emotionally close relationships, but I find it difficult to trust others completely, or to depend on them. I worry that I will be hurt if I allow myself to become too close to others.

\_\_\_ C. I want to be completely emotionally intimate with others, but I often find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I am uncomfortable being without close relationships, but I sometimes worry that others don't value me as much as I value them.

\_\_\_ D. I am comfortable without close emotional relationships. It is very important to me to feel independent and self-sufficient, and I prefer not to depend on others or have others depend on me.

*Now please rate each of the relationship styles above to indicate how well or poorly each description corresponds to your general relationship style.*



0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Do Not				Agree				Agree
Agree				Somewhat				Completely
At All								

## APPENDIX D

## SATISFACTION LEVEL FACET AND GLOBAL ITEMS

## Satisfaction Level Facet and Global Items

1. Please indicate the degree to which you agree with each of the following

statement regarding your current relationship (pick an answer for each item).

- |  |                    |                |                  |                  |
|--|--------------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|
| (a) My partner fulfills my needs for intimacy  | Don't Agree At All | Agree Slightly | Agree Moderately | Agree Completely |
| (b) My partner fulfills my needs for companionship (doing things together, enjoying each other's company, etc.)                      | Don't Agree At All | Agree Slightly | Agree Moderately | Agree Completely |
| (c) My partner fulfills my sexual needs (holding hands, kissing, etc.)   | Don't Agree At All | Agree Slightly | Agree Moderately | Agree Completely |
| (d) My partner fulfills my needs for security (feeling trusting, comfortable in a stable relationship, etc.)                         | Don't Agree At All | Agree Slightly | Agree Moderately | Agree Completely |
| (e) My partner fulfills my needs for emotional involvement feeling emotionally attached, feeling good when another feels good, etc.) | Don't Agree At All | Agree Slightly | Agree Moderately | Agree Completely |

2. I feel satisfied with our relationship (please pick a number).

- |                     |   |   |   |                |   |   |   |                  |
|---------------------|---|---|---|----------------|---|---|---|------------------|
| 0                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4              | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8                |
| Do Not Agree At All |   |   |   | Agree Somewhat |   |   |   | Agree Completely |

3. My relationship is much better than others' relationships.

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

	Do Not Agree At All			Agree Somewhat			Agree Completely		
4. My relationship is close to ideal.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

APPENDIX E  
DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What is your age (years)?

2. What gender do you identify with?

Male

Female

Other

3. Which sexual orientation do you most identify with?

4. What is your relationship status?

Single

In a dating, but not serious relationship (non-monogamous)

In a dating, but serious relationship (monogamous)

Married

Separated/divorced/widowed

2. which ethnicity do you most identify with?

Hispanic/Latino

Caucasian

African American

Native American

Asian

Indian

## APPENDIX F

### DEBRIEFING SHEET

Thank you for participating in this study! We are interested in understanding the relationship between pornography use and attachment style in intimate romantic relationships. Research exploring the relationship between adult attachment and pornography use has been sparse and the findings inconsistent. By attachment, we mean how a person views themselves as acceptable to love and support or not, and if that same person views others as trustworthy and available versus unrealistic and rejecting; with their behaviors matching these beliefs. Sometimes attachment style is categorized in different categories (i.e. secure, preoccupied, avoidance, fearful, dismissing), which is the case for this study. We defined pornography or porn (also known as sexually explicit material) as; material designed to cause sexual arousal or sexual excitement. Such materials generally show images of nudity or different types of sexual acts (e.g., vaginal sex, anal sex, oral sex, masturbation, group sex, bondage, etc. Aspects of pornography use we are looking at are frequency, duration, if viewing pornography alone or with others, if treatment was sought, and views on treatment. Research on attachment bonds and pornography use among intimate couples suggested an overall sense of mistrust and change in attachment. Researcher also suggests watching pornography is associated with increases in extra-dyadic sexual behaviors and, therefore, increases the chances of harm done to a current romantic relationship and the attachment bond. In addition, there is mixed research on the use

of pornography and how it is associated with relationship satisfaction. Thus, we have included questions regarding relationship satisfaction. We predict that attachment style may be used as a predictor to pornography use.

All the information we collected in this study will be kept safe from inappropriate disclosure, and there will be no way of identifying your responses in the data archive. We are not interested in anyone's individual responses; rather, we want to look at the general patterns that emerge when all of the participants' responses are put together. We ask that you do not discuss the nature of the study with others who may later participate in it, as this could affect the validity of our research conclusions.

If you have any questions about the study or would like to learn about the results of the study, you may contact me, Veronica M. Watson, through my research supervisor, Dr. AnaMarie Guichard, at (209) 667-3096. You may also learn more about the results of the study retrieving Veronica M. Watson's thesis once published through the California State University, Stanislaus library at 1111 University Circle, Turlock, CA 95382. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of the Psychology Institutional Review Board of California State University Stanislaus, Dr. Kelly Cotter, at [kcotter@csustan.edu](mailto:kcotter@csustan.edu) or (209) 513-9432. If participation in the study caused you any concern, anxiety, or distress, please call 1-877-726-4727 to locate treatment services in your area and get general mental health information or contact Stanislaus County Mental Health Services at [www.stanislausmhsa.com](http://www.stanislausmhsa.com), 209-525-6247. If you seeking support for pornography use, you can find a meeting and more information by visiting [www.saa-recovery.org](http://www.saa-recovery.org).

If you would like to learn more about this research topic, we suggest the following references:

Bartholomew, K., & Horowitz, L. M. (1991). Attachment styles among young adults:

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Rusbult, C. E., Martz, J. M., & Agnew, C. R. (1998). The investment model scale:

Measuring commitment level, satisfaction level, quality of alternatives, and investment size. *Personal Relationships*, 5(4), 357-391. doi:10.1111/j.1475-6811.1998.tb00177.x

Rosenberg, H., & Kraus, S. (2014). The relationship of “passionate attachment” for pornography with sexual compulsivity, frequency of use, and craving for pornography. *Addictive behaviors*, 39(5), 1012-1017.