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The Role of Pornography Consumption in Intimate Partner Aggression/Violence in Emerging Adult Couples: A Prospective Longitudinal Study

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Title of Research Project: The Role of Pornography Consumption in Intimate Partner Aggression/Violence in Emerging Adult Couples: A Prospective Longitudinal Study

Background and Objective: Pornography consumption (PC) has been associated with negative outcomes, including problems in romantic relationships, such as low self-esteem and decreased sexual arousal (e.g., Daneback, Traeen, & Mansson, 2009), and aggression in men (e.g., Vega & Malamuth, 2007). This study examined the link between PC and intimate partner aggression/violence (IPAV) perpetration and victimization in emerging adult heterosexual couple dyads using the actor-partner interdependence model (APIM; Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006) across a four-month span. The objectives of this study were to: (1) examine the association between PC and IPAV at the couple-level, (2) test the moderating effects of coercive control (CC) and a composite of several behavioural and experiential risk factors for aggression (e.g., delinquency, history of aggression) on the relation between PC and IPAV, (3) assess the mediating effects of benevolent and hostile sexism on the relation between PC the reliability, and (4) to evaluate if PC predicts IPAV four months later.

Methods: A sample of 284 couples in heterosexual romantic relationships ($N = 568$) completed an online survey at baseline and 148 couples ($N = 296$) completed it at the 4-month follow-up. The survey included measures of demographic information, IPAV, PC, CC, benevolent and hostile sexism, history of aggression, delinquency, as well as other potential risk factors and covariates.

Results: Independent t-tests at baseline indicated that men consumed more minutes of pornography per week than women (87.18 vs. 29.33), but there were no significant differences in men and women's level of IPAV perpetration and victimization. Negative binomial models of the baseline data showed that respondents who reported higher levels of PC were at greater risk of IPV perpetration and that higher levels of socially desirable responding were associated with lower reported rates of IPAV perpetration and victimization. When CC was added to the model to test for moderating effects, results indicated that higher levels of respondent PC, partner CC perpetration, or respondent/partner CC victimization each predicted greater risk of respondent IPV perpetration and higher respondent and partner CC perpetration and victimization each predicted higher respondent IPAV victimization. Men's risk of perpetrating IPAV increased as their perpetration of CC increased, but women's risk of IPAV perpetration decreased in the context of higher CC perpetration. There was a significant actor by partner interaction for both CC perpetration and victimization, such that respondent CC perpetration or victimization and respondent IPAV perpetration and victimization were higher in the context of low levels of partner CC perpetration or victimization whereas higher levels of partner CC perpetration or victimization were associated with lower levels of both respondent IPAV perpetration and victimization at high levels of respondent CC perpetration or victimization. Both partner CC perpetration and victimization moderated the relation between partner PC and respondent IPV perpetration, such that higher partner CC perpetration or victimization predicted higher respondent IPV perpetration when partner PC was low but high partner CC perpetration or victimization was associated with lower respondent IPAV perpetration in the context of high partner PC. Both respondent CC perpetration and partner CC victimization moderated the association between respondent PC and IPAV victimization, with respondents with higher levels of PC having greater risk of IPAV victimization in the context of either low levels of respondent CC perpetration or partner CC victimization, but respondent PC and IPAV victimization were negatively related at higher levels of respondent CC perpetration and partner CC victimization. Composite aggression was also tested as a moderator, and results indicated that higher levels of respondent and partner composite aggression predicted greater risk of respondent IPAV

perpetration and victimization. Women reported higher levels of IPAV perpetration and victimization in the context of high partner composite aggression than men. There was a significant actor by partner interaction for composite aggression, such that respondent composite aggression and both respondent IPAV perpetration and victimization were higher in the context of low levels of partner composite aggression whereas higher levels of partner composite aggression were associated with lower levels of respondent IPAV perpetration and victimization at high levels of respondent composite aggression. Partner composite aggression moderated the relation between respondents' PC and IPAV victimization, such that high levels of respondent PC predicting lower risk of respondent IPAV victimization in the context of lower partner composite aggression but higher respondent PC predicted higher risk of respondent IPAV victimization when partner composite aggression is high. Mediation analyses were done with PC as the independent variable, IPAV perpetration and victimization as dependent variables, and hostile and benevolent sexism as the potential mediating variables, but results did not show any statistically significant mediations. Respondents' PC at baseline did not predict their levels of IPAV perpetration or victimization at the 4 month follow-up when controlling for their baseline levels of IPAV.

Conclusion: Together, findings offer evidence that PC does not independently predict the risk of IPAV, but suggests that other variables are important to consider in the association between PC and IPAV as evidenced by the moderating effects of CC and composite aggression on this relation.