

Between Sexual Objectification and Sexual Agency: the Most Watched Porn Videos in the Czech Republic¹

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Abstract

In alignment with the feminist “sex wars”, sexual objectification and sexual agency are considered to be opposites that exclude each other. I used the sexual script theory to perform a qualitative content analysis of the five most-watched heterosexual porn videos in the Czech Republic on Pornhub. The study shows that although sexual objectification and agency are opposite types of behavior, they do not exclude each other; they intertwine. The levels of objectification and agency depend on the roles portrayed by the actors, but even though the women in the analyzed videos are cast in more sexually experienced roles, which grants them more sexual agency, they are still more objectified than the men.

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To my knowledge, this is the first study to measure how the levels of sexual objectification and sexual agency vary with the different genders of the actors.

Keywords: sexual objectification, sexual agency, sexual scripts.

1. Introduction

Until recently, it has generally been expected that people in pornographic videos are either sexually objectified or sexually agentic. On the one hand, radical feminism, with its anti-pornographic attitude, calls for censorship of pornography that harms and objectifies women; on the other hand, individualistic feminism claims that pornography is empowering and liberating, granting women sexual agency (Dworkin 1983; MacKinnon and Dworkin 1998; McElroy 1997; Segal 2016). As the theories themselves are exclusive of each other, it could be expected that the concepts would also be. In their recent media research, Fritz and Paul (2017) argue that people in pornography can be sexual agents and still be sexually objectified. They illustrate their argument with the case of the pornographic short film *Switched*, from the film *Rough Sex* directed by Tristan Taormino (2009), in which the actors Sasha Grey and Danny Wylde establish consent on sexual practices and later are involved in a scene in which Wylde spits on Grey, slaps her, and chokes her.

It is a scene that demonstrates sexual objectification of Grey, where her body is used as an object for male pleasure. It is also a scene where Grey touches herself for her own pleasure, directs Wylde, and appears to orgasm (Fritz and Paul 2017).

According to the authors, this scene portrays sexual objectification, but also sexual agency: it shows a woman who is sexually empowered and decides for herself what and how she wants, in order to feel pleasure.

The notion persists that pornography has not been thoroughly researched (Shim *et al.* 2015; Vannier *et al.* 2013; Fritz and Paul 2017), even though many aspects of pornography have been investigated. Brosius *et al.* (1993) researched the contents of pornography

videocassettes released between 1979 and 1988, and Gorman *et al.* (2010) explored the contents of free online pornographic videos. Research has also investigated the themes in pornography that lead to female degradation (Cowan and Dunn 1994) and pornography's effect on men and their sexual scripts (Sun *et al.* 2016). It has been found that the higher the male consumption of pornography, the more the men want to try depicted sexual practices with their partners (*Ibidem*). Pornography has also been inspected in terms of sexual objectification and sexual agency: McKee (2005) inquired into the 50 most popular Australian pornographic videocassettes and Dvds, and found that women in pornography achieve fewer orgasms than men, but they are also less objectified than men. According to McKee, women in pornography return the objectifying gaze to the viewer by looking into the camera, while men are usually depicted as objects that do not interact with the camera. Seabrook *et al.* (2017) investigated sexual scripts in television series and discovered that most of the heterosexual scenarios are gender-traditional, depicting the female as sexually passive, giving preference to the needs of others. The widespread acceptance of such sexual scenarios leads to the suppression of female sexual agency. Vannier, Currie, and O'Sullivan (2013) compared "mother I would like to fuck" (Milf) pornography and teen pornography and found that Milf pornography depicts women with greater sexual agency and with greater overall control over the sexual situation. Fritz and Paul (2017) investigated the proportions of sexual objectification and sexual agency in mainstream and feminist pornography. They found that women are more sexually objectified in mainstream pornography; in non-heterosexual feminist pornography, they have greater sexual agency.

This paper begins with an overview of the anti-pornography and pro-pornography feminist discourse, followed by a discussion of sexual objectification, sexual agency, and sexual scripts. I utilized the sexual script theory (Simon and Gagnon 1973; Simon and Gagnon 1986; Gagnon and Simon 2005) to conduct a qualitative content analysis of the five most-watched porn videos in the Czech Republic on the most visited pornographic website in Czechia – Pornhub.com. In the analysis, I focus on the levels of sexual objectification and sexual agency of men and women in five movie clips. The aim of the analysis is to show that although sexual objectification and sexual agency are considered to

be opposites, their conceptual definition is not unequivocal, and during a sexual act in pornography they may in fact intertwine.

2. Feminist “sex wars”

Since the late 1970s, the subject of pornography has divided feminists into two opposing positions. Some authors view the division as a war without an end (Segal 1998). The 1980s has been identified as the time of the feminist “sex wars” (Lišková 2004; Corsianos 2007). The “fight” mostly took place between the group Women Against Pornography, formed by anti-pornography feminists seeking to censor pornography, and the group Feminist Anti-Censorship Task-Force, which consisted of feminists who supported pornography (Kimmel 1991). The main thesis of the anti-pornographic feminist discourse, in which the most known authors are Andrea Dworkin, Catharine MacKinnon, Susan Griffin, Robyn Morgan, Sheila Jeffreys, Robert Jensen, and Gail Dines, is that pornography is not a representation, reflection, or authorial expression of sex, but a sexual reality (Segal 1998; Lišková 2004; Schussler 2012). According to MacKinnon, that reality includes «the dehumanization of women who are used as a mere sexual object, by coercing them to endure repeated rapes, humiliation, beatings [...]» (MacKinnon 1996 in Schussler 2012, 68). It is a reality in which «the woman is nothing but a penetrable object which produces pleasure to the Phallic Instance (Man)» (*Ibidem*). Another author claims that there are indicators of a relationship between pornography and violence against women in society everywhere that women in pornography are objectified and harmed (MacRae 2003). For these reasons, anti-pornography advocates strive for a legislative ban on pornography. Through such a ban, they want to free women from the slavery and degradation they are subjected to by pornography (Schussler 2012). They criticize porn consumption by men and women as well: it is expected that «women will faithfully follow [the anti-pornography movement]. Such blind devotion would be in stern opposition to strengthening female sexual agency» claims Lišková (2009, 153). Anti-pornography advocates view the fact that some women are against the censorship of pornography as the ultimate victory of patriarchal power (Easton 2005). As Lišková (2004) and Lee (2013) argue, the

anti-pornography movement sees pornography as violent and coercive, but anti-pornography advocates fail to acknowledge that sexual activities in pornography are performed consensually. These contradictions reveal the perception of male sexuality as active, immoral, and aggressive, while female sexuality is perceived as passive and virtuous – far from the athletic and adventurous performances in pornography that Lee sees (*Ibidem*). Lišková concludes that «the notion of gender among anti-pornography crusades dangerously corresponds to the conservative belief in the essentially different nature of The Man and The Woman» (Lišková 2004, 2). It did not take long for opposition to anti-pornographic ideas to form. The opposition took shape in the pro-pornographic movement of individualistic feminists, which includes authors from the academic sphere, such as Feona Attwood, Linda Williams, Clarissa Smith, Susanna Paasonen, and Lynn Comella, as well as authors from the pornography industry, such as directors Tristan Taormino and Candida Royalle and performers Lorelei Lee and Stoya. Their main argument is that through pornography, women can be freed from all culturally and historically imposed taboos and preconceptions – such an approach to female sexuality grants women sexual freedom and allows them to have sexual agency. According to McElroy, individualist feminism argues for self-ownership: «it is a woman's body, it is a woman's right» (McElroy 1997, 6). When women have the right to their bodies, they have the right to do with it what they want (Schussler 2012).

If Radical feminism considers pleasure and power to be two components that collaborate to emphasize male sexual supremacy, the supporters of pornography consider these two elements to work together for equality, and women's freedom to consume pornography (Ivi, 70).

Their argument is connected to another important fact: pornography, although unrealistic, is still an important source of real and useful information about sex. «The “G” spot and the normalcy of female ejaculation have been introduced to mass culture not by sex therapists but by the porn network» (Steinberg 1991, 57). Zilbergeld (1991) argues that another benefit of porn is the possibility to learn specific sexual techniques. Pornography is also a source of inspiration for how, when, and where to have sex (*Ibidem*). Research

supports their remarks: higher pornography consumption has a positive effect on the desire to try different sexual practices (Træen and Štulhofer 2013), and also has a positive effect on male sexual pleasure (Štulhofer *et al.* 2007). Pornography also influences sexual conduct (Sun *et al.* 2016; Štulhofer *et al.* 2007). On the other hand, an association has also been observed between the consumption of pornography and aggressive behavior, especially among already violent men (Allen *et al.* 1995; Malamuth *et al.* 2000; Malamuth *et al.* 2012). Higher pornography consumption also has been found to intensify the notion of women as sexual objects (Hald *et al.* 2013; Milburn *et al.* 2000; Peter and Valkenburg 2007; Peter and Valkenburg 2011; Shim and Paul 2014; Wright and Funk 2014).

3. Sexual objectification, sexual agency, and sexual scripts

Anti-pornography feminists claim that pornography objectifies women; pro-pornography feminists claim that pornography allows women to have sexual agency. The conceptualizations of objectification and agency differ among researchers – some measure them as different concepts (Fritz and Paul 2017); others measure them as opposites, viewing the lack of sexual objectification as an indicator of sexual agency (Klaassen and Peter 2014; McKee 2005). Sexual objectification is a known concept, utilized in many social sciences; sexual agency has not been investigated to such an extent. For different approaches to possible conceptualizations of sexual objectification, see McKee (2005). Fritz and Paul (2017) point out that in certain situations, sexual objectification and sexual agency appear simultaneously. For this reason, I believe it is valuable to define both concepts individually and not as opposites.

The theory of objectification, created by psychologists Frederickson and Roberts (1997), is frequently utilized among feminist branches of psychology (Szymanski *et al.* 2011) and creates a framework for understanding the experiences of women in a socio-cultural context in which women are sexually objectified. Sexual objectification is a term for a specific portrayal of women (and men, who are also sexually objectified) (Shim *et al.* 2015) in which their bodies are disconnected from their personalities and the main focus is only on their physical appearance (Bartky 1990). Such a portrayal is typical for

pornography (Klaassen and Peter 2014). Fritz and Paul (2017) consider double penetration, a practice which involves the women being penetrated vaginally and anally, as a concrete example of sexual objectification, as it implies that women are nothing but a set of orifices. Another example of sexual objectification, according to Fritz and Paul, is the cumshot, a sexual practice that in heterosexual pornography involves the male ejaculating on the female body, which they interpret as women being nothing but «an object to display the result of male pleasure» (Fritz and Paul 2017, 641). Frederickson and Roberts (1997) distinguish between direct and indirect sexual objectification. Direct objectification includes all kinds of sexual aggression (verbal and non-verbal); indirect objectification consists of the notion of the body as an object to be gazed at and as an object for pleasure, primarily male (Fritz and Paul 2017). According to McKee, men are also objectified in pornography, in fact to the same degree as women (McKee 2005). However, there is a lack of research on sexual objectification and gay pornography. Morrison (2004), who investigated gay male experiences with gay male pornography, is an exception. Morrison found surprisingly consistent answers among the (gay) viewers: the ideal male body in gay porn is tanned, muscular, hairless, and with a v-shaped build, suggesting there is an emphasis on attractiveness and physique. Inquiries into lesbian porn have produced the opposite results. Morrison and Tallack (2005) interviewed lesbian viewers of pornography after they watched two lesbian movies, one targeted at heterosexual male viewers and one at lesbian women, without knowing which was which. The respondents were in consensus that women in lesbian pornography for men were more objectified, and the emphasis on their exterior appearance was higher than in the movie targeting lesbian women. It is also important to note that the idea of sexual objectification is traditionally linked to the female sex role (Dyer 1992) but as Fischer, Bettendorf and Wang note, «the existing objectification framework inadequately represents transwomen's, transmen's, and genderqueer individuals' realities» (2010, 134) and it is necessary to further investigate their experiences, as research considering these individuals is practically non-existent.

In contrast to objectification, sexual agency has not been thoroughly examined – neither theoretically nor conceptually (*Ibidem*). According to Fritz and Paul (*Ibidem*), sexual

agency is a term for taking control of one's sexual life. This control ranges from articulating personal desires, expressing desires to a partner(s), and experiencing sexual pleasure. Curtin *et al.* (2011) enhance this definition to include the possibility of demanding contraceptives, such as condoms, and also add another dimension: assertiveness. Assertiveness is based on the opportunity to refuse sexual practices and sex (Curtin *et al.* 2011). Sexual agency is thus a right to previously mentioned behaviors, regardless of socio-cultural influences such as race, gender, and physical (in)dispositions (Fahs and McClelland 2016).

The levels of sexual objectification and agency are inevitably connected to sexual scripts and the roles played by people in pornography. The theory of sexual scripts (Simon and Gagnon 1973; Simon and Gagnon 1986; Gagnon and Simon 2005) assumes that sexuality is socially constructed and «[w]ithout the proper elements of a script that defines the situation, names the actors and plots the behavior, nothing sexual is likely to happen» (Gagnon and Simon 1973, 19). According to the authors, sexual scripts are organized into three interlinked levels: cultural scenarios, interpersonal scripts, and intrapsychic scripts (Simon and Gagnon 1986). At the cultural level, scenarios provide «instructional guides» through the mechanism of institutions and institutionalized adjustments, demanding specific behavior and roles. The cultural scenarios specify what sexual relations should look like and how they should unfold (Simon and Gagnon 1986). During daily interactions between people, the cultural scenarios acquire a concrete form of interpersonal scripts. At this level, the individual takes control of the situation and has to direct the situation and enact it. According to Simon and Gagnon, these interpersonal scripts provide a «mechanism through which appropriate identities are made congruent with desired expectations» (Ivi, 99). Intrapsychic scripts are the third level of scripting, and they are the space for fantasies. Intrapsychic scripts are also a way to maintain arousal and climax (Simon and Gagnon 1986). All three levels of scripting are linked together and influence not only each other but also human sexual behavior. Kimmel concludes: «Scripts provided a cognitive map to the domain of the sexual – through scripts we learned how to have sex, what was sexy and what was not, even how to experience pleasure. Orgasms, it turned out, were socially constructed!» (Kimmel 2007, xi).

It can be difficult for the viewer of pornography to believe that the sexual conduct in pornography does not occur naturally, but rather the opposite – it is scripted. It is challenging to imagine that someone has to think of the ways the sexual situation will happen and has to direct the actors (Escoffier 2007). According to Escoffier, many consumers of pornography are convinced that all it takes to film a pornographic video is just two (or more) sexy individuals who have sex together and someone who happens to film it: «In fact, the ability of pornographic films to create credible sexual fantasy world depends upon “scripts” and scripted performances, both figuratively and literally» (Ivi, 61). Sexual scripts in pornography are fragments of erotic ideas and fantasies. «The cinematic realization of a sexual fantasy world is envisioned by the scriptwriter or director» (Ivi, 63). The movie’s creators draw their ideas from the sexual scripts that Simon and Gagnon (1986) described. They draw clues of what is considered to be attractive from cultural scenarios; they resolve possible conflicts on the interpersonal scripting level. Their ideas are also based on their personal fantasies, which are referred to by Simon and Gagnon as intrapsychic scripts. We can see the process of working with the three levels of scripting in a quote from an interview by Jerry Douglas with porn director Matt Sterling. In the interview, Sterling was asked how he came up with the idea for a movie called *Mr. Egan and the Paperboy*; he replied:

Oh, I don’t know. I just always thought that every time my paperboy came around to collect for the weekly subscription, I always thought, ‘What if this turned into a sex scene?’ And I’m sure I’m not the only one who’s ever thought that (Douglas 2001 in Escoffier 2007, 64).

His reply reveals that he had been fantasizing about a sexual encounter with his paperboy. That idea thus came from the intrapsychic level of scripts; his «private world of wishes and desires» (Simon and Gagnon 1986, 100). We can also see his conviction that other people have this fantasy too. This conviction comes from the clues he derived from the cultural scenarios. Cultural scenarios allow people to recognize what is sexy and what is not – here, Sterling was able to realize the potential sexiness of a sexual encounter with a paperboy. To transform his fantasy into a pornographic script – «a cinematic realization

of a sexual fantasy» (Escoffier 2007, 63) – he had to employ the interpersonal scripting level. At this level, he arranged the actions and behaviors in such a way that they would lead to a sexual encounter. As Escoffier also points out, the scripts reflecting the fantasies of the creators that are presented in pornography are further edited by the viewers by, for example, skipping scenes that do not interest them (Escoffier 2007).

4. Anti-pornographic conceptualization and objectifying violence

Currently, the most visited site with pornography in the Czech Republic is the website Pornhub (Similarweb 2018), which offers millions of pornographic movies for free, ranging in length from clips that are a few minutes to movies that last several hours. These «aggregate sites» (Sullivan and McKee 2015, 60) host three types of content: «user-generated content, creator-uploaded professional content, and pirated professional content» (*Ibidem*). According to Sullivan and McKee, while at the “highest end” of pornography we discover alternative sites with ethical values, at the “lowest end” of pornography we find sites with revenge porn and child pornography. They report that the most popular pornographic websites are somewhere between progressive and abusive, and usually include suffixes like “hub” or “tube” in their name (e. g. Pornhub, RedTube, XTube), which is a reference to the famous website YouTube as well as to the content that is prohibited there (*Ibidem*).

In this paper, I analyze the five most viewed videos in the Czech Republic over more than ten years of Pornhub’s existence (Pornhub 2017). I chose the Czech Republic because despite the strong role of the Czech Republic in the Internet adult industry (Zook 2007, 113), the contents of pornography and sexual scripts in the Czech context have not yet been explored. The Czech Republic is a country in which 56.8 % of young people aged 11-18 years have experience with porn (Ševčíková and Danebeck 2014): it is, therefore, valuable to see what the most popular themes are. The demand for pornography is heavily influenced by popular culture, as documented in the blog *Pornhub Insights*, for example after the release of the movie *Avengers: Infinity War* (Pornhub 2018b) and by popular computer games such as *Fortnite* or *Overwatch* (Pornhub 2019). To ensure the themes in the investigated videos are consistent over time, I analyzed the most watched

videos of *all time*. The sample consists of five videos, which poses a limit to the variety of selection – for example, there were no queer movies in my sample. Sampling the videos from Pornhub also meant that the videos would represent mainstream pornography, meaning that it can be expected that it will be targeted mainly toward the male heterosexual viewer. Due to constrained space for analysis, I have decided to keep my sample relatively small and therefore compromise sample variety in order to gain deeper insight into the data.

The most viewed video in Czechia is *Cockplay and Fullweight Cockcrush under Plexi with Sexy Hells and Cumshot* (Vip28 2017). The second video is called *Mom Redhead Teacher Teaches Young Student with Big Cock a Lesson* (Mom xxx 2017). The third features popular porn actress Mandy Flores in a video entitled *Horny Boy Fucked His Stepmom* (Flores 2017). The fourth video includes another immensely popular porn star, Jenny Blighe, and it bears the title *Beautiful Sex with JennyBlighe* (Blighe 2017). The last video is entitled *Horny Boy Fuck Hot Teen Butt from Behind* (Teen Mega World 2017). All videos were submitted to Pornhub in 2017, they range in length from six to twenty minutes, and they are all heterosexual. It is important to note that due to the three content types identified by Sullivan and McKee, it is hard to identify the initial author of a pornographic video if it is not directly stated. The production company is mentioned at some point in all of the five analyzed videos, but the directors are not concretely named. In this paper, I therefore credit the production companies. The data were sampled in January 2018.

To analyze the levels of sexual objectification and sexual agency of men and women in the videos, I used the qualitative content analysis described by Schreier (2012). To identify indicators of sexual agency and sexual objectification, I employed the conceptualization by Fritz and Paul (2017), which I further edited (see Tab. 1). As an example, I take ‘Bdsm play’ and the female orgasm.

Fritz and Paul see physical and verbal aggression as part of direct objectification. Their definition includes consensual violence, which happens during pre-negotiated BdsM play. To label such behavior as aggression is debatable. Aggression is usually conceptualized as a behavior that causes pain, inflicted upon a person against their will (Bridges *et al.* 2010). BdsM play, in which consensual violence commonly appears, is pre-negotiated,

and participants agree on the sexual practices they are willing to try beforehand. It is a common practice to agree on so-called safe words, which are used to moderate or stop the scene if the experiences become too intense or undesirable. According to Newmahr, people who enjoy BdsM share an effort to achieve authenticity through an experience of inequality. Such inequality is achieved by suppressing the notion of human equality (Newmahr 2010) and by the submission of one's sexual agency to the dominant. The dominant has control over the submissive during the play and uses various sexual practices, such as pain, insults, and restraints, to cause the submissive pain and also pleasure. Carlström gives an example of a BdsM play involving a rape fantasy, in which the pre-negotiated script is not at first sight distinguishable from a genuine rape. What is crucial is that all people in a scene consented to such a script; this consent gives a different meaning to what happens (Carlström 2017). There is no doubt that sexual practices in such scenes are objectifying, but in contrast to non-consensual physical and verbal aggression, they are objectifying because the submissive wished them to be so.

Researchers deal with this ambivalence differently: Palys (1986) codes violence and degrading behavior separately; Dines *et al.* (1998) consider degrading behavior as a part of aggression; Cowan *et al.* (1988) consider aggression to be a part of degrading behavior; and McKee (2005) understands objectification as an umbrella term for depicting people in pornography in a way that (a) includes degrading non-normative or unusual sexual practices and (b) implies status differences among the people in the scene. McKee also claims that BdsM is not a violent practice, even though participation in BdsM involves pain (Bridges *et al.* 2010). Due to this lack of consensus on the conceptualization of aggression, the levels of aggression in pornography vary strongly: McKee (2005) reports that only 0.8 percent of his sample included violence; a sample by Bridges *et al.* (2010) identified violence in 88.2 percent of the examined pornographic videos. According to Fritz and Paul (2017), when considering the sexual objectification and sexual agency dichotomy, it is logical to include sexual aggression as an objectifying behavior. They conceptualize sexual aggression as behavior that seems to cause psychological or physical pain to another person. I share their belief that consensual violence – sexual aggression, as they call it – is a type of objectifying behavior, but with regard to the differences between “consensual” and non-consensual aggression, I code this behavior as separate.

The coding of female orgasm also presents a problem. While the male climax is easily coded, given that men in pornography visibly ejaculate – that is one of the genre’s conventions (Williams 1999), the female orgasm is usually “invisible”: the muscle contractions and accompanying displays of female climax are usually difficult to identify in pornography. A visible form of female climax, female ejaculation, is still a marginalized practice in pornography, and not every woman is physically capable of such orgasms – the prevalence lies between 10 and 54 percent of women (Pastor 2013). Women in pornographic movies usually communicate their orgasms verbally, but it is debatable whether these manifestations are authentic.

Not long ago, pornography was thought of as a representation of sexuality and sexual fantasies, even though it is a genre that strives for authenticity (Hardy 2009). With new genres like amateur pornography, the line between representation and presentation blurs. The problem of differentiating between the former and the latter prevails (*Ibidem*) and it is an insoluble one. That is why in this study, I do not distinguish between representation and presentation, and I solely focus on whether men or women are portrayed as having an orgasm. Like Séguin *et al.* (2017), who also employ the sexual scripts theory, my research is concerned with how the orgasm is socially constructed (Kimmel 2007) and how this social construction is portrayed in pornography – not what meanings it produces.

Unlike Fritz and Paul (2017), whose conceptualization I employ with the changes mentioned above (see tab. 1), the units of my analysis are whole pornographic clips, not separate and randomly selected scenes. That is because sexual scripts always consider the whole sexual situation, not only its selected fragments. Fritz and Paul also constructed indexes of objectification and agency and coded only for their presence in randomly selected scenes. In this research, I do not work with indexes – I code for the presence of agentic or objectifying behavior and also for their frequency in each movie, separately for men and women.

	<i>Code</i>	<i>Definition</i>
Sexual objectification	Double penetration	Anytime a body is entered orally, vaginally, or anally by two or more penises or toys such as vibrators. This does not include fingers.
	Cumshot	Anytime a man ejaculates on woman's body and thus makes her a presentation of his pleasure (Fritz and Paul coded only for breasts, chest, face, or mouth).
	Stripping	Includes sexually alluring dance, striptease, or posing. When a person dances, moves, or displays themselves, optionally taking off their clothes while moving, for the purpose of sexually arousing the camera or another person either shown or not shown.
	Focus on genitals	When the primary focus of the camera is a close-up (full screen image) of sexual organs or private areas for a sustained period of more than two seconds.
	Gaping	The excessive stretching of the rectum or vagina with the hands, other objects, or due to recent penetration depicted/displayed for the camera.
	Verbal aggression	Any action appearing to cause or attempting to cause psychological harm to oneself or another person, whereby harm is understood as resulting from verbal assault. Individual acts of verbal aggression include name calling, verbal threats of physical harm, and shaming based on gender or sexual orientation.
	Physical aggression	Any action appearing to cause or attempting to cause a physical harm to another person without their consent.
	"Consensual aggression"	Any action appearing to cause or attempting to cause a physical or psychological harm to oneself or another person with their consent (typically during a Bdsm session).
	Orgasm	When an individual reaches sexual climax which can be demonstrated through visual detection including external ejaculation or physical build up that ends in a clearly depicted peak in the sexual response cycle (a full body seizing), or verbal detection such as declaring «I am cumming».
	Sexual agency	Direction
Self-touch		Any touching of the vulva or the penis with the fingers by the self.
Initiation		The point in an interactive situation at which the first instance of sexual contact occurs, including the intentional touching of another person's intimate parts, or the intentional touching of the clothing covering the immediate area of a person's intimate parts.

Table 1 - Codes for sexual objectification and sexual agency

Source: Adapted from Fritz and Paul 2017

5. Between sexual objectification and agency

In the analyzed movies, women are more sexually objectified than men (see Fig. 1). Surprisingly, they also have greater sexual agency than men. That is due to the nature of the pornographic videos in the sample: in two videos, the woman is in the role of the older and more experienced partner: in one video she is a stepmother (Flores 2017) and in another one she is a teacher (Mom XXX 2017). The women in both of the clips have greater sexual agency because their task is to guide and introduce younger men to sex. When measuring the levels of sexual objectification in the MILF category of porn videos, Vannier *et al.* (2013) came to a similar conclusion: women who play the role of the older women «more often initiated the sexual activity, [and] controlled the pace/direction of sexual activity» (Ivi, 261).

In two videos, the levels of male sexual agency and sexual objectification are even (Blighe 2017; Flores 2017). In both cases, the men are sexually objectified mostly through a focus on genitals; they behave in a sexually agentic way through the direction of the female partner and through orgasm. Regarding the women in the analyzed videos, the levels of sexual agency and sexual objectification were not as even – mostly, the women were more sexually objectified. In one video, the woman had a higher level of sexual agency than of sexual objectification; she was in the role of a stepmother, who was more sexually experienced and thus had more control over the whole sexual situation (Flores 2017).

In the clip called *Cockplay and Fullweight Cockcrush under Plexi with Sexy Heels and Cumshot* (Vip28 2017), there is a moment when the man is both sexually objectified and sexually agentic. In one part of the video, the man puts plexiglass over his penis and apparently instructs the women to stand on it – thus, he directs her and can express and enact his sexual desires, which are all indicators of sexual agency. On the other hand, the woman in the video balances on the plexiglass and stomps over the man's penis – in this situation she causes him consensual pain, while the camera focuses on his genitals – both indicators of sexual objectification. After a while, the man ejaculates – which is again

considered as an expression of sexual agency. The described situation shows that although sexual objectification and sexual agency are considered to be opposites, they do not exclude each other; on the contrary, they can intertwine.

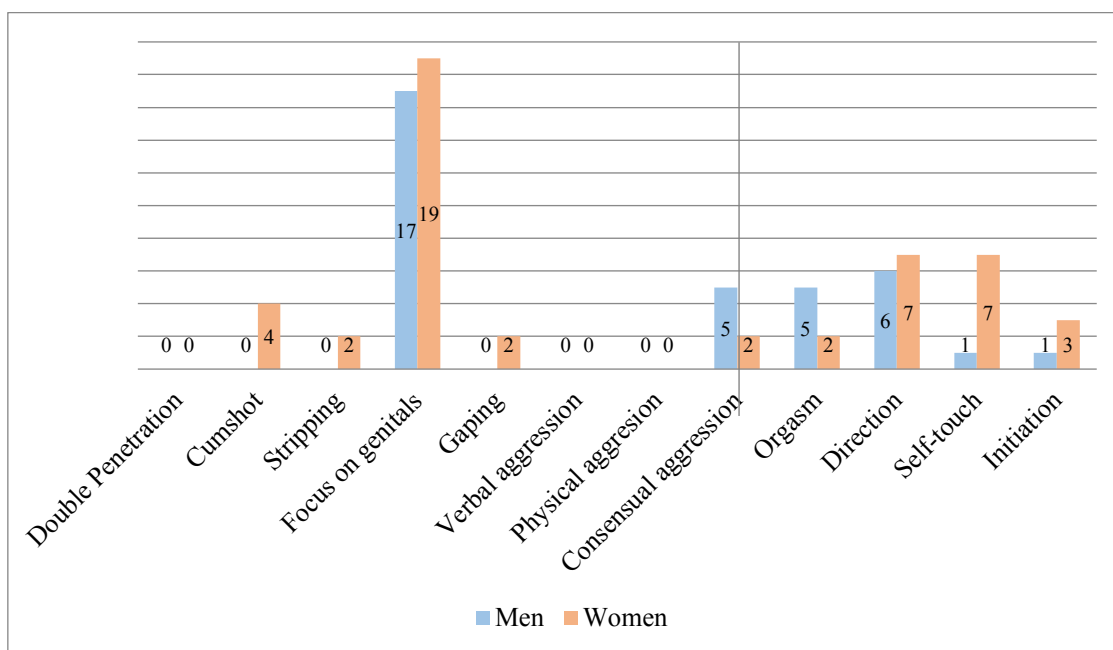


Fig. 1 - Overall proportions of sexual objectification and agency

Source: Analysis of the five most watched pornographic clips in the Czech Republic on Pornhub.com, 2018

The biggest disproportion of sexual agency between the sexes is in the practice of cumshots (ejaculation on a partner's body). The cumshot is depicted in four of the five videos; in the fifth video, the woman is fully clothed and only her feet are shown in the video (Vip28 2017). In the rest of the videos, with the women actively taking part in penetrative sex, the man ejaculates on the woman's body. The cumshot is a set convention of pornography (Williams 1999). Anti-pornography feminists consider this practice to be a degrading one (Dworkin 1983; Dines *et al.* 1998). On the other hand, there are women who enjoy this practice. For example, in the movie starring Mandy Flores as a stepmother, Flores directs the man to ejaculate on her face and allows him to do so. Most pornographic scenarios are written by men (Corsianos 2016), and it is generally presumed that this is why cumshots are shown so often. It is therefore particularly interesting that a movie directed by the production company of Flores herself also depicts this practice.

It seems that the cumshot is a practice that is always directed against the women, but if the videos starred only male actors, it would be directed against men, too. It is important to consider female ejaculation and the possibility of a cumshot of a woman on a man. But female ejaculation is a marginalized practice, depicted mostly in fetish pornography, so it is not common to see a cumshot of a woman in mainstream pornography.

The most common sexually objectifying behavior in the analyzed videos is the focus on genitals – among both men and women, whose levels of focus on genitals are nearly the same (see fig. 1). That is a surprising outcome, given that in the sample of Fritz and Paul (2017), the genitals of women were more in focus. It is also surprising given that most of Pornhub’s visitors are men – 74 percent (Pornhub 2018a) in general; men constitute 75 percent of the visitors from the Czech Republic (Pornhub 2015). Therefore the content of Pornhub is mostly aimed at men, so it was assumed that the camera’s focus would be mostly pointed at women. Shim *et al.* (2015), who analyzed pornographic photographs on four websites – two aimed at men and two aimed at women, reached a similar conclusion: the detailed focus on female genitals was paradoxically more present on the websites aimed at a female audience than on the websites aimed at men (Ivi, 59). The high levels of male objectification can be explained by the stress of pornography on the notion of realness stemming from visual performance, i.e. male ejaculation. As Hirdman points out:

The male body is usually more fragmented than the female, leaving faces and facial expressions out of image, and focusing on legs, penises, and the torso – the performing body. The display of male desire is not signified in facial expressions; male desire is implied in action, in the mechanical performance of sexuality (Hirdman 2007, 166).

The analyzed videos depict neither verbal nor physical aggression. They do contain “consensual aggression.” The “consensual verbal aggression” is depicted only once in the video with a stepmother and her son (Flores 2017). The woman, in the role of a stepmother, verbally humiliates the man, in the role of a stepson: she mocks his erection and pretends to be shocked by his lack of control over himself. She implies that he should get

rid of his erection by masturbating. When he hesitates, she claims that she «should take a look at how big this problem might be» (*Ibidem*); although the son objects, she takes away the blanket covering him. Later they solve his “problem” by having sex together. In the perspective of real-life relationships, such a situation would be extremely degrading and humiliating, if not abusive. In the context of pornography, the dialogue included is considered as a common part of the erotic fantasy and an impulse for having sex.

“Consensual physical aggression” is shown more frequently than “consensual verbal aggression” and is directed towards both men and women. “Consensual physical aggression” directed towards women involves, both times, light spanking during sex (Blighe 2017; Teen Mega World 2017). The women do not respond to the spanking. Consensual aggression towards a man is depicted in only one video, and the aggression intensifies (Vip28 2017). First, the unidentified woman, depicted fully clothed and wearing high heels, plays with the man’s penis using her feet. Then she stomps on his genitals and proceeds to kick his penis. Finally, when the man puts Plexiglas over his penis, she steps on the glass and her movements while trying to keep balance lead him to an orgasm. Given the man’s cooperation, we can assume that the woman’s aggression towards him is a part of a consensual Bdsm play.

The sexual agency of men and women is at the same level in only one video (Blighe 2017). However, the actors are both sexually agentic in different moments. The woman behaves in a sexually agentic way by initiating sex, directing her partner, and self-touching; the man shows his agency by directing his partner and by climaxing. In this video, the sexual agency of the woman is more diverse than that of the man. The woman playing a stepmother has the most varied sexual agency of all the analyzed videos: she initiates the sex and directs her stepson, intensifies her sexual pleasure by touching herself, and orgasms (Flores 2017). In this video, the levels of sexual agency of the man and woman are the most skewed, in favor of the woman (see Tab. 2).

The distribution of orgasms is also disproportionate— while the men climaxed in all of the five analyzed videos, the women climaxed only twice (Flores 2017; Mom xxx 2017), with both instances occurring in the videos in which women played the role of a more sexually experienced partner: a teacher and a stepmother. Male orgasm is portrayed as a visible ejaculation; women’s orgasms are portrayed mostly verbally. In the video with the

stepmother, the woman signals that her orgasm is coming, then she proceeds to moan loudly, and finally, she reports the ending phase of her orgasm by saying «OK, oh my God, OK!» (Flores 2017). Other studies have also reported that men climaxed more often than women (Fritz and Paul 2017; McKee 2005; Dines *et al.* 1998).

	<i>Blighe</i> 2017		<i>Vip28</i> 2017		<i>Flores</i> 2017		<i>Teen Mega</i> <i>World</i> 2017		<i>Mom xxx</i> 2017	
	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
<i>Double penetration</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Cumshot</i>	-	1	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	1
<i>Stripping</i>	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Focus on genitals</i>	4	5	1	-	2	2	3	5	7	7
<i>Gaping</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
<i>Verbal aggression</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Physical aggression</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>“Consensual aggression”</i>	-	1	4	-	1	-	-	1	-	-
<i>Total</i>	4	9	5	0	3	3	4	7	7	9
<i>Orgasm</i>	1	-	1	-	1	1	1	-	1	1
<i>Direction</i>	3	1	2	-	1	6	-	-	-	-
<i>Self-touches</i>	-	2	-	-	1	2	-	1	-	2
<i>Initiation</i>	-	1	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	1
<i>Total</i>	4	4	3	0	3	10	2	1	1	4

Table 2: The proportion of sexual objectification and agency of men and women in the analyzed clips
Source: The analysis of five most watched pornographic clips in the Czech Republic on Pornhub.com, 2018

In terms of directions to partners, the levels are almost equal. Women initiated sexual activity more often than men. These results are due to the two videos in which the women are more in control. In the video in which the woman portrays a stepmother (Flores 2017), the level of direction is substantially higher.

The highest disproportion in agentic behavior is in self-touching, which in the analyzed videos is mostly a female behavior. Gorman, Monk-Turner, and Fish (2010) report similar

findings – in their sample, male masturbation was far less common than other practices and represented only 13 % of the depicted sexual behaviors. This disproportion may be caused by the conventions of the pornographic genre, in which the camera focus is on «female masturbation, lesbianism and the anal penetration of women by men» (Hardy 2009, 7). In addition, Maddison (2009) argues that contemporary hardcore pornography has shifted from the linear progression from foreplay to penetration first introduced by Williams (1999), to cycles of penetration from one orifice to another. What is more,

current conventions organize the depiction of genital acts solely according to the logic of penile stimulation, by hand, mouth, vagina or anus, and multiple combinations of thereof (Maddison 2009, 49).

Similar notions were also observed in gay pornography. Morrison (2004) investigated gay men's attitudes towards gay pornography and reported that gay pornography transfers «heterosexual culture to gay people» (Ivi, 175) by creating gendered differences between “tops” (givers of anal sex) and “bottoms” (receivers of anal sex). Sexual agency and the portrayal of ejaculation also depended on this division: for example, when a top ejaculated, it was onto the bottom's body, while when bottom ejaculated, he did so on himself. Similarly, it was a bottom who performed fellatio, not the other way around, mimicking the focus on penile stimulation mentioned by Maddison (2009) in the previous paragraph.

Another factor may be that women use self-touching as another source of pleasure during penetrative sex. In a study of sexual behavior on a representative sample of more than 19,000 Australians, 49.6 percent of women climaxed solely from penetrative sex; 94.5 percent of men climaxed from penetrative sex (Richters *et al.* 2006). Self-touching among women may, therefore, be a consequence of the need for an increase in their sexual pleasure in order to experience orgasm.

This analysis has limits, mostly given due to methodological choices. To explore the proportions of sexual objectification and sexual agency, I coded for the indicators throughout the whole videos. If the situation indicating objectifying or agentic behavior was interrupted, I coded these instances separately; however, if the situation was not interrupted, I coded it only once. Therefore the limitations arise for non-standard videos

such as *Cockplay and Fullweight Cockcrush under Plexi with sexy Heels and Cumshot* (Vip28 2017), in which the actors appear in the middle of a sexual situation, and the situations in it do not vary. Therefore this video is coded for fewer proportions of sexual objectification, even though sexually objectifying behavior is the theme of the video. Given that this problem arises only in non-standard videos and not in usual mainstream productions, I have not altered my methodology.

6. Discussion

Some authors have asserted that pornography has not been thoroughly investigated (Shim *et al.* 2015; Vannier *et al.* 2013; Fritz and Paul 2017), but the number of researchers is higher every year. The number of researchers concerned with the levels of sexual objectification and sexual agency in pornography has also increased (McKee 2005; Fritz and Paul 2017; Cowan and Dunn 1994; Vannier *et al.* 2013). The results of these studies contribute to the feminist sex wars and the arguments of anti-pornography and pro-pornography feminists who disagree whether pornography is harmful or sexually liberating. To my knowledge, there have not yet been any studies exploring how the proportions of sexual objectification and sexual agency vary with gender. The aim of this study was, therefore, to fill this gap and investigate the levels of objectification and agency in the most watched pornographic videos on Pornhub in the Czech Republic.

The analysis shows that women are more sexually objectified than men, but that they also have higher sexual agency. This result is because the sample of five contains two videos in which the woman plays a more sexually experienced figure – a stepmother (Flores 2017) and a teacher (Mom XXX 2017). These findings are consistent with the research by Vannier *et al.* (2013), in which more experienced women more often initiated sexual activity and had greater overall control of the sexual situation. The most frequent type of sexually objectifying behavior was a focus on genitals, for both men and women. The most frequent type of sexually agentic behavior was the direction of the partner. Both the focus on genitals and the direction of partners are roughly at the same level for both men

and women in all five analyzed videos. The analysis also shows that although sexual objectification and sexual agency are opposite types of behavior, they do not exclude each other – rather, in special cases, they may even intertwine.

For future research, it would be valuable to investigate the levels of sexual objectification and agency by gender on a larger sample. A larger sample could offer greater variability of sexual scenarios and situations and presumably would also depict differences between gay male porn and lesbian porn. An inquiry of that type would provide more insight on how the levels of objectification and agency vary not only with the gender of the actors, but also with their roles and the types of sexual scenarios.

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