

Will women show higher levels of emotional interference than men when an Emotional Stroop Task is conducted using pornographic trigger words?

Object of Study : Porn Perception vs. Gender
Instrument: Emotional Stroop Task

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Introduction

When it comes to the discussion of Pornography and its effects on society, it seems that everyone has a different opinion. Many feminist believe porn could be responsible for perpetuating gender inequality, while scientist who have done studies, suggest there is no correlation between gender inequality and porn viewership. Pornography, defined as “the depiction of erotic behavior, intended to cause sexual excitement” (Thirteen.com) is often stigmatized for its vulgarity and false representation of sexual acts. After investigating a number of heterosexual porn sites myself, I found that the depiction of erotic behavior was often one of a sexist connotation. Videos entitled “Daddy Skinny fucks some random white bitch” and “Rude girl gets deserved spanking” (pornhub.com) demonstrated to me a theme of female degradation. This lead me to believe that pornography could in fact be creating a societal discourse. Belinda Luscombe writes, in the *Times* article “Porn and the Threat to Virility,” that “A growing number of young men are convinced that their sexual responses have been sabotaged because their brains were virtually marinated in porn when they were adolescents” (Times, 2017). This statement shines a light on the capability that pornographic discourse has in shaping sexist ideals in men. The depiction of sexist gender norms within heterosexual porn must be a factor that undoubtedly infuses bias into society's discussion on porn, sex, and gender equality.

In a 2013 study published by The Journal of Sex, investigating Gender Inequality in Internet Porn, the four questions were sought to be answered. 1. To what extent are men and women objectified in Internet pornography? 2. How is power distributed between men and women? 3. To what extent does pornography depict violence against men and women? And 4. How does amateur Internet pornography differ from professional Internet pornography in regards

to depictions of gender (in)equality? A content analysis was then performed on the 100 most viewed videos for February 2013. These videos were taken from four popular porn sites: Pornhub, RedTube, YouPorn, and xHamster. Four coders then viewed the entire set of videos, taking note every time they observed indicators of objectification, power, and violence for each gender. (Psychology Today). It was found for the objectification question that women were more likely to be objectified than men. For the second question of power distribution, it was found that one third of the videos had equal distribution of power between men & women. Regarding the sexual dominance and submission question, half of the videos were neutral, meaning there were no gender differences. The remaining half that did depict gender differences, the men were more likely to be portrayed as dominant, while women were more likely to be portrayed as submissive. Violence was infrequent, only being represented by gagging or spanking, responses from women were never negative only neutral or positive, no men were ever spanked. Most interesting the answer to the question of amateur porn vs. professional porn in regards to gender inequality depiction, it was found that amateur porn contained more inequality than professional porn. This was demonstrated by women initiating sex less often than men, the women were also less likely than men to have sex for their own pleasure, and the men tended to have higher social and professional status, they were more sexually dominant, while the women were more sexually submissive. The conclusion of the study was that Gender Inequality does exist in the realm of internet pornography but not on all indicators.

Another Study conducted on the valence of trigger words in female subjects with anxiety, tested the amount of emotional interference women faced when confronted with words of emotional relevance. This study is relevant to the one at hand with the respects that it uses the

same information processing approach to test valence of trigger words. The instrument used to determine this is the Emotional Stroop Task. The Stroop Task is made up of a chart of emotional words and a chart of neutral words printed in ink colors, subjects are instructed to read the color of the ink that the words are printed in opposed to the word itself. This forces subjects to ignore the word meaning so that they can answer as accurately as possible. The longer it takes for subjects to get through the task demonstrates higher levels of emotional interference because it is assumed that it took longer to complete due to subjects being thrown off by their subconscious response to the trigger word. This study's main objective is to denote how emotions or anxiety can affect the cognitive process and memorization. This study found that it's participants were much faster to recall emotional words than the neutral words due to their triggering nature and rates of anxiety.

The first study demonstrates that there are large amounts of gender inequality in internet porn, where the second study demonstrates the use of the emotional stroop task and its efficiency in dictating emotional interference. The study at hand on porn perception and gender will use an emotional stroop task consisting of misogynistic words taken from the titles of heterosexual porn, to see if there is a link between gender and mal-perception of the words. These three studies together can create a link between the use of misogynistic words in heterosexual porn videos and dictate if their use creates and a higher emotional trigger for women than men. I believe that because women face the perils of sexism on a daily basis, the response rates for the emotional task will be longer than the response rates for men.

Methodology

For this study 10 male college students and 10 female college students were tested using an Emotional Stroop Task after answering yes to the following question, “Do you currently or have you previously watched heterosexual porn.” After answering yes to the initial question participants were then asked “With which gender do you identify, Male or Female”. After being separated by gender, subjects were individually presented with four test. The first was a baseline assessment consisting of the six color words (yellow, blue, black, green, orange and red) printed in congruent ink colors. These color words were presented five times each in a chart. Subjects were instructed to read the color of the word and not the word itself as accurately as possible. The baseline serves as the control in this experiment in regards to the Standard Stroop Task. Next participants were given a second assessment which consisted of the same six color words (yellow, blue, black, green, orange, red) presented five times each printed in incongruent color ink. The subjects were again instructed to read the color of the word and not the word itself as accurately as possible. Next subjects were given a list of neutral words consisting of animal names, human anatomy, beverages ect. printed in the 6 ink colors. Subjects were instructed to read the color of the word and not the word itself as accurately as possible. Next subjects were handed a list of emotional or trigger words printed in the 6 ink colors, and given the instructions to read the color of the word and not the word itself as accurately as possible. For each

assessment the number of errors and time of completion were taken. The list of emotional & neutral words used for this experiment can be found in the index portion of this study.

The four test that embody the Stroop Task and Emotional Stroop Task all deal with information processing. The Stroop Task consisting of the baseline task and incongruent color task and deal specifically with color and information processing. The Standard Stroop tests the occipital lobes ability to processes human perception of color, shape and size (Brain Injury Alliance Utah, 2017). Where the Emotional Stroop Task measures emotional interference which deals with one's sense of personality, emotion, mental flexibility and language (Brain Injury Alliance Utah, 2017). Emotional interference occurs in the frontal lobe of the brain, not the occipital.

The Stroop Effect is visualized when it takes participants longer to complete the incongruent color task than the congruent color task, because when following the Speed of Processing Model, it is believed that the brain processes the word stimuli before the color stimuli. An example of this habitual nature of the brain can be noted when a subject is confronted with the word RED printed in blue ink, and their initial response is to say “red.” The response time for the subject to say “blue” will be represented by a slower response rate which would indicate the confusion, or the interference the subject faced. The difference in response rates to the baseline and the incongruent color task, reveals that the brain has fixed knowledge that

allows for a deeper understanding of surroundings and environment. (Imotions Biometric Research Platform, 2017) . The Stroop Tasks second application, the Emotional Stroop follows the same approach but instead of a slowing in response rate indicating the Stroop Effect, it indicates emotional relevance to the subject. The emotional task indicates an emotional response because instead of using incongruent colors and words, the task lists neutral and emotional words in different colors.

Results

- For women it took on average 10.61 seconds longer to complete the Incongruent Color Task than it did for them to complete the Baseline Task.
- For women it took on average 8.16 seconds longer to complete the Emotional Task vs. The Baseline Task
- For women it took on average 9.08 seconds longer to complete the Emotional Task tvs. The Neutral Task.
- For men it took on average 8.73 seconds longer to complete the Incongruent Color Task vs. The Baseline
- For men on average it took 8.06 seconds longer to complete The Emotional Task vs. The Baseline Task.
- For Men on average it took 7.44 seconds longer to complete The Emotional Task vs. The Neutral Task

Discussion

When examining the response rates to the Emotional Task it took women longer to get through the list of emotional words than it for men. The data collected in this study did support my hypothesis that it would take women longer to respond to the emotional task. This was represented by 1.64 second difference for the emotional words vs. neutral words. Although this was a small difference it is supported.

When I administered the emotional task to women after the neutral task, many of the female participants hesitated when initially starting. I assumed this to be because the emotional words came as either a surprise or did in fact trigger negative a response. When the emotional task was administered to male participants after the neutral task many of the male participants laughed when confronted with the emotional words, I assume this to be because the words did not trigger any negative emotions. This is most likely because the words taken from the porn titles were male-oriented to begin with.

Possible errors for this experiment include participants reading the words from right to left opposed to top to bottom. Participants were instructed to read from top to bottom. Other possible errors for this experiment include participants not being able to decipher the orange color from the yellow. These two errors did affect response rates slightly. For future studies I would recommend using clearer colors.

Concluding this experiment it is evident that there are indeed high rates of gender inequality in porn and this was registered by women who participated in this task by longer response rates to each task but more specifically the emotional task.

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Script Question's

1. What Gender do you Identify as?
2. Do you currently, or have you previously watched heterosexual porn?

Instructions

“Read the color that the word itself is, in order from top of column to bottom of column.”

1. Congruent Color & Word Task

Red	Black	Blue	Red	Red	Green
Green	Red	Black	Orange	Green	Black
Yellow	Green	Orange	Blue	Yellow	Green
Blue	Blue	Blue	Yellow	Orange	Orange
Yellow	Black	Orange	Black	Red	Yellow

2. Incongruent Color & Word Task

Red	Black	Blue	Red	Red	Green
Green	Red	Black	Orange	Green	Black
Yellow	Green	Orange	Blue	Yellow	Green
Blue	Blue	Blue	Yellow	Orange	Orange
Yellow	Black	Orange	Black	Red	Yellow

3. Emotional (Negative) Color & Word Task

Bitch	Squirter	Bukkake	Gangbang	Dildo	Objectification
Cunt	Dike	Tease	Orgy	Face Fuck	Begging

Men Subje cts	Basel ine Time	Basel ine Error s	Color s Time	Color s Error s	Emoti onal Time	Emoti onal Error s	Nuetr al Time	Nuetr al Error s		Color s-Bas eline	Emoti onal-B aselin e		Emoti onal- Nuetr al
1	12.06	0	21.55	2	13.98	2	13.2	0		9.49	1.92		0.78
2	10.82	0	14.55	0	14.72	0	14.7	0		3.73	3.9		0.02
3	13.95	0	15.35	0	18.6	2	12.76	0		1.4	4.65		5.84
4	10.88	0	25.38	0	31.17	2	15.52	0		14.50	20.29		15.65
5	18.69	0	38.43	5	26.38	5	17.7	0		19.74	7.69		8.68
6	11.53	0	23.36	3	27.8	2	10.56	0		11.83	16.27		17.24
7	10.76	0	25.76	2	32.9	0	12.2	0		15	22.14		20.7
8	15.8	0	19.07	0	17.68	1	14.64	0		3.27	1.88		3.04
9	13.56	0	15.99	0	13.35	0	12.5	0		2.43	-0.21		0.85
10	12.09	0	18	0	13.75	0	12.08	0		5.91	1.66		1.67
										8.73	8.06		7.44

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