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LIFE WITH DICK AND DICK: RACE AND MALE PORNOGRAPHIC SELF-REPRESENTATION ON REDDIT

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The circulation of what Kath Albury (2018) refers to as pornographic genres of self-representation (PSR) via a range of content sharing sites such as Pornhub, as well as messaging and dating apps, plays an integral role in the *pornification* of culture (Paasonen, Nikunen & Saarenmaa, 2007). To paraphrase Sandy Stone's words cited in the AOIR2020 conference call, "The machines are horny tonight."

One locus that is not generally thought of in relation to PSR is Reddit. Although associated with technology and gaming, Reddit has a relatively small core of "Not Safe for Work" subreddits that feature PSR. While the majority primarily feature female PSR, this paper will focus on the sharing of male PSR on the largest subreddit of this ilk (305k subscribers), r/MassiveCock (henceforth referred to as Massive). The large penis, associated with power and dominance, has long been a focal point in pornography (Brennan, 2017). On Massive, the cocks on display are without question a source of pride and admiration by posters and commenters alike.

Last year we conducted research that focussed on the ways in which gay-straight relations are recoded on the forum. Mobilizing a discourse of inclusivity with its call to "all straight and gay who love those cocks so big they hurt," Massive brings together two groups of men who historically have been engaged in separate practices of porn consumption and PSR-sharing (the "dick pic" being the most ubiquitous form.) We argued that heteronormativity is reinforced by the performances of the predominantly straight-identified posters but disrupted by those of the gay-identified commenters (Bury and Easton, forthcoming). In this paper, we turn our attention to the performance and representations at the intersection of masculinity and race. Based on previous research

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we hypothesized that Massive is structured not only by heteromasculinity but also by whiteness.

In July-August 2020, we conducted a content analysis of up to 400 posts over seven, 24-hour periods. Of the 2800 posts, we were able to classify 228 as being made by men of colour. Even if we assume that the four percent of the dick pics that were not easily classifiable were in fact racialized PSR, 88 percent of the posts unambiguously featured white cocks.

Next, we did a textual analysis to understand how racialized discourses were mobilized on the forum by both white posters and posters of colour. We looked specifically at a post's three textual components- the title, the user name and what is known as flair (a searchable term sanctioned by the subreddit in question for use by "verified" subscribers. Following Barthes (1977), these serve to anchor the meaning of the image. In the context of Reddit, text also needs to be treated as computer-mediated communication (CMC), which allows us to pay attention to "the ways in which contributions are justified and rendered authoritative and on the identities which authors construct and perform through their writings" (Hine, 2000: 53). Below we discuss several different performances of race and masculinity that emerged from our preliminary analysis:

The first embraces the pornographic discourse of the BBC ("big black cock"). Although a problematic trope which reduces Black men to the stereotypes of hypermasculinity, violence and animality (Smith and Luykx, 2017), on Massive, it was taken up by a number of Black posters. Although we are not providing sample of usernames due to ethical concerns, some posters included the BBC acronym in their username while a few also included the BBC flair. Others marked out their identity with post titles such as Thick Black Cock; Blackzilla; Dark Magic; and BBC for Raceplay (msg me).

We also came across a few posts (no more than four out of four hundred) that flagged other racial identities, including Latino, South Asian, Asian, and Indigenous. While there is no flair available for non-black racialized men, usernames and post titles do this work. Examples include: How are hung Korean guys for you?; Anyone appreciate 6.5" brown dick; Hung Native.

Taken together these markers of racialized identities disrupt the unmarked whiteness of Massive. Yet not all racialized posters chose to mark out their identity. In fact a slight majority of those whose posts we classified as racialized PSR left no textual trace (more data is needed to support this claim). When we followed their digital traces on Reddit by looking at their posting history on their profile (all Reddit accounts have a public profile), however, we discovered that they tended to also post and cross post to subreddits organized around a particular racial or ethnic identity. Some examples include BigAsianCock (24k subscribers) IndiansGoneWild (309k subscribers) and Mexicancocks (19k subscribers). Many of the Black posters, regardless of whether they textually marked out their identity on Massive or not, did the same. Examples of these forums included Church of the BBC (71k subscribers), BigBlackCocks(21k subscribers), BBC-Worship (7k), and interesting in light of recent US political protests, Blackdicksmatter (11.2k subscribers).

Finally, we make note of another cluster of racialized performances— those by white men. About two percent of the posts (n=60) mobilized a discourse of the BWC (“big white cock”), one that is clearly an appropriation of that of the BBC. This was again done through use of a BWC flair, the poster’s username or through post titles such as Big White Cock?; Any interested in BWC? [M 20]PM open. These performances function not to align these posters with black posters as much as to cast them into relief in a sea (see?) of unmarked whiteness.

Although more data needs to be collected and analyzed to further unpack and expand on these findings, there is no question that Massive is, to paraphrase Tom Waugh (2004) a fraternity of the [white] cock. That said, our findings underscore how racialized identities can disrupt this whiteness.

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