"Not my proudest fap" – Among Us porn videos and audience reception

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ABSTRACT

Among Us (InnerSloth 2018), a popular online game has also become a popular topic of animated pornography (e.g. Pornhub 2020). In our research, we examine animated porn videos based on the game *Among Us* and the reception of these videos. Digital games and pornography have a long common history in the form of pornographic games, even though these games have remained in the margins of game business (Harviainen, Brown, & Suominen 2016, 608). The intersection of games and pornography has previously been studied from the perspectives of porn games and pornographic content in games (Payne & Alilunas 2016; Lankoski & Dymek 2020), as well as player-created and fan-created pornographic content, such as game mods, fan art, or videos created using game engines (e.g. Bohunicky & Youngblood 2019; Paasonen 2018; Majkowski 2019). As games have become a major cultural influence, they have increasingly become visible in more traditional forms of pornography as well, such as porn videos. Game titles and game characters have become popular search terms on pornography websites (e.g. Pornhub 2019), which in turn offer a multitude of game themed porn videos, both live-action and animated videos.

Among Us is a multiplayer online game set in space, where players are randomly assigned the role of a crewmate or an imposter with corresponding goals of either completing or sabotaging the space mission. The game has a cartoon-like visual style and is clearly casual in nature. While *Among Us* is not explicitly erotic, we analyze what are the potential erotic qualities in the game and its play experience, and how they are reproduced in *Among Us* porn. Simultaneously, we examine what other affordances (e.g. available free game engines) steer how *Among Us* animated porn is created and what it includes. In addition to the content of *Among Us* porn videos, we examine their reception by analysing the comments left by the viewers. Through our analysis, we ask what these responses to the videos can tell us about the audience reception and the consumption of *Among Us* porn, and about audience engagement with video game porn more generally.

For our analysis, we collected 77 animated porn videos from the porn website PornHub and the comments to these videos. We selected the data both using the site's own search engine and the search term "among us" as well as lists of links to these films created by audiences and posted on platforms such as Reddit. We focus our examination on videos from one particular platform, PornHub, in order to analyze what kind of spaces the, often very amateurish, Among Us porn carves in a platform that is mainly framed as showcasing commercial and live action porn.

The results of our preliminary analysis suggest that most animated *Among Us* porn videos appear to be amateur work. The animated videos are usually short (approximately 1-3 minutes long) and portray human-like characters, which are similar to each other across the videos. These characters have a fairly limited resemblance to the original game characters, in that they tend to have more human-like bodies as well as human genitalia and breasts. Most of the animated porn videos only depict one sexual act, usually between two or more of the Among Us characters. Dialogue and any narrative beyond the sex acts are considerably rare, albeit some of the animated videos showcase these as well. When there is a narrative, it often plays with elements of Among Us gameplay, thus, is built around winning or losing the game and the potential consequences of this result.

The number of comments to the *Among Us* porn videos range from zero to over thirty per video. The most frequently occurring form of comments are memes related to the game, such as repeating the word "sus" (a term used by the players to refer to a suspicious player, a potential imposter), or making jokes about the videos and the phenomenon as a whole. The main purpose of these comments is to signal belonging to an "in-group", as the comments themselves bring nothing new but rather function like spamming in Twitch chat. However, in addition to these memes, the comments display a range of affective stances toward the porn videos, ranging from playful shame and horror to sexual pleasure. In some of the videos, the comments also include appreciation of the animation and the work done by video creators, and these even lead to discussions between the viewers and the creators in the comments section.

Our analysis shows that game porn has multiple functions. The contents of the porn videos suggests animated game porn as a way of amateur production often akin to other types of fan art and fan fiction, whilst the reception demonstrates forming and maintaining communities around porn consumption and viewership, something commonly constructed as a solitary experience. Further analysis will delve into how these videos are positioned in the intersection of not just game cultures and pornography consumption, but also in other relevant categories of nerdcore pornography and fan labour. As PornHub is a mainstream porn website with commercially based structures and functionalities and a certain aesthetic, all of them creating affordances and limits for both content creators and audiences, in future research it is important to extend the analysis to other websites and services to gain a deeper understanding of audience engagement with game porn and the intermingling of porn and gaming cultures. Furthermore, *Among Us* porn functions as an interesting intersection of human and non-human bodies as well as that of playful, the lustful and the ironic. Examining the ways these themes come together can help us to understand the relationship of genres, bodies, and play in contemporary digital culture (see also: Paasonen 2018; Williams 1991).

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