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Using porn: Discourse and identity construction in male consumers

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USING PORN: DISCOURSE AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION
IN MALE CONSUMERS

by

Andrew F. Harper

Bachelor of Arts
University of Northern Colorado
1997

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

**Master of Arts Degree
Department of Sociology
College of Liberal Arts**

**Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
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ABSTRACT

Using Porn: Discourse and Identity Construction in Male Consumers

by

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A number of cultural perspectives address the question of male consumers of heterosexually oriented pornography. Porn and the consumer have been characterized from feminist, conservative, and scientific positions. Despite the presence of these perspectives, little work informed from the consumer perspective exists. This research allows consumers to speak about their own experience. This research analyzes the impact of framing discourses on the identity construction of consumers. Using concepts from Foucault and cultural studies, these questions are explored: How do discourses about consumers affect their identity construction? Which are important? How do men construct their consuming experiences? How does consumption context affect identity construction? How do consumers feel people will perceive them? Data derives from a questionnaire and individual interviews analyzed qualitatively. Findings indicate

consumers' sense of themselves as influenced by discourses in culture; however, when given the opportunity to speak they demonstrate resistance.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vii
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCING THE PORN CONSUMER.....	1
Research Questions.....	8
CHAPTER 2 DEFINING PORNOGRAPHY	10
CHAPTER 3 FRAMING THE MALE PORN CONSUMER: EXISTING THEORIES	16
Feminist Theories.....	16
The Moral Conservative Position	47
Scientific Approaches	51
Summary	53
CHAPTER 4 THEORY: CONSTRUCTION OF CONSUMER IDENTITY	54
Introduction.....	54
Michel Foucault	55
Cultural Studies.....	72
Intersections: Applying Foucault and Cultural Studies to Existing Theories.....	83
Conclusion	92
CHAPTER 5 METHODOLOGY	94
Introduction to Methods.....	94
Research Design.....	95
A Note Regarding Reliability and Validity	103
Framework	106
Sampling	108
Sample.....	111
Methods of Data Collection	114
Reiterating Major Problems	122

CHAPTER 6 ESTABLISHING THE PANOPTIC TOWER? REECALLING EARLY CONSUMPTION EXPERIENCES	123
CHAPTER 7 DODGING THE GUARD? ADULT EXPERIENCES WITH PORNOGRPAHY	151
CHAPTER 8 UNDESERVED PRISON: VIOLENCE AND BEHAVIOR FOR CONSUMERS	173
CHAPTER 9 TALKING BACK TO THE GUARD: CONSUMER DISCOURSE.....	199
CHAPTER 10 CONCLUSIONS	219
APPENDIX A QUESTIONNAIRE.....	232
APPENDIX B INTERVIEW	241
APPENDIX C INFORMED CONSENT FORM	244
REFERENCES	246
VITA	250

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCING THE PORN CONSUMER

"Pornography grabs us and doesn't let go. Whether you're revolted or enticed, shocked or titillated, these are flip sides of the same response: an intense, visceral engagement with what pornography has to say. And pornography has quite a lot to say. Pornography should interest us, because it's intensely and relentlessly *about* us. It involves the roots of our culture and the deepest corners of the self. It's not just friction and naked bodies: pornography has eloquence. It has meaning, it has ideas. It even has redeeming ideas. So what's everyone so wrought up about?"

Maybe it's that buried under all the nervous stereotypes of pimply teenagers, furtive perverts in raincoats, and asocial compulsively masturbating misfits, beneath all these disdainful images of the lone pornography consumer, is a certain sneaking recognition that pornography isn't just an individual predilection: pornography is central to our culture" (Kipnis 1996; 161).

There are a number of questions that have not been addressed in the academic literature regarding male pornography consumers. Those questions are specifically related to how individual consumers experience pornography in their daily lives. What is it like to be a male consumer interested in heterosexually thematic pornography in United States culture? Do pornography consumers experience their consumption as an affirmation of male dominance in a patriarchal society? Or is pornography simply a way to become sexually titillated, to become aroused by women and men one will never know doing things one may never do? How do male pornography consumers feel about the activity of consuming? What is the subject position, the self-construction, of the pornography consumer as he consumes?

In this thesis, the major concern is with male consumption of heterosexually oriented pornographic materials. Given the stereotypes of the male consumer outlined in the opening quote by Kipnis (1996), it seems appropriate to attempt to investigate, in an exploratory manner, the consumer point of view since stereotypes are necessarily generated from the outside, primarily in the form of framing discourses. It is the overarching interest of this paper to begin documenting how particular discourses frame and influence the pornography consuming experience for men. To do this, this thesis will do a number of things. First, this thesis will document discursive positions that deal with pornography consumption and consumers (including feminist, moral conservative, and scientific positions). Second, this paper will discuss a theoretical framework, informed by the works of Foucault (1977, 1978) and cultural studies, that will allow for conceptualization of how the documented discourses might influence the identity construction of porn users as porn consumers. Third, this paper will describe the qualitative research process by which consumers' experiences were documented through in-depth interviews with porn users themselves. Finally, findings of this research will be discussed.

It is the overall intention of this paper to allow, through interviews, porn consumers to generate their own discourses of their experience. This is intended to create both opportunities to discover how outside framing discourses influence consumers, and to allow consumers to demonstrate conceptions of themselves that resist those discourses. The second of these intentions makes this project political in its intentions.

Within this paper, the term discourse will refer to ideas and stories in culture which have a political impact on the lives of everyday people. Discourses, as the term is

used here, are sets of ideas with particular assumptions about the nature of reality that become reified and define subject positions. In this sense, they can be large-scale, widely disseminated conceptions that have the potential to affect many lives, or discourse could be the generation of ideas that affect identity at the micro-political level with the potential of becoming large-scale discourse with pervasive dissemination. This definition is informed by, though not necessarily in an unchanged manner, the ideas of Michel Foucault (1977, 1978) and Roland Barthes (1972), most heavily by Foucault. Though perhaps not completely consistent with the works of these two men, it is hoped that the reader will see this paper is informed by the spirit of their work.

A number of people from a variety of positions have written *about* the pornography consumer, either directly or by implication. Some feminists have talked about the role of pornography in society as affirmation of male dominance and how porn must be used by the male consumer as part of this hegemonic role. Clinical psychologists have written about the link or lack thereof between pornography and aggression and how the male pornography consumer must or must not be aggressive when he consumes. These are examples of the discourses *about* male pornography consumers that are common in the literature. What is lacking in the literature regarding male pornography consumers are the voices of those consumers themselves. What are the understandings and feelings of those men while they consume pornography? What do they have to say for/about themselves? Is there a universal experience of pornography consumption for men, or is the experience varied from consumer to consumer? The remainder of this introduction is intended to illustrate some of the potential variety of the pornography

consumption experience for men; as well as, to demonstrate some of the variety of framing discourse around the meaning of male consumption of porn.

Some men's experience as they depict it coincides with arguments that pornography affirms male dominance and gives permission to men to sexually aggress against women.

"Then one night about a year after I split from my wife, I was out partyin' and drinkin' and smokin' pot. I'd shot up some heroin and done some downers and I went to a porno bookstore, put a quarter in a slot, and saw this porn movie. It was just a guy coming up from behind a girl and attacking her and raping her. That's when I started having rape fantasies. When I seen that movie, it was like somebody lit a fuse from my childhood on up. When that fuse got to the porn movie, I exploded. I just went for it, went out and raped. It was like a little voice saying 'It's all right, it's all right, go ahead and rape and get your revenge; you'll never get caught. Go out and rip off some girls. It's all right; they even make movies of it.' The movie was just like a big picture stand with words on it saying go out and do it, everybody's doin' it, even the movies" (Beneke 1990; 45).

This quote reflects fears that male consumers who view pornographic films depicting violence and dominance toward women will be incapable of resisting the urge to take the cinematic fantasy into the world of reality. The above quoted consumer's account seems to justify those fears; however, not all accounts from pornography consumers do the same. Some show a sense of guilt and an understanding of what the male pornography consumer is supposed to be while showing decidedly non-violent tendencies.

"(I)f going to porn films or arcades were emblematic of male power, one might expect that the experience would be characterized by an easy confidence reflective of macho security.

For me, however- and, I'm guessing, for many men who have visited porn arcades or film houses-these periodic visits are always minor traumas. While there is an erotic excitement involved in the decision to attend and in the experience itself, this is mixed with considerable amounts of fear and embarrassment. From the instant my car is carrying me toward pornography, I feel painfully visible, as if everyone who sees me knows from my expression, my body language, whatever, precisely where I'm going. The walk from the car to

the door-and later, from the door to the car-is especially difficult; will someone drive by and see me? This fear of being seen has, in my case at least (as far as I can tell), less to do with guilt than with fear of being misunderstood. Even though the frequency of my experiences with pornography has nothing at all to do with the success of my sex life-I'm at least as likely to visit a porn arcade when I'm sexually active as when I'm lonely and horny- I always feel the power of the social stigma against such experiences. Unless the people who see me have been in my situation, I'm sure they'll deduce that my visit to the arcade reflects my inadequacy or some inadequacy in the person I'm living with, that either I 'can't get any' or I'm not satisfied with what I can get. As a result, I try to look at ease during the walk to the door: any evident discomfiture on my part, I warn myself, will only fuel whatever laughter my presence has provoked.

Once inside an arcade or theater, this anxiety about being seen continues, though with a different slant: will I run smack into someone I know? Of course, anyone I would run into would be unlikely to misunderstand the meaning of my presence, but such a meeting would interfere with what seems to me the most fundamental dimension of going to a porn arcade or movie house: the desire for privacy and anonymity. Meeting someone I know would, I assume (this has never happened to me), force us to join together in the phony macho pose of pretending that our interest in the pornographic materials around us is largely a matter of detached humor, that we've come for a few laughs" (MacDonald 1990; 35).

This account of a male subject interpreting his own experience with pornography evidences the complexity of the experience of pornography use by challenging the idea that he feels dominant and macho when going to consume pornography. Pornography is not interpreted by this consumer as patriarchal affirmation; he acknowledges embarrassment alongside desire. He discusses an erotic excitement coinciding with a fear of detection; he indicates a desire for privacy and a desire for intimate fantasy; he does not describe a desire to violently dominate women sexually. He describes a complex experience and fluid identity position. He describes an experience in which his own perceptions of his activities, and his perceptions of how others might view his experience, create a complex, uncomfortable experience.

There are a number of ways of interpreting why men consume pornography, and those discourses loose in culture about consumers do so in varying ways. On one hand,

there is a perception that men use pornography to affirm patriarchal domination of women and to justify to themselves their violent sexual exploitation of women; however, if this is the case, one might expect that the experience of consuming pornography would be characterized by an easy confidence reflective of macho security, not the guilt and fear expressed by MacDonald (1990). The position that pornography validates male dominance and sexual aggression is based on the assumption that pornography reflects a patriarchal reality, one in which men feel entitled to women's bodies as a matter of course. Then again, there may be other ways of interpreting the porn consumption experience.

Steinberg (1990) asserts that pornography may be fantasy that expresses a male and female sexuality that is not apparent in social reality, for example, one in which men are desired sexual objects for women, one in which women want to touch men and be touched by men as much as men want to touch and be touched by women. He points out that society's repressive ideologies toward sexuality may create an atmosphere of sexual scarcity rather than sexual abundance for men as well as women.

“In any case, fear of rejection, and the resulting negative feelings about ourselves (men) as sexual beings and about our desirability, are difficult aspects of sexual manhood all men must grapple with, usually with only partial success. The residue is part of the emotional material we take to pornography.

I believe that these issues-sexual scarcity, desire for appreciation and reciprocation of desire, and fear of being sexually undesirable-are the central forces that draw men to pornography. While violent imagery, by various estimates, accounts for only three to eight percent of all pornography, images that address scarcity, female lust, and female expression of male desirability account for at least seventy-five percent of porn imagery.

Pornography is a vehicle men use to help us fantasize sexual situations that soothe these wounds. The central themes are available, lusty sex focused on *our* desirability, involving archetypal images of the very women who must represent our felt undesirability in real life. When we buy pornographic magazines, take them home and masturbate to their images (or when we masturbate to the images of those same women on the screen), we vent the

frustrations born of scarcity, the sexual fears born of rejection, and the sexual insecurity born of being so seldom appreciated by women for our specifically sexual existence.

And which images most effectively accomplish this for us? Images of women openly desirous of sex, who look out at us from the page with all the yearning we know so well yet so rarely receive from our partners. Images of women hungry for sex *with us*, possessed by desire *for us*. Women hungry to get their hands on our bodies or get our hands on theirs. Receptive women who greet our sexual desire not with fear and loathing, but with appreciation, even gratitude. And glamorous women whose mere bestowal of sexual attention mythically proves our sexual worth" (Steinberg 1990; 55-56).

Rather than centering pornography as part of a culture of men patting themselves on the back for being masters of the sexual universe, Steinberg describes pornography as a place where men go to soothe their sexual insecurities. He describes an uncertain and non-dominant male sexuality wherein men strive to feel desirable, even if that feeling is vicarious.

In addition to talking about pornography as a place to have desires validated, Steinberg (1990) points out that pornography may be one of the few places men can go to have their bodies validated. It is one of the few places where penises are portrayed as natural and desirable rather than as an object of disgust and fear, where semen is not abhorrent, but an acceptable and even integral part of sexual activity. In most pornography, semen becomes a substance of validation rather than loathing (Steinberg 1990).

The contradictions between men's experiences as they consume pornography illustrated above seem to indicate that the consumption experience is not universal. Perhaps the experiences of individuals as they consume pornography take place in a mediating context, one that implies male dominance, but reactions to that context when consuming porn seem to be variable. There is fluidity implied in the disparities between

men's experiences with pornography. The overall purpose of this project is to explore that fluidity by providing a forum for the voices of a number of male porn consumers. The following set of research questions is intended to provide a framework for investigating both the influence of discourses about male consumers in culture, and to seek understanding of how the men themselves view their consumption experience.

Research Questions

How do discourses about male pornography users affect their identity as consumers and which ones are important? This is, overall, the key question for this research. There are a number of discourses in culture, including feminist and Christian ones, which might impact the way the male consumer sees himself. The influence of these ideas on consumers may have an impact on their identity, how they see themselves. By conducting interviews with consumers as the main part of this research, it is the intention of this paper to discover what the political and personal impact of external discourses are on the way porn users think of themselves as consumers.

How do men construct their pornography consumption experiences? One focus of this paper is men's interpretations of their own experiences. Giving men the opportunity to speak about pornography and themselves as users is a major aspect of this project because it is necessary to understand their experiences in order to understand what outside discourses influence them and how they might resist those discourses.

How does consumption context affect identity construction in male pornography users? The time and place of consumption may influence the way the consumer feels about the activity of pornography consumption. One way to discover this is to ask them

how they feel or react to different pornography consuming experiences in varying contexts.

How do porn users feel people in general will perceive them? It seems likely that pornography consumption is a stigmatized activity and that the position of pornography consumer is a stigmatized position. It also seems likely that consumers vary in awareness of their stigmatization and will have varying reactions to that stigmatization. This leads to the related question; are there differences across porn consumers regarding those feelings?

In order to answer these questions, the primary method used for this research is in-depth, qualitatively analyzed individual interviews. Questionnaires are also employed in order to collect demographic data and basic information about men's consumption habits and content preferences. The primary purpose of the research design is to generate consumer discussion of their pornography use experiences in order to gain an exploratory understanding of the porn experience from the male consumer point of view.

CHAPTER 2

DEFINING PORNOGRAPHY

The most important aspect of doing research on any particular topic is to first come up with an idea of what it is. This is a difficult task, particularly in the case of pornography where a number of definitions have been proposed and used both in the culture at large and in the academic literature. The aim of this chapter is to briefly explore various definitions of pornography in the literature, and to clarify the definition of pornography for this study specifically.

Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart ran into just this problem of definition in discussing pornography in *Jacobellis v. Ohio* when he stated, "I shall not attempt today to define it (pornography), and perhaps I could never succeed in intelligibly doing so. But I know it when I see it" (quoted in McElroy 1995; 41).

There are two important aspects of this quote to consider. First, there is an issue of difficulty in defining pornography. Second, there is an assumption of a common-sense understanding of pornography. Considering that the purpose of this paper is to examine the self-understandings of male pornography consumers as individuals in a common-sense world, it seems that one imperative for this project is to come up with a definition that captures as closely as possible a common-sense understanding of what pornography is for people in general.

The major reason for providing definitions is to sketch the appropriate boundaries within which a word can be used, to let people know what they are talking about, and to provide the clarity of distinctions (McElroy 1995). In other words, defining a concept is a process of deciding what it is by distinguishing it from what it is not. A definition should apply to all possible cases that a word refers to, and only those cases (McElroy 1995). The meaning of pornography and what pornography does within society are areas of contention and that fact is reflected in the number and diversity of definitions applied to it.

"1) The explicit description or exhibition of sexual activity in literature, films, etc intended to stimulate erotic rather than aesthetic or emotional feelings.

2) Literature etc. characterized by this" (*Oxford English Encyclopedic Dictionary*).

"Sexually explicit material designed for recreation rather than educational or other use" (King 1993).

"Pornography is material that combines sex and/or the exposure of genitals with abuse or degradation in a manner that appears to endorse, condone, or encourage such behavior" (Russell 1993).

"Pornography is the explicit artistic depiction of men and/or women as sexual beings" (McElroy 1995).

Within the above definitions two aspects of pornography seem to be commonly shared. Pornography is some form of representation such as film or literature, and pornography is sexually explicit. For this project I will use these two components to define pornography. These are the least contentious elements in defining pornography (McNair 1996). However, despite agreement on these two broad points, there is no single agreed upon definition of pornography. The contentiousness in terms of defining pornography evidenced by the above definitions requires an analysis of the components

of each in order to clarify the distinctions between them, so that choosing one in particular for this project will be justified.

First, both the *Oxford Dictionary* definition and the definition of pornography as sexually explicit material intended for recreational purposes rather than other purposes are not appropriate for this study. Because the interest of this research is focused on reception and consumption of pornography, the intent of the author or producer of sexually explicit representation is not relevant, nor can it be known. Also, by excluding the intent behind the production of sexually explicit material, it is possible to include material that authors claim not to intend as pornography though they may fit a common-sense understanding of what pornography might be. For example, the works of Bataille, De Sade, or Henry Miller might not have been intended as pornography, but they may be received as such on the consumption end. If that is the case, then consumers experience them as pornography and the presence of those types of works would be justified in this paper. By excluding authorial/production intent more latitude is permitted for consumers to relate their perceptions of their experience with sexually explicit representations because nothing is excluded from possible examination ahead of time based on artistic intent. In other words, something can be pornography whether or not its producer believes it to be so. The important questions here are what and how consumers define pornography in and through their use.

Diana Russell's (1993) definition characterizes pornography by its abusive and degrading content; it, too, is not appropriate for this particular study. This is because it may not coincide with common-sense definitions of pornography among pornography consumers, and because it tends to ideologically predefine pornography as necessarily

abusive and degrading with a number of consequences. This, of course, is the intent of such a definition. Russell's definition, along with other anti-pornography feminist definitions, are ideological constructions intended to control the debate around pornography in ways that predetermine victory for the radical feminist argument. If pornography is defined as abusive and degrading, then it is necessarily abusive and degrading in reality. This tautological approach linking definition with consequence allows the anti-porn feminists to attack pornography as if its impact was not in question.

The primary problem with a definition of pornography based on its inherent abusive and degrading qualities is that the actual meaning of such qualities are exceedingly subjective. What constitutes abuse and or degradation is not consistent from person to person, though anti-porn feminists seem to believe that such qualities are/or should be obvious and consistent for everyone. However, in the context of this particular project, such a definition is counter-productive. It assigns labels of abusive and degrading to pornography when the consumers of pornography may not see it as such. Since the interpretations of the male pornography consumers are my primary interest, it serves no purpose to use a definition of pornography that predefines subjective meanings regarding the content of sexually explicit representations.

Further, definitions such as Russell's tend to expand the scope of what might be considered pornography, even if a particular example might not fit in a common-sense definition of pornography. For example, Russell (1993) asserts that slasher films, movies whose content generally includes the murder of attractive young women by a male maniac, liberally laced with scenes of nudity and sexual content, fit her definition of pornography. However, films such as *Friday the 13th* or *A Nightmare on Elm Street* are

generally not considered pornographic outside of anti-pornography feminist circles. Further, definitions of pornographic representation as depicting inherently degrading and abusive behavior situated within a context of sexual explicitness creates a question of whether or not there are any non-degrading, non-abusive sexually explicit representations. Some anti-porn feminists claim that there are and some claim that there are not. Those that do have created the concept of erotica to stand for acceptable sexually explicit representations. "Erotica refers to sexually suggestive or arousing material that is free from sexism, racism, and homophobia, and is respectful of all human beings and animals portrayed" (Russell 1993).

Though attempting to define a set of good sexual representations may be laudable, it is not practical. The idea of erotica suffers from the same problems of individual interpretation as the idea of pornography. People may have different ideas about what constitutes respectful sexual representations that are free from homophobia, sexism, and racism. In addition, a schism between erotica and pornography places a value judgment on the content which may not be consistent with the values of pornography consumers. This is problematic for this project considering the goal is to allow consumers to express their values surrounding pornography rather than to fit their experience into a pre-existing ideology regarding pornography's meaning.

The definition that is most appropriate for use in this paper is Wendy McElroy's (1995) definition because it is the most broad, it emphasizes the possibility of multiple interpretations, and it excludes material that does not fit the common sense definition of pornography.

"I propose a value-neutral definition: Pornography is the explicit artistic depiction of men and/or women as sexual beings. The modifier explicit excludes

such gray areas as women's romance novels. The modifier *artistic* distinguishes pornography from psychological analyses of sex, such as those found in Freudian textbooks. The term *depiction* includes a wide range of expression including paintings, literature, and videos. Thus, the genus of my definition of pornography is 'the explicit artistic depiction.'

The differentia is 'of men and/or women as sexual beings.' This means that pornography is the genre of art or literature which focuses on the sexual nature of human beings. This does not mean pornography cannot present people as full well-rounded human beings. *But*, in order for the piece of art to be part of the 'genre' of pornography, it must explicitly emphasize their sexuality" (McElroy 1995; 51)

This definition is acceptable for this project because it most closely conforms to a common-sense definition of pornography at the same time that it allows latitude in the interpretation of the meanings of pornography by those people consuming it. McElroy's definition manages to avoid the confusion of the other definitions by not worrying about the intent behind the production of an image, by eliminating those depictions that most people would probably not consider pornographic (*Friday the 13th*, *Our Bodies Ourselves*), and by removing the majority of value judgments regarding the appropriateness of some sexual acts as opposed to others.

The literature on the subject of pornography illustrates the difficulties involved in defining exactly what pornography is. Differing interpretations and political agendas influence the ways that pornography is defined from various academic and social positions. The contentious atmosphere surrounding the definition of pornography makes it important to define what the term pornography means for this study. A definition emphasizing a broad range of sexual depictions and allows consumer interpretation the most influence in defining pornography for himself is most appropriate.

CHAPTER 3

FRAMING THE MALE PORN CONSUMER: EXISTING THEORIES

The primary purpose of this research is to explore the impact of cultural discourses about pornography on the identity construction of male consumers. There are a number of ways of thinking about pornography in the academic literature and in wider culture. Among these are feminist theories about the meaning of pornography, scientific approaches to the study of pornography, and moral conservative understandings of pornography. All of these approaches have basic assumptions regarding the meaning and impact of pornography on culture that have implications for the way consumers of pornography are thought of from each perspective. The purpose of this chapter is to outline the primary theories in the literature that address pornography and to discuss the potential implications of those theories for male consumers. Three major feminist approaches, anti-pornography feminism, anti-censorship feminism, and pro-sex/sex positive feminism will be outlined. In addition, moral conservative and scientific approaches to pornography and the male porn consumer will be addressed.

Feminist Theories

Three main strains of feminist theory address pornography specifically. These are anti-pornography feminism, anti-censorship feminism, and pro-sex/sex positive

feminism. These three have different views of pornography's role in society, as well as differing views of how pornography impacts those males who consume it. These varying ways of thinking may have impacts on the identity construction of consumers in society. Following are descriptions of each feminist position, including discussion of how each views the male consumer.

Anti-Pornography Feminism

Anti-pornography feminism approaches issues of pornography based on the assumption that the sexually explicit content and intention to arouse with porn plays a role in perpetuating gender oppression in a patriarchal society. The anti-pornography feminist perspective sees the women portrayed in pornographic texts as objectified as purely sexual animals, their beings stripped down to the sexual essence for the voyeuristic pleasure of the spectator (McNair 1996). Because pornography has developed in the male dominated system of patriarchy, anti-pornography feminists tend to assume that the voyeur, the consumer of pornography, is male and heterosexual.

Anti-pornography feminists tend to see sexuality not as a given of nature, but as a construct of a specific culture, conditioned in both women and men by the existence of gender inequality in patriarchal culture, an inequality that puts women in a position of being a thing for sexual use which is the basis of sexuality for women under patriarchy (Leuchtag 1995).

Perhaps the anti-pornography feminist viewpoint can be made clearer by examining some specific definitions of pornography used by anti-pornography feminists in the literature. Diana Russell (1993) defines pornography as material that combines sex and/or the exposure of genitals with abuse or degradation of females in a manner that

appears to endorse, condone, or encourage such behavior. This clearly adds a dimension to a more basic definition proposed by McNair (1996) in which pornography is defined as material intended to create sexual arousal. It does so by adding elements of abuse and degradation of women to the basic definition of pornography. Russell extends her definition by clarifying the meanings of abuse and degradation. Abusive sexual behavior refers to sexual conduct that ranges from derogatory, demeaning, contemptuous, or damaging to brutal, cruel, exploitative, painful or violent (Russell 1993). Degrading sexual behavior refers to sexual conduct that is humiliating, insulting, and/or disrespectful, and includes examples such as urinating or defecating on a woman, ejaculating in her face, treating her as sexually inferior, depicting her as slavishly taking orders from men and eager to engage in whatever sex men want, or calling her insulting names while engaging in sex, such as bitch, cunt, nigger, whore (Russell 1993). To generalize from these specific definitions, Russell's conception of pornography points to a representational form that graphically displays male dominance and female subordination through sexual acts. Pornography eroticizes the unequal power relations between men and women under patriarchy by putting unequal power relations on display in a sexualized context.

Russell's focus on the hierarchy of gender relations within pornography places her squarely within the anti-pornography feminist camp, though one of the best known anti-pornography feminists takes Russell's definition a step further. Andrea Dworkin's (1979) basic definition of pornography, the depiction of women as vile whores, suggests a great deal about what she believes pornography to be. Whores are women who are to be used by men, particularly sexually, in any way men see fit. Because male sexuality is

a product of patriarchal culture, the choices of how these whores are to be used are domination, domination, and more domination.

Dworkin presents a view of a society in which the consistent sexual degradation, abuse, and domination of women in culture is the primary force behind the maintenance of male supremacy under patriarchy. According to Dworkin, pornography is the primary cultural expression of this consistent sexual domination.

First, pornography is not simply a representation of the sexual domination of women, but is a primary form of sexual domination in and of itself. The producers of pornography actively exploit and degrade women who are used to make pornography. Both Dworkin (1979) and Russell (1993) cite the story of Linda Lovelace who was coerced into making the film *Deep Throat* as evidence of the exploitation of women in the making of pornography.

Second, according to Dworkin, pornography is the teacher of the patriarchal sexual idiom to men. Through pornography, men learn that their role in patriarchy is to sexually dominate women, and in fact, women like and deserve to be sexually dominated, degraded, and abused because of their nature as women.

To Dworkin, pornography is the paradigm for sexuality under patriarchy, and therefore, it is an active oppression of women within patriarchal society. Where Russell tends to define pornography as a reprehensible depiction of sexual domination of women, Dworkin moves pornography into the realm of an active and omnipresent domination of women as a hegemonically defining force in patriarchal sexuality, teaching men how to dominate and women how to be dominated.

Catherine MacKinnon (1989) agrees with Dworkin, arguing that cultures construct sexuality within their own context, and that patriarchal societies demand that sexuality be arranged as masculine dominant and feminine subordinate. She constructs a powerful model in which male sexuality is dominant and dominant male sexuality is portrayed in pornography reinforcing male dominance within patriarchy. Pornography is created by and at the same time teaches and reinforces the male dominant ideologies of patriarchy through a perpetuation of a male dominant sexual idiom. Pornography and sexuality are tautologically intertwined, with pornography and male dominant/female submissive sexuality staring at each other's reflections as if in a mirror (MacKinnon 1989). This constant reinforcement of patriarchal sexuality through pornography and pornography through patriarchal sexuality serves to set up a hegemonic, reified sexuality that protects patriarchy. Pornography exploits women while at the same time convincing them that their subordination within patriarchal sexuality is natural and that they in fact enjoy it. To MacKinnon, sexuality and sexual behavior are the most effective and pervasive set of values that define and protect male supremacy within patriarchy. She goes so far as to say that with the reified pervasiveness of patriarchal sexuality, it is a wonder that not every woman is a masochist (MacKinnon 1989). In her dichotomous model there is little doubt as to the fact that all males are sadists.

So, how is the anti-pornography feminist approach to pornography relevant to a study on the identity construction of male pornography users? First, it constructs a discourse of male sexuality and its relationship to pornography that defines male pornography consumers in a particular way. Second, it defines pornography publicly in

ways that construct a discourse around male pornography users that may inform their self-conceptions through its public presentation.

The anti-pornography definition of the male pornography consumer is displayed by MacKinnon (1989) when she asks, "What is it men want?"

"Thus the question Freud never asked is the question that defines sexuality in a feminist perspective: What do men want? Pornography provides an answer. Pornography permits men to have whatever they want sexually. It is their 'truth about sex.' It connects the centrality of visual objectification to both male sexual arousal and male models of knowledge and verification, connecting objectivity with objectification. It shows how men see the world, how in seeing it they access and possess it, and how this is an act of dominance over it. It shows what men want and gives it to them. From the testimony of pornography, what men want is: women bound, women battered, women tortured, women humiliated, women degraded and defiled, women killed. Or, to be fair to the soft core, women sexually accessible, have-able, there for them, wanting to be taken and used, with perhaps just a little light bondage. Each violation of women-rape, battery, prostitution, child sexual abuse, sexual harassment-is made sexuality, made sexy, fun, and liberating of women's true nature in pornography. Each specifically victimized and vulnerable group of women, each tabooed target group-black women, Asian women, Latin women, Jewish women, pregnant women, disable women, retarded women, poor women, old women, fat women, women in women's jobs, prostitutes, little girls-distinguishes pornographic genres and subthemes, classified according to diverse customers favorite degradation. Women are made into and coupled with anything considered lower than human: animals, objects, children, and (yes) other women. Anything women have claimed as their own-motherhood, athletics, traditional men's jobs, lesbianism, feminism-is made specifically sexy, dangerous, provocative, punished, made men's in pornography" (MacKinnon 1989; 327).

According to this, men consume pornography because it provides a sense of dominance over women. That men actively seek to consume pornography means that they desire the domination and degradation of women. They desire women bound and tortured. They desire women humiliated and defiled. They desire women raped and killed. Though not explicitly called a definition of male consumers of pornography by MacKinnon, this passage serves to define what her conception of those men is. Pornography consumers are men who desire what pornography offers.

MacKinnon's argument holds that men who learn their sexuality in such an atmosphere are likely to act on that sexuality. Dworkin (1979) makes the same point by presenting what she claims are truthful accounts of women harmed directly by men using pornography.

"She was thirteen. She was at a Girl Scout camp in northern Wisconsin. She went for a long walk in the woods alone during the day. She had long blond hair. She saw three hunters reading magazines, talking, joking. One looked up and said: 'There's a live one.' She thought they meant a deer. She ducked and started to run away. They meant her. They chased her, caught her, dragged her back to where they were camped. The magazines were pornography of women she physically resembled: blond, childlike. They called her names from the pornography: Little Godiva, Golden Girl, also bitch and slut. They threatened to kill her. They made her undress. It was November and cold. One held a rifle to her head; another beat her breasts with his rifle. All three raped her—penile penetration of the vagina. The third one couldn't get hard at first so he demanded a blow job. She didn't know what that was. The third man forced his penis into her mouth; one of the others cocked the trigger on his rifle. She was told she had better do it right. She tried. When they were done with her they kicked her naked body and they kicked leaves and pine needles on her. 'They told me that if I wanted more, that I could come back the next day'" (Dworkin 1989; xviii-xix).

The presentation of this story adds the characteristic of explicit dangerousness to the characteristics that define male pornography consumers for anti-pornography feminists.

Dworkin and MacKinnon's discourse about male pornography consumers became a part of popular culture when they were hired by the Minneapolis legislature to design anti-pornography legislation for the city in 1983. The Minneapolis ordinance contains a detailed definition of pornography that addresses all those aspects of pornography that MacKinnon (1989) cites as "what men want" sexually and in pornography. The definition of pornography in the statute reads as follows:

"Pornography is the sexually explicit subordination of women, graphically depicted, whether in pictures or in words, that also includes one or more of the following: (i) women are presented dehumanized as sexual objects, things, or

commodities; or (ii) women are presented as sexual objects who enjoy pain or humiliation; or (iii) women are presented as sexual objects who experience sexual pleasure in being raped; or (iv) women are presented as sexual objects tied up or cut up or mutilated or bruised or physically hurt; or (v) women are presented in postures of sexual submission; or (vi) women's body parts-including but not limited to vaginas, breasts, and buttocks-are exhibited such that women are reduced to those parts; or (vii) women are presented as whores by nature; or (viii) women are presented as being penetrated by objects or animals; or (ix) women are presented in scenarios of degradation, injury, abasement, torture, shown as filthy or inferior, bleeding, bruised, or hurt in a context that makes these conditions sexual.

The use of men, children, or transsexuals in the place of women in above is pornography for purposes of this statute" (quoted in Winston and Bane (eds.) 1993; 150-51).

Because of their public activism, Dworkin and MacKinnon's discourse about pornography, and by extension male consumers of pornography, became a part of popular culture. As part of popular culture, their discourse has the opportunity to effect the self-conception and possibly the identity construction of male pornography consumers. Evidence for this possibility comes from Philip Weiss (1990) as he describes his feelings and thoughts as a man who "feels aroused by looking at or reading some of this stuff" in the context of the debate surrounding the Minneapolis ordinance. He says that he felt like a "lizard" as the definitions of the pornography consumer, the definitions of him, floated through Minneapolis at the time. This was especially difficult for him in that he felt that he was sensitive to feminist issues. He could not engage in an active resistance to this definition because he would be forced to admit he was one of "them", a male consumer of pornography and all that entails from the anti-pornography point of view. It would be akin to admitting that he wants and enjoys depictions of women degraded, humiliated, tortured, raped, violated, and subjugated.

Feelings of consumers justify the analysis and use of the anti-pornography feminist position in this paper in that the anti-porn feminist position may have an impact

on the self-conceptions of consumers as well as their understanding of pornography itself. Considering that a primary interest of this paper is to explore the ways in which discourses of pornography and male consumers effect those consumers' identities, a discourse like the anti-pornography feminist one requires examination.

Anti-censorship Feminism

Anti-censorship positions in the pornography debate within feminism are not necessarily an independent theoretical approach. Instead, they tend to react to pro-censorship/anti-pornography discourses within feminism, and society at large, by criticizing the assumptions behind anti-pornography positions, as well as analyzing anti-pornography discourses in terms of their possible implications for feminism as a discipline and for people as free sexual agents.

"In 1992, in response to a complaint, officials at Pennsylvania State University unceremoniously removed Francisco de Goya's, *The Nude Maja*, from a classroom wall. The complaint had not been lodged by Jesse Helms or some irate member of the Christian Coalition. Instead, the complainant was a feminist English professor who protested that the eighteenth-century painting of a recumbent nude woman made her and her female students 'uncomfortable'.

This was not an isolated incident. At the University of Arizona in Tucson, feminist students physically attacked a graduate student's exhibit of photographic self-portraits. Why? The artist had photographed *herself* in her *underwear*. And at the University of Michigan Law School, feminist students who had organized a conference on 'Prostitution: From Academia to Activism' removed a feminist-curated art exhibition held in conjunction with the conference. The reason? Conference speakers had complained that a composite videotape containing interviews of working prostitutes was 'pornographic' and therefore unacceptable" (Strossen 1995; 7).

The primary complaint of anti-censorship feminism regarding the anti-pornography/pro-censorship position is the difficulty of stopping censorship at any particular point. The concern of anti-censorship feminists is that definitions of pornography, such as the Dworkin and MacKinnon definition in the Minneapolis statute,

are so ambiguous and subjective that they can be applied to nearly any sexually explicit expression, not simply degrading and/or abusive sexually explicit materials sold commercially. Definitions of pornography can be applied to forms of expression ranging from religious imagery to video footage of mass rapes in the Balkans, from commercial erotic material sold as entertainment to self-help books about women's health (Strossen 1995).

The potential for anti-pornography censorship to be applied in such sweeping terms is a concern for many feminists in that they fear anti-pornography censorship will be appropriated by those social groups, religious and moral conservatives particularly, who will use the power of censorship to go after expression by feminists and sexual minorities, including lesbians and gay men. More disturbing, this censorship will be applied by those groups while they trumpet "feminist" rhetoric such as that of Andrea Dworkin, Catherine MacKinnon, and Diana Russell (Strossen 1995, Rubin 1993).

"There is mounting evidence...that MacDworkinite-type laws will be used against the very people they are supposed to protect-namely, women. In 1992, for example, the Canadian Supreme Court incorporated the MacKinnon-Dworkin concept of pornography into Canadian obscenity law. Since that ruling, in *Butler v. The Queen*-which MacKinnon enthusiastically hailed as 'a stunning victory for women'-well over half of all feminist bookstores in Canada have had materials confiscated or detained by customs. According to the *Feminist Bookstore News*, a Canadian publication, 'The *Butler* decision has been used...only to seize lesbian, gay, and feminist material.'

Ironically, but predictably, one of the victims of Canada's new law is Andrea Dworkin herself. Two of her books, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* and *Women Hating*, were seized, customs officials said, because they "illegally eroticized pain and bondage" (Strossen 1995; 9).

As Strossen points out, the danger of appealing to state systems as censor in order to protect women is that state systems may use feminist definitions and rhetoric to censor feminist materials and expression. In addition, the expression of sexual minorities is

threatened by state censorship more than mainstream heterosexual sexually explicit expression through commercial pornography. Rubin (1993) illustrates this by pointing out that the ability to sue for damages against a pornographer contained in legislation like the Minneapolis Ordinance threatens fledgling sexually explicit expression by lesbians more because the media for such expression, lesbian pornographic magazines, have tiny budgets that would be wiped out by even a single damages award. Mainstream heterosexual expression in magazines such as *Playboy* and *Penthouse* could survive because such companies could endure several large lawsuits. It is the less powerful in society who are threatened by censorship practices against sexually explicit media, not the powerful heterosexual males that anti-pornography feminists purport to attack.

In order to avoid the possibility of such potentially catastrophic effects of the anti-pornography feminist position, Gayle Rubin (1993) undertakes a systematic critique of the assumptions behind the anti-pornography/pro-censorship position. Though reacting to the anti-pornography position, this analysis is in fact the beginnings of an alternative way of theorizing sexually explicit materials that begins to find fuller expression within sex-positive feminist approaches discussed in the next subsection.

Rubin begins by pointing to a feminist history of critique of androcentric ideas in western literature, high art, popular media, religion, education, children's reading materials, medicine, psychiatry, and all academic disciplines. She points out that the feminist project has been one of denouncing male supremacist cultural expressions and the production of new art, fiction, children's literature, film, and academic work with different values. In addition to producing differently informed expression, feminists have been activists for change in areas of expression such as advertising, television

programming, and popular fiction. Her point in briefly illustrating a feminist tradition of producing expression from different values and activism for change is that nowhere in that tradition has the abolition of the various domains criticized; academia, the novel, television, or literature, been advocated. The only exception to this tradition is the case of pornography.

According to Rubin, pornography, because of the perception that it is inherently degrading and/or abusive toward women, is the only domain treated as if it were beyond feminist salvage. Pornography has been approached as the one area of expression that cannot be reinterpreted, reclaimed, and/or reorganized according to feminist values, wrongly so in Rubin's opinion. She believes that pornography has become "an easy, convenient, pliant, and over-determined scapegoat for problems for which it is not responsible" (Rubin 1993; 20).

The goal of this critique is to challenge the assumption that pornography is particularly sexist, especially violent or implicated in violence, or intrinsically antithetical to the interests of women. To do this, Rubin offers counter-arguments to the two main implicit assertions she sees within the anti-pornography feminist agenda, those claims being that pornography is violent and/or sexist and promotes violence against women, and that pornography is intrinsically more violent and/or sexist than other media.

To counter the first claim, that pornography is intrinsically violent and/or sexist and promotes violence against women, Rubin makes a number of points. First, she points out that very little pornography actually depicts violent acts, instead she claims that pornography tends to show a variety of sexual acts that are non-violent. The primary sexual act shown is heterosexual intercourse, with nudity, genital close-ups, and oral sex

also prevalently featured. Anal sex is also represented but tends to be a less common more specialized depiction. In fact, pornography tends to be subdivided in terms of its production and sale into a variety of specialized tastes, with particular tapes and magazines having specific content and being grouped by that content within the context of the business selling them. This variety is actually representative of the variety of tastes within heterosexual consumption of pornography.

In addition to the variety in heterosexual genres of pornography, sub-genres designed for minority sexual populations are available, though they by no means represent the bulk of commercial pornographic expression. These sub-genres include material intended for minority populations such as gay men, lesbians, transsexuals and those who find transsexuals erotic, sadomasochists, and those who enjoy bondage. According to Rubin, these sub-genres of pornography have been appropriated by the anti-pornography feminist position in order to illustrate, distortedly, the presence of violence in porn and its potential to cause actual violence against women.

For example, sadomasochistic and bondage material is over-represented in the anti-pornography feminist discourse. Its over-representation is used by anti-pornography feminists to establish a perception that sadomasochistic and bondage pornography, and its images of coercion and violence, are the norm within pornography rather than the limited sub-genre it actually is. Sadomasochistic pornography is aimed at a specific audience who understands the conventions of how to interpret it. This audience understands the highly negotiated nature of sadomasochistic and bondage sex play and the degree to which the participants in sadomasochistic practice consent to play at coercion and

violence. To those who are not initiated in the conventions of sadomasochism and bondage, such sex play can appear to be actually coercive and violent.

Sadomasochistic pornography, when taken out of context, can be upsetting to an unprepared audience who sees its images of violence, restraint, and coercion. In Rubin's opinion, the shock value of such images is exploited by anti-pornography feminists in its presentations, for example films and slide shows, to make a statement about the violence and coercion depicted in all commercial sexually explicit materials. In fact, these presentations tend to misrepresent sadomasochistic pornography, distort the relationship between sadomasochistic pornography and sadomasochistic practice, and treat sadomasochistic pornography as representative of pornography as a whole when it is not. Anti-pornography feminists also tend to use images from pornography that are violent and distasteful, such as the infamous *Hustler* meatgrinder cover, to make statements about pornography as a whole when such images are not representative of pornography in general.

Rubin points out that using bad, unrepresentative examples is effective but also irresponsible, not to mention antithetical to most conceptions of feminist values. In effect, anti-pornography feminists are using the same techniques of stereotyping that feminism in general has struggled against throughout its history. Bad examples can always be found in any group of materials or people, whether it is pornography, women, blacks, or male pornography consumers. Not incidentally for the overall analysis of this project on male pornography consumers, Rubin's analysis begins to open the way for an alternative way of viewing this group in that it begins to open the possibility that consumers are varied in their tastes and desires when consuming pornography. This

implies that male pornography consumers are not a homogenous group particularly in terms of a proclivity to violence and degradation of women as a matter of course.

Another favorite ploy of anti-pornography feminists attempting to illustrate the inherent violence of pornography is the assertion that pornographic materials are in fact a documentary of abuse against the women who are the models used to make the actual tape or photograph (Rubin 1993). As was pointed out in the previous section, both Diana Russell and Andrea Dworkin have cited the story of Linda Lovelace's coercion in the creation of the film *Deep Throat* to imply that all or most pornography is produced under conditions of violence and abuse toward the women involved. Dworkin (1979) has called attention to the "fact" that what is seen in photographic and film pornography must have happened to a real woman because it was photographed or filmed. At the hearings for the 1984 Commission on pornography, Catherine MacKinnon also argued that pornography is a photographic record of women being abused. She listed various images found in pornography-women being bound, tortured, humiliated, battered, urinated upon, forced to eat excrement, killed, or merely taken and used-then argued that in order for the pornography to be made a woman must have been bound, tortured, humiliated, battered, urinated upon, forced to eat excrement, killed, or merely taken and used.

Rubin addresses this by pointing out two major problems in the reasoning of feminists who claim pornography is a record of abuse. First, it is impossible to infer the conditions of the production of an image by the content of that image. Images of coercion and or violence do not necessarily correspond to the actual use of violence and coercion. According to Rubin, we see images of violence and coercion as content on television everyday in the form of shootings, beatings, automobile accidents, sexual

harassment, and sexual violence without assuming that the actors and actresses involved are really fatally shot, killed in car accidents, or sexually harassed. Why, she asks, is pornography any different?

In Rubin's opinion, Dworkin, MacKinnon, and other anti-pornography feminists must believe that certain sexual activities are so inherently distasteful that no one would do them willingly and therefore the models are victims who must have been forced to participate against their will. Using the example of oral sex, she points out that many gay men and heterosexual women enjoy performing fellatio. She even asserts that some lesbians relish the prospect of going down on dildos. According to Rubin, the idea that these sexual activities are inherently distasteful, and that their presence in sexually explicit material must represent force because no one would engage in those activities willingly, shows a very narrow conception of human sexuality that lacks even basic notions of sexual diversity.

That anti-pornography feminists assert the inherent violence of pornography and target it specifically for censorship indicates to Rubin that anti-pornography feminists have an implicit belief that pornography is more violent than other media. Rubin counters this claim by pointing out that the majority of sexually explicit materials do not contain images of violence, whereas mainstream television, film, and fiction contain numerous acts of violence. She then asks, if violence is the problem then why are sexually explicit media targeted rather than the violence of mainstream media. The only answer in her opinion is that the problem is not violence, but sexual explicitness. For Rubin this creates a schism in the anti-pornography feminist argument that cannot be easily overcome. Pornography cannot be the graphic depiction of violence, degradation,

and abuse towards women on one hand and be sexually explicit material on the other unless sexual explicitness, and by extension sexual activity, is inherently violent and degrading toward women. Rubin and other anti-censorship feminists believe that this is an untenable position.

It is important to note that Rubin and other anti-censorship feminists, like Nadine Strossen (1995), do not claim that pornography is free of violence and sexism. In fact, they believe that much pornography is sexist and that violence and coercion do exist in the images and sometimes the production of sexually explicit materials. They do not, however, believe that sexism and violence are inherent in pornography. Because of this, they do not advocate the suppression of sexually explicit materials, but instead encourage the proliferation of sexually explicit expression in new ways. The basic tenet of the anti-censorship position is that the only answer to negative free expression is more free expression.

By opening the door to the possibility of non-sexist, non-violent, and non-coercive pornographic expression, anti-censorship feminism leads in some cases to a more active form of feminist rewriting of the discourses of pornography. This position is best expressed by the pro-sex/sex positive feminists.

Pro-sex/Sex Positive Feminism

While anti-censorship feminism tends to criticize the methods of anti-pornography feminists, a push towards censorship, while not necessarily rejecting anti-pornography feminist assumptions of rampant misogyny, pro-sex feminism is the antithesis of anti-pornography feminism. This is true because pro-sex feminism has developed as a response to the radical feminist discourse that portrays women,

particularly women who participate in the sex industry, as brainwashed victims of patriarchal hegemony.

The primary tension between the two camps is located in conceptions of agency. Anti-pornography feminists remove agency from the individual level, replacing it with a kind of cultural agency in patriarchy that molds people and pushes the social behavior of individuals in directions that support the male dominant gender and sexual status quo. Pro-sex feminism insists on the principle of self-ownership in which a woman (and presumably a man) has the right to decide what to do with her or his own body (McElroy 1995).

The key element for pro-sex feminism is individual choice, with choice being present in all cases where a person chooses to act without the presence of physical force, threat of force, or fraud. Pro-sex feminism believes that women can make choices and consent to activities, sexual or otherwise, and those choices should be respected whether or not another person finds that choice distasteful (McElroy 1995).

The approach taken by pro-sex feminism cancels the class analysis of the anti-pornography feminist approach. Whereas the anti-pornography camp focuses on an ideology of "the personal is political", pro-sex feminism focuses on the idea that "the personal is personal" (McElroy 1995).

This does not mean that pro-sex feminists reject the idea that one person's actions may effect another; however, it does mean that no one has the right to interfere with individual choice providing one person is not using some form of coercion over another (McElroy 1995).

According to this position, there is one overarching benefit to a freedom of choice ideology. Every free choice made by a woman enriches the lives of other women because the range of alternatives available to women increases with each freely made and respected choice (McElroy 1995). This is true even if the choices made by other women are activities that other women would probably not choose to engage in. The choice is still there. One point that McElroy (1995) makes is that level of discomfort with a choice should not interfere with respect given to a choice. She compares the acceptance of women's sexual choices to women's choices in relation to feminism. Just like the choice of some women to participate in or consume pornography, the choice of some women to embrace feminism makes others uncomfortable. However, a respect for that choice opens life possibilities for women in that they may choose to embrace feminism even if they end up not doing so. According to McElroy, the same applies to women's choices in relation to pornography.

This association also applies to men. Each choice freely made by other men and women increases the possibility of choices for all. Men making alternative choices increase men's ability to make those choices. This implies, for example, that straight, dominating, heterosexual sex becomes less hegemonic due to the possibility of other types of interactions. This undermines the conception of a single, consistently dominating male heterosexuality and opens the possibility for more diverse sexual relations for men and women alike. For example, Nina Hartley (1997) discusses an uncertain and sometimes submissive male heterosexuality.

"I found that the majority of men will follow sexually if the woman will only lead, and that men feel victimized around sex just as women do, only in different aspects of the sexual dance. I realized that, as a committed feminist, I had to be open to men's pain and see it as equally valid to women's. I discovered

that a woman who is willing to talk about sex honestly and show her body can get men to listen, learn, and be better lovers with their partners. Finally, I learned that to be eternally mad at men's sexual 'nature' was as useful as being mad that water is wet. Anger inhibits intimacy and shared pleasure, to the detriment of all involved. I seek in my work to defuse anger so that the pleasure I invoke can work its healing magic" (Hartley 1997; 61).

This conception of the male heterosexual and, by extension the male consumer of heterosexually oriented pornography, is a far cry from the consistently violent men and consumers put forth by anti-pornography feminists. However, if men and women are denied their choice to experiment in or with pornography and other types of sexuality, then it becomes much more difficult for men and women to experiment with different types of heterosexual relations. Silence forces people to choose the activity that has the remaining voice, male dominant forms of heterosexuality. What is more, this type of choice benefits people both personally and politically. It benefits them personally by enriching the possibilities of sexual relations at the intimate level and politically because different forms of expression make the overall atmosphere of sexual practice more diverse. Pro-sex feminists argue that pornography, freely available, plays or could play an important role in diversifying, and making more satisfying, heterosexual relations in society.

From a pro-sex feminist position, there are other ways that pornography can benefit women, and possibly men, both personally and politically. Wendy McElroy (1995) provides a list.

"I contend: *Pornography benefits women, both personally and politically.*

It benefits them *personally* in several ways:

1. It provides sexual information on at least three levels: it gives a panoramic view of the world's sexual possibilities; it allows women to 'safely' experience sexual alternatives; and, it provides a different form of information than can

- be found in textbooks or discussions.
2. Pornography strips away the emotional confusion that so often surrounds real-world sex.
 3. Pornography breaks cultural and political stereotypes, so that each woman can interpret sex for herself.
 4. Pornography is the great leveler of shame.
 5. Pornography can serve as sexual therapy.

Pornography benefits women *politically* in many ways, including the following:

1. Historically, pornography and feminism have been fellow travelers and natural allies.
2. Pornography is free speech applied to the sexual realm.
3. Viewing pornography may well have a cathartic effect on men who have violent urges toward women.
4. Legitimizing pornography would protect women sex workers, who are stigmatized in our society" (McElroy 1995; 128-29).

That pornography can be beneficial to individuals and to society is a main point of the pro-sex feminist acceptance of people's choices to participate in the making and consumption of pornography. With that in mind, I would like to discuss in greater detail each of McElroy's possible benefits. Though McElroy's discussion is applied specifically to women, I will add some discussion of the possible implications for men which reflects on the possibilities of pornography consumption experiences for men.

Beginning with McElroy's list of personal benefits, she suggests that pornography provides sexual information to women on at least three levels. It provides women a view of the world's sexual possibilities, it allows women to safely experience sexual alternatives, and it provides different information than the information that can be derived from textbooks or discussion.

That pornography can provide a view of the world's sexual possibilities means that it is filled with representations of diverse types of sexual practices, with several implications. First, it illustrates the existence of sexual possibilities that may not have

occurred to women in their daily lives. As McElroy points out, pornography represents sexual options as diverse as "masturbation, voyeurism, exhibitionism, sex with a stranger, in a group, with the same sex, as an act of revenge..." (McElroy 1995; 129-30). It puts on display for women a diversity of sexual options. Since men also consume pornography, it is plausible to suggest that male consumers may also receive information about a broad range of sexual possibilities. In short, one of the advantages of pornography for pro-sex feminists is its ability to represent and disseminate a range of sexual possibilities for people.

Not only does pornography display sexual diversity, it can also act as an instruction manual about how to do different types of sexual activities. The example used by McElroy is fellatio. Pornography makes available to women the techniques of hundreds of women performing this act, allowing women to see the possibilities of how to do fellatio. McElroy suggests that such instruction can make for a more pleasurable sex life by teaching technique and by lowering anxiety surrounding fears of not performing particular acts in a way that will be pleasurable for themselves and their partner(s). Men also can use pornography to teach them technique and lower anxiety about performance, around cunnilingus for example. As Nina Hartley (1997) puts it...

"You could go to school for any other skill, but not sexual skill. It made no sense. Stripping and adult films provided a safe place to practice lots of sex with lots of different people in lots of different situations. I gained competence and confidence, two things I had always wanted" (Hartley 1997; 61).

Admittedly, Hartley's experience is a result of her direct participation in the sex industry; however, through her films other people can go along for the ride vicariously.

In addition to simply presenting sexual alternatives to women, pornography can be used in a way that allows women to "safely" experience sexual alternatives (McElroy

1995). Pornography provides a vicarious experience without many of the risks of real world experiences. It provides an experience controlled in every way; by the on/off switch, the fast-forward/rewind button, the turning of the page. There is control of duration, timing, content, and climax. Experiences of sexual alternatives through pornography provides an experience free from the threats of real violence, AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, infidelity, pregnancy, or generally dealing with another person's reactions (McElroy 1995). Because pornography is a vicarious experience for men as much as it is for women it allows them the same type of control and safety when experiencing pornography, and through pornography, sexual alternatives.

An important aspect of accepting this as a possible benefit for male, as well as female, consumers is an acceptance of the possibility that men are interested in knowing about and experiencing diverse sexualities. This places pro-sex feminist conceptions of the male pornography consumer differently than anti-pornography feminists. Anti-pornography feminists suggest a one-dimensional male sexuality with one interest in pornography consumption. Males have a penetrative, dominating desire toward women in their sexuality. Their interest in consuming pornography is to vicariously experience the abuse and domination of women. If one accepts a pro-sex feminist understanding of the experience of consuming pornography, then the possibility of multiple desires on the part of male consumers is opened.

Finally, McElroy suggests that pornography provides information about sex that cannot be derived through textbooks or discussion. Specifically, she says that the vicarious experience of sex through pornography provides emotional information, a sense

of how it might feel to participate in a particular expression of sexuality. Women, or men, need not have sex with a stranger in order to get a sense of how such an encounter might feel. Pornography consumption can provide an emotional template upon which to begin making decisions about real world sex. A woman or man revolted by something vicariously experienced through pornography is unlikely to seek that experience in real life. There is a kind of emotional forewarning that gives people the opportunity to know without the possible harms carried by real world interaction.

That men might use pornography to gain this type of information also differentiates a pro-sex feminist position from an anti-pornography feminist position. According to anti-pornography feminists, the only kind of emotional response a man can have to pornography is an enjoyment in the vicarious domination and abuse of a woman or women. From a pro-sex feminist position, men can have varying reactions to pornography, as well as a need to emotionally explore their sexual responses.

The second major personal benefit to women that McElroy suggests is that pornography strips away the emotional confusion of real life sex. This suggestion is similar to pornography's ability to provide emotional information, but it extends it to some degree by pointing out that the experience of a fantasy is freer from emotional consequences than real interactions with people. The point here is that through pornography, women can experience diverse sexual situations without the emotional risk that might accompany those experiences if they were real. Women can experience an affair or lesbianism without worrying about the emotional effect on themselves and others. Similarly, men could experience affairs, homosexuality, bondage, and so on, without the potentially harmful effects of real world experimentation. In addition,

vicarious experience may prevent emotional strain if a decision is made to engage in real world experimentation. Pornography may give a sense of permission, a sense of sexual experimentation as acceptable.

Here, McElroy fails to consider a related issue. Consuming pornography can be considered an overt sexual act that may create an uncomfortable emotional response. Men and women may have feelings of shame, anger, or guilt when they consume. Pornography consumption is a stigmatized activity particularly considering that the anti-pornography feminists, along with right-wing conservatives, currently have the loudest voices in the debate (McElroy 1995; Kipnis 1997). Men and women may have negative emotional reactions based on a perception of participating in a socially unacceptable activity. Still, the presence of this emotional discomfort potentially undermines anti-porn feminist assertions of a monolithic male attitude toward women. Put simply, feelings of shame or guilt would not be consistent with a sexualized activity that is an expression of male sexual dominance. To reiterate a point made earlier in this paper...

"(I)f going to porn films or arcades were emblematic of male power, one might expect that the experience would be characterized by an easy confidence reflective of macho security.

For me, however-and I'm guessing for many men who have visited porn arcades or film houses-these periodic visits are always minor traumas. While there is an erotic excitement involved in the decision to attend and in the experience itself, this is mixed with considerable amounts of fear and embarrassment" (MacDonald 1990; 35).

The third personal benefit asserted by McElroy is a belief that pornography breaks down cultural and political stereotypes allowing women to interpret sex individually. This benefit also serves as a direct critique of the anti-porn feminist position in that women who consume are often characterized as psychologically overwhelmed by patriarchy, especially when the types of depictions they enjoy consuming are defined as

particularly degrading, for example scenes in which a man ejaculates into a woman's face (McElroy 1995). McElroy contends that depictions that are characterized as degrading are not intrinsically so. Instead, they are subject to individual interpretation. Whether or not something is degrading is a subjective judgment. According to McElroy, pornography allows women to view the full spectrum of sexual diversity and decide for themselves what is abusive and degrading and what is not. There is an emphasis on the diversity and moral ambiguity of sex in pornography. If this is the case, then all sorts of sex, from straight heterosexual intercourse to bondage and sadomasochism is open to individual interpretation. The presentation of sex in a morally ambiguous context allows women to validate their own interpretations and fantasies around sex, from a pro-sex feminist standpoint.

By emphasizing diversity and moral ambiguity, McElroy suggests that emphasis of interpretation should come from those people who consume a particular genre of pornography. By shifting interpretive authority to those who enjoy a particular type of pornography, women who consume those types of pornography are permitted to validate themselves. For example, Marcy Sheiner (1997) finds validation for her preference of the submissive position in sadomasochistic sex play through writing and consuming pornography that accepts that practice and position as a non-degrading, non-abusive form of sexual expression. She interprets sadomasochistic depictions from her own subject position, though she understands the anti-pornography critique of sadomasochistic pornography as inherently degrading and abusive toward women. That she interprets such depictions differently challenges the singular definition provided by anti-pornography feminism. She understands the critique yet rejects it.

This benefit of pornography and critique of anti-pornography feminism could have especially strong implications for the understanding of male consumers. Anti-porn feminist constructions of the male porn consumer suggest only one possible interpretation that men could apply to porn, an interpretation of men dominating women through degradation and abuse. McElroy's pro-sex position allows the possibility of multiple interpretations on the part of different male consumers. Various men may interpret the meaning of a fellatio scene or image completely differently: one man may interpret it as an act of domination, while another might interpret it as an act of trust and surrender. Ambiguity of interpretation destabilizes stereotypes surrounding the meaning of sex and depictions of sex in pornography.

A fourth personal benefit according to McElroy is a suggestion that pornography is a leveler of shame. Pornography takes away the guilt and shame women may feel for sexual responses they may have that are defined as wrong by others. Pornography validates all kinds of desire. By displaying a diversity of sexual expression in a non-judgmental context, pornography focuses on sex as good for its own sake avoiding the consistent negativity of sexual discussion in other contexts which tend to focus on AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, date rape, teen pregnancy, and so on (McElroy 1995). Sex and sexual diversity are depicted in a sex-positive context.

"If you love to give blow jobs, pornography applauds you. If you wonder about sex with a woman, pornography makes it seem harmless. If you wish to be overpowered by a man, porn allows you to see what it might look like. Videos make no comment on which sexual preferences are acceptable; they eroticize every aspect of the human body, from feet to breasts; no sexual question is wrong to ask; no sexual preference is wrong to pursue. Pornography is the true arena of sexual tolerance" (McElroy 1995; 139).

Pornography is one of the few areas in culture where a non-judgmental, diverse approach to sexuality is presented. This aspect of pornography can also be beneficial to male consumers in that it allows them to contemplate sexual choice without shame and guilt in the same way women can. Male consumers can contemplate same sex encounters, submissive positions, sex with transsexuals, and so on in a guilt free context. This would tend to cancel radical feminist assertions that men go to pornography to view a sexuality they already understand, male dominant heterosexuality. The question is: can men (or women) give themselves that permission despite a fairly rigid sexual ideology in culture in general? Still, the possibility is there.

The final personal benefit that McElroy discusses is the possibility that pornography can be used as sexual therapy. It can provide a sexual outlet. People who have difficulties finding partners, do not choose to engage with other people sexually, are widowed or divorced, and so on, can use pornography to help them meet their sexual needs despite solitude. In addition, porn can be an important part of keeping relationships sexually healthy. Sex therapist Bernie Zilbergeld (1990), for example, prescribes adult video as part of his sex therapy programs, contending that pornography often has the effect of spicing up a couple's sex life and making sex more satisfying for both partners. Porn allows for and can teach sexual variety that can help relationships (McElroy 1995).

The implications of this suggestion for male porn consumers also contradict radical feminist conceptions of how and why men consume porn. Rather than consuming pornography in order to vicariously dominate women and learn sexual dominance, the suggestion is that men can use porn to educate themselves in a variety of sexual practices

and teach themselves how to make sex a more pleasurable experience for both themselves and their partners, particularly women. If this is true, pornography could be seen as a force for mutuality in sexual relations between men and women rather than a force for patriarchal sexual domination of women by men.

McElroy also lists four political benefits of pornography for women.

Pornography and feminism are linked in terms of their success. Pornography increases the possibilities of women's speech because pornography is free speech applied to the sexual realm. Pornography may protect women because it might have a cathartic effect for men who have tendencies toward violence against women. Finally, legitimizing pornography would protect women sex workers who are stigmatized in society (McElroy 1995),

McElroy's suggestion that the fates of pornography and feminism are linked arises from the fact that both require an atmosphere of sexual freedom to survive and advance. Historically, lack of sexual tolerance has been used to attack feminist principles and issues such as birth control, abortion, women's sexual freedom, critiques of the institution of marriage, and so on (McElroy 1995). The implications of a lack of sexual tolerance for pornography are obvious. McElroy's correlation of the two may be somewhat spurious, but her contention that both need a similar atmosphere to flourish has a logical validity.

The success of feminism is important politically to women and has implications for men in general and male pornography consumers specifically. For women, feminism's general political goal is to improve social conditions for women, including in the realm of sexuality. To the degree that it is successful, women can demand better

treatment in the realm of sexuality and their relationships with men. As feminism is more successful, men will be required to engage in a sexuality of mutuality with women. This cannot happen if feminism is hampered by attitudes of sexual intolerance in society.

Pornography also can flourish in an atmosphere of sexual freedom. In addition, in an atmosphere of sexual tolerance, pornography can become a tool of feminism in attempting to secure a more just set of sexual relations between men and women. Female (feminist) producers of pornography such as Candida Royalle and Debi Sundahl produce pornography that is designed to appeal to women and couples by respecting women's sexuality. They present depictions of sex that foster a sense of mutuality for men and women (Nagle 1997). Candida Royalle says...

"The main thrust, no pun intended, is there is finally something that men and women can share together" (Nagle 1997; 158).

The implication of this for male pornography consumers is the possibility that men may become more sensitive to women's sexual needs and pleasure by viewing female/feminist informed pornography. In addition, feminist informed pornography that alters male dominant sexual roles in its depictions opens the possibility for men to view their sexuality in ways different from male dominant heterosexuality. The opening of personal sexuality for men and women through pornography has profound political potential for both.

McElroy's second political benefit, that pornography is free speech applied to sexuality, dovetails with the first political benefit. The application of free speech to sexuality through pornography guarantees that female/feminist informed sexual expression cannot be suppressed. Pornography as free speech allows the possibility of people challenging the sexual status quo through diverse depictions of sexuality.

McElroy believes this is especially important for women because historically their sexuality has been subject to more control than men's. However, this political benefit extends to men in that it permits male access to expression that can expand their sexual imagination beyond male dominant heterosexuality. If this is the case, then the anti-pornography feminist drive to suppress pornography could ultimately interfere with women's possibilities for gaining sexual justice.

Another way that the anti-pornography position may harm women rather than help them is by taking pornography away as a possible protection from men who have tendencies to be violent toward women. McElroy points out that some studies have found a possible cathartic effect of porn on male consumers that can diffuse violent tendencies. The research on the effects of pornography on men is contradictory and inconclusive. It is not known if pornography contributes to male sexual aggression, diffuses it, or does both in different situations; however, banning porn before this issue can be resolved could take away a possible protection from women (McElroy 1995). It also may take away a benefit from male porn consumers by depriving them of a possible outlet for their aggressive feelings.

The final political benefit for women that McElroy suggests is that legitimizing pornography will serve to protect women sex workers. The social stigma of being a sex worker creates isolation that increases the risk of their labor being exploited as well as increasing their risk of being victims of violence.

In terms of pornography consumption, the protection of sex workers through a legitimization of porn is important because it creates an atmosphere in which men cannot be openly exploitative and must learn more respectful sexualities.

Overall, the pro-sex/sex-positive feminist position is based on assumptions that pornography has the potential to open choice and expand freedom for people in the realm of sexuality.

The Moral Conservative Position

The moral conservative position regarding pornography differs from feminist theories in that it is not interested in pornography as an issue surrounding cost and benefit, safety and danger for women. It does not consider pornography in terms of its potentially misogynistic/patriarchal representation of sexuality. Rather it concerns itself with the potential for moral subversion found in the decontextualized images of sexuality within pornography. The problem is not power relations regarding gender, but the fact that pornography presents human sexuality in a way that disconnects it from the social setting that justifies sex as an activity and/or presents the potential consequences (McNair 1996).

Moral conservative positions toward pornography in western cultures, including the United States, are founded on traditional Judeo-Christian values which laud the nuclear family, monogamous sexual relationships within the context of marriage, and the reproductive function of sexuality compared to its pleasurable pursuit (McNair 1996). This emphasis on the reproductive function of sexuality also places moral conservative values in support of heterosexual relationships exclusively.

Pornography, of course, is not consistent with the Christian values that inform the moral conservative position. Pornography is much more likely to portray sexuality that is not sanctified by marriage, is non-monogamous (to the point of portraying multiple

partner sex), does not portray possible consequences of sex in terms of emotions and/or physical health, with consequences in terms of pregnancy also generally ignored (unless one of the people portrayed happens to be pregnant). Pornography is removed in terms of the situations it portrays from the everyday sexual experience of those who consume it (McNair 1996). In short, pornography represents all those things that the moral conservative position regarding sexuality opposes.

According to Mielke (1995), the primary issue that Christianity has regarding pornography is that it encourages a self-centered attitude toward sex. Within Christian teaching, sex is seen as a mutual act in which the emotions and joy of God's reproductive plan are expressed. The attention of each partner should be on the other, not on a self-centered desire for visceral pleasure.

This need to focus on the pleasure of another, loved and cherished in marriage, seems to be linked to the possibility that the desire for visceral, carnal pleasure leads the mind to contemplate possibilities that are forbidden by God. In fact, the Christian ethic toward sexuality seems to be exceptionally concerned with the harmful possibilities brought on by sexual fantasy, the inner-life of the individual (Mielke 1995). This of course makes pornography exceptionally problematic in the moral conservative scheme because pornography is impure sexual fantasy made concrete in a textual form.

It seems that one of the first rules of sexuality in the Judeo-Christian tradition is, "Though shalt not commit adultery" (Exodus 20: 14). This particular commandment forbids against a sexual act, an overt behavior. A person shall not have sexual relations with another person outside of the union of marriage. It is a straightforward, unambiguous directive about sexuality and it governs the concrete world.

However, nearly immediately afterwards in the same Ten Commandments an edict regarding sexuality and the inner-life is given to Moses by God.

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, *though shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife*, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor's (Exodus 20:17; emphasis mine).

This commandment does not emphasize behavior, but desire. To covet something is an internal process, a wanting or yearning. That one shall not covet the neighbor's wife means that one may not desire the neighbor's wife. This is exceptionally problematic when one considers pornography since the business of pornography is making material through overt depiction the fantasized desire for another's wife (or manservant, maidservant, ox, or ass for that matter).

The emphasis on the dangers of sexual fantasy, its potential to offend God, is reemphasized by Jesus in the New Testament.

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart (Matthew 27:28)."

Jesus clearly says here that one cannot think sexually of a woman without fantasizing and therefore committing an offense against God. It is not clear whether or not lustful thoughts towards one's spouse are considered adultery; however, the Christian/moral conservative position that emphasizes the reproductive rather than lustful aspects of sexuality seems to indicate that lust towards one's spouse is probably not the best Christian approach. Either way, the emphasis is on the internal processes of the individual. Sin is not primarily located in behavior but in fantasy, in desire. Pornography then becomes a primary mechanism for sin because its function is the generation of fantasy that directly breaks the laws of God.

Why this prohibition against lewd fantasy exists in the Bible and is so vehemently clung to within the moral conservative position is unclear. One might speculate that there is an element of fantasy that changes the sex act from the reproductive function intended by God to visceral hedonism. One might choose to take simple lustful, bodily pleasure in the sex act even with one's own wife rather than doing the act for the glory of God (Mielke 1995). It seems then that the root of Christian/moral conservative sexual mores is an attempt to avoid selfishness in sex, to avoid personal carnal pleasure. It seems likely that the issue with selfishness in sexuality is that when one is being selfish one is not concentrating on the glory of the Lord. The body undermines the privileged position of the mind and soul in the worship of god if it is left unrestrained. The prohibitions against sexual fantasy in The Bible seem designed to head such trouble off before it begins, to make sure that selfish hedonism does not intrude on the glory of God. Pornography is then problematic in that it is specifically designed to display, further, and create new hedonistic fantasies. As such, pornography is not just subversive in terms of undermining traditional Christian values, but it threatens to undermine the worship and glory of God.

The Bible, and the moral conservative position that springs from it, seems to place a natural bulls-eye on the male pornography consumer (we can assume that the vast majority of consumers are male since the one warned against lust in The Bible is male). Not only does the male consumer undermine traditional values regarding sexuality, marriage, and monogamy when he engages pornographic fantasy, but he siphons some of God's glory by losing focus and concentrating on his own carnal pleasure. Even worse,

making him ultimately despicable in Christian eyes, he does so deliberately when he seeks the forbidden adulterous fantasy in pornography.

Scientific Approaches

Scientific discourses surrounding the male pornography consumer are not independent theoretical positions. Instead, scientific approaches (primarily in psychological research endeavors) seek to empirically determine the cause and effect relationship between consuming pornography and subsequent behavior of consumers (McNair 1996). In terms of grounding empirical findings, scientific researchers are dependent on metanarratives about the possible effects of pornography including feminist discourses and moral conservative positions. The most influential of these have been anti-pornography feminism and right-wing conservatism (McNair 1996).

The original impetus in creating scientific interest in empirically investigating the relationship between pornographic texts and porn consumer behavior was the appointment of the Commission on Obscenity and Pornography by President Lyndon Johnson in 1968 (Byrne and Kelley 1984; McNair 1996). The mandate of the Commission was to investigate the effects of obscenity and pornography upon the public, particularly minors, and its relationship to crime and other antisocial behavior (Byrne and Kelley 1984). The mission implied in this mandate is finding the cause and effect relationships between pornography and porn consumer behavior.

The reason for such a mandate was the rise of prevalence in pornographic materials in the United States and a concern that such material could have harmful consequences within society. The concern with possible harm was informed by the rise

of feminist and moral conservative concerns regarding pornography (McNair 1996).

Considering that both positions at the time were focused on the issue of pornography as a social problem, it is not a coincidence that most empirical research on the subject was, and has been, focused on the potentially bad consequences of pornography on consumer behavior. In particular, links between pornography consumption and sexual aggression have been sought (McNair 1996).

The vast majority of empirical research regarding pornography's effects on consumer behavior has been conducted by psychologists using various experimental methods (Byrne and Kelley 1984; McNair 1996). The model for such research, one that makes a great deal of sense considering the presence of many psychologists, is a stimulus-response hypothesis (McNair 1996). Examples of these types of experiments involve setting up situations that allow consumers to aggress before and after viewing pornography with a comparison to a control group, or measuring penile tumescence as a signal of arousal to particular types of sexualized materials (McNair 1996). This of course assumes that arousal is an adequate indicator of potential aggression.

Other empirical approaches involve documenting real life cases of aggression "caused" by pornography (McNair 1996).

The scientific approach to characterizing pornography consumers is vague. The primary reason is that empirical research tends to justify itself because it is empirical and therefore does not need to present the discourses that inform it. With the proliferation of discourses, particularly feminist and moral conservative discourses, empirical researchers can afford to hypothesize cause and effect relationships that assume a potential for harm without acknowledging the large-scale discourses that inform it. Because those

discourses create a commonsense understanding that pornography is harmful, it makes sense to investigate those harmful effects. In essence, the scientific approach to empirically investigating pornography consumers may have the effect of reifying discourses that inform the empirical approach.

Summary

It should be clear that there are a number of positions in the academics and the wider culture that inform interpretations of the meaning and impact of pornography in society. Those discussed here include, anti-pornography feminism, anti-censorship feminism, pro-sex feminism, moral conservative approaches, and scientific approaches.

Of most interest to this research project are the assumptions of each position that inform their understanding of pornography and inevitably their characterization of the male pornography consumer. Each position is invested in assumptions that create a particular way of seeing the male consumer, from potentially dangerous to women, to immoral, to varied beyond simple characterization. Within this chapter it is hoped that an understanding of each position's basic assumptions about porn and their implications for the characterization of the male consumer have been illustrated. As will be theorized in the next chapter, such an understanding is necessary in that characterizations of male consumers in academics and other areas of culture may have effects on the way society in general constructs the porn user and how the porn user constructs his own identity as a consumer.

CHAPTER 4

THEORY: CONSTRUCTION OF CONSUMER IDENTITY

Introduction

The focus of this chapter will be to outline a theoretical framework from which to begin analyzing the possible ways that discourses about pornography and porn users in culture may impact the identity construction of men as consumers. In this chapter the concern is with the macro level social structure that provides the overall context for pornography consumption in the society, the micro level context in which individual porn consumption actually takes place, the potential interactions between the two contexts, and the ways in which those interactions might effect the identity construction of the individual consumer.

With these concerns in mind, it is necessary to draw upon theory that addresses the dynamics of micro versus macro level interaction in the social setting with particular emphasis on the ways in which those interactions influence the lives of individual members of society. The two theoretical approaches with implications for identity construction of porn users that will be discussed in this chapter are the ideas of Michel Foucault and the theoretical tradition of cultural studies. Foucault constructs a theory of a deployment of sexuality through discourse carried out at the level of interaction, with said deployment having the effect of creating cultural identity positions that actual people

in society come to occupy, in particular, positions of perversion. One such position, for the purposes of this paper, is the position of male pornography consumer. To the degree that those discursively constructed positions lock people into ways of being seen by others and ways of seeing themselves, people become trapped in a panoptic gaze that seeks to lock them into their specified subject position. Cultural studies, through the idea of hegemony as consensus, illuminates the power relations involved in such a deployment.

In addition, both cultural studies and the work of Foucault posit the possibility of resistance to defining discourses at the micro level of interaction. That is, individuals, including male porn users, are capable of resistant identity construction and self-conception within the large-scale discourses of culture, with the potential of creating new identity spaces.

The overarching concern of this chapter is to explore the ideas within these two traditions and to discuss the ways in which such ideas might be applied to the analysis of the male porn user. In particular, these theories illuminate the ways in which discourses about pornography like feminism, moral conservatism, and so on might influence the identity of men in the individual consuming context and how those men might resist that influence.

Michel Foucault

The primary reasons for looking at pornography in a sociological manner are to understand the role/s of pornography in the construction of society and the realities of individuals, in the case of this paper, male consumers of pornography. Also, the ways in

which society and individuals construct pornography, influence its content and meaning. In order to do such an analysis, it is necessary to develop and/or use a theoretical approach that accounts for both implied directions of effect for pornography: first, pornography influencing the individual and society; and second, the individual and society impacting pornography. More specifically, the question is how is power related to pornography? Is power contained in pornography as it writes sexuality upon society and the individuals within society that consume it? Is power located in the individual consumer as s/he writes his or her own meanings upon the pornography s/he consumes? Is power located in social institutions that use pornography to construct a populace that is suited toward preservation of the status quo? Or, is power located in all of these areas and moving in a variety of ways?

In order to begin theorizing in ways that may illuminate these issues, it is useful to return to the original premise of this paper. Pornography is text that reflects discourse. It is a set of representations in words and image that reflect ideas about sex and sexuality. For this project, I am concerned with one strand of discourse within the set of discourses related to pornography, that of male pornography consumers. This narrows the scope of inquiry but does not change the basic questions raised by an approach to pornography as discursively inscribed text. How do the discourses reflected in pornography construct identities, and how are discourses surrounding pornography disseminated? Are there discourses that interact with pornography in ways that reinforce and/or undermine the presumed meaning of pornography? Are the discourses that construct pornography's meaning all-powerful and determining, or can they be resisted?

One way to begin is to ask, what is it that pornography does? In previous discussion, it was pointed out that at least three different feminist academic discourses, a moral conservative discourse, as well as a scientific discourse, discuss the possible implications of pornography's existence for society and the individual.

The anti-pornography feminist discourse asserts that pornography reflects a sexuality that teaches men dominance through sexual behavior. Men internalize messages of sexual dominance from pornography that they act on in their daily lives to the detriment of women, with the overall effect being the reinforcement of patriarchy.

Anti-censorship feminists criticize the sexist and violent aspects of pornographic discourse, but accept the possibility of different types of pornographic expression. In addition, anti-censorship feminists criticize anti-pornography feminists for creating a monolithic discourse on pornography that tends to be unrepresentative of the actual diversity of meaning within pornography; as well as, creating a limiting definition of sexuality for women and for men.

Pro-sex feminists tend to see pornography as reflecting potentially liberating ideas about sex and sexuality. The representation of sex and sexuality through words and images can have the effect of opening possibilities for the expression of sex and sexuality in new ways. Pornography can provide a forum to legitimate and expand a variety of sexual practices.

Scientific discourse approaches pornography as essentially a causal variable in producing behavior in consumers, particularly male consumers. The scientific position is concerned with pornography as a social problem in that it tends to look at pornography as a cause of undesirable behavior, for example, sexual violence in the form of rape.

There are two things that all of these positions agree upon. First, pornography has a relationship to sexuality. It constructs sexuality or it is an expression of ideology (particularly patriarchal) through sexuality. Either way, the second commonality is apparent in the analysis of pornography's relation to sexuality. Pornography is powerful. For the anti-pornography feminists, it has the power to influence men to use sexuality as a tool of patriarchal dominance. For pro-sex feminists, pornography has the power to alter attitudes and sexuality in ways that create a greater sexual freedom. For those who approach pornography through a scientific discourse, pornography has the power to influence or cause behaviors like rape. For all three, pornography is a form of power that can construct and be expressed through sexuality.

What all this means is that pornography is a channel for creating discourses about sexuality that have power implications. In addition, pornography is a site of contention that generates discourses around it in the form of analysis of pornography and the people who are effected by it. One theoretical approach that takes into account all three of the important aspects of pornography, its form as text that reflects discourse, sexuality, and power as applied to those who consume or are affected by it, is presented by Michel Foucault in his *The History of Sexuality: Volume I* (1978). In this work, Foucault discusses how a general discourse of sexuality, in fact the creation of sexuality as discourse, developed through historical circumstances. Though pornography is not his focus, he does mention it as one component of the larger discourse of sexuality. This, I believe, puts pornography in its proper place, as one influential aspect intersecting other components, particularly academic and moral conservative discourses, that construct an overall discourse of sexuality. Foucault's overall premise is one of power and

knowledge. In the case of *The History of Sexuality* he basically proposes that sexuality is a particular knowledge construction that influences and is influenced by power relations in society.

Foucault traces the beginning of sexuality, that is the discursive form of how to do sex and be sexual, to the institution of confession as created by the Christian pastoral. During confession, the person confessing is required to state in detail all the behaviors, particularly sexual behaviors, that could be thought of as sin. Contrary to ideas that Christianity and confession are repressive towards sex, Foucault asserts that confession became the model for, the moment in which, sexuality began to form as a discursive force. In essence, confession was not repressive toward sexuality, but instead became a factory through which sexuality as a discursive knowledge was produced. Confession materialized a discursive site in which sexual behavior could be talked about and categorized, conceived of as licit or illicit, in concrete discourse. Knowledge of sexuality is produced as sex as it is spoken about within confession. More specifically, sexuality is produced as it becomes knowledge through discourse.

As knowledge is produced in the form of sexuality, schisms begin to appear. Sexual behavior begins to fragment into discursively constructed perversions, normal sexuality is then implicitly defined in-between these fragments of behavior. As sexual behaviors are discursively defined as perversions, discourse becomes infused with power. Once, sexual perversions were simply acts that an individual engaged in. With the increase of discourse, an increasing colonization of a person came to exist, a specification of individuals (Foucault 1978). Rather than perversions being acts in and of themselves, they became the behaviors of a new social category of persons: perverts. The discourses

of sexuality created types of sexual people, a sexuality that effected every part of that person. With the proliferation of sexuality as opposed to sex, the homosexual became a person rather than a person that engaged in homosexual acts (Foucault 1978). Discourse as a vector of power becomes apparent as it "subjects" an individual in reference to itself. Discourse colonizes the individual and concretizes itself in the flesh of the individual pervert.

Discursive sexuality does not remain in the confessional, or if it does the site of the confessional does not remain static. Sexuality, and its production as knowledge through discourse, moves to the psychiatrist's couch, the doctor's office. The discourses of sexuality, the defining of perversions, become medicalized (Foucault 1978). The sites of sexualized discourse become more numerous and sexuality proliferates. Sexuality gains power, becomes a more forceful vector through which to "subject" individuals. Its movement into discursive sites of medicalization, psychiatry and medicine, tie the discourses ever closer to the body and mind. It compartmentalizes selves into boxes of sexuality, into categories of perversion, categories of perversion like pornography consumption. People become separated as they are defined into different areas of discursive sexuality.

The basic idea here is that talking about/representing sex makes a discursive ideology of sex pervasive. This is not to say that a sanctioned sexuality is constructed, but instead, a set of discursive intersections around perversions comes to form an implicit sexuality. The pervasiveness of sex as discourse comes to be a reality at the intersection of these discourses, which is necessarily the bodies and minds of those who engage in discourse, individual humans.

Furthermore, as psychiatry, particularly psychoanalysis, adopts the logic of confession they seek to root out pleasure. That is, they medicalize pleasure by connecting it to biological instinct and psychopathologies that are in turn assumedly expressed through sex and sexuality. Interestingly, these discourses that define sex as the expression of an instinctual need for pleasure essentially create the discourse of sexuality as the search for pleasure through sex, thus the discourse is justified in reference to itself as scientific. Discourses intersect. Science and sexuality come to reference each other, though in large part they create and justify each other, with possible implications for feminist and moral conservative positions as they intersect the discourses of sexuality and pornography.

At this point sexuality becomes a search for knowledge, a search for the truth of pleasure, and various discourses come to define the appropriate ways to seek pleasure through sexuality, most particularly heterosexual genitally centered sexual pleasure that is linked to a discourse of reproduction thus making it doubly powerful (Foucault 1978), a definition obviously related to by modern moral conservatives. However, just because typical sexuality has come to be defined as genitally centered does not mean other bodily centers of sexual pleasure cannot find an expression as sexuality, particularly mental and visual stimulation through depictions of both licit and illicit sex. In my opinion, the discourse/s of sexuality expressed through pornography are centered here. The feminist, moral conservative, and socio-scientific discourses that seek to analyze the impact of pornography are also centered here as they seek to investigate the implications of this particular form of sexuality.

This seems complicated, but it only scratches the surface. Pornography as text displaying discourse/s on sexuality spawns other discourses about pornography and in turn more about sexuality. Some of these discourses intersect other discourses that are also constructing discourses of sexuality, including academic, scientific, and religious discourses of sexuality. Examples of these are the previously discussed discourses of moral conservatism, anti-pornography feminism, pro-sex feminism, anti-censorship feminism, and scientific discourses about pornography. These discourses take as their object the consumer of pornography in general, and importantly for this paper, the male user of pornography specifically. All three of these discourses take a “blank-slate” view of the male pornography consumer. That is, they posit a male porn consumer who will be written upon/colonized by the presentation of sex in pornography. They all have different opinions of how this colonization can and will be displayed as the colonized consumer interacts as a subject in society, yet they all implicitly accept the power of the pornographic form to subject the male pornography consumer in ways that will influence his behavior. What they fail to acknowledge is the way that their discourses potentially combine with each other and other discourses on sexuality to colonize and create male consumers of pornography. In other words, these discourses could influence the identity of male consumers as greatly as pornography influences them. Even this paper is complicit in creating a discourse of male pornography consumers. This “subjecting” of the individual through defining discourses is a major focus here.

At this point, it is necessary to backtrack to make a connection. Foucault discusses how the act of creating and engaging in discourse creates categories of perversion. The discursive form of the perversion as organizing knowledge then

colonizes an individual transforming him/her into a pervert. Their selfhood, their subjectivity, is ascribed by their status as pervert. The person that engages in homosexual acts discursively constructed as perversions becomes homosexual in fact. There is a move from doing to being. So too with the male pornography consumer. Pornography consumption is seen as a difference, something to be studied and understood because it is not the heterosexual, genitally centered, discursively constructed, sanctioned sexuality. Pornography consumption is an other sexuality. The person who engages in the consumption of pornography is engaging in illicit pleasure with consequences that are unknown, but must become known in order for them to be controlled. One of the ways to control a porn user is to subject him to defining discourses. The male consumer of pornography becomes a site of colonization, a discursive intersection, and in the process he is literally subjected, or made into a 'subject' of his own sex/sexuality. As the person who engages in homosexual acts becomes a homosexual as a person, so the man who engages in acts of pornography consumption becomes a male user of pornography, which discursively defines him as a pervert. He becomes a discursive intersection. He becomes a site where the discourses reflected within pornography about sexuality meet the discourses about pornography to construct an identity, or at least part of an identity.

Up to this point, the argument is unidirectional; the individual is subjected beyond his/her control as a site of discursive intersections of sexuality, perversion, pornography, and so on. This is not necessarily the case. Foucault (1978) points out that where there is a push toward subjection, there is also the possibility of resistance to subjection. Though Foucault is not particularly clear as to how resistance is accomplished, I believe one way is through the very nature of human beings as creators of discourse. Human beings can

talk about and express their personal understandings of their subjectivities, including their sexualities. They can concretize their own experience, their own self-conceptions in discourse. Self-reflexivity, or even more fundamentally just talk, can lead to a conception of self that pushes back against the discourses that intersect and seek to define. The male pornography consumer can construct his own reality of his pornographic consumption through discourse. Perhaps he reinforces the category of male consumer of pornography in the short term, but as more particulars become concretized in discourse, as diverse discourse is produced, the category may lose its sharp focus, become blurred and fluid. In time the discursive intersection of the male porn user may implode itself as it loses its meaning in overlapping discursive roads at the intersection.

As reassuring as the notion of resistance is, engaging it is easier said than done, at least at an explicit discursive level. Perhaps resistance frequently occurs inarticulately at the subconscious level but may be much more difficult to consciously, directly express. This difficulty has its roots in the way large-scale discourses constructed of intersecting discourses, such as sexuality, come to be powerful in society.

According to Foucault (1978), power flows. Power is expressed as it moves from discursive intersection to discursive intersection, point of expression to point of expression. It is not focused in any one place. One class does not wield power, subjecting other classes with its discourses. Instead power moves about society as discourse moves about society, constructing knowledge in everyone and power everywhere. Sexuality is powerful not because it is defined by men as the powerful class in patriarchy using it as a tool to subject women to male whims, male needs, but because it is diffuse, fluid as it moves in the form of discourse between everyone in society.

Similarly, discourse defining perverts, including male porn consumers, is powerful because the discourse flows from site to site through interaction creating a potentially overarching web of subjection.

Foucault (1978) refers to this in reference to discourses of sexuality as a deployment of sexuality. Discourses intersecting and working together come to construct a large-scale ideological structure of sexuality, particularly by creating perversions. The discourses deployed (and the word deployed expresses this concept) are part of an overall strategy of power. Certain ends in society need to be met through the deployment of sexuality, such as control of a population as a reproducible workforce, and the discourses that define sexuality coalesce in ways that make that strategy happen. What is interesting in Foucault's conception of the strategic deployment of discourse, including sexuality, is that there is no driving subjectivity behind it. The deployment logically occurs in the little confrontations of power that occur day after day over time. Small discursive battles fought over and over eventually come to create a sort of discursive order or ideology that can be called sexuality. That is not to say that a particular class's interests are not expressed in ways that dominate the web of discursive power relations, they just do so without conscious direction. The discourses of the more powerful in society have a greater chance of winning more of the small discursive battles, overwhelming the dialogue of the less powerful at the level of interaction. Sites of potentially powerful deployment of discourse around sexuality include the academy and religion.

Perhaps, it would make sense to think of power in society as resonance. Certain discourses and intersections of discourses have more opportunity to resonate throughout society as they become more prevalent through subtle power relations. The discourses of

the more powerful, with presumably a number of interests in common, intersect and come together in ways that tend to dominate. This is particularly true when certain groups have the means to more readily and thoroughly distribute discourses into the deployment of power. Certainly, this applies to pornography as it reflects discourse in that it is distributed in the most powerful/far-reaching form of discursive representation yet developed, modern mass media and information technologies. Pornography and the meanings within it are pervasive in that pornography permeates so many forms of distribution, including books, magazines, film, videotape, cable television, and computers to name some. However, the discourses that frame the meaning of pornography and pornography consumption also can be distributed through these means, for example, anti-pornography feminists or moral conservatives appearing on cable television to discuss pornography. In advanced technological societies, these media are pervasive, meaning that the discourses they distribute are pervasive. It might even be possible to make a case that pornography has no meaning of its own outside of framing discourses like heterosexuality, feminism, moral conservatism, and so on. Regardless, those discourses in pornography with the most resonance, particularly those images and words that present the types of sexualities that resonate the most in society, are the most pervasive. In the case of United States society, it seems likely that pornography that depicts genitally centered pleasure with a sexualized female object is the most pervasive because the intersections of various discourses about gender and sexuality tend to create the greatest resonance for this type of sexuality. One interesting area of speculation is to attempt to discern the degree to which discourses framing pornography consumption as perversion are attached to the dominant ethos of heterosexuality. It is possible that their critical

discourses toward pornography reinforce the sexual status quo by creating pornography consumption as perversion.

All of this has a hegemonic effect, an effect of privileging one discourse over others (Foucault 1978). An actual hegemony is not created because there is no actual direction through discourse of particular interests, yet the resonance of particular discourses in society tend to create a type of rigidified/reified knowledge of sexuality in society. The large-scale resonance of certain discursive ideas tend to make those discourses seem like the natural order of things, particularly when many large-scale discourses intersect and reinforce each other, such as the discourses of pleasure, sexuality, science, religion, and so on. These great discursive deployments tend to appear as the natural order of things limiting the imagination of those involved in discursive interaction and knowledge production thus limiting the types of discourses that can be expressed. In addition, framing discourses that are more widely deployed have an opportunity to influence identity construction of those that are framed, including pornography consumers. One cannot express a different discourse if one cannot think of and articulate a different discourse. More importantly, the reification of discourses tends to depoliticize them (Barthes 1972), obscuring their role in the deployment of a strategy of power. In the case of pornography, particularly that created for male consumers, the genitally centered, female objectifying form of sexuality likely resonates the most, is most reified, and is therefore the most powerful.

Pornography has a twofold impact in reifying conceptions of sexuality. Not only does it increase the resonance of "normal" sexuality through what it depicts, it defines normal sexuality by representing a perversion. So-called, 'normal' sexual subjects do not

need pornography for sexual pleasure. They engage in sexuality and the experience of pleasure with another person within socially defined morals, values, norms, and laws.

The incitement to masturbation that is assumed to accompany the consumption of pornography, makes porn use a deviation from the discursively defined norm.

Pornography has the effect of reinforcing the hegemonic effect of sexuality, while at the same time undermining the self-conception and discursive existence of the person who consumes pornography by defining him as a pervert. This has the overall effect of lowering his level of power to make his discourse heard, certainly not to the degree of homosexuals, or pedophiles, or other more extreme perverts, but to some extent all the same. The evidence for this comes from the fact that discourses such as the anti-pornography feminist discourse, the pro-sex feminist discourse, and the scientific discourse on the causal effects of pornography have to some extent sprung up around the category male porn consumer as pervert.

Perhaps the best metaphor for analyzing the potential effects of hegemonic framing through discourse is Foucault's (1977) adaptation of Bentham's panopticon. The panopticon is an architectural design for a prison. This prison is built in a particular way in order to maximize the power of the authorities to control the inmates of the facility. The panopticon consists of an outer circle in which the cells are built. Each cell holds a single occupant, cut off from communication with the other inmates of the prison. At the center of the circle, separated by open ground is a guard tower. The tower is situated so that the guard within the tower can peer inside any cell. The cells are backlit in order to illuminate the activities of the prisoners, while at the same time the movements of the guard are obscured from the inmates. This creates an atmosphere in which the prisoners,

mental patients, and/or schoolchildren (Foucault 1977) must assume that they are always being observed lest they risk punishment by being caught in an unauthorized behavior. More importantly, the prisoners must be aware of what the guard defines as allowed and not allowed in order to make sure they commit no transgressions. In the process of always adhering to those definitions the prisoners internalize them. The definitions become part of the subjectivity of the inmate, he is thus subjected to the discursive definitions of the guard. When the process of internalization is complete, then there is no need to have a guard within the tower. The definitions of the guard are suffused throughout the inmate population and control is complete.

Foucault (1977) elaborates this architectural design into a metaphor for power and control within a society. Essentially, sanctions, or threat of sanctions, for deviating from the definitions of normal in society create a panoptic gaze that infuses discursive power throughout the interactions of culture. An interesting example of how this works is articulated by Bartky (1990) when she talks about the panoptic enforcement of norms of femininity for women in the United States. According to Bartky (1990), women exist within a panoptic system in which discourses of what is appropriately feminine are enforced through sanctions at the everyday level of interaction. Women who do not fit the definition of feminine beauty do not achieve the goals set for them within heterosexual interaction, they do not get dates or find husbands. Overweight women are subjected to snide comments from people they don't know. Women who fail to carry themselves with appropriate modesty are labeled in disparaging ways and sometimes physically attacked. This atmosphere of sanction provides motivation for women to adhere to the discursive definitions of appropriate femininity. As they do so, through

rigid discipline (Foucault 1977) of their presentation, they internalize those standards and definitions and apply them to themselves. At that point, sanctions are no longer applied, but the existence of the panopticon means they could be reapplied. The most efficient way to avoid them is to be feminine. Panoptic power is complete when the woman comes to define herself in terms of the discourses that surround her. The gaze of the guard, that is society, is transferred from outside to inside making the woman self-controlled. They occupy both the cell and the tower at the same time. Of course, there is not a complete panoptic in society regarding femininity, otherwise there would be no one to discursively define as different and sanction.

The same type of dynamic might work around porn users. Consider the case of women who are discursively defined as different. In terms of panoptic ideology they may still define themselves in reference to the standards of culture. They will see that they do not fit that definition. In other words, their position is analogous to the subject position of pervert. As such they may feel incredible guilt, as overweight women often do (Bartky 1990). Porn consumers are discursively defined through various discourses (feminist, moral conservative) as perverts. That is they are engaging in behavior not sanctioned by the guard in the tower. As such, they are subject to sanction as perverts. To the degree that they internalize the definition of themselves as perverts they are likely to feel guilt, embarrassment, and/or shame. These feelings are likely to be more intense if they are in a situation where the agents of the panopticon, a.k.a. people in society, can threaten them with or impose sanctions. The panopticon as social control is enacted at the everyday level of interaction. The tower is all around and the cells are where we are. The difference between the architectural and the social panopticons is that the social

panopticon can never have a complete gaze. This offers an opportunity for resistance, particularly if there is reward. The satiating or curiosity or the building of excitement may be examples of such rewards for the pornography consumer.

Regardless of the degree to which the panoptic gaze is applied to the porn consumer, it must be taken into account by consumers. They may resist, but there are likely times when the intense gaze of the guard will fall upon them. What may be interesting to discover is which discourses about male porn consumers are most deeply or readily internalized. Feminist discourses or moral conservative discourses may be more or less prevalent in the consumer identity as discourses that seek to define the porn consumer as pervert. What is assumed is that such discourses do have hegemonic/panoptic effects in society and that consumers may not always be able to articulate their resistance and/or compliance.

The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to restore some discursive power to the male porn consumer by giving him a forum for discursive engagement. Through interviews with male consumers of pornography I intend to give the porn consumer the opportunity to escape outside stereotypical discursive subjection and express his own self-construction through his own discursive account of his relationship to pornography and other people. Also, I intend to look for a variety of ways of being a male pornography consumer so that the variety of expressed discourse can begin the process of imploding the dominant discursive category of male pornography consumer. The weight of monolithic discursive dominance and hegemony crumbles under the weight of diversity.

The main tension in Foucault's presentation of the deployment of sexuality is between hegemonic effects and individual resistance. Because of this, some use of conceptions found in cultural studies may be of use, particularly concepts of hegemony as consensus.

Cultural Studies

Cultural studies is important to this paper in that it provides a way of theorizing how discourses, including pornography, become prevalent and accepted in society. The most essential concept is that of hegemony which has its roots in the work of neo-Marxist theorist and political activist Antonio Gramsci (1929). Gramsci essentially defines hegemony as those ideological structures that serve to protect the status quo. He posits a top down control of ideological distribution from the elite to those who must be controlled.

Building on Gramsci's work is Stuart Hall (1972) who posits hegemony as "consensus" which may be more appropriate to this discussion.

"Consensus may be defined as the 'lowest common denominator' in the values and beliefs which are widely shared amongst the population of a society. It provides the basis of continuity and fundamental agreement in common social life. 'The consensus' is the structure of common-sense ideology and beliefs in the public at large. In formal democracies, a great deal of what holds the social order together consists of those tacit, shared agreements about fundamental issues embedded at the level of 'common sense ideology', rather than what is written down in constitutional protocols and documents. 'The consensus' on any specific issue is however extremely fluid and difficult to define. The opinions of very few individuals will coincide exactly with it" (Hall 1972; 12).

In terms of widely shared values and beliefs, gender and sexuality are among the most diffuse. Nearly everyone understands and lives their lives by these hegemonic/consensus value systems yet there are any number of ways that each could be

interpreted or described at the individual level. Even at the group level such concepts are diffuse perhaps explaining the difference between interpretations of pornography and male pornography consumers by different feminist and academic discourses. As Hall (1972) points out, consensus hegemony will never be uniform or total which allows for some concept of resistance. Cultural studies allows some inroads into understandings of how subject positions, such as male pornography consumer, can be both hegemonically defined and incredibly diffuse at the same time. In many ways, this way of thinking is a restatement of the idea of the panopticon. Panoptic power is rooted in the discursive elements that construct consensus. As such, consensus has enormous power in defining subject positions; however, the fact that consensus can never be total allows the pornography consumer some leeway to resist, to escape the panoptic gaze.

The primary utility of a consensus view of hegemony rather than a top down view is that consensus implicates the individual in hegemony construction. The individual is part of the consensus regarding hegemonic views, whether it is the view of what pornography is, what the male pornography consumer is, or how pornography is used. Cultural studies theorizes the presence of the subject in both the tower and the cell.

However, a consensus view also allows for negotiation. If hegemony is transmitted from the top down then it is nearly irresistible. Those in power dictate perception. If a consensus view is utilized, then hegemony construction becomes subject to individual processes of interpretation and micro-political interaction, and there is opportunity for diversity as hegemony construction shifts contexts from person to person. The interpretation of pornography, what it means in the context of its consumption becomes located within the individual consuming it in that context. There will almost

certainly be an influence from the surrounding hegemonic context, the larger consensus; however, the actual meaning of any text, pornography itself or the porn consumer, is dependent on the immediate context and subject position of the individual consuming or being it. There is a tension between hegemonic effects and resistance that is visible in Foucault. The individual cannot interpret outside the social context, but there is room for resistance and non-hegemonic strands of interpretation because of the diversity of contexts within which consumption of pornography can take place. This is Janice Radway's (1984) point in her interpretation of how women read and construct the meanings of romance novels. She insists that the large scale consensus context of romance reading, patriarchy, inevitably influences the interpretations of the readers but she goes on to assert,

“The point I want to make here is that when analysis proceeds from within the belief system actually brought to bear on a text by its readers, the analytical interpretation of the meaning of a character's behavior is more likely to coincide with that meaning as it is constructed and understood by the readers themselves. Thus the account offered to explain the desire to experience this particular fantasy is also more likely to approximate the motives that actually initiate the readers' decisions to pick up a romance. While the romantic heroine may appear foolish, dependent, and even pathetic to a woman who has already accepted as given the equality of male and female abilities, she appears courageous, and even valiant, to another still unsure that such equality is a fact or that she herself might want to assent to it” (Radway 1984; 78).

If we look at what Radway is saying in reference to male pornography consumers rather than female romance readers, we can surmise that the particular textual meaning of pornography, for example the idea that pornography embodies messages of male dominance and female submission, might be interpreted differently by someone who is not even aware that such a position could be taken. If the pornography consumer is not looking for messages of male dominance, but is instead looking for messages about

women who might value him sexually, then the interpretation by the individual is an instance of resistance to a hegemonic textual meaning. This does not mean that the person is not influenced by possible messages of male dominance, but it does mean that he is constructing the narrative of pornography differently than he would be expected to if hegemonic ideology were simply transmitted whole through the text. He has an opportunity to speak differently about his experience because his individual context, his place of resistance, is his own.

In her analysis of romance reading and romance readers, Radway (1984) is deliberately approaching the issues of cultural meanings in popular fiction from two vantage points. One vantage point is that of the text and the other is that of the reader. She points out that this approach makes coming to any direct, all encompassing conclusions difficult. Instead she comes up with indistinct conclusions because the two directions of analysis lead to different understandings of how to interpret romance reading. Radway (1984) suggests that rather than uniformly reinforcing or challenging the status quo, the effects of romance literature and romance reading as behavior are indistinct. When looking at romance reading as it is understood by the women who read it, she finds that the activity of romance reading and how women understand it is oppositional to hegemonic patriarchal ideals because it allows the women to briefly refuse their social role. On the other hand, a strict narrative analysis leads to a conclusion of support for the status quo because romance seems to “recapitulate and recommend patriarchy and its constituent social practices and ideologies” (Radway 1984; 210). Essentially, the act of interpretation is different from the perspective of the women who read romance than it is for someone doing a narrative analysis from a feminist point of

view. This raises difficult issues about whether or not engaging a text can be both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic at the same time based on subject position and context.

Radway's (1984) findings regarding romance reading and romance readers has implications for this paper on pornography consumption if we keep open the possibility that male heterosexually oriented pornography consumption is also an ambiguous activity. It is possible that pornography consumers might interpret their behavior as counter-hegemonic while at the same time they are internalizing hegemonic imagery in the texts of the pornography they are consuming. A hypothetical example might be a porn consumer seeing himself as a sexual rebel because he is actively seeking to participate in the stigmatized world of pornography consumption, while at the same time supporting the sexual status quo by consuming images that put that status quo on display. Or, the porn consumer may feel that he is vicariously participating in a new type of sexuality, one that does not conform to his life experience, while the messages of male dominant patriarchal sexuality are actually being displayed, albeit in an altered form.

Radway proposes that this ambiguity is a result of tension within the ways culture is perceived by individuals. Romance reading can be both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic in that "...culture is both perceptible and hidden, both articulate and covert" (Radway 1984; 210). There is an implication of the layering of culture here. There can be consensus and anti-consensus at the same time based on the tensions between individual subject positions and the surrounding hegemonic atmosphere of culture.

"Dot and the Smithton women know well both how and why they read romances. Yet at the same time, they also act on cultural assumptions and corollaries not consciously available to them precisely because those givens

constitute the very foundation of their social selves, the very possibility of their social action” (Radway 1984; 210).

In other words, part of the activity of reading romance is the influence of reified social discourses that construct the foundations of knowledge for those reading them. The same might be said of pornography consumption. Those consuming pornography may well understand why they are choosing to engage in this activity at the individual level, and may even view it as a rebellion of some sort, yet they are doing so within a reified context that they are not necessarily aware of. Their overall knowledge and their tools for analyzing the meanings of the pornographic discourse are derived from a hegemonic context. That is, they may be locked in a panopticon of patriarchal discourse while resisting the panoptic of pornography consumption as perverted.

Radway (1984) discusses the possibility that there is a tension between the act of romance reading and the content of romance stories. The act of reading for the women in her study is seen as combative and compensatory. It is combative because it allows the women to reject their lived experience of their social role. The act of romance reading is a rejection of the insistent demands on their time by their role as women in society. They are consuming romance as an act of rebellion. Romance reading addresses needs such as the need to be independent which is not met by patriarchal engendering practices. It is used to thwart expectations.

At the same time, romance reading presents a story that tends to reinforce the institutions that lead to those expectations, such as the acceptance of marriage or the responsibility of women to nurture the emotional aspect of relationships. The act is resistive, but the content of the romance is conservative (Radway 1984). The process may be similar for pornography consumption. The act of consuming may be an attempt

to own a particular sexual space that is rebellious, but the overall effect of the content is to reinforce consensus notions of sexuality. In a reified cultural context, tension exists between individual interpretations of activities and the sources of knowledge that inform the content of those activities.

“In summary, when the act of romance reading is viewed as it is by the readers themselves, from within a belief system that accepts as given the institutions of heterosexuality and monogamous marriage, it can be conceived as an activity of mild protest and longing for reform necessitated by those institutions’ failure to satisfy the emotional needs of women. Reading therefore functions for them as an act of recognition and contestation whereby that failure is first admitted and then partially reversed. Hence, the Smithton readers claim that romance reading is a ‘declaration of independence’ and a way to say to others, ‘This is my time my space. Now leave me alone.’

At the same time, however, when viewed from the vantage point of a feminism that would like to see the women’s oppositional impulse lead to real social change, romance reading can also be seen as an activity that could potentially disarm that impulse. It might do so because it supplies vicariously those very needs and requirements that might otherwise be formulated as demands in the real world and lead to the potential restructuring of sexual relations” (Radway 1984; 213).

This disarmament of an impulse to change may be traced to the hegemonic influence of the text because “that projection (romance story) actually leaves unchallenged the very system of social relations whose faults and imperfections gave rise to the romance and which the romance is trying to perfect” (Radway 1984; 215). In other words, the romance supports the status quo by allowing women to vicariously meet the needs that patriarchal reality does not meet, while presenting those needs as the same ones patriarchy requires. Romance reading supports the status quo by allowing women to feel they are resisting their everyday existence by engaging in the activity of romance reading while the romance itself spits back the status quo in its content. The same may be true of pornography consumption.

The utility of Radway's analysis of romance reading to this particular paper is that it illustrates the complexity of the relationship between the activity of consuming cultural discourses and the content of those discourses. It underscores the importance of analyzing not just the perception of the consumer, but the content of the various discourses that surround him as a pornography consumer including, but not necessarily limited to, the content of pornography and framing discourses such as feminism or moral conservatism. By paying attention to the tensions between the individual and hegemonic discourses, it may be possible to shed more light on the meanings and accuracy of the discourses surrounding the male pornography consumer.

One aspect of Radway's analysis that is not satisfactory is her almost exclusive focus on the tension between individual romance readers and patriarchal hegemony. In the case of pornography consumers (and perhaps romance readers) a more detailed analysis may be possible by theorizing a multiple hegemony approach to pornography consumption. In her article on the cultural meanings contained within *Hustler* magazine, Laura Kipnis (1992) proposes that pornography content is not just derived from hegemonic conceptions of gender and sexuality but is also a reflection of and/or reaction to class hegemony.

She begins by criticizing radical feminists and moral conservatives alike for lumping *Playboy*, *Penthouse*, and *Hustler* together as an unholy trinity as the three most circulated men's magazines pointing out that *Hustler* is fundamentally different from the other two. While *Playboy* and *Penthouse* tend to fetishize the female body, particularly breasts and vaginas, as soft-focus works of art, *Hustler* goes out of its way to show the female body, and bodies in general, as exceedingly material and vulgar. This vulgarity

serves the purpose of distinguishing the proletariat from “high” culture while at the same time targeting bourgeois sensibility for offense (Kipnis 1992). In short, *Hustler* contains a political discourse based on class relations rather than gender relations.

With that in mind, the anti-porn feminist discourse, which Kipnis asserts has gained at least a temporary hegemony over the ways in which pornography is defined, becomes problematic. As I discussed earlier in this paper, anti-porn feminism defines the meaning of pornography in terms of male domination of women. Pornography is a discourse derived solely from patriarchy in which women are exploited for the sexual pleasure and material profit of men. If *Hustler* is not simply a discourse on male domination of women, if it contains a class-based critique of high culture, then there are sites of multiple meanings related to multiple hegemonies within porn.

Kipnis (1992) locates the class politics of *Hustler* in its very vulgarity. According to her argument, *Hustler* creates a completely different kind of bodily representation than the classical, clean body of high culture (which not coincidentally are the bodies created by *Playboy* and *Penthouse* that seek to identify the beautiful body with high culture). Rather than a beautiful, clean body, *Hustler* tends to produce an “often gaseous, fluid-emitting, *embarrassing* body, one continually defying the strictures of bourgeois manners and mores and instead governed by its lower intestinal tract—a body threatening to erupt at any moment” (Kipnis 1992; 375). *Hustler* produces an insistently material body, one mired in its material surroundings and conditions, and it does so in the most explicit of ways, through sexual representation. The *Hustler* body can in many ways be seen as a direct attack on the sensibilities of the higher classes in relation to the embarrassing

materiality of the proletariat. The *Hustler* body may be seen as a retort to high culture (Kipnis 1992).

Rather than being exclusively a discourse of male domination of women sexually, *Hustler* can be seen as a political attack and/or critique of those classes of people whom *Hustler* (and perhaps its readers) deem as pretentious and hypocritical, politicians, feminists, clergy, and the wealthy among them. It does this by characterizing bodies, especially the bodies of the pretentious and hypocritical, in terms of the vulgarity and obscenity that those people despise. It uses nudity as a leveler and critique of the upper classes, grafting the heads of politicians onto nude models' bodies engaged in various and often "deviant" sexual activities, or by publishing nude pictures of Jackie Onassis in its pages (Kipnis 1992). Pornography becomes a class-based political critique in the pages of *Hustler* by concretizing the possibility that the rich, the powerful, the upper class, and the educated ejaculate, defecate, masturbate, lactate just like the proletariat. It exposes materiality, the corporeality of the upper-classes and thus calls into question the justice of their higher social standing while at the same time expressing disdain for that standing. *Playboy* and *Penthouse* laud the pleasures and superiority of an upper-class existence. *Hustler* attacks it.

All of this is not to say that patriarchal ideology does not play a part in the discourses of *Hustler* magazine. There are numerous instances of depictions that nearly everyone would consider demeaning to women, but that does not invalidate the possibility of multiple discursive sites within *Hustler* that access different hegemonic structures. This opens the possibility that pornography is a much more complex

representational form than most people, and most especially anti-porn feminists, would give it credit for on its face.

This opens the possibility that the pornography consuming experience is more complex than previously thought. Perhaps someone chooses *Hustler* over *Playboy* because he semi-consciously or subconsciously identifies with its class message as much as its patriarchal messages. The utility of a cultural studies analysis like Kipnis' is that it opens the possibility of approaching and understanding the meaning of pornography, and by extension the meaning of pornography consumption, as a multidimensional experience based on context and specific subject position within society as a whole. By opening the possibility that class can be a legitimate subject within pornographic representation, Kipnis opens the possibility that other aspects of a subject position can be, and likely are, part of the consumption of pornography, race or religious affiliation are two among many examples. Kipnis' analysis adds layers to Radway's analysis by suggesting that not only can there be a tension between hegemony and individual resistance within one large discourse that defines a representational form like pornography or romance reading but that this tension can exist between various subject positions and multiple hegemonies. In addition, there can be a tension between different hegemonies. *Hustler* for example tends to support (though not unproblematically) hegemonic male dominance while undermining bourgeoisie dominance. There is a tension between two different hegemonies within the overall status quo within the pages of *Hustler*. An understanding of the possible complexity of pornography consumption experiences provided by cultural studies is an important warning and guide for this paper in that a great deal of care must be taken to not overemphasize some parts of the experience over others. Though one

major interest of this paper is to relate pornography consumption to patriarchy in order to shed light on the debates within feminism regarding pornography, the ideas of Radway and Kipnis force me to pay attention to the potential complexity of the phenomena I am investigating.

Another difficulty with Radway's analysis is the lack of attention paid to the way framing discourses can serve to define romance readers. The idea is present in the spirit of Radway's analysis; after all, her purpose is to see if the experience of romance readers differs from the way their experience is characterized from outside, particularly by feminists. However, she does not deeply question the ways in which feminism might panoptically frame the experience of romance readers. How it might be complicit in assigning them the status of "other". Though she addresses this to some degree, it is not enough to be the center of this study. Thus a blending of cultural studies and Foucault is necessary, considering my major contention is that the subject position of porn consumers is surrounded by definitions of pornography consumption as perverted. I am interested to some degree in the interpretation of pornography by consumers, but I am more interested in consumers' sense of identity given consensus discourses that define them as pervert.

Intersections: Applying Foucault and Cultural Studies to Existing Theories

In trying to bring the different aspects of this paper into focus, it must be noted that a consistent tension exists between society and the individual. Specifically, the question is who has agency to create meaning in popular culture. Does agency derive from a temporally pre-existing set of ideologies in society at large whose discursive

intersections have hegemonic effects? Is agency located in the individual ascribing meaning to her/his surroundings and interactions during the life course? Or, is agency expressed in negotiation between the individual and the ideological meanings in the larger society? Questions regarding the origins of meaning seem to confound the study of culture in general, and the study of pornography and the people who consume it specifically. This is most apparent in the heated debate between anti-pornography feminists and pro-sex feminists.

The monolithic conception of pornography as a primary component of a patriarchal, universally male dominant hegemony that dictates the terms of society is the epitome of a diffuse, institutionally centered conception of agency. To the anti-pornography feminists, women and men are what they are because the existing social conditions of patriarchy make it impossible to be anything else. Hegemonic ideology constructs the individual by eliminating imagination on the part of individuals. Unlike Freud's axiom "biology is destiny", for anti-porn feminists, society is destiny. This monolithic conception leads to a rigid and determined idea of what men and women are.

"Under patriarchy, no woman is safe to live her life, or to love, or to mother children. Under patriarchy every woman is a victim, past present, and future. Under patriarchy, every woman's daughter is a victim, past, present, and future. Under patriarchy, every woman's son is her potential betrayer and also the inevitable rapist or exploiter of another woman" (Dworkin 1976; 20).

Women are universal victims under patriarchy while men are universal oppressors. This polarization is especially important to discussion of the meaning of pornography and the meanings of being a male porn consumer because pornography teaches the male sexual model that is the basis of patriarchy. It also implicates anti-pornography discourse in the possible maintenance of the system it opposes.

“Nowhere is this clearer than in the area of sexuality. The male sexual model is based on a polarization of human beings into man/woman, master/slave, aggressor/victim, active/passive. This male sexual model is now many thousands of years old. The very identity of men, their civil and economic power, the form of government that they have developed, the wars they wage, are tied *irrevocably* together. All forms of dominance and submission, whether it is men over women, white over black, boss over worker, rich over poor, are tied *irrevocably* to the sexual identities of men and are derived from the male sexual model” (Dworkin 1976; 11-12).

Both of these quotes from Dworkin express a non-individualistic, culturally centered agency. Her discussion is laced with words and phrases such as “every woman”, “every woman’s daughter”, “every woman’s son”, “inevitable” and “irrevocable”. Society determines the meaning of existence for individuals through patriarchal hegemony.

Why is this the case? Because the anti-pornography feminist position is primarily a group based analysis (McElroy 1996). Men collectively, as a class, oppress women collectively, as a class. In order to have universal class statuses attached to any group of people, a cultural hegemony must exist which dictates the terms of and defines the existence of each class. For anti-pornography feminists, that hegemony is patriarchy transmitted through an ideology of male dominant sexuality. Agency does not exist, or is extremely limited, for individuals because patriarchal hegemony determines the imagination of the individual. The logic of the anti-porn position is that people cannot think outside the ideological box in which they exist. Put another way, anti-porn feminists believe in a panoptic control of sexuality, primarily through pornography. What they do not acknowledge is the degree to which they panoptically define the porn consumer as deviant, though this is their goal.

Moral conservatives also believe in a hegemonic definition of pornography as a corruption of the sexuality intended by God. They also intend to discursively impose a panoptic of perversion on pornography consumption.

On the opposite side of this dichotomy of agency is the pro-sex feminist position. Pro-sex feminists not only accept the possibility of individual agency, but demand that it be respected and nurtured. McElroy (1996), whose arguments surrounding pornography are decidedly pro-sex, defines herself as an individualist feminist and outlines the position of individualist feminism.

“Self-ownership is the defining term of individualist feminism. It is the conviction that every human being has moral jurisdiction over his or her own body. Women, as human beings, have exactly the same rights and political interests as men do. The right to self-ownership; the political interest is freedom. And the most fundamental of these shared rights is the ability to control one’s own body and peaceful actions. To claim that someone else has jurisdiction over one’s body is to argue for slavery. The goal of self-ownership is equality under laws that embody individual rights” (McElroy 1996; 16).

At base, McElroy is arguing for the right of individual choice regarding actions and meaning with the qualification that that choice be peaceful. The possibility of choice centers agency at the level of the individual. In the anti-pornography feminist discourse this cannot happen because choice is determined by the cultural conditions of patriarchy, making choice illusion. For pro-sex feminists a range of alternatives in terms of meaning and possible action is a given because choice exists.

These differing viewpoints lead to radically different constructions of the male pornography consumer. For anti-pornography feminists the porn consumer is participating in the active oppression of women in patriarchy. For the pro-sex feminist, the consumer is choosing to engage in an activity that can have a plethora of meanings between and within individuals. Because of these different constructions of the porn

consumer, radically different ways of dealing with him are required from each perspective.

For the anti-pornography feminists, the solution (and in their case a solution is required because in the anti-porn analysis the male porn consumer is a problem) is revolution that results in the destruction of the patriarchal cultural idiom.

“The fact is that in order to stop rape, and all of the other systematic abuses against us, we must destroy these very definitions of masculinity and femininity, of men and women. We must destroy completely and for all time the personality structures ‘dominant-active, or male’ and ‘submissive-passive, or female’. We must excise them from our social fabric, destroy any and all institutions based on them, render them vestigial, useless. We must destroy the very structure of culture as we know it, its art, its churches, its laws; we must eradicate from consciousness and memory all of the images, institutions, and structural mental sets that turn men into rapists by definition and women into victims by definition” (Dworkin 1976; 47-48).

In other words, patriarchal hegemony must be torn down and replaced with something else. Certainly an important part of hegemony that must be eradicated is pornography, falling squarely into the category of patriarchal imagery that Dworkin addresses.

According to McElroy (1996), the beginnings of the anti-pornography attack on patriarchy can be seen in an ideology of what she terms “sexual correctness”. This is an ideology designed to break down male dominant heterosexuality as the basis of patriarchy by dictating what are appropriate sexual behaviors for both men and women. By enforcing an appropriate sexuality, anti-porn feminists intend to eradicate the atmosphere that makes patriarchy possible.

An enforced ideology of sexual correctness is anathema to pro-sex feminist. Why? Because it is the replacement of one concept of hegemony, patriarchy, with another, sexual correctness. Either concept limits choice. The concept of patriarchy

limits choice for men and women by predefining men as victimizers and women as victims. Sexual correctness limits choice by enforcing a code of meanings and behavior on all people that is consistent with the anti-porn feminist conception of an appropriate sexuality. In other words, the pro-sex feminists resist the imposition of another panoptic, the one which defines the porn consumer as perverted.

Pro-sex feminists advocate a proliferation of depictions of all kinds of sexualities, whether they are sexually correct or not. Unfortunately, whether or not this proliferation results in concepts of new sexualities is dependent on the degree to which people can think in new ways about sexuality.

This is the crux of the problem with understanding and interpreting pornography and the men who consume it. Radically different conceptions of them emerge depending on the set of assumptions about the nature of agency in society one accepts. The challenge in analyzing pornography consumers is in creating a research atmosphere in which their characteristics are allowed to emerge. This makes both the anti-porn feminist and pro-sex feminist positions untenable as positions from which to create a theoretical structure to analyze porn users. However, they can be used as reference points for interpreting data collected about pornography consumers. Some information gleaned from interviews could lead to understandings about the identity position of porn consumers that correspond with one or the other feminist position or both positions at different times.

That aspects of both positions might be apparent in actual porn consumers is indicative of a possibility that is important in conducting this research. It is possible that hegemonic influence exists both in the production and consumption of pornography, as

well as, in the construction of men who consume porn. It is also possible that within an overall hegemonic context, enough particular contexts with their own variables exist to create experiences that are contradictory to the hegemonic ideologies in large-scale culture, which could in turn spawn individual resistance to hegemonic determination.

The existence of these simultaneous possibilities is the reason that Foucault and cultural studies, particularly Radway, have been chosen to create a theoretical framework. Foucault creates an elaborate theory of discourse that has hegemonic effects; however, because discourse is ultimately enacted at the level of the individual, opportunities for resistance exist at the same time. If one accepts this assertion, then it is possible to look at anti-porn and pro-sex feminism as approaching the debate on pornography from opposite sides of Foucault's discourse theory without acknowledging the other side. If Foucault is correct, then dominant discourses of sexuality should be evident in porn consumer experience. At the same time, the unique lived context of each consumer should also yield unique interpretations that sometimes resist hegemonic definitions. More importantly for this study, the impact of theories such as anti-porn feminism, pro-sex feminism, or moral conservatism as potentially hegemonic in themselves should be evident. That is the discursive framing of the consumer from potential hegemonic positions should be evident, as should areas of consumer resistance to framing.

The utility of Radway's analysis in *Reading the Romance* (1984) is both research template and methodological structure. Her analysis of romance readers was specifically constructed to give her contextual data about the individual experiences of readers that she could read against feminist theory about how romance textually reconstructs

patriarchy. Radway finds indications of resistance and indications of hegemonic domination of identity construction.

One aspect of this analysis of pornography consumers that may be an improvement over Radway's design is the inclusion of oppositional viewpoints to read pornography consumers' experiences against. Radway's analysis used a consistent patriarchal hegemony oriented feminist conception of identity construction without including a feminist conception that resists the idea of a dominant patriarchy such as pro-sex feminism. Still, Radway's work is an excellent example of attempting to reconcile the problems of studying concrete individuals in an abstracted, large-scale society and is an excellent place to begin looking for methodological direction.

It should be noted that both Radway and Foucault have been criticized for over-emphasizing hegemony as an influence on identity construction. McElroy (1999), in discussing why Foucault has been popular with anti-porn feminists, asserts that Foucault's concept of hegemonic effects through discourse naturally lends itself to a unidirectional construction of sexuality and pornography through patriarchal discourse. Though it does seem that Foucault pays more attention to outlining the hegemonic effects of discourse, I believe McElroy underestimates the potential for resistance in Foucault's conception of power flowing at the micro-political level. Discourse is fundamentally located with individual people who speak just as interpretation exists primarily at the individual level. Foucault does a remarkable job of straddling two divergent positions, the structuring of knowledge through hegemony and the idiosyncratic reconstruction and spin put on knowledge through individual agency.

Radway's (1984) work tends to lean toward hegemonic explanations at the end of *Reading the Romance*, situating resistance at an everyday level that is still overwhelmed by patriarchal discourse. At the same time, she points out that changes in narrative structure of romance indicate possible resistance to patriarchy. As with Foucault, she straddles a line of social domination versus individual resistance. In neither theory is either position total.

Radway's larger problem is in theorizing hegemony and resistance within romance as exclusively gender related. Kipnis (1992) points out in her discussion of *Hustler* multiple discourses can be sites of hegemony and resistance. That is the main utility of wedding Foucault with Radway. Foucault theorizes multiple discourses intersecting in the deployment of hegemony, in terms of sexuality for example. With multiple discourses hegemony and resistance can both be operating at the same time but along different discourses, thus Kipnis' understanding that *Hustler* can reinforce patriarchal ideology while undermining class based ideology.

In terms of methodology then, Radway provides a methodological map that describes reading individual experience against hegemonic discourse. Foucault acts as a theoretical model that permits an understanding of multiple discourses and multiple hegemonies intersecting to surround meaning, including in the lived experience of porn consumers. The oppositional feminist discourses regarding porn act as sites of comparison to determine if interpretation is either hegemonic, resistive, or perhaps both. The task of this project then is to construct a specific methodological strategy that accounts for all of this; hegemony, resistance, multiple discourses, individual agency, and social control.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined a theoretical framework from which to examine the identity construction of male porn users as pornography consumers. The ideas of Michel Foucault and conceptions from cultural studies are used to theorize how conceptions in culture about male pornography consumers might become part of consumer self-conceptions.

According to Foucault, identity positions like pornography consumer are discursively constructed as ideas and disseminated in culture as part of a deployment of sexuality. The pervasiveness of particular discourses have the potential to create a panoptic control of consumers as they are applied to consumers who might internalize those pervasive discourses. Potentially panoptic discourses of interest in this research are pre-existing theories of porn and the porn consumer from academic and other cultural positions, including anti-porn feminism, pro-sex feminism, anti-censorship feminism, moral conservatism, and scientific approaches. Though Foucault seems to emphasize the social control aspect of a discursive deployment of sexuality, he indicates that resistance is possible primarily because discourse is enacted at the level of the individual.

Conceptions from cultural studies are used to theorize how resistance might be possible within large-scale defining systems. In particular, the concept of hegemony as consensus is useful. Hegemony consists of meanings that are widely shared in culture, such as ideas of what pornography is and who pornography consumers are. The utility of a consensus view of hegemony is that it implicates individuals in the maintenance of hegemony and leaves an avenue for resistance at the micro level despite framing by

large-scale discourses. Radway's work on female romance readers illustrates the tension between hegemony and resistance by demonstrating how those readers are both part of consensus and resistant to it through individual interpretation. The same may be true of pornography consumers.

The perspectives outlined in this chapter are intended to illustrate how consumers might be surrounded by the panoptic gaze of a consensus hegemony informed by discourses on porn in culture, and how they might resist that gaze within the context of their own experience.

CHAPTER 5

METHODOLOGY

Introduction to Methods

The primary purpose of this project is to generate discussion on the part of porn users regarding their experiences as consumers. Drawing on the methodological traditions of the critical paradigm, in the form of cultural studies and feminism, and the interpretive paradigm, this research attempts to use brief questionnaires and in-depth, qualitatively analyzed one on one interviews to generate that discussion. Focus groups were attempted but eventually rejected because of low participation rates. Regardless, in depth individual interviews are sufficient to address, in an exploratory manner, the research questions driving this project. How do discourses about male pornography users affect their identity as consumers and which ones are important? How do the men themselves construct pornography consumption experiences? How does consumption context affect identity in male pornography users? How do porn users feel people in general will perceive them, do those feelings vary, and how does that perception influence their identity construction as consumers? The design of this research is intended to generate discussion that addresses these questions specifically in ways that will allow new considerations of what it means to be a pornography consumer in today's culture.

Research Design

Any research project draws on, and should be constructed in ways, that use and reflect appropriate (in the eye of the researcher) traditions of scholarship and methodology. This project is no different, though I do not pretend to fit myself, and this project, uniformly into any single research paradigm. The traditions most reflected in this project are critical theories, in the form of cultural studies and feminist thought, and the interpretive paradigm, particularly its concern with the search for meanings present in culture. Overall, the questions and goals of this project suggested the use of qualitative methods primarily; including group interviews (focus groups) and individual semi-structured interviews.

One important goal for this project is to create a space, through the process of research and the production of a written text, in which male porn users can speak about their experiences with pornography in their own words. More specifically, in conducting this project, I am interested in the meanings placed on pornography by those men who have a stake in pornographic meaning because they consume pornography. This suggests a research methodology that is qualitative and consistent with the interpretive, hermeneutical tradition in the social sciences (Hoshmand 1999; Rennie 1999).

"...qualitative hermeneutical research focuses on people's self-interpretation within the webs of meaning generated by our cultural processes of intersubjectivity. The central metaphor is the interpretation of text, including texts of identity. Most qualitative researchers see their task as the analysis of narrative data for themes and patterns of meaning" (Hoshmand 1999; 19-20).

This type of approach serves as a center point for the assumptions guiding this research; that participants in the research process produce meanings within the overall cultural context and that those meanings can be narrated and interpreted. It gives

credence to the assumptions within this study that culture influences meaning, but at the same time, discovering the meanings produced by individuals has value because each textual identity may be somewhat different (Hoshmand 1999). In other words, interpretive approaches situate individual meaning in a context.

"(It) involves deconstruction and critical examination of the underlying assumptions in any form of cultural text. In grounding social interpretation and judgments in cultural existence, the hermeneutical tradition considers human beings to be governed by particular histories as understood within particular cultural assumptions that can be critically evaluated" (Hoshmand 1999; 20).

Interpretive approaches give research, including this project, some authority to interpret based on the assumption of cultural influence of meaning. This does not mean, however, that the researcher's voice in the form of the text produced is necessarily authorized over those voices s/he is re-presenting.

"In comprehending another person's story or action, no one has final authority. Social interpretation and critique imply an irreducible plurality, which is consistent with the perspective in the interpretive social sciences that culture is always multivocal" (Hoshmand 1999; 20).

This is ideal for the type of understandings that this project attempts to get at. The idea that individual interpretation of culture and cultural texts, like pornography or the self as pornography consumer, can vary by individual context and at the same time reflect hegemonic ideology makes it of paramount importance that all voices be given equal credence in order to find the areas of overlap that mark the intersections of identity and culture. This does require that I, the researcher, practice reflexivity and acknowledge that my position is central to the production of knowledge in the research setting (Merrick 1999), both in terms of the research process and the production of the final text which represents the knowledge gained by conducting the research. In other words, though I attempt not to privilege my voice over the voices of the participants, my central position

may make my voice the loudest. Acknowledgement of such a position should not take away from the value of the research in that such reflexivity and honesty about representation is widely held to be an appropriate part of qualitative research (Merrick 1999).

This attention to voice within the interpretive tradition of qualitative research reflects an increasing awareness of the variability of sociopolitical positions of researchers and participants in the overall context of culture. Thus, it becomes important for qualitative researchers to locate their narrative analysis critically. Working as a qualitative researcher...

"...calls for more attention to the sociopolitical aspects of knowledge and the deconstruction of cultural texts. It involves an intentional effort in uncovering cultural and political assumptions, with the aim of empowering the less vocal and those who have been subjugated by the existing social structure and dominant discourse" (Hoshmand 1999; 20-21).

Situating individual experience in an overarching sociopolitical context is not new, but it has been an important part of social investigation in some areas of scholarship more so than in others. Two areas where it has been particularly prevalent in conducting research are cultural studies and feminism. Though both have had a critical approach to analyzing social realities for some time, the postmodern turn has created an increased urgency in situating methods in such a way as to create understanding of both individual identity and social context.

"A complementarity can be achieved by reconnecting cultural analysis with the political economy of the cultural and media industries. The 'global postmodern' cannot be understood only as a matter of signification, identity and difference; the material powers of multinational business and politics must also be taken into account" (McGuigan 1997; 3).

The task of cultural studies is to understand identity construction as a process by "combining political economy, textual analysis and study of audience reception within the framework of critical social theory" (Kellner 1997; 19). Cultural studies emphasizes the influence of large-scale cultural structure on the interpretation of individuals and the construction of individual identities. It is concerned with hegemony.

This perspective is combined with an idea of counter-hegemonic resistance that leads to the possibilities of political struggle and emancipation from oppression and domination through articulation and exposure of the forces of domination within hegemony (Kellner 1997). Cultural studies, at root, is a project of praxis which is closely involved with the politics of knowledge that influence individual freedom. However, the best way to engage identity politics in a way that maximizes resistance to oppression is in flux. Recently, many in cultural studies have tried to resist cultural domination and the reproduction of domination by, "...a widespread tendency to decentre, or even ignore completely, economics, history and politics in favour of emphasis on local pleasures, consumption and the construction of hybrid identities from the material of the popular" (Kellner 1997; 20). That is, many have completely associated themselves with the postmodern turn. If that were the be all end all of cultural studies it would not have a place in this project given a dual interest in hegemony and identity however the tradition of cultural studies remains one that accounts for both. Kellner (1997) argues that the current social system demands a continued emphasis on both.

"Indeed, the defining characteristic of global media culture is the contradictory forces of identity and difference, homogeneity and heterogeneity, the global and the local, impinging on each other, clashing, simply peacefully co-existing, or producing new symbiosis..." (Kellner 1997; 22).

Methodology in cultural studies should, and often does, not concentrate exclusively on the text, but moves from text to context (Kellner 1997). In this sense, cultural studies is ideal to inform this project. Considering the overall goal is to situate the meanings of individual porn users within the context of hegemonic definitions of pornography consumption then such a methodology of text to context is essential. Kellner (1997) suggests that an important aspect of cultural studies research should be the "study of audience reception and the uses of media/cultural products" (Kellner 1997; 34) and an attempt to place them in the cultural context.

The one aspect of cultural studies that needs to be adjusted in terms of this project is its traditional focus on hegemonies of political economy, most particularly the potential of capitalism as an economic system to dominate identity. Instead, this research focuses on the potentials of hegemonic systems of patriarchy and heterosexuality in dominating knowledges of desire regarding pornography, and more importantly hegemonic systems that define particular aspects of sexuality as perversions. This paper, and its approach to methodology, is consistent with feminist research projects. In order to avoid arguments about whether or not this project can be a feminist project, I will simply state that this project is, in part, informed by feminism.

One utility of feminism to this project is that...

"...feminists have insisted on, amongst other things, extending the understanding of the political, of bringing the concept of power, quite literally, home and into the intimate relationships of the so-called private and domestic spheres, of the importance of representation and consumption in an understanding of cultural processes, of the need to conceptualize pleasure and desire, and , crucially, the centrality of sexuality to questions of subjectivity and identity" (Gray 1997; 87).

Feminism has similar interests as cultural studies but insists on expanding the areas of investigation beyond the capitalist production of culture and into the world of the individual existing as an individual in terms of desire. This is a useful addition to the possibilities for approaches to this project in that the concern is not with the cultural production of pornography, but is instead concerned with the way pornography is interpreted by the individual in terms of his desires and understandings of his sexuality. Overall, feminism brings to research a conception of method that involves questions of identity and difference (Reinharz 1992). This creates a flexibility in conceiving research approaches that goes beyond simple concern for the influence of political economy, or patriarchy, and so on.

Feminism also has a concern with allowing the voices of the marginalized to be heard (Reinharz 1992; Gray 1997). Specifically, women as a marginalized group have been the focus of feminist research, "...women have been positioned and dealt with by powerful structures which operate in complex and contradictory ways in limiting and enabling women's lives" (Gray 1997; 98). The task of feminism has been to conduct research in such a way as to create a form of praxis that allows women to voice their own experience and be empowered.

This project has similar aims in terms of male pornography consumers. As a group potentially marginalized by their interest in pornography, this project is intended to allow porn users to voice themselves in ways that allow ownership of their experience of being a consumer, while at the same time situating the limits of that experience in the systems that influence desire and sexuality. Porn consumers are not women (though

some women are porn consumers), but the ideas of feminism in terms of liberating women through research praxis is equally applicable to male porn consumers.

Both the critical and interpretive paradigms are interested in giving voice to participants. This has to do with the conception of reality within both traditions. Interpretive approaches tend to focus on the meanings of the context of the local, which is also true of the critical paradigm (Guba and Lincoln 1994). Both traditions believe that meaning is situated at the local level, that participants construct meanings. The difference between the approaches is that the critical paradigm assumes a historical reality that strongly influences the conceptions of individuals while the interpretive paradigm tends to focus more exclusively on the politics of the local (Guba and Lincoln 1994). Blending the two positions is actually the best approach for this study. The attempt here is to understand the influence of a historical, political context by investigating the meanings of the local, particularly the individual porn consumer. In that sense what I am attempting is to create discourse through interviews (Gray 1997) that can both surprise in terms of resistant meanings, and illuminate hegemonic influence, possibly through consistent patterns between voices (Alasuutari 1995).

In order to allow someone to give voice, it is necessary to use qualitative methodology. Quantitative methodology requires that the researcher determine the direction of the respondents' voices in order to quantify it. That is, he must give the respondent a set or directed way of responding (Alasuutari 1995). In order to generate these kinds of directed inquiries the quantitative researcher must theorize beforehand. Qualitative research works in the opposite direction. "Qualitative research is about the

development of understandings, and consequent to, not prior to, the analysis of text" (Rennie 1999; 7). That is, it attempts to create understanding inductively.

Qualitative methodology approaches research as if the issue being investigated were a riddle and the information collected are a set of clues. Thus, the real goal of qualitative approaches is to find a logical answer or set of answers to the riddle of the issue (Alasuutari 1995).

"To call a study qualitative research it must be assumed that inferences based purely on qualitative analysis, or other references to excerpts or cases in the data, are used as clues in solving the riddle" (Alasuutari 1995; 8).

For the purposes of this project, this definition of qualitative research is appropriate. The idea is to allow porn consumers to speak about their experiences and then try to discover lines of domination and resistance in their identity construction. The riddle is the porn consumer in the overall context of society. The goal of this project is to unravel some of their experiences and situate them in that overall context. In a way, this makes the researcher and the participants collaborative in producing the final meaning of the written text of this project, another emphasis of critical theory in qualitative research (Guba and Lincoln 1994). Though, as was stated earlier, my voice will be the most clear because my interpretations and choices will be most reflected in the text.

Another important aspect of Alasuutari's (1995) above quote is that it opens the possibility for a plethora of methods that can be called qualitative. It is the intent and way of thinking that defines qualitative methods, not a particular method such as participant-observation/ethnography. That being the case my specific methods, group and individual interviews, can be considered qualitative because my intent and theoretical approach are consistent with the spirit of qualitative research.

This view is consistent with the idea of qualitative research as a bricolage and the qualitative researcher as bricoleur (Denzin and Lincoln 1994). The researcher as bricoleur uses methodological tools in ways that allow her or him to get at the answers to the riddle at hand. The choice of research tools are not necessarily set in advance but are chosen as the research is conducted giving the researcher the best chance to obtain goals (Denzin and Lincoln 1994). This concept gives the researcher flexibility in attempting to unravel the mysteries he or she investigates.

The concept of the bricoleur is essential to this project. This is exploratory work on a topic, the identity construction of male porn consumers, that is not well articulated. In this sense educated guesses about what methods will work may not turn out to be accurate, which was in fact the case in this study. Focus groups turned out to be impractical in that many subjects failed to attend group interviews. This created a need to try another method, individual interviews, which turned out to be more successful.

Overall, qualitative approaches informed by the interpretive and critical paradigms are most appropriate for this project in that they provide the greatest amount of flexibility in conducting this exploratory type of research. Qualitative methodology gives the most opportunity to locate discourse produced through interviews in the overall historical context that influences the identity construction of porn consumers. As a template for how to actually conduct such research, the most appropriate example is Janice Radway's (1984) *Reading the Romance*.

A Note Regarding Reliability and Validity

“It is important to note at the start that whether the terms *reliability* and *validity* belong in considerations of qualitative research is debatable. After all,

these criteria have traditionally been used to assess the quality of quantitative research. Traditionally, *reliability* is described as the extent to which a research endeavor and findings can be replicated; *validity* refers to the extent to which findings can be considered true” (Merrick 1999; 25-26).

In the sense of the above quote, reliability is not really an issue for this project. It is not the intention behind this study to discover reproducible truths. The intention of this research is to produce ideas that may lead to future investigation by myself or other researchers. It is intent on the clarification of ideas and the production of new ways of thinking, not fact finding. In addition, the newness of this approach requires a convenience sample (discussed in more detail later in this chapter) which is unlikely to be reproduced making the possibility of replication for this research unlikely.

In quantitative approaches, reliability is achieved mostly through standardization (Babbie 1995). For this project, full standardization is impractical. The idea is to allow discourse to develop. Standardized approaches tend to pre-structure discourse. However, some structure was deemed necessary. Considering my inexperience with conducting interviews, a semi-structured approach seemed appropriate. For both focus groups and individual interviews (Appendix B) lists of questions were used though the participants were permitted a great deal of latitude in voicing tangential discourse. I also allowed myself to probe in areas that diverged from the question lists if I felt it was appropriate. In this sense, there is a loose outline that another researcher might follow in conducting similar research though the discussion produced might differ substantially.

Validity is a more difficult issue. For something to be considered valid it must be credibly true. To claim a piece of research is valid necessarily makes a claim that what is presented is true. Considering that both the interpretive and critical paradigms locate truth at a local level (the critical situating that truth in the truth of historical context), then

truth becomes relative. Instead of Truth we have truths and a crisis of representation (Denzin and Lincoln 1994). That is, there is a problem of authority in claiming to know truth from any particular perspective whether one is a researcher, a participant, or a reader of the research text. The quality of research when one acknowledges a multiplicity of truths needs to rely more on credibility with a variety of subject positions rather than a claim that truth is known and faithfully represented by the researcher.

One way of going about establishing credibility as a qualitative researcher is to reflexively admit that there is no claim to truth and therefore no validity in the traditional sense (Merrick 1999). I do so now. This research is not intended to claim any exceptional knowledge of real truth. It is a representation of the experience of male pornography consumers interpreted through my position as a social researcher. Though I make every effort to allow the voices of the participants to come through in the text, in the final instance any truth represented is filtered through and therefore reflects my local identity position.

Since no claims to truth are made, the quality of the research is open to debate. In that sense one of the most important checks in terms of “validity” applied to qualitative, interpretive research such as this is evaluation by various audiences including academic peers, research participants, and/or readers in general (Altheide and Johnson 1994; Merrick 1999). As a graduate student thesis, this paper will automatically be submitted to an academic audience (my thesis committee), efforts will be made to contact participants in order to make the text available to them, and perhaps this text will eventually find its way to a general audience in one form or another. The test of validity

here is one of verisimilitude (Denzin 1989). If the text, whole or in part, rings true with various audiences then it is valid.

Triangulation is another acceptable way of judging the quality of qualitative work (Merrick 1999). Triangulation involves using a variety of methods to investigate the same problem with similar subjects.

“Thus to analyze several ‘homogeneous’ observation units as examples of the same phenomena is a means of achieving validity in qualitative research. However, it is approached by raising the level of abstraction, not by looking for an average or typical case. In this enterprise combining observations becomes important” (Alasuutari 1995; 19).

This research does use multiple methods that should provide some degree of triangulation though not to the degree that using a greater variety of forms might. This research uses various interviews and questionnaires for research. Unfortunately, one potential source of triangulation, focus groups, is not included in the final presentation of this research, which does reduce the power of this check on validity. A greater degree of triangulation might be achieved with a combination of interviews, ethnography, and so on.

Overall, the questions of reliability and validity in this research as a final product are not as important as the process of conducting the research and beginning discourse from and around the male pornography consumer.

Framework

Radway's (1984) approach to understanding romance readers in *Reading the Romance* serves as a template for the methodology of this study. As discussed earlier, one of the primary strengths of Radway's design is her purposeful accounting of both hegemonic and individual knowledge formations. By both reading romance texts for

hegemonic meaning, particularly in the form of patriarchal ideology, and by allowing readers to express their experiences, Radway was able to situate readers' perceptions of romance and the romance reading experience into hegemonic ideology. More importantly, she found two patterns in readers, both resistance to patriarchal knowledge and influence by patriarchal knowledge. Also, she was able to discern readers' perception of resistance when they were not necessarily stepping outside of patriarchal ideology. Clearly, her interest was to account for both macro and micro forces in evaluating the meaning of romance novels in culture and in the women who consume them.

The research interest in this project is similar. I am interested in giving male pornography consumers an opportunity to speak on their own behalf. As was noted in the introduction to this paper, there have been a large number of texts produced that speak about pornography consumers, but very few produced by them. The primary aim of this research is to allow male pornography consumers to take an active speaking voice in relating their own experience as pornography consumers and the meaning of porn to them. This is similar to Radway's emphasis on allowing romance readers to give voice to their experiences concerning the activity of romance reading and the meanings they attribute to the texts they consume.

The second interest of this research is to compare the experiences and knowledge of male porn consumers to competing hegemonic discourses about porn and male porn users. By using divergent discourses as reference points, preliminary insights can be discerned regarding which is most closely in tune with the experiences and knowledge of the men who consume pornography.

In terms of theoretical framing, this study is primarily concerned with the exploration and evaluation of porn and male porn user experience through discourse. As was more elaborately discussed earlier in this paper, Foucault explains how subject positions are constructed at discursive intersections. The acts of homosexual practice become the subject position of the being, homosexual, when discourses intersect. The discourses of science, religion, the person engaging in same sex activities, come together to define a particular type of person as homosexual through the meanings attributed materially to his sexual practice through discourse. Similarly, the discourses of anti-porn feminism, pro-sex feminism, moral conservative ideology, individual porn consumers and so on, may come together to form the subject position of being a pornography consumer. Essentially, this study is interested in identifying the ways in which intersecting discourses interact to influence and/or construct the experiences and knowledges of male pornography consumers.

Sampling

The private (due to perceptions of sexuality as private) and sensitive (due to stigmatization) nature of pornography consumption makes it difficult to attempt to generate any type of random sample. In addition, the qualitative nature of this research, the need to allow consumers to produce discourse of their own, makes using anonymous methods such as mail surveys impractical, particularly because surveys tend to predefine the expression of respondents by forcing them to respond to very specific questions designed by the researcher with equally specific answer choices. In other words, detailed questions allow little leeway for participants to construct their own discourses.

The sensitive nature of the topic makes using any kind of random sampling difficult. Chances are, approaching a random selection of the general population about participating in a study about a private and often stigmatized activity will result in low response rates making the attempt to randomly sample pointless, particularly because this study asks participants to admit to engaging in the activity in question.

Attempting to generate a random sample within the specific population of pornography consumers is also impractical. Pornography consumption is likely diffused throughout society making the parameters of the population uncertain. Producing a list from which to sample is not possible given the limited resources of this study.

Intercept sampling is also not useful because of the sensitive nature of the topic. Potential subjects are unlikely to react positively to a stranger approaching them and either asking them to answer sensitive questions or to participate in a study about a stigmatized activity. In addition, the utility of intercept approaches in obtaining subjects is questionable given the fact that participation in this research requires some investment of time and effort on the part of subjects.

Overall, the question of whether or not a random sample is necessary can be answered in the negative. Because little research has been done which allows subjects to relate their own experiences and knowledge of pornography consumption, this project's primary utility to such an endeavor is exploratory. By providing a forum for some porn consumers to speak about themselves, it is possible that directions for future research will be suggested.

The purpose of this study, the difficulty of obtaining subjects in an area of inquiry that is not well defined, and the exploratory nature of this research suggest that volunteer

sampling is an adequate technique for this type of project. It should be noted that snowball sampling was also considered as an appropriate method to obtain subjects, but under actual conditions of the research subjects were reluctant to suggest participation to people known to them or give contacts for such people to the researcher. With this being the case, giving potential subjects the opportunity to volunteer for the research became the primary sampling issue when research was actually conducted.

The methods for creating conduits for a self-selected sample in the Las Vegas area were as follows. Flyers advertising a research project about adult materials were distributed in diverse locations including adult bookstores, coffee shops, the University of Nevada, Las Vegas campus, and outdoor locations such as telephone poles and bus stops. Classified advertisements for the research were submitted to and run in a major daily for the Las Vegas area (*The Las Vegas Review-Journal*) and an independent weekly Las Vegas newspaper (*City Life*). The ad ran in the major daily for a period of two weeks and in the independent paper for a period of six weeks. The time disparity was due to monetary concerns considering advertising in the daily was much more expensive (and less effective it turned out). Finally, some subjects were recruited when they heard about the research from people associated with it (myself and my advisor) and expressed an interest in participating.

The primary difficulty with self-selected, volunteer samples such as this one is that information provided by respondents cannot be generalized with any confidence to a larger population (Babbie 1995). Those who volunteer to participate in this study specifically may have particular characteristics that differentiate them from the general population and the population of pornography consumers overall. For example, men

who volunteer to participate in this study may have an unusually high comfort level with consuming pornography compared to pornography consumers who choose not to participate. However, considering the exploratory nature of this research, generalizability is not considered of primary importance. What is important is to collect participants who will generate discussion, opening the door to evaluation of the pornography consuming experience for men.

A final issue to address in terms of a self-selecting sample is the impact it might have on reliability. With a volunteer sample like this one, it seems unlikely that a similar sample could be obtained in subsequent attempts to do similar research. Frankly, it is impossible to know what kind of influences there are at any given time on the pornography consuming population that would influence choices of self-selection on the part of members of the pornography consuming population.

Sample

The sample for this study consists of fifteen men who agreed to participate in one on one interviews with the researcher. Though twenty-nine intake questionnaires were completed, only fifteen men chose to take the step of participating in the individual interview aspect of the research. It should also be noted that of these fifteen men, five had participated in a focus group previous to doing their individual interviews. Whether or not this will bias the data is unknown; however, the complication was unavoidable. Focus groups were initially intended to be the primary method of data collection. Unfortunately, not enough men chose to participate in the first two groups to make further use of the method worthwhile. It is still believed that such an approach might be

beneficial to the study of pornography consumers. The reasons for choosing such a method originally will still be addressed in this paper.

The demographic information collected for the fifteen men participating in individual interviews is as follows. Given that this study is concerned with male consumers, all fifteen subjects were male. In addition, all fifteen subjects were born in the United States.

The other category that universally applied to this sample could be considered problematic and certainly interferes with any semblance of generalizability. All fifteen subjects self-identified as white in terms of race. This is unfortunate because it is probable that not all male porn consumers are white. Certainly differences in terms of race when analyzing the subject positions of porn consumers would be interesting and relevant; however, since this study is considered exploratory it is assumed that future research, by myself or others, will address issues of race. It is suggested that new sampling strategies be developed in future research to gain a racially diverse sample.

The age range for the sample was twenty years old up to seventy-seven years old. The mean age was 40.06 years of age. The median age was thirty-four. Eleven of the fifteen participants were under forty years of age. Whether or not this indicates that older people are less likely to consume pornography is unknown. The higher representation of younger people could be an artifact of sampling techniques. For example, flyers may not have been seen by older people because they may be less likely to leave their homes. The same is true for *City Life* because it is distributed in public places.

Religious affiliation is as follows. Six of the participants claimed no affiliation, four claimed to be Protestant, one claimed to be Catholic, and one indicated he was

Jewish. Three participants claimed other affiliations, two indicating that they were Taoist and one claiming to be a Universalist. The presence of moral conservative discourses about pornography consumption prompted the inclusion of this category. However, it is suggested that future research ask about the religious affiliation of parents in case the religious context for them as a younger person differs from pornography consumers' present affiliation.

The education level for the sample seems to be generally quite high, probably higher than the general population. Only one participant claimed the earning of a GED as his highest level of education. One participant completed only high school without further educational experience. Eight men reported at least some college/university experience, and three had earned bachelors degrees. In addition, one participant had earned a doctorate and another claimed a professional degree though the type was not specified. It is fairly clear that this level of education is probably not representative of the general population of pornography consumers. The source of the bias is unclear. It may be a reflection of the racial bias of the sample. It may also reflect problems with the methods of sample collection, primarily the use of newspapers to recruit subjects.

Despite a relatively high level of education, most of the participants did not have a high income level. Eight of the subjects made \$20,000 a year or less. Three subjects made between \$25,001 and \$40,000 a year. Three subjects made \$50,001-\$75,000 a year, and one made \$75,001-\$100,000 a year.

In terms of self-identification of sexual orientation, twelve of the subjects claimed heterosexuality, while three claimed bisexuality. I was contacted by several gay males; however, it was determined that gay men were not eligible. The original interest of this

project is heterosexually oriented pornography and the men that consume it. The dynamics of being a gay male consuming homosexually oriented material may be completely different because of different stigmas and self-identifications associated with being gay. Bisexuals were kept in the study because they professed an interest in heterosexually oriented material, and, frankly, they were needed to make sure the sample was large enough.

Overall, it should be emphasized that the sample is most likely not representative of the overall population of pornography consumers; however, considering the exploratory nature of this research and the lack of concern with generalizability this is not particularly problematic. It is suggested that new strategies of sample collection for this type of population be developed in future research in order to generate better and better samples.

Methods of Data Collection

Two main methods of data collection are employed for this research; short questionnaires and individual interviews. As was stated earlier, focus groups were also attempted but the method abandoned though the reasons for attempting group interviews will remain a part of this paper.

Intake Questionnaires

A brief intake questionnaire (see Appendix A) was used to collect demographic information, a short pornography consumption history, and information concerning current pornography consumption habits. The main purpose of the questionnaire was to provide baseline information for each subject so that comparisons of differences in

subject responses during group and/or individual interviews could be made. Basic issues of demographics and general interests in pornography could be obtained with the questionnaire without using limited and valuable interview and focus group time.

A second purpose of the intake questionnaire was to screen participants in terms of suitability for the focus group and interview portions of the study. Because the interest of this study is pornography that can be classified as heterosexual/straight, it seemed prudent to exclude gay men who might desire to participate. This separation of straight and gay porn is based on a concern that the significance of porn in the gay community is fundamentally different from its significance in the straight or bisexual community. Bisexual perceptions of porn may differ from the heterosexual perception of porn as well; however, bisexuals included professed an interest in straight porn making it viable to include such men in the study. A second reason for not excluding bisexual men was assuring that the study had enough subjects to make the overall study worthwhile. Screening for gay men was necessary in that it was impractical to specify heterosexual or bisexual men when advertising for the research. In addition, it was thought that procuring questionnaires from people who were not eligible for this particular project might lead to potential subjects for future projects for which they might be eligible.

A final purpose for the intake questionnaire was to give the respondents an opportunity to become adjusted to the sensitive nature of the research. It seemed appropriate to give the subject some forewarning that questions during subsequent stages of the research would be personal and possibly embarrassing. In essence, the questionnaire served as an additional stage of disclosure about the research beyond the informed consent form.

It should be noted that questionnaires were not all conducted under the same circumstances. Originally, focus groups were to be the only form of data collection other than the intake questionnaires. In the earlier contacts with subjects, the questionnaires were filled out during a brief meeting with the researcher at a time intended to make arrangements for focus group participation. When it became apparent that focus groups were not going to be viable as the main method of data collection for this study, individual semi-structured interviews were substituted. For those participants who took part in only individual interviews, the questionnaire was the introductory part of their only meeting with the researcher. The questionnaire was completed and the interview immediately conducted.

Questionnaires, in the case of this study, are considered mostly supplemental data. The primary data gathering method for this study is individual semi-structured interviews. However, a discussion of focus groups will remain so that the reader may understand the justifications for first attempting that particular method as well as evaluate the potential for the success of such methods in future research.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were considered especially relevant to a project such as this one because one of their primary strengths is to provide a forum that allows discussion and data collection on topics where little previous knowledge exists and the researcher may be unsure of what areas of discussion will be most important to the subjects (Morgan 1997). Structured interviews and detailed questionnaires require a high degree of foreknowledge of what to expect in order to construct productive questions that extract detailed information. Focus groups can follow a topic outline while allowing the group

participants to provide what details are important to them (Morgan 1997). Given the relative newness of this project's approach and the expressly stated goal of NOT predetermining the possible discursive expressions of the participants by asking extremely specific questions, focus groups seemed to be an ideal way of generating varied and dynamic discourse on the pornography consuming experience.

While loosely structured interviews can also allow for expression on the part of subjects, focus groups originally seemed more appropriate because of this study's focus on tension between hegemonic influence and individual resistance. Focus groups rely on interaction in the group to produce data, and as a process of group interaction, focus groups allow direct observation of consensus and diversity in the production of discourse in the group (Morgan 1997). Areas of consensus could indicate issues that are more closely controlled/influenced by hegemonic ideology, while areas of diverse opinion could indicate issues around which individual resistance is most likely. There is also the possibility that consensus around some issues might indicate a pseudo-group resistance on the part of porn users to dominant ideologies such as definitions of the porn user as pervert. It also provides participants with the opportunity to speculate on their own about similarities and differences within the group. Overall, focus groups had the potential to display the junctions of discursive intersections more obviously and immediately than any other method.

In terms of actually conducting focus groups a decision had to be made regarding the degree of control the researcher would exercise over the group interaction during focus groups. Morgan (1997) describes the merits and disadvantages of loosely structured versus tightly controlled focus groups. Loosely structured focus groups have

minimal moderator involvement while tightly controlled groups are handled more like structured interviews. Considering the goal of this project to allow subjects to construct their own discourses, a more loosely structured group was better suited and employed.

An additional reason for loosely structured groups that Morgan (1997) points out is that when issues surrounding a piece of research are poorly understood or previous research may reflect agendas of researchers rather than the reality of the participants (see feminist research on pornography), loosely structured groups are appropriate.

Though a less structured approach to focus groups in this study is desirable, some structure is necessary in order to answer, to some degree, basic research questions involved. How do porn consumers understand and define themselves as such? How do pornography consumers interpret porn itself? Where is there consensus and diversity regarding each form of construction?

In order to have some degree of structure but still allow freedom to create discourse, a funnel approach (Morgan 1997) was used in conducting these focus groups. A funnel approach requires that the researcher bring a topic sheet with a list of areas of interest and some specific questions that might be asked to move the discussion in relevant directions. The researcher reserves the right to probe when appropriate. The use of this type of format allowed the researcher to lead the discussions in such a way that it made sense for the study and allowed flexibility in the group discussion. It should be noted, however, that the researcher was inexperienced at the time focus groups were conducted which may have led to more reliance on the topic sheet than might have been the case with an experienced moderator, experience being an important part of smooth running, loosely structured focus groups (Morgan 1997).

The primary problem with conducting focus groups in this particular project was a high degree of non-participation from subjects who agreed to come and then neglected to show up. Two focus groups were organized in which seven subjects and six subjects were expected. Four and three appeared for each group. Since six is considered the minimum number for a good focus group (Morgan 1997), one that will produce a variety of interactions, the groups were inadequate. They were conducted with those who showed up, but it was decided that the data would be far too unreliable to use, though some interesting discussion was generated. An attempt to organize a third group was abandoned when it became clear that it would not meet the six person minimum either.

It is unclear why non-participation was such a problem. There are two possibilities. First, and most likely, is the possibility that the degree of effort expected of the subjects was overly high. A second possibility is that the sensitive nature of the topic made it more threatening for subjects to talk in front of others, a common problem with focus groups (Morgan 1997).

Focus groups were conducted in the following manner. Subjects contacted the researcher and were brought in for a meeting. The research was briefly explained, an informed consent form distributed and signed, and the intake questionnaire done. Subjects were asked if they would be interested in participating in a focus group on the subject of pornography. Those that agreed were reconnected after a brief period of time and told when the groups would be. They were informed that focus groups would be videotaped and that several other men would be there.

Those participants that arrived for the group were asked to read and sign a consent form. After a time, researcher and subjects sat around a common table and discussed

pornography, the researcher acting as moderator. A rather long list of possible questions was available to the researcher but not all were covered because of limited time and a desire to let the subjects direct the conversation to some degree. Most of the same topics were covered in both groups. Length of time for focus group participation was 2-2 1/2 hours (Morgan 1997).

Props, examples of pornography from magazines, were used to facilitate discussion as well. The examples were intended to give concrete examples for the group to discuss and to further highlight consensus and discord around pornography in pornography consumers.

The original intent was to conduct 4-5 focus groups so that comparisons between groups could be made with a greater possibility of patterns emerging. In the case of this study, with two groups only and an inadequate number of people in each, between group comparison would have been spurious at best.

It is still believed that focus groups as a method have potential in this type of research; however, given the difficulties in using the method in this particular study, the data collected in this manner is excluded.

One on One Interviews

Interviews are not a radical departure from focus groups. One takes place in a group interactive context while the other takes place in an interactive dyad between researcher and subject. They share many of the same strengths as focus groups. They allow the subject to express his ideas in detail. They allow the subject to interpret a question and respond in a way that makes sense to him rather than being bound to set responses on a questionnaire. A loosely structured interview allows the researcher room

to maneuver, to ask follow up questions, or to probe interesting areas of discussion (McCracken 1988). For this project other advantages include the fact that loosely structured interviews allow subjects room to maneuver as well, giving them a chance to construct their own discourse in relatively autonomous ways. One definite advantage for individual interviews over focus groups is the fact that a higher degree of confidentiality exists in a one on one interview rather than among a group, especially important because pornography is a dangerous, sometimes embarrassing topic to discuss.

There were different paths to individual interviews for different subjects. Those that participated in the focus groups were re-contacted and asked if they would like to do an individual interview with the researcher. Those that said yes were invited back and interviews were conducted. Those that did a focus group had already been introduced to the topic, taken the questionnaire, and participated in qualitative research. This may create some bias in their interview data because they are aware of what to expect and may have prepared answers ahead of time to specific questions they thought might be asked.

Those subjects that did not participate in the focus groups did the entire bit of research in one shot. They contacted the researcher, were invited in, were appraised of their rights as subjects, signed the consent form, completed the questionnaire and participated in a 1-2 hour interview in one session. All interviews were conducted in the researcher's office except one that was conducted at an elderly participant's home.

The interviews themselves were loosely structured. A list (see Appendix B) similar to the topics list for focus groups was used but plenty of variation and exploration off the beaten path was allowed, though the researcher was certain to ask all the questions

on his list. Interviews were audiotaped. Props, examples of pornography, were not used during individual interviews.

Reiterating Major Problems

The primary problem with this research design is the semi-structured nature of interviews in terms of allowing the voice of the participants' to come through. In a paper concerned with generating discourse from particular identity positions it is once again necessary to reflexively reiterate that the main subject position represented here is mine, both in terms of conducting the research and writing text.

Another issue that should be reiterated is the fact that the sample in this research is self-selected and therefore the findings of this paper cannot be generalized to the overall population of pornography consumers. Considering the aims of this paper do not require that the results should be generalized, reiterating this point is simply to assure the audience that I am aware of this issue and that I am aware that readers should be aware of it as well.

Despite these two major issues, this research design is well-suited for an exploratory investigation into the ways in which men construct their identity as pornography users. Semi-structured interviews are appropriate for the generation of discussion on the part of consumers in ways that both expose the influence of framing discourses about pornography and allow them to demonstrate resistance through their own interpretation of their consumption activities.

The next chapter begins the exploration of findings using these methods.

CHAPTER 6

ESTABLISHING THE PANOPTIC TOWER? RECALLING EARLY CONSUMPTION EXPERIENCES

This chapter explores the recollections of consumers regarding their youthful experiences with porn. It examines questions regarding which framing discourses are important in creating the foundations of the porn consumer subject position, and which interactional contexts are most influential in transmitting framing discourses. This chapter is generally concerned with the discernable character of panoptic framing of the porn consumer subject position in the early development of the porn user.

Considering the importance of socialization in the formation of identity for any person in a society, it is logical to assume that attitudes about pornography and the meaning of consuming pornography are affected early in the lives of consumers. According to Foucault (1978), ideas are transmitted within discourse, and discourse is enacted at the interactional level as people communicate with each other. Discourse about sex and the establishment of its meaning are produced in the interactions of the confessional, the psychiatrists office, the halls of universities. It is the micro interactional enactment of discourse that lends power to the ideas contained within it. The more types of interactions a discourse infiltrates, the more flowing power the ideas within a discourse have. Certainly discourses about sex, and topics of a sexual nature like pornography, are

widespread in culture, permeating in one way or another a variety of patterns of interaction. In the case of younger people one has to wonder how the generated discourses about pornography come to enter the lives of kids as they go about their daily lives, and one has to wonder which discourses might have the most effect. In other words, one must wonder what interactions and what discourses have early influence on young people's perceptions of themselves as pornography consumers.

At this point, it is appropriate to briefly summarize the potential framing discourses of pornography discussed earlier in this paper in order to re-familiarize the reader with the types of ideas that discursively flow through culture and might influence people's, including young people's, perceptions of themselves as they use pornography in their everyday lives.

Several strands of feminist thought about pornography and the male pornography consumer were discussed; anti-pornography feminism, anti-censorship feminism, and pro-sex/sex positive feminism. Each has a relatively distinct approach to the analysis of pornography and the male pornography consumer as he uses porn.

Anti-pornography feminists regard pornography as an oppressive discourse that enacts and teaches male domination of women through the construction and depiction of male dominant sexuality. They believe that pornography is a discourse which reinforces patriarchy by teaching men how to subjugate women, while at the same time, bolstering a masculine sense of privilege in the sexual realm and, by extension, other realms of interaction with women. The anti-pornography feminist conception of the male pornography consumer himself is one that defines him as a person desiring to see and subsequently enact various forms of dominating sexual practice against women. The

pornography consumer desires to see women beaten, raped, used, and so on (MacKinnon 1996), and is likely to want to pursue such activities in his real interactions with women. The overall discursive flow of anti-pornography feminism is toward a definition of pornography consumers as perverts.

The anti-censorship feminist view actually does not have all that much to do with the mainstream consumers themselves except that it makes few assumptions about how they will react to pornography. The overall anti-censorship feminist position is that the effects of pornography are unknown, and that taking steps to censor pornography is irresponsible. They fear that attempts to censor pornography will not damage mainstream porn producers, but will end up hurting sexual minorities (gay men, lesbians, and practitioners of bondage and sadomasochism, for example) and feminists. Anti-censorship feminists do criticize anti-pornography feminists and moral conservatives for pushing towards censorship based on assumptions of pornography consumers as dominating and potentially dangerous perverts. Despite this, the anti-censorship position does not discursively define the consumer as non-pervert, instead emphasizing that the nature of the consumer is unknown. The main discursive flow of anti-censorship feminism is toward free expression, while they generally avoid discursively defining the consumer realizing that he may or may not be patriarchally dominating and/or dangerous to women.

Pro-sex feminism is diametrically opposed to anti-pornography feminism in both defining the pornography user and in assigning meaning to pornography itself. The main thrust of the pro-sex argument is that interpretation of pornography and the meaning of consuming pornography is a matter of localized interpretation. They acknowledge that

some pornography can be damaging at some times based on some interpretations; however, they do not believe that pornography's meaning or the experience of consuming pornography can be generalized beyond the specific localized experience of each consumer. In fact, they emphasize the potential of pornography to benefit both women and men. In terms of discursively defining pornography consumers, the pro-sex approach is to characterize the consumer as a complex human being capable of many reactions. In other words, the pro-sex argument attempts to counter knowledges that seek hegemonic definition of the consumer as a pervert. The overall point of pro-sex approaches is that pornography is good because it represents the variety of human sexual possibility, in direct opposition to anti-pornography feminism which claims that pornography can only present one kind of sexuality, male dominant. Whether or not a definition of complex human for consumers represents another type of hegemonic discourse is debatable, but such an idea could certainly impact self-understanding and self-definition for consumers if they become exposed to it.

The moral conservative position towards pornography is that it is a negative force because it undermines appropriate sexuality within monogamous marriage for the primary purpose of reproduction rather than pleasure. Their argument is centered around a rejection of the idea of hedonistic, selfish pleasure which draws away from attention to one's sexual partner and from the glory of God. Moral conservative discourses are not concerned with the potential of pornography to reinforce patriarchal domination of women, but are instead concerned with its potential to undermine traditional Judeo-Christian values. Regarding consumers of pornography, the moral conservative position views them as engaging in an, at best, immoral and, at worst, evil act. They, along with

anti-pornography feminists believe it is necessary to remove pornography from culture in order to protect people from the ideas within it. Their discursive approach to the consumer of pornography is also one that seeks to frame him as pervert.

Scientific approaches to pornography consumption center around a belief in a cause and effect relationship between the consumption of pornography and the subsequent behavior of the consumer. Most recent scientific research around pornography consumption views pornography as a stimulus that precipitates some kind of response in the consumer, the most commonly investigated effect being potential aggression. The discursive framing of the pornography consumer by the scientific discourse is also one of consumer as pervert, though the framing is more subtle than either the anti-porn feminist or moral conservative approaches. The scientific approach to pornography consumption implicates the consumer in perversion by making him a special object of study, assuming that his consumption makes him different than non-perversed people.

This research has a primary interest in identifying and discussing the hegemonic framing discourses like feminisms, moral conservatism, and so on. It is interested in identifying discourses that have a potentially panoptic effect on the identity of porn users and discussing them. It became immediately clear upon reviewing the discussions held with participants that the discourses with panoptic potential in influencing their identities are anti-pornography discourses. As should become clear in the remainder of this paper, anti-pornography ideas seem widely disseminated in culture, internalized to a greater or lesser degree by consumers, and they have a large impact on how porn users go about their consuming experience.

Foucault approaches the dissemination of discourse by emphasizing that discourse is transmitted and power in discourses enacted at the interactional level. Conversation and interactive behavior bring to life discourses as they are expressed by the people accessing them. Any and/or all of the previously discussed discourses could be transmitted and the power of their meanings made to flow through interaction. If one discourse about what it means to be a pornography consumer is disseminated in a way that dominates all discursive interaction, then all behavior and self-conception related to pornography consumption will be essentially the same. In other words, there will be a complete panoptic gaze from that point of view internalized by all participants at the interactive enactment of discourse. For example, if the moral conservative discourse on pornography and pornography consumption gains a hegemonic, panoptic control of the enactment of discourse then all discursive power flow will enact that discourse. In that case, one would expect that all pornography consumers would internalize a strong sense of themselves as perverted which would likely manifest itself in strong feelings of shame, guilt, embarrassment, and so on when they engage in the activity of pornography consumption. It seems likely that this would be particularly true for young consumers who lack experience, which would make them especially susceptible to incorporation in a panoptic system of self-definition if there were a panoptic discourse.

If, on the other hand, there are discourses competing for a hegemonic domination, if there is lack of consensus between discourses, and therefore people at the interactive level, one would expect to see varying responses and varying self-definitions for porn consumers. At the very least one would expect to see a conflicted identity around pornography use as discourses defining one as or as not a pervert compete. This type of

conflict might display itself in recollections of porn consumers regarding their fledgling porn consumption in the form of tension filled experiences where they felt both shameful and curious, excited and guilty.

In the case of this research, this last possibility seemed most common. Most consumers felt both excited and as if they were doing something wrong when they were engaged in pornography consumption as younger people. This is indicative of competing hegemonic discourses and a number of incomplete panoptic gazes.

A number of examples demonstrate the relative consistency of a conflicted self-perception around consuming pornography at a young age.

Researcher: Um, How did you feel when you were a kid looking at these magazines?

Subject: Hmm, when I was looking at my dad's magazines, I was excited but I was afraid too because I was afraid I was going to get caught.

Subject: The very first time with seein' a magazine, it was really a time of confusion....

Researcher: How did you feel the first time you saw pornography?

Subject: Probably, you know, very excited, probably very nervous. I'd have a sense of guilt maybe that I shouldn't be doing this but the strong desire to, you know, keep doing it.

Subject: So, I think the first time I saw it I was excited, sexually excited. Guilt feelings too, you know, I'm not supposed to be doing this so.... The excitement kind of won out, and I looked, you know, looked at it and looked at it.

Considering the nature of the panopticon, the overwhelming internalization of a single discourse to define the self, these feelings are indicative of a fragmented panoptic gaze. Fragmented in that it seems likely that multiple discourses are running into each other, blocking each other, causing competing reactions to the pornography consuming experience in these men as youths. There are feelings of guilt, a sense of doing something wrong which could be indicative of an internalization of anti-pornography discourses like moral conservatism or anti-pornography feminism. They could be feeling

as if they are doing something morally wrong, which would indicate a sense of the moral conservative position, or they could be reacting to feelings generated by some awareness of discourse that claims they are behaving in ways detrimental to women. These discourses do not need to be fully articulated in the consumers' young minds to create negative feelings, they simple need to have been exposed to the discourse in a pervasive enough manner to internalize some of it.

The feelings of excitement could be indicative of an internalization of discourses indicating that looking at pornography and having sexual feelings are normal and/or good. If one believes somewhere within the self that this is good, right, and/or natural and that one should be excited about it, one is likely to experience feelings of excitement and curiosity. This would of course seem to be most indicative of a pro-sex/sex positive position though we should be cautious. Consumer's recollections of excitement could be indicative of resistance to anti-sex/anti-porn feminist and moral conservative discourses and an internalization of pro-sex ideas; however, it must be acknowledged that their feelings of excitement do not necessarily invalidate the anti-porn feminist point of view. Their excitement could be indicative of a masculine excitement toward images of the domination of women meaning that they are accessing the patriarchal hegemony criticized by anti-porn feminists. Regardless, the presence of these feelings of excitement does contradict the possibility of anti-pornography discourse having a panoptic effect in labeling the young consumer pervert in ways that would define his self-identity.

Certainly this analysis would be much easier if the recollections of consumers regarding their youthful experience were universal. One could simply identify the offending social panopticon and move on. Instead there is a task of unraveling at hand.

It becomes necessary to trace the transmission of discourse as best as possible in order to determine what discursive flows are coming into play and where their power is situated. Foucault's (1978) assertion that discourse is transmitted and power enacted at the interactive level suggests that we analyze the types of interactive relationships that might affect a young male's view of pornography.

One institutional area of interaction that leaps to mind is religion. Children do go to church, and they sometimes attend religious schools. If aspects of their self-identity around pornography consumption are related to a moral conservative discourse, certainly parts of that will be exposed by examining their interactions within religious settings.

Another important institutional area of discursive interaction is the family. Young people interact and generate discourse with mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, and so on. In addition, the close proximity of families means much more, and perhaps more intense, discourse can be generated. It seems likely that a great deal of self-identity is generated within the family, and that this influence on self-identity might include perceptions of self as a porn user. Also, families do interact with other institutions. If there are parents with strong religious beliefs, moral conservative discourse could be enacted through family interaction.

Another intense area of interaction experienced by many young people is their relationships with peers, particularly friends. It seems likely that pornography consumption experiences with, around, or reacted to by friends can influence self-perception of the young male as a pornography consumer. If friends react positively to porn consumption they may be accessing one discourse, if they react negatively they may be accessing another.

In conducting this research, interviews revealed that all of these interactive situations were involved in early pornography consumption experiences with various results that could indicate differing hegemonies. One interactive situation that did not seem to have a heavy influence on young males as porn consumers was public school. Schools' sex education was described as shallow or non-existent and school did not discuss the issue of pornography. It is possible that this silence indicates the potential presence of anti-sex discourses, or the silence itself could have been a type of discourse; however, consumers did not indicate that public schools played a large role in their views about themselves as pornography consumers. Religious institutions, such as Catholic schools, did influence some consumers but their nature as religious institutions necessarily makes them part of an analysis of religious impact on self-identity not educational impact in general.

Because the family is generally the institution of origin for most people, and generally has a great deal of impact on young people's self-conceptions we should begin there. When analyzing the data provided by pornography consumers in reference to their recollections of early pornography consumption experiences, one notices that different types of familial interactions seem to reflect different views of or behavior regarding pornography. In particular, one notices that mothers, fathers, and brothers generate different kinds of interactions, and likely access different discourses. Sisters were never mentioned, perhaps because pornography consumption is a young male, but not young female, activity. Further research would need to be conducted to establish this, though such an argument would fit within the idea systems of various feminist discourses.

In terms of actual verbal interaction, parental communication about sex in general, and pornography in particular seemed rather rare. Parents seemed to often choose silence as a way of dealing with sex, and almost exclusively when it came to pornography.

Subject: Well my parents were very, very strict. I mean I grew up in England where a lot of people don't—the things people do maybe aren't any different than they are in America, it's just that it's all done behind closed doors and nobody talks about it. But you know, if a riské program came on television they'd switch the channels and things like that, so, my parents were coming from a very, very conservative perspective.

Researcher: So do you think their attitudes about sexually explicit-type materials affected your attitudes about it?

Subject: I think, I don't think so, other than the thought that maybe it was wrong to masturbate or to look at pictures of naked girls or think about sexuality from that perspective, yeah. I mean that probably gave me the attitude, and I think probably many children, that it was a bad thing to do.

This is an interesting bit of discussion to analyze. It does not express discourse as speech. He does not say that his parents told him that sexually oriented media were bad or wrong. Instead they communicate through action and silence, simply changing a channel, the same message.

Researcher: What was your parents' overall view of sexuality? Was it talked about?

Subject: No, it was not really talked about. I mean I was, you know, told where I came from and all that shit, but that was about it.

This is another example of relative silence around sexuality. The extent of sexual discussion in the family verbally was a speech on where babies come from. This doesn't really represent a strong overt discourse, though the emphasis on reproduction would be consistent with a moral conservative view of sex. Certainly this level of silence about sexuality indicates that pornography was not a frequent topic of discussion. Interestingly, the issue of silence around pornography consumption on the part of parents sets up a

situation of discursive ambiguity. That is, a vacuum that can be filled in differing ways depending on the individual person's position.

Researcher: Did you feel guilty or a little excited or anything like that?

Subject: Maybe bad a little bit, maybe like I shouldn't be doing it or maybe like it could be bad, I don't know, you know, Because it was never really brought up. You know, this is good or this is bad, you know as far as pornography, you shouldn't be doing that or you shouldn't be doing this. Neither, you don't know.

Researcher: Um, where do you think that this might be bad came from? Any idea?

Subject: Hmm, could be, just 'cause it wasn't around the house, you know? It wasn't an open thing so it was bad, something that was 'cause it wasn't around the house.

Subject: I guess the lack of—the lack of any sort of parental attitude towards pornography made it permissible.

Silence around sex and pornography is discursively interesting in that it produces an ambiguity in responses that is indicative of the presence of discourses that are absorbed from places other than the family. That there are opposing discourses in culture about the appropriateness of being a pornography consumer is illustrated by the fact that diametrically opposed reactions to silence are expressed by these two consumers. That parents are often silent about the issues of sex and pornography puts their children in the position of absorbing discourse from other sources. Though it could possibly be argued that silence is a discourse of its own based on the types of significant behavior from parents that surrounds that silence. Regardless, the lack of consensus of interpretation of silence on the part of subjects as they recollect their childhood is indicative of an incomplete panoptic in terms of framing discourses. It is indicative of competing hegemonic discourses.

Despite a general silence about pornography from parents, it is obvious when reviewing the interviews that different discursive messages are transmitted by mothers and fathers to their sons regarding pornography. It is certain that sons interpret their

parents' silence differently at any rate. In addition, when there is overt discourse, the messages of mothers and fathers regarding sex and pornography or definitely different.

Mothers definitely seem to have more negative reactions to issues of sex, pornography, pornography consumption and other sexual subjects. These types of reactions did often impact the way consumers as young people felt about their consumption. Mothers' reactions were more likely to cause reactions consistent with a self-conception of perversion.

Researcher: How did your parents feel about pornography?

Subject: My mother would turn red if you—if you said any dirty words.

Researcher: Oh yeah?

Subject: Or anything about sex. And my father would—my father was a very quiet man, just a hard working guy. He never knew how to make any money. My mother was from the old school. If you had a joke and the joke was slanted, she's blush. But she's a tough, tough woman.

Researcher: Right.

Subject: You know, from the old country. But that's the way it was, the first generation people, they had no interest in sex. That was a dirty thing.

This is a relatively typical statement about mothers' reactions to issues of a sexual nature. Often the participants could not directly comment on what their mothers' view of pornography was. Frequently, questions about mothers' views on pornography were met by comments regarding mothers' reactions to sexuality in general. In terms of analyzing pornography as an aspect of sexuality around which power is deployed pervasively this makes sense. If mothers react negatively toward sexual discourse in general it makes sense that their sons would assume that their reactions toward pornography would be negative.

Subject: Oh, my mom's kinda freaky about it. My mom thought I was having sex when I was thirteen 'cause she found a condom in my dresser.

Researcher: So how did you feel about her reaction to that? Was she pissed off? Was she upset?

Subject: Yeah.

Researcher: What did that do to you?

Subject: She's crying dude. I just said, mom—relax, I'm not doing anything. I'm gonna wait for when Lisa's ready. I said sixteen.

Researcher: That kind of reaction from her make you feel bad or worried about sex or anything like that?

Subject: A little bit, yeah....

This negativity on the part of mothers was consistent when attitudes about pornography specifically were speculated on by the participants.

Researcher: Do you have any idea how your parents might have felt about pornography?

Subject: I think my mom didn't like it. My dad, he didn't really, he had some Playboys—that was a little later on—but he never was really open about or talked about it.

Researcher: How did you know that your mom didn't like it?

Subject: 'Cause if she caught me with like magazines or something, she'd throw them out.

Researcher: Did she yell at you or anything?

Subject: No man, just that, you're sick...

Researcher: So, how did your mom's reaction make you feel?

Subject: I guess ashamed.

Looking at self-perceptions within the above quotes, it's fairly obvious that the reaction to negative reactions on the part of mothers is some kind of negative self-conception, a feeling that one should feel negatively about sex and pornography and negative about oneself for consuming it.

Researcher: You said in your questionnaire that when you first saw pornography you felt a little guilty. Where do you think that came from?

Subject: Probably the fact that, you know—just knowing my mother and knowing her attitudes towards it. Knowing she wouldn't approve of what I was doing. That—that kind of interjected some, you know, feeling of guilt into it.

It seems that mothers fairly consistently transmit discourses that tend to frame pornography consumption as perversion. In doing so they tend to create a panoptic gaze that causes their sons to feel defined as perverts to some degree. Those feelings are expressed in terms of guilt, shame, and discomfort around pornography consumption.

Is there evidence for particular anti-porn discourses being enacted within mothers' interactions with their sons around pornography? The internalization and discursive spread of anti-pornography feminism by mothers is one possible explanation for their negative reactions toward and interactions regarding pornography. If they have internalized a sense of pornography as demeaning to women then they are likely to react negatively toward porn considering that mothers are women. If this is the case, then their expression of the discourse is not obvious to their sons in recalling their mothers' thoughts regarding porn. None of the men in the sample indicated that their mothers were active feminists or that they bought into any aspect of feminism. It is most likely that mothers' expression of anti-pornography feminist discourse is a result of a subtle internalization of its ideas through pervasive dissemination through mass media, discussions with other women, and so on. Without doubt, their negative reactions to pornography as women bolsters the anti-pornography feminist argument that porn is perceived by women as degrading to women. Whether or not mothers are aware of the connections between their reactions to pornography and pornography consumption and anti-pornography feminist discourse cannot be determined from the data collected in this study.

There is direct evidence that moral conservative positions do influence mothers in terms of how they think of pornography and how they frame pornography consumers. Mothers are exposed to moral conservative discourse through religion, and they are exposed to anti-sex/anti-pornography discourses in religion.

Subject: Growing up, like I said, my mom was a devout Christian, and she was going to these prayer meetings, and they were like, you know, the type of meetings that people would think are maybe too farfetched, where people talk in tongues and whatnot. And, I remember this one kid was jacking off or something and they were bringing him out in

front, in the open saying he's got a problem with this or that and he's been saved and he doesn't have that problem anymore. And I'm like going, sure he does. You know what I mean, it's like, it's not really a problem you know. They made it seem like it's a problem.

Subject: My mother was very religious and very disapproving of pornography and, you know—and she didn't want me to see even movies on TV that might have had a little bit of sexual content in them or anything like that.

The first quote is an obvious example of both moral conservatives ideology in terms of sexual activity geared toward personal pleasure and of the discursive construction of a person engaged in that type of sexual activity as pervert. That the mother was actively seeking out this discourse indicates that she was likely to use the same discourses in terms of framing her son's identity as a pornography consumer whether she was aware of it or not. The second quote graphically illustrates how moral conservative discourse translates into a general disapproval of depictions of inappropriate sexuality and a fear that her son would become a pervert if he observed such material. The implication is that the mother becomes a site of transmission of moral conservative discourse in interactions with her son. In that sense she becomes the guard in the panoptic tower. This puts the son in the position of having to internalize the discourse himself in order to know when he is at risk of being discursively defined as a pervert in his mother's eyes. As he internalizes the moral conservative discourse by transferring his gaze to the tower represented by his mother, he also becomes more likely to see himself as a pervert when he engages in the activity of pornography consumption.

It seems that there is a fairly consistent framing of pornography consumption as perversion from mothers. This certainly reflects moral conservative discourses for some mothers and may represent anti-pornography conservative feminist discourses for others.

The fact that it is difficult for consumers to connect their mothers' attitudes to particular discourses actually supports a view of hegemonic definition of meaning as consensus, a diffuse flow of power as Foucault suggests. That there is a fairly consistent negative perception of pornography and pornography consumption on the part of mothers suggests that anti-pornography discourses are fairly pervasive. In terms of hegemonic discourse, pervasiveness serves to obscure the source of power. Discourses appear as the natural order of things rather than as discursive constructs. The fully internalized reified discourse becomes the complete panoptic. This is obviously not the case because consumers do not recollect feeling only guilt, shame, or embarrassment, but the consistent presence of those feelings indicates a strong presence of anti-pornography discourses in the society at large.

Perhaps if mothers were the only site of interaction for young males when they first encountered pornography there would be a more widely encompassing anti-pornography hegemony in society, a more complete panopticon. However, men are exposed to a wide range of interaction at the time they first encounter porn. The dynamics between fathers and sons around pornography are generally quite different.

Fathers, like mothers, tend to not speak directly about pornography. In this sense, they probably do their part in promoting some degree of anti-pornography discourse. By not being open about pornography consumption they do tend to give it a somewhat shameful appearance. This is particularly true because so many fathers who did not discuss pornography with their sons were pornography consumers themselves. The combination of consumption and silence around consumption could certainly be a large part of why sons feel conflicted in their own pornography consumption experiences. In

fact, fathers' combination of silence and consumption indicates that they may themselves be sites of conflicting discourse. Fathers' pornography collections were frequently the source of first or early pornography consumption experiences for sons. Pornography was a fairly common, if not directly expressed, aspect of father/son relationships.

Subject: My parents are, well—how would you say, pretty straight laced. My father has a collection of Playboys around but I've never seen any video tapes or anything like that. He just has the—how would you say it—mass market pornography? My mother, no. She—I've never seen anything pornographic, you know? In all the times I've rummaged through all of her old hidden things I've never seen anything of a pornographic nature.

Researcher: Well let me ask you, what was your first or early experiences like with pornography?

Subject: You know, I can't really remember too much of my early experiences, but I know that my dad had Playboy throughout—forever, you know?

Researcher: Tell me a little bit about your first or early experience with pornography.

Subject: I remember at my dad's house we had a pool room off to the side of the house and underneath the bar he had all his Playboys stacked up. Me and my brothers used to go out and—when they would leave for work—we'd go out and pull them out and look through them and stuff....

Finding fathers' hidden stash of pornography was a common occurrence for this particular group of men. This illustrates two important points. Fathers often have enough of a pro-pornography attitude to own their own pornography; but at the same time, they have a need to hide it. That they feel a need to hide it is indicative of some internalization of anti-pornography discourse. If they are hiding it from their children then they are assuming there is something wrong with it that could hurt children. If they are hiding it from their wives then they are assuming that there is something about it that will offend their wives. More importantly, they may be protecting themselves from the discursive label of pervert by hiding their pornography. This is important in that if fathers discursively define themselves in a particular way, they may also frame their sons in the same way, or at least be a role model for that subject position.

Subject: You know I can't really remember too much of my early experiences, but I know my dad had Playboy throughout—forever, you know?

Researcher: Do you remember looking at them?

Subject: Uh huh, uh huh.

Researcher: And?

Subject: I think for me, it was more of a curiosity-type—I don't think that the connection was made at that age that I had first observed naked females and stuff, you know—that it had anything to do with orgasm, you know?

Researcher: It's just looking at the female body and stuff?

Subject: Well yeah, and plus that, you know—your father looks at it. You kind of have that thing. Its like, if you're a kid and your dad looks at engines, and you don't quite know why he does it, but still, you want to look at engines too.

This is as good an expression as any of how a son might want to emulate his father in terms of the things he does. Because the father consumes pornography, the son is likely to choose to do the same. At the same time, the expression of pornography construction, the discursive meanings behind behavior, are likely to be transmitted from father to son as the son enacts the father's behavior. If the fact that the father consumes pornography is an important behavior for the son, it is logical to assume that the father's hiding of his pornography is also an important behavior for the son. Certainly the behavior has discursive meaning behind it that the son will also probably internalize, most likely anti-pornography discourses. On the other hand, the fact that the father does consume pornography is indicative of pro-pornography discourses in culture. The obvious outcome of such competing discourses embodied in a primary role model is a conflicted identity as a pornography consumer, both normal and pervert at the same time. Throw in the silence from fathers around pornography consumption and the outcome can be a great deal of confusion.

Subject: Um, I know my parents are really different from each other. My mother was really religious and very disapproving of pornography, you know, and didn't want me to see even movies on TV that might have had a little bit of sexual content in them or anything like that. Um, My dad, he was pretty much the opposite. I always noticed that

when me and him went to a store he would go over to the magazine rack and look at, look through the Penthouses and Hustlers and things like that. But he never brought any home. I think probably because of my mother's attitude towards it, and he was much more liberal minded about it, but neither of them really talked about sex to me at all. And there was just almost zero discussion of any kind of sexual issues in the house.

Researcher: Well, your parents had kinda different attitudes. How did that shape your attitudes towards pornography? Why do you think it did that?

Subject: I think probably it meant that I knew that I had to kinda keep it a secret if I was gonna look at it. As the years went on I got a learner's permit to drive, and I used to sneak into the car and drive to the bookstore where I knew they would sell me Penthouses and beer.

Researcher: Right.

Subject: But you know, I knew it was something that I would have to keep secret and not let my parents find out about, otherwise they might be upset.

Researcher: Their being upset—when you were trying to hide it, was that more in the way of being punished or being kind of ashamed?

Subject: Good question. Probably a little bit of both. But probably more fear of punishment. I was someone, I was a pretty good kid. I didn't really get into much trouble and part of that I think was because I just didn't like to be punished. I had a pretty good idea of what my parents would like and what they wouldn't like and if I really had to do things that they wouldn't like I made sure that they didn't find out about it, so really I didn't, I didn't like being punished. But, there are probably also, a little, a small element that I might be ashamed too, or probably embarrassed would be a better word, because the fact that sex wasn't really talked about in the house made it kind of an embarrassing subject.

Researcher: Do you think that maybe your dad was a little hypocritical looking at it but not talking to you about anything like that?

Subject: Yeah, I think so to some extent. Because it ended up being my mother who tried to explain sex to me. You know, how babies were made. And she didn't do a very good job of it at all, and given what I know now, looking at this from an adult perspective it does seem kind of strange or hypocritical that he would be the one that would probably be more comfortable. He would probably be able to explain it better to me because he didn't have these issues that my mother did. And yet he didn't. That is kind of strange.

Deconstructing the above discussion serves to illustrate and summarize issues around conflicted identity as a young pornography consumer. First, it illustrates the common difference between mothers and fathers in their attitudes toward pornography. His mother was against pornography and uncomfortable with sexual issues, based in moral conservative discourse in this case. His father was much more accepting of pornography and more comfortable with sexuality than his mother. There is a basic

division between how his parents approached the issue of pornography. The mother shunned it while the father consumed it. This obviously enacts conflicting discourses that result in confusion for the young consumer, excitement impacting guilt, curiosity impacting embarrassment.

The confusion mounts when one considers the way the two parents behave and end up framing the pornography consumer. The mother obviously frames the pornography consumer as pervert. In fact she seems to frame anyone who is overt about sexuality as pervert, including herself which is illustrated by her discomfort when discussing sex with her son. If the son is only exposed to his mother's discourse he is likely to only conceive of pornography consumption as perversion.

However, his father does consume pornography, and does so in front of his son transmitting a message of acceptability of consuming pornography. However, his father displays conflicted discourse. He is secretive about his pornography consumption, hiding it from the mother. This would seem to indicate the father's understanding of the potential of being labeled and treated as a pervert within the view of the mother's anti-pornography discourses. He only consumes when he can get outside the panoptic gaze of anti-pornography discourse characterizing him as pervert. The son's likely internalization of such a display would be to realize that pornography consumption can be labeled as perversion and the porn consumer as pervert and that he must be secretive about his pornography consumption. And in fact, he does indicate that he is also secretive about his pornography consumption. Interestingly he hides the consumption of pornography from his father as well as his mother which could indicate that he believes his father interprets pornography consumption as perversion and that the father would be

disappointed in the son's status as pervert. In other words, the conflicted identity of the son is linked to the conflicted identity of the father around pornography consumption. The son sees the father attempt to escape the panopticon through secrecy and emulates him.

One final interesting thing in terms of self-identity within this consumer's recollections of his early experience is the way he internalizes his negative feelings. He indicates that his fears of being discovered are more linked to fear that others, his parents, will see his consumption as wrong rather than a conception within the self that it is wrong. He feels guilt instead of shame. If he were caught within a complete panoptic he would feel much more strongly that he was perverted within himself rather than fearing that he would be labeled pervert from outside. In other words, he is aware, perhaps through the example of his father's secretive behavior, that the defining gaze is not complete. Because of that he does not need to transfer his sense of self into the tower completely. He knows that the guard does not see him at all times. He can find places within his cell to hide his activity and therefore there is room for him to resist self-definition as pervert. He must be cautious that he will be labeled from the outside, but he is not required to label himself that way. Because there are safe spaces as well as dangerous spaces to be a consumer, there is opportunity for resistance.

Contributing to the development of resistive spaces where interaction that is accepting of pornography is enacted are relationships between consumers and male peers, particularly brothers and friends. Many early experiences for young consumers took place in the company of brothers and friends.

Subject: There was this one time that this guy in my band, he was like really into it, and all the guys in the band sat there and watched a video, the first X-rated video that I'd ever seen. It was funny, and it was arousing too, you know what I mean? And it was all good.

Researcher: Did it bother you at all?

Subject: No, I thought it was funny and I thought it was good. But, it didn't bother me because I was in what I would consider comfortable company.

Subject: I mean he (father) would have really gotten pissed 'cause like me and my brother were both going into the closet and he had a special box, you know, and my brother dug out the magazines and started picking up magazines for both of us and stuff.

Researcher: Tell me a little bit about the first time you saw porn.

Subject: Uh, it was at a friend's house actually, back in—I believe it was 6th or 7th grade, and his parents were away for the weekend and he got out a couple of their tapes. So, we all sat in a room, went through a couple of them, basically laughed at the whole thing.

Researcher: How'd you feel about it?

Subject: I don't, um, I don't know. It was—it was kind of amusing. It was different definitely. Being a twelve or thirteen year old I guess you're kind of aroused by the whole thing.

It is quite clear that interactions with peers, friend and brothers, are outside an anti-pornography panoptic gaze. Metaphorically, one might surmise that the construction of the panopticon was done incorrectly because the inmates of the prison have contact with the other inmates. This opens the opportunity for mutual examination of and resistance to the enacted discourses of the guardian. There is a chance to validate and reinforce pornography consumption as an appropriate behavior.

That is not to say that there are not discourses that intersect peer relationships. There are rules of arousal and interest in types of pornography consumption around mutual consuming experiences. Certainly it is inappropriate to overtly display any sexual arousal caused by pornography.

Subject: I mean if you're sitting around with your friends you're not really going to be sitting around talking about how turned on you are by the whole thing. But you know, just the whole humorous aspect of it made me a little more tolerant to it.

Researcher: What is it like to be turned on to some degree with a bunch of people around?

Subject: Um, you don't really say anything. Well I mean, you know they are to an extend, but they're not gonna say anything about it. You also know you are, you just, you don't really discuss it with them.

Researcher: Just make jokes? You think making jokes is kinda to cover being a little embarrassed?

Subject: Oh yeah, it's definitely a defense mechanism.

That there is transformation of arousal to humor in shared pornographic experiences may indicate some internalization of anti-pornography/anti-sex discourse in that there is uncertainty about whether or not one risks being defined as a pervert. If something is a joke one can deny looking at it for reasons that would be thought of negatively, if arousal is acknowledged then an anti-sex discourse can come into play and one risks being defined as a pervert by peers.

Another possibility is that acknowledgement of arousal in a same sex peer setting accesses hegemonic discourses around compulsory heterosexuality. If there is acknowledgement of a shared sexual arousal there is an implication of homosexuality. In this sense there is a shift in peer group relationships from a panopticon dedicated to regulating the pornography consumer and instead a shift into a deployment of sexuality and power meant to regulate the homosexual. Illustrated in a conversation with one of the self-identified bisexual subjects, the possibility of a same sex specter is problematic in peer consumption experiences.

Researcher: Did you share pornography experiences with your brother or friends or stuff like that when you were younger?

Subject: No, because I knew from the first time I got aroused that it was not heterosexual. I mean there were parts of heterosexual sex that I could do that, but it was more of a bisexual thing and back then you didn't even discuss going down on a guy as exciting.

This illustrates an awareness of the likelihood of being stamped as pervert in a deployment of sexuality that defines homosexual desire as perverted. Though he refers to “back then” it seems fairly clear from the defensive experience of the previous subject that prohibitions against same sex arousal are still in place. It is okay to share pornography with peers as a young person as long as the shared sexuality and arousal is re-channeled to avoid suggestions of homosexuality.

One thing that is fairly clear from this analysis of interpersonal relationships and pornography consumption for young males is that there are gender differences in terms of how strongly one internalizes anti-pornography discourse. Mothers are much more likely to have a negative attitude toward pornography consumption than fathers. Peer group experiences with pornography occur with male friends or brothers. This could certainly tend to support aspects of the anti-pornography feminist discourse because it appears that pornography consumption is a male realm. If it’s purpose is to socialize males to behave in pornographic ways toward women then it is at least reaching its target audience. An alternative interpretation, however, is that feminist anti-pornography discourse serves to define pornography as demeaning to women and thus block women’s access because they should not want to participate in such an activity. In relation to anti-pornography discourse, women who choose to look at porn risk being accused of identifying with the oppressor thus they avoid the activity. In other words, discourses surrounding pornography consumption may frame women as consumers as well as men.

Outside of interpersonal interactions, the interactive realm that seems to have the most impact on young male consumers is exposure to discourse in specifically religious

settings. Generally the result is an exacerbation of conflicted feelings around the pornography consuming experience.

Subject: I was at that age where I was starting to say, hey, you know, I'm attracted to that. And I was excited about it and I felt like I was doing something wrong because I went to so many Catholic schools growing up. I had a Christian upbringing and I knew it was wrong, but you're still kids and we did everything wrong.

Researcher: How much did your Catholic school upbringing affect your understandings of pornography?

Subject: Well I suppose quite a lot. At first I'd had a lot of guilt feelings about it. It takes a long time to overcome that kind of stuff. Even though you do it, you know, you don't feel completely comfortable with it, still trying to hide it and stuff. Brown paper bags and that kind of thing.

Researcher: Did it make you feel a lot of tension?

Subject: Yeah well, it was a tension between natural desires and religious teaching, they didn't agree.

Immersion in a religious atmosphere works to instill feelings of guilt and discomfort for the young male consuming pornography. Religious institutions are a primary focus of a panoptic gaze of moral conservative anti-pornography discourse. When inside the institution that gaze is probably nearly complete. Still, the tension suggests that even those who are raised in profoundly religious environments find spaces where they can resist that discourse. There are other sites of discursive interaction for these subjects otherwise conflict would not be apparent, they would embrace a self-definition of perversion if they looked at pornography.

Still, the power of the moral conservative discourse does seem to resonate fairly powerfully in society as a whole, creating safe and unsafe spaces for pornography consumption. It affects the lives of consumers who are not within primarily religious institutions as they grow up.

Researcher: Do you think you were a little bit nervous about maybe your parents catching you?

Subject: Um, that's a good question because they never really had bad things to say about pornography, they were, I don't know—I mean I felt like I was doing something wrong.

Researcher: Why do you think that is?

Subject: Um, probably the passed messages of Judeo-Christian ethics that was in my family.

Researcher: Why? Was your family religious?

Subject: No, but Catholicism, Christianity and Jesus, it's like a cancer in some ways.

This person's experience is indicative of a widespread discourse with a relatively powerful panoptic eye. Though his family was not religious he felt that he was being defined by religious conceptions of pornography consumption as perversion. The result was a conflicted identity similar to the conflicted identity of someone who attended a Catholic school. It seems that moral conservative discourse is prevalent in society and does have a significant impact on the deployment of appropriate and inappropriate expressions of sexuality, including pornography consumption.

Overall, the recollections of consumers regarding their experiences as young people indicates a strongly conflicting set of discourses around pornography. Mothers tend to define pornography consumption as perversion and their sons react to their mothers in ways that are intended to protect themselves from being defined as perverts. Fathers send conflicting messages. On the one hand they send a pro-porn consumption message because they are often porn consumers themselves. On the other hand they yield to anti-pornography consumption discourses by being secretive in their consumption, indicating an awareness of pornography consumption as an activity of perversion and passing that message to their sons through their behavior. Peer interactions, brothers and friends, tend to be validating of pornography consumption if it is consumption that does not acknowledge sexual arousal that could lead to an overt display of same sex arousal. Religion sends out strong anti-pornography discourse which permeates culture and sets

up a strong enough panoptic gaze that young consumers internalize the possibility of being stamped as pervert from that direction.

The early experiences of pornography consumers is strongly suggestive of competing discourses and an absence of any social consensus that could lead to a complete panoptic gaze, either pro- or anti-porn. In addition, particular types of interactions seem to create different perceptions of pornography consumption, that is the interactions between fathers and sons regarding porn is different than the interactions between mothers and sons regarding porn.

CHAPTER 7

DODGING THE GUARD? ADULT EXPERIENCES WITH PORNOGRAPHY

This chapter is concerned with questions regarding which discourses are most influential in constructing the identity position of pornography consumers as adults, what interactions are most influential in enforcing a panoptic gaze or undermining it, and what consumption contexts in terms of place are most likely to be panoptic or resistive to hegemonic discourses. Overall, this chapter examines whether or not consumers demonstrate a conflicted identity construction as adults as they do when they are youths.

Recollections of consumers about their youthful pornography consumption experiences illustrate a conflicted experience, particularly in terms of a sense of excitement when viewing pornography and a sense of guilt at the same time. Interestingly, negative feelings about pornography consumption are nearly always linked to a perception that they will be judged from the outside.

Researcher: Do you think your negative feelings or attitudes as a young person around sex or pornography were much more centered around disappointing someone than actually engaging in the activity?

Subject: Yeah, yeah. That's a good way of putting it. Yeah 'cause I—even at an early age I really didn't think that there was anything wrong or immoral per se in, you know, a naked woman or picture of people having sex, but I thought that it was—I thought that it might be wrong or disappointing to others for me to be into that.

Patterns of perception on the part of consumers in this sample related to their more recent experiences with pornography seem to follow a similar conflicted pattern.

Consumers at some times feel negatively about their consumption and sometimes they feel positively about their consumption. One major difference, and one that makes logical sense, is that the patterns of comfort and discomfort are more solidified. When consumers are in their comfort zone they have very few feelings of guilt, only feeling negatively when they are outside of their comfort zone or their comfort zone is disrupted by outsiders.

The consumers' adult experiences are characterized by competing discourses just as their youthful experiences are. There are times when pro-sex sentiment is in the forefront of the consuming experience and the consumers feel most comfortable. Alternatively, there are times when the full force of anti-pornography discourses threaten to come down on consumers and they suddenly feel guilt and sometimes shame. Just as with their youthful experiences, adult experiences take place in an incomplete panopticon. When the guard, the carrier of anti-porn discourse, arrives, the panopticon comes solidly down and the consumer internalization of that discourse comes into play. Often however, the structure of the panopticon breaks down, allowing the consumer to escape the view of the tower or communicate with the other inmates. Either way, comfort level indicative of the presence of different discourses is linked to particular types of interactions and how the people interacted with are perceived to view pornography consumers.

Based on conversations with the men in this sample, comfort level seems to be highest when porn users consumer alone, with other consumers they feel comfortable around, or in a place populated exclusively by other consumers such as an adult

bookstore. This is not completely uniform for the sample but does seem to be the general pattern.

Feelings of discomfort, like embarrassment or guilt, seem to be related to interactions that hold potential negative judgement of the porn consumer. In some interactions, consumers see the possibility of the perversion definition being applied. There is a fear associated with being thought of as weird or sick. Basically, consumers are aware of and react to situations in which negative discourse is applied to them. They are aware of the possibility of ending up within the panoptic tower's field of vision, expressed in the negative judgement of others.

The highest comfort levels for consumers occur when they are using pornography alone in a comfortable setting, particularly at home. Consumers characterize such experiences as exciting, stimulating, relaxing and/or calming. Though these feelings are not restricted only to solitary consuming experiences they seem to be most enveloping in such a setting. One consumer had this to say about what triggers his desire to go and rent pornography to view at home.

Subject: And I ask myself, well is it a question of, did I have some sort of frustration or did I have a bad day or something like that? And porn, you know, relaxes me. And I think that a part of what kind of triggers my response is that it's—it's something that is almost guaranteed to produce a feeling of pleasure and excitement and even relaxation. I mean, I've even seen it as a way to kind of unwind, or release some stress or something like that. So I guess that's something I was thinking about in the last couple days. You know, what makes me go on any given day and want to look at some porn or rent a video or whatever, and it's almost like a kind of release or just something that I do for myself that makes me feel better.

Subject: It's certainly enjoyable to look at. You know, it's enjoyable and I know it's not just enjoyable for me, it's enjoyable for probably everybody.

Subject: I enjoy reading and viewing sexually explicit material. I find that the material is stimulating. Because my partner is not interested in it, it's kind of, you know, a world unto my own.

Subject: I feel very calm and—and at peace when I see some of these things because it's like—it's like just this—it triggers in me a feeling of like happiness, and stimulates me in ways that music does. For instance, really powerful music will—will calm you into going relaxed. It might even, you know, like arouse you in certain ways, and it's the same way I think with certain images. Not all images, not all pornography, but certain pornography when viewed in that sort of attitude. It's very calming, very serene, makes you feel better inside yourself, not necessarily externalizing yourself into that situation, but by just simply having that affect you in certain ways.

Consuming alone, in general, seems to be a comfortable, and in many ways fulfilling, experience for consumers. Solitary use allows the consumer to get the sensation he seeks from pornography. In a solitary setting consumers are free to interpret however they see fit. They are outside the panopticon, free from any discursive threat. This is also evidence of competing hegemonic discourses because a total anti-pornography hegemony would be fully internalized and consumers could not feel comfort even when consuming in a solitary environment. The fact that feelings of comfort when consuming alone are not universal for everyone in the sample is indicative of the potential for anti-pornography discourses to be internalized. At least one subject expressed negative feelings about all his consumption because he felt that it interfered with other aspects of his life. Whether or not this is the case is debatable, but if he blames pornography for interfering in his life, causing him to not learn to play the guitar was one example, then he has internalized a discourse that lets him believe that pornography consumption can have that kind of negative effect. That anti-pornography discourse can be deeply internalized supports the argument that sexuality is deployed in ways meant to control. That those discourses are generally not internalized enough to cause discomfort in a solitary environment is indicative of an incomplete panoptic. It is appropriate to reiterate at this point that this sample of consumers is self-selected so it is

possible that comfort level is over-represented. However, that some consumers might choose to not participate because they are afraid of exposing their consumption only supports the argument that threat of discursive framing as pervert exists relatively pervasively in society. Overall the feelings of comfort are linked to the fact that the consumer is not visible. If they became visible discomfort might arise.

Researcher: Can you think of any time that you've ever felt ashamed for liking pornography or anything?

Subject: Uh uh (meaning no). I, I guess that I would only feel that way if, if someone could somehow see me, like watching a video or looking at a magazine or sitting in a video booth or something like that.

In general, consumers in this sample also seem to be comfortable interacting with, or at least being in the vicinity of, other consumers. There are two main situations where consumers come together. One is in the context of interactions with friends. The other includes situations where consumers come together in places where porn is concentrated, most particularly adult bookstores.

Experiences with friends for adult consumers are similar to experiences with friends as youthful consumers. The experience is permitted and comfortable as long as it is carried out in a spirit of camaraderie. The overt display of arousal is certainly not encouraged, particularly if it leads to a homo-erotic atmosphere. Desire needs to be channeled into thoughts about an appropriate object.

Researcher: What was a recent experience with porno like?

Subject: More recent?

Researcher: Like the last one you can think of.

Subject: Okay, last time I can really remember watching porn was over at my friend's house, and it was almost the same as, you know, being a little kid except it was a little more funny. By then everybody'd already had sex so it was a little like, okay, I understand what they're doing. But you know, more than anything else is was just something to laugh at.

Researcher: So it's more like a joke, something to do?

Subject: No, no it's more the joke than anything else.

Subject: And it's just funny, you know, we were sitting down having a few beers and we were watching girls on TV.

Researcher: So how did you feel about watching that with him?

Subject: I felt fine about it. I mean I did feel fine about it, but I also feel as though, I don't know. I mean, when you get aroused by something that's on TV, what's it make you want to do? It makes you want to go out and get laid.

Pornography consumption experience with friends can be comfortable. Neither of the above conversations displays any type of discomfort surrounding the actual consumption of pornography. There is no threatened definition of perversion in these interactions, at least in terms of being called pervert for consuming porn. There is a threat of being defined as pervert in terms of being homosexual. The arousal generated by pornography needs to be channeled in another direction. In the case of the first conversation arousal is translated into humor, an idea that the pornography is funny. In the second discussion the arousal is transferred to thoughts about an appropriate sex object, a desire to go out and "get laid".

Interestingly, one bisexual subject said that an individual pornography consuming experience could help him deal with homo-erotic arousal that did not have an appropriate release in an all male setting. His comments also display a fairly astute, if crude, critique of compulsory heterosexuality.

Subject: You know, these sexual desires have to be about going out and getting laid with pussy. Like, let's say I go out with my friends. We're all going out and the thing is to, you know, go get laid, right?

Researcher: Right.

Subject: So we all go out and we come back again, and now we're all buzzed and we're all in the same room. There's no pussy right? But you think we're all gonna like come together? Well, no, we're all gonna have this extremely uncomfortable thing and we go to bed, you know? And this would be the perfect time where I would go down to the bookstore and get off. And it's too bad because it should be you go out, you meet someone, you come back and you could still have sex. But the whole thing about gay sex—sex with other males is just too prohibitive.

In this case, an interesting reversal takes place. Instead of avoiding the label of perversion attached to homosexuality that could come into play sharing pornography with friends, this consumer channels his homo-erotic desire into a pornography consuming experience. He uses what could be considered a perversion, pornography consumption, to mitigate the discomfort generated in a panoptic that bans homo-erotic desire as perversion. Interestingly, this same consumer claims that homo-eroticism can be better dealt with in a public pornography consumption area because it is anonymous and he feels it is exciting to see another penis in the context of anonymous pornography consumption in an adult theater or bookstore. Though an attempt to gain access to said penis would probably be inappropriate.

Consumers in this sample generally seem to be comfortable with the public process of procuring and consuming pornography as well. Though most of them seem to prefer to consume in the comfort of their own homes, getting pornography generally requires a trip into a public space where one can be observed as a likely consumer. In other words, in order to obtain pornography, the consumer needs to place himself at potential risk of being observed from the panoptic tower. In public there is always the possibility that one's perversion will be seen and sanctioned with an overt label of perversion.

Researcher: Now what's it typically like for you to go and get it; buy or rent it?

Subject: Yeah, well usually I just go down to the local video store and pull it out, pay for it, that's all. No—no big deal. If I want to go to a club I go, you know, I don't have to sneak around and do it.

Researcher: Do you ever feel uncomfortable going into video stores?

Subject: Nah.

This particular consumer shows a high degree of comfort with being in public considering he often rents at non-adult oriented video stores.

Researcher: So where do you generally get porn at?

Subject: Adult bookstores.

Researcher: Yeah?

Subject: But actually I bought the Playboy I think at 7-Eleven. It's like Playboy, but that shit you can get anywhere. But if I want to get something like Gallery or Barely Legal or whatever, whatever it is, I'd probably go to like, there's this one place off of R Road and B Highway, the fancy one.

Researcher: Uh huh.

Subject: I like that place. It's real cool. It's real nice in there. They're cool in there, and so when I take my there all the time they know me there. Hey M—, how's it goin', you know?

Comfort levels are high for consumers when they are in a space where everyone is part of the consuming experience. Because they are in an atmosphere saturated with pornography, in a thoroughly perverted place so to speak, everyone in that atmosphere is at risk for being discursively defined as pervert. Everyone is engaged in an activity that contradicts the panoptic deployment of normal sexuality. Because the space is suffused with perversion the risk of being detected is cancelled since everyone there is involved in perversion. Everyone knows that the guard cannot see into this place to discursively define them in any way. In addition, the walls between cells are broken down. The consumers can see that others consume and that means that there is some element of validation, sharing with other consumers, even if that sharing is generally anonymous.

That anonymity and shared perversion are important aspects of being comfortable in a public consumption setting can be illustrated by examining the consequences of disruptions to that comfortable setting by obvious non-consumers. When people that are foreign to pornographic public spaces enter them, they bring the panoptic eye and the discursive construction of pornography consumption as perversion with them.

Researcher: Are you ever uncomfortable still, going to get porn?

Subject: Not really, no. Not really. I mean the last time I felt uncomfortable was getting some videos and a bunch of people came in—like eight or ten people that were celebrating somebody's birthday. Somebody had just turned eighteen or twenty-one or

however old you have to be to get into one of those places. Half of them were that age and half of them were their parents, strangely enough. And they all came in, they're all drunk, they're all really loud and everything, and I was up at the counter and I was getting my movies. They all came in and they're partying and, and like laughing and stuff at everything they saw, 'cause you know, they have all the sex toys and things like that on the walls, and they were just being silly. And you know, I thought about it afterwards, I felt strange about feeling strange, but I did. I felt weird that they would come in and they were making comments like, oh my god, what kind of weirdos would come to a place like this, you know? They were doing that kind of thing. It's always other people that I, I don't want to be judged by I guess, you know what I'm saying?

Researcher: Kinda interesting that they said what kind of weirdos when you think about that they're in there too.

Subject: I know, I know, and it—and I thought of that too. And that's—that's the rational way to look at it, but I mean I think that's part of what I was saying just before about people want to distance themselves from pornography and somehow make it seem like, you know, I'm just doing this because we're drunk and we're just doing it for a laugh. We're not really doing this but somebody who is, you know, they're a pervert.

The above discussion illustrates specifically the external nature of discourse and the panoptic eye when the panopticon is not complete. This person thought he was outside the view of the guard. He saw other inmates doing illicit things because the guard also could not see them. He is carrying the view of the guard internalized because he knows what the potential consequences of his acts are; however, the discursive deployment of perversion is not complete because he does not carry that guard with him as a defining sense of self. The intrusion of outsiders, the drunken party people, disrupted the comfort zone for this consumer. It is as if the gaze of the guard in the tower swung around like a lighthouse beacon to remind the consumer it was there. The outsiders brought with them the terminology and all they're discursive meaning, weirdo and pervert, applying them out loud to the people inside the store. For a brief time the safety of a place suffused with "perversion" was undermined by outsiders bringing the label pervert making the consumer aware of his status as such in the eyes of society at large.

Strangers, however, are a lesser worry for consumers when they are in safe spaces. Known people can also disrupt the comfort zone of an adult bookstore or adult theater. One of the fears of consumers is that they will be identified by people they know when entering or leaving the store. The same consumer explains it this way.

Subject: I used to go to the video booths. There used to be a store on, I guess Paradise and Flamingo that got torn down. And I used to go there a lot, but every time I used to go out of the video booths I used to check around and see if anyone was looking at me, and I'd, I never liked going there in the day time because I didn't want people driving by on Paradise, if by chance someone I knew would seem me there, then I would kind of feel like they would think I was a pervert coming out of a porn shop in the middle of the day.

Another consumer expressed similar sentiments.

Subject: When I first moved here and knew no one in town, I would boldly walk into anyplace and park right out in front, you know, just like I have no shame, no guilt walking into these places. And as I've developed more and more friends, friends that would accept it and friends that might not accept it I feel a little more careful. I'd feel some of the pangs that I used to feel of like shame and guilt. But for the most part, I can boldly walk into anyplace and rent and walk out, and still—I mean, I still try to hide it a little bit.

Known people carry a threat because they may think of pornography consumption as perversion and they can carry that definition in reference to the consumer they saw into the outside world, possibly to other people that he knows who might also apply the conception of pervert to him. Being spied in a consumption setting by a known person who is an outsider is problematic because it could have consequences for the consumer in other aspects of their lives, their family or work relations for example.

Subject: If people knew that you use porn, or you know, know that you went to the adult theater, they may put a label on you as being an undesirable or a pervert or some other thing.

The same consumer speculates specifically on the possibility of people at work discovering his consumption.

Subject: I think that most people aren't even aware, like people in my office. They probably think I'm square as a box, you know. They'd be shocked I'm sure if they realized that I'm enjoying looking at porn.

Researcher: What do you think would cause that shock?

Subject: I think their image of me. That, and maybe because they have an image that you shouldn't do it. Maybe the men would do it, but not the women. I think people just aren't—we, as a society and the influence that society in general has on these women is that we're not open to accept things that are different from the prescribed norm.

It's problematic for consumers if people from other aspects of their life find out about their pornography consumption because they could lose acceptance. They're image could suffer. Basically, the deployment of sexuality and its label of perversion for pornography consumers would bring the panopticon into a space that has nothing to do with pornography consumption. The consumer risks being thought of and treated as if he were a pervert in the realm of his everyday life. One subject articulated this quite simply, "Oh yeah, I don't want—I don't want a reputation I don't need."

Meeting known people inside a porn store can also be momentarily disruptive to the comfort zone for consumers, but that disruption is usually quickly mitigated by the fact that both are in the consuming environment and both are at risk of being discursively defined as pervert in the outside world.

Subject: I also remember going into an adult video store, this is when I'm like 24, 25. Walked into an adult store in Seattle, and it was strictly—it was called Blue Video. And I walked in. I turned the corner, boom, walked face to face with this guy I knew.

Researcher: What was that like?

Subject: And he looked at me, and I was like, aaaaw, I was just mortified for a second. I was like literally shaking. And he looked at me, and like there's no way we could avoid—I wanted to avoid him. If I had seen him a second earlier I would have tried to avoid him. I know I would have. But we were stuck there, and he said so you cool with not seeing me? And I said I'm cool. And he went good. So we just like had this little nod and this little shake like, you know. Neither of us saw each other here? Yeah. It works for me.

There is a momentary fear that the panoptic gaze will come down; however, the fact that both are at risk cancels that threat. They agree to not carry their knowledge of

the other's "perversion" into the outside world where judgement might be applied by non-consumers. The major difficulty is not necessarily knowing someone, it's not knowing what the reaction of people who are outside the consuming environment will be, though the general fear is that one will be discursively defined as pervert.

This is really the crux of pornography consumption comfort zones for porn users. Negative feelings when consuming are generally a reaction to fear of external judgement. Isolation or being with other consumers is safe because everyone is involved in the stigmatized activity. As such, there is no stigma within the comfortable space, which is exactly what makes it comfortable. Danger comes with the fear of being exposed to the outside, non-porn consuming (assumedly) world. When a space is thoroughly "perverted" the panoptic gaze of disapproval toward porn consumption that is perceived as prevalent in wider society is resisted. The walls between the cells are gone and the guard is known to not be in the tower.

Issues with non-consumers are not limited to being caught in pornographic spaces. Sometimes pornography is located in places that are essentially non-pornographic and the consumer becomes more aware of the potential of coming under the gaze of the guard. Las Vegas has an especially prominent example of this type of public pornography. Catalogs advertising hotel room exotic dancers and the kiosks that distribute them are common in the Las Vegas area. Such publications have pictures of naked women and, sometimes, naked men. Breasts are generally exposed though genitals are usually censored out (barely). Some of the consumption of some men in this study included such public pornography. The exposed position of the consumer when procuring this type of material raises awareness of the gaze of non-consumers.

Researcher: Do you ever worry about if other people see you buying or picking up flyers; do you care what they're thinking?

Subject: Sometimes when I'm on the street I might find myself a little bit cautious, but that's usually if somebody's gawking. Usually I'm only cautious if somebody's gawking. I mean there's always somebody that gawks.

Gawking constitutes a pointed direction of the panoptic gaze. It is a direct discursive, though non-verbal, framing of the consumer as pervert. It is almost a direct construction of the panopticon. The gawker is the guard in the tower and the consumer is in a cell constructed of his connection with pornographic material. At the moment the consumer notices the gawking, he transfers his consciousness into the mind of the guard interpreting himself through the eyes of the person gawking. It is telling that the consumer reacts to gawking as if it were a negative judgment. This indicates a perceived pervasiveness of anti-pornography discourse in culture, whether moral conservative or feminist. This sense of pervasive anti-pornography discourse threatens to slam the prison down on the consumer if he is not cautious. That the panopticon really exists in the mind of the consumer is evidence that even consumers who are fairly comfortable with their use of pornography have internalized discourses of perversion. Even those that claim not to ever be nervous about being seen by strangers prefer to get to know someone before they intentionally expose their use of pornography. Even a consumer who professes comfort in the fact that other people might know quickly accesses framing discourses of perversion.

Subject: I mean a lot of people know I have, rent pornography. I don't care, you know. Yeah I got lots of porno, so? But in some areas I do. Like where I work made me kind of worry.

Researcher: What would you worry about?

Subject: Being judged. Being judged.

Researcher: What do you think people are going to think?

Subject: That he's sick or twisted or something like that.

Whether or not this person is generally comfortable with his use of pornography he can, and quickly does, access discourses that threaten him with discursive definition as a practitioner of perversion.

This form of awareness of potential judgement from strangers and acquaintances is common in this sample. Generally, the level of fear with this kind of judgment is not that high. It becomes somewhat more intense when people that are closer to the consumer may or do stumble on his use. The higher level of intensity is probably associated with the higher level of risk involved with actual friends or relatives finding out. The consumer has much more to lose, not the least of which is emotional investment in a relationship. For example, consider the amount of emotional investment that goes into a relationship with a father.

Subject: And since then, as an adult, I've gone to my parents' house and have gotten on the Internet and I didn't know about photo caches. I didn't know about this when I first got onto it, and I felt really embarrassed that I knew my dad was going to stumble upon that. But I'm an adult, and he said, yeah, I saw that stuff. Uh, kind of crazy stuff in there you're getting into. So I mean, I mean it—it was never reprimanding or like that, or strict but....

Though his father does not reprimand him or overtly label him, the internalization of anti-pornography discourse is felt as embarrassment to this person. The guard is in the tower in the form of the father even if the father does not intend it to be that way. As was stated before, the panopticon is really in the mind of the consumer. A concern with a definition of perversion is always present because pervasive discourses have been internalized. The panopticon is not complete because the consumer is not fully self-disciplined (Foucault 1977), evidenced by his actual consumption, but he is aware of the potential consequences of being observed by the tower. There is an understanding of discursive threat based on the internalization of discourse.

The same type of dynamic is illustrated by this consumer when relating an incident with a friend.

Subject: I mean, I still try to hide it a little bit. People are coming over and I know that I have these three-day rentals, and they're sitting there. And I go, oh shit, you know, maybe move those off to the side so they won't stumble on them. Well, this friend I ran into—I was on the phone with my mom and he came over and the videos were ready—I was ready to return them, and he walked in and saw the videos and walked over and grabbed them and for a moment I was—one of my friends was about to see the fact that I had pornography sitting right there.

Researcher: What are you afraid the consequences are going to be if your friends find out?

Subject: Judgment. Just the way they were judging you. You're just viewed differently.

The discomfort felt by consumers when their use of pornography is exposed is indicative of awareness of pervasive discourse that is anti-porn. Fear of being judged is related to the fact that consumers cannot be sure that the people in their lives won't react negatively when they discover the user's activity. It is related to awareness that they can be caught in the deployment of sexuality that characterizes them negatively. This occurs even though experience of consumers shows that they are often not really judged negatively, like the above person's father did not judge him negatively.

Both of the above experiences are related to male relatives and acquaintances. Consumers seem to be even more concerned with judgments of perversion from females. This is true whether the woman in question is a stranger or is well known to the consumer. An example of fear of judgment from women is the way that consumers react to buying pornography from female clerks.

Researcher: What do you feel like when you're actually buying or renting porn?

Subject: Generally I don't rent movies. When I go and buy porn it depends on who's behind the counter. I hate going up and buying—for some reason, I don't know why, I hate buying pornography from a woman 'cause I get so embarrassed. I mean she's having sex too, you know?

Researcher: Right.

Subject: It makes no sense.

Researcher: Buying pornography from a woman at the counter is more embarrassing than buying it from a man?

Subject: Yeah, generally.

Researcher: Why do you think that would make you embarrassed?

Subject: I don't know. It's just—not that she's thinking of me in particular, it's just I feel like I've been exposed. And that's really sad.

Subject: I bought the Playboy I think at 7-Eleven.

Researcher: Right.

Subject: It's like Playboy, but that shit you can get anywhere. But if I want to get something like Gallery or Barely Legal or whatever I'd probably go to this one place off R Road and B Highway. I like that place, it's real cool, it's real nice in there, they're cool in there, so when I take my cousin in there all the time, they know me there. Hey man, how's it goin', you know?

Researcher: They have Barely Legal and stuff at 7-Eleven.

Subject: Yeah, but I don't want to go over and buy there.

Researcher: So what's the difference between buying there?

Subject: There's usually women that run register at 7-Eleven and it's a little bit odd, 'cause I don't consider myself a bad looking guy, and I think that I can present myself to any woman and say, hey, you know what, I can date you if I wanted to. It's not like I'm conceited or anything. I'm just confident that I can date people if I wanted to. I could take you out, I know you want to go out with me. And I wouldn't want to buy a Barely Legal—fresh pussy, shaved snatch, whatever. If I buy a Playboy it shows that I have style.

Researcher: So what makes you uncomfortable about the other?

Subject: Just seems a little more demeaning.

Researcher: Yeah. What do you think would...?

Subject: I don't know if they really mind. Huh?

Researcher: What do you think would be going through their mind?

Subject: Dirty. Dirty fucking kid, you know? Dirty kid, dirty old man. Why would you want to see that girl naked?

There are two major issues that should be considered when we think of men's concerns about women discovering they use porn. It is a double type of exposure. Both the above conversations reveal a sense of embarrassment at the possibility of being exposed as a pornography consumer. The first major reason for this discomfort is the fear of being labeled a pervert, a "dirty fucking kid". That fear of the panoptic gaze, the transformation of the anonymous woman into the guard in the tower, seems to be quite strong. It is especially noticeable when women as clerks are singled out as a source of

embarrassment. This is probably related to the second major issue of exposure before anonymous women. Men are afraid that exposure of their use of pornography will undermine their masculinity in the eyes of a woman.

The second consumer above illustrates this by communicating that his embarrassment is related to the possibility that the female clerk might interpret his purchase of pornography as a signal that he does not have success with women. This accesses large scale discourses of masculinity which serve to define successful masculinity, in part, as the ability to be romantically and sexually successful with women. Having one's masculinity publicly undermined, based on the consumer's comments, is problematic, particularly when it is undermined in front of a person he is supposed to be sexually successful with. The implication of buying pornography is that the porn is needed because the consumer cannot get real women. This can cause issues for the consumer in terms of self-conception, an anger or shame for not being with a woman.

Researcher: Have you ever felt ashamed for looking at porn?

Subject: The only shame that I would feel is—I wouldn't call it shame, but it's really a thing, you know, a certain longing in your life for some beautiful girl by my side. How come I'm working at this, you know? And so I don't know if you'd call it shame or anger or what, by I'm a nice guy. I work hard, I'm a nice guy, I'm not a fuck up, you know what I mean? How come I don't have somebody in my life at this time? That's probably the only type of shame or anger that I felt, and it's not like intense shame or anything, but it's just a feeling that you get.

It should be noted for a number of these men that issues of discomfort with women could be mitigated if the woman was conceived of as another consumer. For example women shopping in porn stores didn't necessarily embarrass consumers. The participant who hated buying pornography from a woman behind the counter at a 7-11 said this about women shopping at a porn store.

Researcher: What if a woman came in?

Subject: Doesn't bother me at all 'cause they like the same thing I do. They just look around the shop.

Being a consumer in a perverted space seems to overcome some issues of gender around pornography because the woman is also potentially labeled as pervert. Perhaps even more so because women are not expected to look at pornography.

There are other issues around women for pornography consumers. Being caught and identified as a pornography consumer by women who are significant others is particularly problematic. If a consumer feels uncomfortable under the scrutiny of a woman he doesn't know like a counter clerk, the discomfort of being exposed in front of a person one cares about and has a personal investment in can be extremely uncomfortable. Certainly the prospect of being put in that situation makes some consumers uncomfortable.

Researcher: Do you hide your porn from her (girlfriend)?

Subject: Yeah, I keep it out of sight. I make sure that it's not around for her to see. I'm not really sure if she knows how much I have. I have a little box with some magazines and some tapes in it and stuff, and I don't know if she knows that box exists actually. I know that she knows that occasionally--well here's the thing, I think that she thinks that I don't watch it as much as I do. I think she thinks that every now and then I do and I think that I do more than she thinks that I do.

Researcher: How do you think you'd feel if she went through the box?

Subject: That's a good question 'cause there's some stuff in there that.... 'Cause, like I was saying, I've started the last couple years looking for things that are a little different or a little, you know, farther than stuff that I had seen before. So, I've got some things in there that I--you know some pictures I downloaded off of web sites. Just pictures. Some like--it's kind of silly but there's some web sites that are like shots looking up girls dresses.

Researcher: Yeah, I've seen those things.

Subject: Yeah, but I've got those, and I'd feel silly kind of if she saw those because they're actually, they're so far from hard core. They're like pictures of Martina Hingis bending over to serve and being more exposed than usual. and things like that. I think she would just think that I was kinda childish for getting stuff like that, but you know, that's something different.

Researcher: But you think she'd think you were kinda childish for that?

Subject: I think so, yeah.

Researcher: Does it worry you that she might freak out about it?

Subject: I don't think she'd freak out. That's not the way she is. She's pretty, she's pretty reasonable, you know, not the type of woman who throws tantrums or anything like that. I just think that she would look at me and go, you know, grow up or something.

Researcher: Would you feel a little bit ashamed maybe, if she found it?

Subject: Yeah. I would say embarrassed, like we were saying before, more embarrassed than ashamed.

The prospect of being caught as a porn consumer, particularly if one's predilections could be considered somewhat off base, can be uncomfortable. This is another, of many, examples of situations where a potential interactional panopticon, a deployment of sexuality through discourse, that defines the consumer in terms of perversion is threatened. If the consumer's significant other finds out, there is no way to be sure how she'll react. That the first feeling that the consumer is likely to exhibit is embarrassment or another negative feeling about the self once again evidences the internalization of a hegemonic anti-pornography discourse. In relation to women, that hegemonic discourse shows the most relation to an anti-pornography feminist discourse because it reflects awareness on the consumer's part that some people interpret the porn user as someone who demeans women by consuming. Men are afraid that they will be interpreted by women in general, and their significant others in particular, as men who do not respect women or think of them as people. Consumers do demonstrate an awareness of this discourse in larger culture.

Researcher: Do you think men who look at porn get a bad rap?

Subject: Yeah, I do.

Researcher: How so?

Subject: Because they get lumped into certain things—certain aspects like—like the objectification of women, that kind of thing.

Consumers are aware that their consumption habits may be interpreted in that way by women and they will be judged as disrespectful and even potentially dangerous to women. That the consumers themselves do not usually see pornography as demeaning to

women, at least not mainstream pornography, has little impact in mitigating negative feelings. Once again this displays the external, social control oriented, deployment of sexuality and the panoptic framing of the consumer through discourse. The consumers do not themselves feel they are demeaning women, yet they are aware that they could be labeled as such and that there are potential consequences.

One issue that should be mentioned is the willingness of some consumers to discursively frame other consumers as perverts. Just as the non-consumer is able to define him or herself as normal by perceiving themselves in relation to the overall population of pornography consuming “perverts”, consumers themselves can put themselves closer to the mainstream, normalize themselves, by discursively defining what other consumers do as more perverted. If a consumer just looks at magazines, those consumers that look at videos can be considered more perverted. If consumers spend only a little time using pornography, those who spend a lot of time can be thought of as having a problem. For example one participant had this to say about men who consumed too much;

Subject: Uh, I think it’s kind of pathetic, but it’s—I can’t really say it’s wrong.

Researcher: Why is it pathetic?

Subject: Well, I don’t know. If you want to get a woman, you know, grow a set of balls, go out to a bar or something. Go pick somebody up. I mean if you’re gonna sit at home all day and do nothing but masturbate, unless you don’t want a woman in the first place, that’s kind of odd.

This consumer is discursively defining other consumers as pathetic and/or odd.

This serves a function of normalizing his activity by labeling another’s activity as abnormal. It is a case of the consumer mitigating his perversion by pointing out the more perverse behavior of other consumers.

A consistent thread running through my conversations with consumers, though it was not completely uniform, was much more identification of guilt and embarrassment rather than shame in terms of negative feelings.

Researcher: What's the difference between feeling guilt and feeling shame?

Subject: Being guilty is kind of knowing that somebody's going to be disappointed with you, you know, they're going to think you're kind of sick or whatever. Being ashamed is more feeling guilty except it's your own expectations instead of somebody else's. So no, I've never really been ashamed.

This is significant in this discussion because it indicates that the consumers resist hegemonic domination at the same time that they internalize it. Guilt and embarrassment are related to people outside the consumer, the guards in the tower. Guilt reflects negative feelings associated with disappointing someone else by violating their expectations while embarrassment is caused by being caught doing something that violates another's expectations. Either way, the locus of negative feelings is outside the consumer. Shame, on the other hand, reflects self-disappointment. It is a feeling associated with violating one's expectations of oneself. That consumers tend not to feel shame is indicative of a resistance to full internalization of anti-pornography discourses. They can see themselves from the guards' point of view, hence guilt and embarrassment. They do not think of themselves as they believe the guards think of them, hence the lack of shame. The panopticon is in place but there are some design flaws. Sometimes the isolation between consumers breaks down allowing them to validate each others' consumption through mutual "perversion". Sometimes the inmates find places outside the gaze of the guards allowing them a respite from thinking in the way of the guards and their own resistive self-perceptions come to the surface and are reinforced. There is not an anti-pornography consensus because the consumers are not overwhelmed.

There is a panoptic gaze in culture, or at least a gaze that has the potential to become panoptic. Consumers are aware of these discourses and aware that they might be applied to them if their consumption activity is exposed. However, the full force of the panopticon is not in play. The sign of a complete panoptic is that the inmates internalize the gaze of the guard and come to define themselves in terms of that gaze. It is quite clear that, while porn consumers have internalized the panoptic gaze of anti-pornography discourses to the degree that they regulate their behavior around it, they have not come to define themselves in terms of it. There are signs of resistance in their behaviors and self-conceptions.

CHAPTER 8

UNDESERVED PRISON: VIOLENCE AND BEHAVIOR FOR CONSUMERS

This chapter addresses the question: how do men construct their own pornography consumption experiences within a cultural setting with hegemonic effects? As was mentioned early in this paper, there are a number of theories out there about male pornography consumers, particularly in terms of how they think of their activities and how they are likely to behave in reaction to pornography. This chapter examines what the consumers themselves have to say about their activity and compares their perception to what framing discourses say their experience should be.

Anti-pornography discourses (as evidenced primarily by moral conservative and anti-pornography feminist discourses) in culture at large center their arguments around the harms pornography and pornography consumers do in society. Their primary methods for doing this are to characterize the pornography consumer as dangerous to women, and disrespectful and deviant in terms of sexual desire. Anti-pornography feminists characterize pornography as primarily consisting of depictions of domination and violence, particularly in terms of sadomasochism, bondage, and depictions of rape. Moral conservatives also hold up depictions of S&M and bondage as evidence that pornography creates deviant and potentially dangerous sexualities. That anti-pornography discourses are pervasive is displayed by the search for connections between

pornography and aggression in scientific studies, and a sense on the part of consumers that they are potentially seen as perverts in the real world.

The fundamental perspective for both anti-porn feminism and moral conservative discourse is an assumption that violent and/or deviant fantasy will infiltrate the mind of the consumer to influence fantasy that he will then want to carry into reality. The numerous horror stories about how pornography has been a causal factor in violence against women from an anti-pornography feminist position displays this mentality.

"She was tortured in her marriage by a man consumed by acting out pornography. He tied her up when he raped her; he broke bones; he forced anal intercourse; he beat her mercilessly; he penetrated her vagina with objects, 'his rifle, or long-necked wine decanter, or twelve-inch artificial rubber penises.' He shave the hair off her pubic area because he wanted, in his word, to 'screw a baby's cunt.' He slept with a rifle and kept a knife by the bed; he would threaten to cut her face with the knife if she didn't act out the pornography, and he would use the knife again if she wasn't showing pleasure. He called her all the names: whore, slut, cunt, bitch. 'He used to jerk himself off on my chest while I was sleeping, or I would get woke up with him coming in my face and then he'd urinate on me' (Dworkin 1989; Pp. xxiii).

The purpose of such a story is to demonstrate a causal relationship between pornography and violence against women in order to characterize porn consumers as violent. Men look at porn, want to do what is in porn, and will likely try to do what is in porn to an available woman. Similarly, moral conservatives believe immoral, unchristian sex will be the result of pornography consumption by men. In either discourse, the argument insists that deviant, violent sexuality is pervasive in porn, that men will have a strong interest in such material, and that they will seek to enact such sexuality in their real lives.

Since the discursive framing of consumers as potentially violent is overarching in anti-pornography discourses, and results in the construction of pornography consumption as perversion, this issue will be addressed first.

In the case of this sample of porn users, it is apparent that a bent toward violent pornography and violence in sexual practice is not pervasive, though we cannot assume this is the case for the general population of pornography consumers due to the biases of a self-selected sample. The men in the sample generally show a low interest in violent pornography, whether it is sadomasochistic, bondage oriented, or rape oriented. They do not notice a prevalence of such material on the market, though they know it exists, and when they do see it the majority of them tend to react negatively toward it. In fact, they often identify with the pain of the “victim” in the depiction rather than with the displayed dominance of the aggressor. Some also report a desire to intervene and help the victim.

Consumers do report that pornography sometimes influences their sexual fantasy life; however, their general fantasies tend to run more toward mainstream sexuality. They may fantasize positions or acts, but rarely do they fantasize violence. Whatever their fantasy life is, they show little penchant to carry it into real life situations without the permission of the people they practice sexuality with. Though some have tried sexual acts that they found in pornography, they tend to be respectful of their partners in terms of initiating or continuing a particular practice. In other words, their behaviors as they report them are resistive toward the definitions of them by anti-pornography proponents.

Interestingly, only one consumer in this sample reported a strong interest in bondage-oriented or sadomasochistic pornography while the others showed little or no interest. The reason most commonly given is that it does not coincide with the types of

fantasy sexuality that they have in their minds. This seems to indicate the possibility that fantasy influences the type of pornography chosen rather than pornography constructing fantasy. If so, this complicates the typical model of porn consumption and further evidences what participants in this research have indicated; that pornography is an outlet for sexual fantasy and self-pleasuring and an entertaining form of sexual education. Unfortunately, this possibility cannot be fully explored with the data gathered here, but should be addressed with further research.

Researcher: How would you define violent pornography?

Subject: Violent pornography? Abusive—let's say anything that when a guy's doing something and a woman doesn't enjoy it, but the guy keeps doing it. You know, when it's only for one—one partner's pleasure. That's it.

Researcher: All right, can you think of like a specific example maybe?

Subject: I don't know, for example, maybe slapping somebody around. Maybe even more extreme bondage/S&M kind of things.

Researcher: Have you ever seen any porn that you would consider violent?

Subject: No, not really.

Researcher: How do you think you would feel if you did see it?

Subject: That kind of stuff, that's not really arousing to me. I would probably be more disgusted than anything else.

This consumer goes on to assert:

Subject: You know, part of the fun of sex is knowing that the other person's enjoying it too, and if you're viewing that and knowing that just the one guy's enjoying it, the woman's getting no pleasure out of it or vice versa, then it's not really an enjoyable thing.

The self-expression of this person in relation to pornography does not show the type of interest in violent pornography that anti-pornography feminists or moral conservatives assert is typical of porn consumption. Furthermore, this person does not display any interest in real life violent activity, stressing much more the importance of the mutual enjoyment of both partners. As he puts it, "I've never really seen the whole point between pain and sex. Pain doesn't really turn me on actually, you know, it hurts."

This is not an isolated perspective for consumers.

Researcher: Okay, how would you define violent pornography?

Subject: Define violent pornography?

Researcher: Right.

Subject: It sucks. It's not sexy at all.

Subject: The stuff that I've seen is mostly women being tied up and then, like beaten with, uh, with whips. But it's not even, I think beating's the wrong word for what I've seen. It's more like, half-hitting, you know. It doesn't look like they're trying to whack the crap out of them or anything in the ones that I've seen. It looks more like a light slap. But sometimes the tying up looks kinda painful 'cause their skin gets red and things like that.

Researcher: How do those kinds of videos make you feel when you see them?

Subject: Just not interested. I mean, I don't really get disgusted or anything, and I wouldn't even say that it turns me off. I would just say that they don't turn me on.

Researcher: Have they ever translated into any kind of fantasy?

Subject: No

Researcher: When you've seen S&M or bondage-type porn, how did that make you feel?

Subject: It didn't make me feel anything. It didn't do anything for me.

Researcher: Have you ever seen pornography that you consider violent?

Subject: Um, yes.

Researcher: How did you feel about it?

Subject: It turned it off.

Researcher: That means you didn't like it?

Subject: That means I didn't like it. That means that it was a turn-off for me; that I don't think any one person should—anybody should get their pleasure from the pain and discomfort of the other.

Other consumers in this sample felt similarly though there were a couple who did express an interest in violent depictions in porn. That those people were in the vast minority sets up and enacts a resistive discourse on the part of these consumers to anti-pornography arguments that most men want to see male dominance through violence in pornography. It also sets up potential resistance to the next link in the argumentative chain of anti-pornography discourse. If men do not desire to see depictions of violence because they prefer to see scenes of mutuality and pleasure then it is unlikely that they

will want to practice violent sexuality in their real lives rather than a sexuality of mutual pleasure.

The testimony of the consumers in this sample sets up an interesting possibility that should be explored in future research. There may be a continuum of pornography consumption taste and preferences for porn users. Some consumers may prefer porn that emphasizes complete sexual mutuality while others prefer porn that depicts heavy domination or violence, and so on. Unfortunately, this topic cannot be fully explored with this research. Sample bias related to self-selection on the parts of respondents makes it unlikely that the range of consumer tastes and preferences have been captured here. This possibility should be explored in future research on male pornography consumers.

Subject: I guess you know that I don't spend a lot of time going around to video stores, but on the occasions when I've done that, the sections that are relative to violence, that would be domination and S&M, had to be much more limited sections then the rest of the store, so I would not think it is more widely popular.

Researcher: Have you noticed a lot of that kind of porn?

Subject: No. I mean I know it's there, but I don't really pay attention to it. I see something like a woman tied up in like a leather suit or something I kinda just pass it.

This comment is indicative of another aspect of the consuming experience that resists anti-pornography discourses in that the perception of consumers is that rape-oriented and BDSM porn is not prevalent. Though they acknowledge that such fare is available, they do not see it as representing the majority of pornography, unlike anti-porn feminists for example, who claim that violent pornography constitutes the mainstream of pornography. This is evidenced by consumers' ability to avoid such material for the most part, and their sense that more violent fare occupies smaller areas of adult bookstores. It

should be noted that this sense might reflect this sample's distaste for the subject matter and a tendency to ignore its presence.

One way or another, the majority of consumers in this sample did not notice violent pornography to be the majority of pornography available. The existence of this type of perception on the part of these pornography users allows them to present a discourse that resists the characterization of that type of consumption as prevalent by anti-pornography feminists and moral conservatives. This, in turn, allows consumers to resist their framing as potentially dangerous perverts. Pornography consumers' perceptions and the discourse generated in these interviews by that experience resist the monolithic characterization of pornography and pornography consumers coveted by anti-pornography proponents. The characterization of pornography consumers as dangerous makes it simpler to create a panoptic control over them; however, if that argument is weakened by discursive resistance from the consumers themselves, the power of the panoptic is similarly diminished.

Interestingly, when asked about violent pornography they have seen, particularly in reference to depictions of rape (though also some depictions of bondage) consumers turned to representations of violence they had seen within the mainstream media. More specifically, when consumers were asked about such scenes that they had been exposed to, some talked about pornography in the sense of adult materials while others could only think of examples from the mainstream media.

Subject: I mean there's the occasional thing about being, you know, having the whole bondage thing, but I think that's more of, say, a mass media fetish. I don't know—I don't even know how to describe it. It's kind of, should I say, the counter-cultural version of S&M.

Researcher: What do you mean by counter-cultural version?

Subject: It's the fetish without the whips and chains and all the crazy stuff.

This particular comment from a consumer indicates the presence of bondage and S&M depictions in the popular media. In that sense, pornography is not the main distributor of those types of images. The comments of this consumer begin a resistive discourse because the argument of the anti-pornography groups points to mainstream pornography as the main source of such depictions. Though some anti-pornography feminists, like Diana Russell (1993), have tried to extend their definitions of pornography to include such depictions in the mainstream media, that the consumer separates pornography and mainstream media resists the idea that this can be considered discursively defined pornography because his experience suggests this is not the case.

Another consumer suggested that he believed a lot of violent pornography was available in places like adult bookstores; however, the example he came up with regarding depictions of rape was *Death Wish*, an R-rated movie starring Charles Bronson which contains a graphic rape scene. As he put it, "To me, that *Death Wish* movie was as close to pornography on regular TV as it gets." This complicates the issue of whether or not mainstream media can be classified as a type of pornography; however, on the other side, it resists the argument that X-rated pornography is the only, or even most prevalent, source of such material. Mainstream movies were cited more than once as sources of rape imagery.

Researcher: Have you ever seen porn that effectively depicts rapes or anything like that?

Subject: I've seen it on HBO and Cinemax, like normal TV.

Researcher: Like normal movies?

Subject: Yeah.

Researcher: How did those make you feel?

Subject: They make me feel repulsed.

This supports Gayle Rubin's (1993) argument that pornography can be attacked as portraying and possibly causing violence only if it is inherently more violent than other types of depictions. Clearly the experience of some consumers resists and undermines the assertion that pornography is inherently more violent than other media, and exposes that it is the sexually explicit content rather than violent content that anti-pornography discourses object to.

Whether the depiction seen was in pornography or the popular media, an interesting phenomena appeared regarding consumer behavior. Several consumers expressed a desire to assist or avenge the female victim within a depiction of violent sex. They showed an empathy with the victim rather than the male perpetrator.

Researcher: This film you saw, kinda describe it briefly. What did you see?

Subject: I was quite stoned at the time. I saw a woman in this S&M bar kinda crap. She was all tied up—bondage, and I remember somebody with a knife and he sure worked hard on her face and I don't remember much else.

Researcher: Do you remember how seeing that made you feel?

Subject: It made me wish I was anywhere near with a rifle to be honest with you. I will not tolerate that.

Researcher: So you would have shot this guy.

Subject: Without hesitation.

Researcher: It kinda made you mad I guess.

Subject: Yeah, pissed me off.

Researcher: Have you ever seen any porn that you'd label as rape, something like that?

Subject: One of the novels I read actually was called—was something about a raped cousin or raped virgin and it like detailed the rape and that was pretty weird. But it was something that I said, I'm not going to do this to any girl so, I kinda just looked at it positively, you know?

Researcher: Um, how did that actually make you feel? You're obviously thinking this is wrong but...

Subject: Well yeah 'cause it was a novel. It really can juice your imagination up, let you visualize it more than just seeing a picture or watching a movie 'cause you can watch in your head what's happening. It's more than visual. Actually it scares me. I wanted to beat the guy's ass, and I got pissed off. I'd fucking kill him.

Researcher: Right. So you reacted negatively toward it.

Subject: I did. They'd probably say I wouldn't do it (kill him), but I wouldn't let anyone do that.

Researcher: What kind of film was it?

Subject: It was basically a women held down and men taking turns, and then expecting her to be happy that it happened, be happy she was forced to have sex when she didn't want to have sex. So that is just something that I just—I personally wouldn't tolerate it. If I ever seen something like that going on, at a party or in a house or on a college campus, I might get shot one day because I would get involved.

Researcher: Right.

Subject: I would try—I would come to the rescue of the person being abused.

One of the primary arguments of anti-pornography forces as they try to justify a controlling panoptic gaze toward pornography users is that the male viewing an image will identify with the male character(s) in the depiction. They will be excited by and want to emulate the behavior of male characters as they engage in deviant and violent sexual activity. In a sense, the anti-pornography discourses theorize a form of vicarious bonding in violent perversion between the men on the screen/in the magazine/on the Internet and the consumer. They assume that the porn user will empathize with and seek to be like the male(s) in the depiction. The above quotes clearly do not support this as a monolithic characterization of pornography consumers. Consumers are clearly able to define particular situations as wrong and undesirable. They are also able to identify with the victim rather than identifying with the domination through violence expressed by the depicted aggressor. Several even assert a desire to intervene in such depictions on the behalf of the victim in order to stop the deviant/violent activity. Panoptic control of pornography consumers is unjustified if there are cases where the consumer does not identify with the perpetration of sexual violence as anti-porn advocates insist they must. That consumers realize that violence is wrong resists hegemonic depictions of them as inherently dangerous.

Consumers also distinguished between types of violent pornography.

Researcher: Okay. Do you consider bondage and S&M to be violent?

Subject: No, up to a point. I mean, actually, it's just not violent period if both of them are enjoying it. But you know, if you tie somebody up and, you know, maybe gag them or do something a little bit extreme to the point that they don't really like it, then I suppose that would be violent.

Researcher: So, it's not really the act but whether or not...

Subject: Yeah, its not the act, it's, you know, the mutual pleasure I suppose.

Researcher: So if two people are beating the utter fuck out of each other, if they're both getting off on it that's not violent?

Subject: No, it's not, because they're both consenting to it.

Researcher: So how would you define violent pornography?

Subject: Violent?

Researcher: Yes.

Subject: Oh gosh, I don't know if I've seen violent pornography. I mean I've seen a few of the B&D movies. Again, I assume these people are doing it voluntarily because it turns them on. Early on they used to have chambers over here, I don't know if you ever went over.

Researcher: No.

Subject: I went over a couple times. I didn't actually do any of the stuff, I just wanted to see what it was like, but you know people like to go in and have hot wax dripped on them and be tied up and whipped and stuff. I never did that 'cause I didn't think it would turn me on, but some people want to do it.

Researcher: Do you consider bondage and S&M porn to be violent?

Subject: You know, to me I don't think so, not if both people are voluntarily doing it. Violence to me is where people aren't—don't want to be hurt. I know there's some people that do enjoy being hurt. I understand from reading that they have signals that they can give too somebody if it goes down to a certain level to stop and that kind of thing. So there is control over it. So, if people want to be hurt then I don't—I wouldn't consider that to be violent. If you don't want to be hurt then that's what I consider to be violent. If somebody attacks you and does something to you that you don't want them to do.

Consumers resist panoptic anti-pornography discourses of what violent pornography is and how it affects them by using a differing definition of what is violent in pornography. That anti-pornography advocates access bondage and sadomasochistic depictions in order to display violence as prevalent in pornography implies that bondage and sadomasochism are inherently violent. Consumers do tend to think of such images as appearing violent; however, they do not condemn such depictions based on appearance.

Instead, they acknowledge that some people, both male and female, enjoy participating in such activities and if they consent to participate it is not violent. Being forced to participate in an act is violent, being subjected to pain with consent is not.

Obviously the consumers in the sample do not consider pain to be the major issue when it comes to violence, though they access that as an initial reference point around violence. Instead, consumers tend to recognize that their definitions of unpleasant do not necessarily coincide with other people's definitions of unpleasant and come to redefine violence in terms of presence or lack of consent to participate in certain activities. Even consumers who want to consider bondage and S&M pornography to be violent display an understanding of relativism.

Researcher: Do you consider bondage and S&M porn to be violent porn?

Subject: Yes.

Researcher: Why?

Subject: Because there's—it involves fear and pain inflicting and that sort of stuff, and that kind of stuff—I don't know. I just don't—I can see where aspects of it might be—there's just something about the whole latex and leather that just doesn't appeal to me. I don't really know why, but that's just a personal—a personal attitude.

This consumer, who displays a desire to define S&M and bondage as violent, ends up acknowledging that his understanding of it is a personal matter. In other words, he does not acknowledge a monolithic definition of bondage and sadomasochism as violent. All of these consumers seem to display at least some understanding of and tolerance for sexual diversity. This is completely resistant to anti-pornography discourses, which monolithically display bondage and sadomasochism as inherently violent and likely to cause violence in the real world. Essentially this is akin to the tension between ethnocentrism and cultural relativism. Anti-pornography proponents display a high degree of sexual-centrism, assuming that what appears to be violent to them is indeed

violent. Consumers, on the other hand, seem to recognize a sexual relativism. Just because something may appear violent or unpleasant to them does not mean that it is violent and unpleasant to those participating. Further, just because someone consumes such material does not mean that they will force someone to participate in such an activity in reality. It is just as likely that they will seek like-minded people to participate in BDSM sexuality voluntarily. Clearly, consumers allow for the possibility of a greater variety of legitimate sexual representations than anti-pornography proponents do. That they are able to conceive of that variety of sexuality yet not want to participate in all of it resists the application of hegemonic anti-porn discourses on two levels.

First, it resists anti-pornography advocates' attempts to define all types of violent looking porn as violent. Second, that these consumers show little interest in participating in such activities is not consistent with anti-pornography arguments because it denies the discursive framing of consumers as inherently dangerous and likely to imitate what they see in pornography. Once again, consumer discourse demonstrates that panoptic confinement of the consumer may be unwarranted, and in fact, the consumers themselves escape the panoptic because they do not internalize the guard's opinion that they are inherently dangerous.

Probably the best indicator that consumers do not internalize a panoptic, anti-pornography gaze from hegemonic discourses is that they themselves do not believe that pornography could cause them to become physically violent toward anyone. They deny the possibility that pornography could cause them to do anything to another person against their will because violence is not part of their character.

Researcher: Do you think it's possible for violent pornography to take somebody like yourself—if you were exposed to it frequently—do you think it could make you become violent?

Subject: I don't think so.

Researcher: No?

Subject: I think, I think it depends on your mental makeup. You know, I think for a person to be violent with or without visual stimulation it has to be part of your make up.

Researcher: Has it (pornography) ever influenced you to maybe behave negatively towards anybody that you normally wouldn't?

Subject: No, not that I can think of.

Researcher: Do you think porn...

Subject: It hasn't made me go out and rape women. It hasn't made me go out and kill people. It hasn't made me into a bank robber, I don't know.

Researcher: Do you think it could ever affect you to behave negatively toward someone?

Subject: I don't think so. I can't imagine it would. I mean to me, it's a joyful, fun kind of thing.

Researcher: Right.

Subject: So I don't see how it would influence me to be violent or evil or anything like that.

Researcher: By looking at pornography, ever thought you'd go out and rape somebody?

Subject: No, nuh uh. I wouldn't let it happen.

Researcher: So what makes you different from someone who would?

Subject: Because I'm a real man and real men don't need to do that. I mean, I'd rather go without sex for years, you know, come alone, become celibate before I would ever, ever do that to a woman.

Clearly these men don't feel that pornography could influence them towards violence. Perhaps this is related to an understanding and empathy with people in their own lives.

Researcher: How severe do you think you could go (watching violent porn) before you started being uncomfortable?

Subject: Well, as long as they were both enjoying themselves I'd be comfortable, you know what I mean? But if it looked to me like somebody was actually getting hurt—it'd be like *Death Wish*. I remember watching that movie when I was a kid and I gotta tell you, that left a bad feeling in my mind. My whole life it's left a bad feeling in my mind, like something's gonna happen to my girlfriend, or something's gonna happen to somebody in my family, you know what I mean? It caused what I would consider undue stress. You know, the funny thing is you still like watching the movie to an extent, but it still gave me a paranoid felling that something bad is going to happen in my lifetime somewhere.

That pornography consumers in this sample denied the possibility that they might be violent in reaction to their consumption resists anti-pornography discourses that try to frame the porn consumer as unacceptably dangerous, as only one viewing away from committing an act of violence or degradation against an unsuspecting victim. Part of the reason that anti-porn proponents are capable of making that kind of assertion is the circular relationship their argument has to their way of framing the consumer. The consumer that uses pornography must act as a consumer of pornography, which in the discourse of anti-pornography feminists and moral conservatives is generally deviant or violent sexual activity. In effect, anti-pornography groups think of the consumers exclusively as pornography users. They expect them to relate to women in real life in ways that are consistent with what they learn in pornography. They forget that many consumers have women in their lives that they care about and want no harm to come to. That consumers identify with women in a loving way challenges anti-pornography arguments that pornography causes men to exclusively desire to behave in a dominant way towards women. All of this challenges the appropriateness of a discursive panoptic control of them based on an assumption of their inherent dangerousness.

Even those consumers in the sample that expressed the most anger towards women and described aggressive thought or fantasy denied the ability to be physically violent towards women.

Subject: I mean, I never raped or anything like that, I can tell you that. I'd never take a woman against her will or anything like that. I still contend, I mean even as angry as I was, I would not do that to anybody.

Even this next consumer, the only one to indicate a strong interest in violent pornography denied that he could be physically violent after consuming pornography.

Researcher: Do you think it (violent pornography) would cause you to be violent?

Subject: Hmmm. Not in a physical way, more in a lack of respect way. More like you know someone acting like they're God's gift you know, I'd be like, get a hold of yourself. That kind of attitude towards women.

The proclivity toward real life violence is not high in this sample. Their own discursive framing of themselves resists panoptic framing because it allows the consumers to know they are not what they are thought to be by anti-pornography advocates. They must still be concerned that others have internalized those ideas, but they know such a definition is unjustified in many cases.

All of this is not to say that consumers believe that pornography can never cause violence. In fact, many of them do believe that violence can be the result of viewing pornography; however, they tend to associate this possibility with the character of individual consumers. In effect, this amounts to a framing of perversion for a minority of consumers who have a predisposition toward violence from the consumers in this study. Perhaps this type of discursive framing about others allows these consumers to distance themselves from the possibility of being framed as pervert. Just as some consumers label other consumers as perverts for liking explicit content, the consumers in this study seem to want to define the minority of violently predisposed consumers as pervert in order to reaffirm that they are not that kind of consumer. It allows them to focus the panoptic gaze in a different place, though it is questionable whether such a framing of consumer by consumer could spare some users from panoptic framing.

Researcher: Do you think violent porn could cause real violence?

Subject: Probably to the degree that it may be a stimulant for those people who are already violence prone. Uh, just like non-violent porn. Does non-violent porn cause people to be more sexually active? Maybe so. I would say it probably does. Although these people would be sexually active anyway. Does violent porn cause people who are more violence prone to be more violent in their sexual acts? Uh, probably so.

Researcher: Do you think that kind of depiction (violent pornography) could cause actual violence?

Subject: Only if the person was actually thinking about doing that in the first place. Only if the person was thinking about doing that in the first place, just like the thing with songs. You know, people say that songs and music cause them to do this. That's just dumb, like saying the devil made me do it. The person wanted to buy that pornographic material because they had thought of such a thing, whether it was a distinct click in their mind or they had fantasies of such. So they were thinking about doing it in the first place and if they go out and actually do it with someone, I don't think it influenced them at all. I think they did it themselves. They just wanted to see their fantasy on film. They wanted to see it acted out, just like a regular porn film.

Researcher: Do you think pornography can cause rape and stuff like that?

Subject: Oh yeah.

Researcher: How so?

Subject: Because men who watch—single men who watch violent—well, not just violent pornography—any type of pornography could cause rape. Say I was at home watching porno non-stop and I just decided I got tired of masturbating. I wanted to get me a woman, but I didn't have any money in my pocket to get a prostitute. I had to go out and I get one, and just find a dark spot and nobody will find out.

Researcher: Right.

Subject: It all depends on the individual's mentality, you know? If that's how sick you are, and you need to do that then you're gonna, you know.

The consumers in this sample locate the potential for violence in the individual consumer, not in exposure to pornography. This does two things. First, it legitimizes their resistance to a panoptic gaze that attempts to frame all consumers as potentially violent; and second, it lends credence to their claims that they are not capable of acting violently. Also, it should be noted that consumers are divided on the influence mainstream pornography versus violent pornography has on consumers. Some consumers, like the one quoted most recently think any pornography could be involved in creating violence given the right individual consumer. Other consumers deny that mainstream pornography could cause violence. The difference seems to be based on whether one believes violence is related to a desire to perpetrate violence or whether violence is related to sexual frustration. If the consumer believes that sexual frustration is the cause

then any porn can be involved in creating violence, if consumed by an individual who has trouble controlling sexual impulses. If the consumer believes that only violent porn can cause violence, the perception seems to be that people with violent fantasies will seek out violent porn and take their examples from there. Either way, the consensus seems to be that the potential for violence is located within the individual consumer, not pornography.

That consumers believe this challenges anti-pornography discourse in that those discourses postulate pornography as a causal factor in sexual violence in order to justify panoptic control of all consumers. If porn causes violence then all consumers are potentially violent. If the source of violence is in the individual consumer, then a panoptic framing of all porn users is unjustified. The implications are difficult for anti-pornography forces if this is the case because the banning of pornography will not remove the predisposition to violence from violence prone individuals. The violence will be waiting for an alternative to pornography to activate it. Panoptic control of all consumers and attempts to ban pornography cannot work to solve issues of sexual violence if pornography is not the cause.

Anti-pornography discourses tend to frame the type of sexuality “taught” by pornography as deviant, dangerous, and disrespectful. The reports of these consumers in terms of their actual sexual behavior is resistant to this type of discursive characterization by anti-porn forces. All of these consumers claim that they would do nothing without consent. Even those consumers who like to behave roughly or domineeringly toward their partners report that they need their partners to be willing participants. Though some consumers have fantasies that many might consider deviant, anal sex fantasies for example, they do not pursue that fantasy forcefully. Though pornography consumption

by these men in general takes place alone, the use of pornography in relationships seems to be dependent on the sense that the partner is interested.

That pornography is not often a shared activity and that fantasies spawned by pornography are often not explored may be because of the perception of perversion created by anti-pornography forces. These men, in general, care about what their partners think and feel and don't want to be classified as perverted. The negative stigma acts as a deterrent to communication.

Researcher: Have you ever thought about trying to make something you saw in pornography happen?

Subject: Sure, sure. There have been times where I thought, boy I'd like to get her and her sister both to do me and that type of thing, or any number of kinky things, but it all comes down to your connection with the other.

Researcher: Right.

Subject: If your connection with the other is such that you can be totally free and relay your desires to them without them getting offended and without them feeling that you're weird, you know. Because what you are asking someone else to do is maybe do something that's beyond their boundaries.

Researcher: Right.

Subject: Open up boundaries with someone and sometimes you're just amazed that maybe that person was thinking the same thing that you were. Take an example. You have sex with a woman three years and then one time you decide to go for it in her butt, right? And she loves it. And she's just going, oh oh oh, thank you, thank you, you know. You're thinking, well wow, I could've done this three years ago and she would've loved it, I would've loved it, but we never brought it up and it was never done. Or, I'm sure that many people just have missionary style sex, and maybe the woman wants to suck his dick, and he never brings it up and she never brings it up 'cause she's scared to. And so communication is everything sexually.

There is awareness on the part of consumers that their desires, particularly those that might derive from pornography, can potentially cause them to be characterized as perverted. There is also an understanding that their partners might be considered perverted for engaging in that fantasy with them. The effect is a control over the degree of communication around sexuality and a blunting of the outward expression of pornographic sexual desire. Barriers to sexual communication function to create isolation

between panoptic cells, the hiding of desire between partners. Rather than being a panoptic around pornography consumption specifically, this block on communication derives from the entire deployment of sexuality that defines those things in pornography as taboo and subject to punishment from the panoptic guards. The justification for this, from the position of those opposed to pornography, is that such desires are harmful to society and the people participating. Based on this sample's reports of their behavior, such an assumption is too simplistic. Though some behaviors involving pornography might be considered deviant by some people, others are not. Sometimes just a new sexual position is all that comes about.

Subject: There was one particular time, and this was the girl who was most pent up about sex. She was in one of her rare moments where she wanted to do it, and it was the first time that I got to do something with her that I wanted to do as far as fantasy. It was something I really wanted to do with her because she was tight. She was the type of girl of girl that you really think about having that fantasy. She starts breaking out these magazines, okay, which really surprised me because she was the type of girl that had repressed written all over her.

Researcher: What was the fantasy?

Subject: Oh something basic. I took her from behind.

Researcher: Okay.

Subject: Yeah, she was showing me pictures. She pointed at this one particular picture and I was just like enraptured because the guy was taking her from behind. And I used to have fantasies about having her leaning over the kitchen range and things like that and taking her that way. And she showed me the picture that was exactly what I wanted to do, and I was like yeah. It emboldened my courage to ask her if she wanted to try that and when she said okay, I was just like, oh yeah. I guess you could say that was one time where I did (something in pornography).

In this case, pornography did not result in any kind of forcing of fantasy on an unwilling recipient. It didn't even result in anything that most people, outside of moral conservative circles, would consider deviant. It simply inspired a new sexual position, one that he had fantasized about and one she picked out of a magazine. In this case, pornography seems to have broken down a barrier around sexual communication, which

allowed the consumer and his partner to try something new. In addition, the interaction around pornography and sexual activity seemed to be completely mutual in terms of the consent of both parties participating. This resists moral conservative and anti-pornography feminist arguments that the use of pornography in sexual relationships almost always leads to some form of degrading behavior from one partner to the other, unless that particular sexual position is inherently degrading, which many people would argue it is not. That this consumer waited until his partner expressed some interest in the activity before suggesting that they try it seems indicative of a desire not to degrade the partner in actuality.

Sometimes, for this sample, behavior that might be considered somewhat deviant by many people might be fantasized about and even practiced by consumers. However, the importance of mutuality between partners, and a desire not to do things that were unpleasant for the partner were still manifest. A relatively common example of somewhat deviant practice centered on anal sex.

Researcher: What is it about anal sex that really catches your attention?

Subject: A big part of it is the taboo of it, that it's seen as kind of something that's not acceptable to a lot of people for various reasons. For moral reasons and also for health reasons, you could get a disease. So that's part of it, it's the excitement of seeing something that's seen as forbidden or taboo. Also, it's something that I don't get to experience a lot in my life, you know, I've tried it a few times with my girlfriend, the woman that I'm with now. She didn't really seem too into it, it's been awhile since we've done it. I never really had a direct discussion about it, but I can kinda see that it's something that she doesn't really want to do a lot of so, that's something that I can still fantasize about and get excited about.

Researcher: Did your interest in that in pornography lead to you trying it with your girlfriend?

Subject: Yeah, yeah, definitely it did. I'd seen, I'd been interested in it for a couple years in watching videos and just wanted to see what it was like. And so yeah, definitely, I wouldn't have thought of it if I hadn't seen it in porn.

Researcher: How did it come about to try? Did you suggest it or...

Subject: I don't think we ever really talked about it. We were having sex and I just started going that way and, you know, used my finger first and she seemed to like it and

then just you know went ahead and did it. And like I said, it's not that she didn't--not like she told me to stop or anything, or said I don't want to do that. But we did that just a few times and then no more. It just seemed--I just got the feeling from her that she really wasn't interested in it too much.

In this case, pornography led to a particular type of fantasy that the consumer was interested in pursuing in his actual sexual practice. Interesting, and not insignificantly, he was interested long before he ever tried it. It seems likely that the perception of such an activity as taboo, which the consumer was obviously aware of, would cause him concern about whether or not he would be defined as perverted by a woman he cared about. It also demonstrates respect to some degree of his partner in that he did not just come out and force a "perversion" on her. The actual act comes about spontaneously. His partner seems to enjoy it in the early stages and does not ask him to desist. They do what they do; however, when the subject realized that she was not really into it, he did not push her to continue engaging in this behavior. This behavior is resistive to anti-pornography discourses in that he does respect his partner's wishes, even though they are not directly voiced, and does not pressure her to continue engaging in a behavior despite the fact that he obviously enjoys it. If anti-pornography feminists were correct in their characterization of male consumers, this person would have continued to engage in the behavior if allowed and probably would have also accessed an affirmation of his masculine dominance. This is obviously not the case. In terms of the moral conservative argument, it is obvious that this type of sexuality is simply for pleasure; however, their assumption that hedonistic pleasure leads to selfishness is resisted here since this particular consumer is obviously concerned with his partners pleasure which is indicated by the fact that he discontinues a behavior that he perceives she gets no pleasure from.

Both anti-pornography feminists and moral conservatives justify discursive framing and panoptic control of consumers because they believe the consumer will be driven to do something to another. In particular, they assume that male consumers will be driven to do something to a woman. This posits a unidirectional agency in terms of sexual relations, particularly when influenced by pornography. This is not the case. Some consumers report that pornography inspires experimentation in both directions.

Researcher: Has pornography been a benefit to you or to her? Or not?

Subject: I feel that it's beneficial to both of us. It's because when we're together we're a couple. There is no I and me.

Researcher: As far as pornography, has it ever influenced you to do something you wouldn't normally do?

Subject: Uh huh (meaning yes).

Researcher: Like what?

Subject: I let her shove a dildo up my ass, and that kind of hurt.

Researcher: Did that come from a porn video that she saw or something?

Subject: Yeah, from a German thing.

Researcher: Right.

Subject: You know, I always wanted to experiment. She put her fingers up there and stuff like that, and I could handle that. And because she didn't have a problem with me doing that to her.

Researcher: You mean anal sex?

Subject: Yeah, anal sex. You know, I figured that being a team in this, you know, if she's willing to do that for me I've got to at least try what she wants and say hey, I don't like it. But I did try it and we did go to the store, got some toys that were a little smaller than what she did at first. And you know, I did get sensation out of it, I did enjoy it, but only when she would do it. I couldn't do it to myself. And it made it, when she was doing it, it made it sensual and sexy so it did excite me.

Researcher: Do you think that this kind of influence from pornography to do creative or just different things is positive or negative overall?

Subject: Positive, positive.

Researcher: Why?

Subject: Because it makes us both climax.

Though this kind of behavior is clearly deviant within the current deployment of sexuality that defines perversion, it is not characterized by selfishness or male dominance as moral conservatives and anti-pornography feminists tend to assert it must be. Instead the interaction between this couple is characterized by mutuality and a sense of sexual

obligation. There seems to be a sort of sexual barter system in place for these two. If she is going to let him do something, he must let her do something. If pornography inherently inspired a male-dominant, predatory attitude toward sexuality, then this kind of tradeoff would not occur. The only way that defining such activity as dangerous and perverted is justified is if the issue is the behavior itself. Clearly the attempt to characterize pornography consumers as dangerous indicates that just exotic sexual behavior is not enough to place a label of perversion, and since the interactions between this couple are characterized by mutuality, then dangerousness is not an issue. In other words, this interaction challenges the argument that men will act on women and not the other way around; as well as, highlighting the fact that the explicit dangerousness in consumers posited by anti-pornography forces does not exist in every case. In the case of this consumer, panoptic control is problematic because he is not engaging in behavior that is dangerous or disrespectful to anyone. In fact, much of this interaction does not position him as the active party, but as the partner that is acted upon.

A final assertion within anti-pornography discourse regarding behavior and pornography is that the male is most likely to introduce pornography into a relationship. This is not always the case. Sometimes women bring pornography into a sexual relationship without prompting from a man.

Researcher: What was the best experience you've ever had sharing pornography with a girlfriend?

Subject: Probably one of the first ones. I went to the Rose Bowl and was away from home for about four or five days. I came back, and it was one of those deals where we were all driving back to one guy's house in the van and then we were going to have everybody kind of pick us up there to go home. And so I called my girlfriend up from like ***** and said that I'll be back in about an hour. Meet me at *****'s house. She goes, I'll get everything. Are you hungry? I said yeah. So she was ordering pizza and the whole bit. She came over, and she said we're going over to my house, and she had a six-pack of

beer, a pizza, and porno. And I went, oh my God, this going to be great, and it was just like—it was just perfect. So perfect and very, very exciting.

It is clear in the anti-pornography discourses that it is men who initiate the use of pornography in sexual activity, yet in this case, it is the woman who introduces pornography into a sexual encounter. This challenges assumptions of pornography as an exclusively male fantasy domain, as being employed (usually harmfully) by men only in terms of fantasy and sexual activity, and as a negative force in sexual relationships. Clearly in this instance, pornography was introduced by the woman and mutually enjoyed by both parties. This expression of mutuality discredits claims that pornography always leads to a male dominant sexual activity and a desire to control women. Obviously there are times when control is not sought by the male, and the lack of control is not seen as a negative.

This type of activity may or may not be common in the general population of porn consumers, but expressions of mutuality were fairly common in this sample. Whether or not it is common, its presence resists the justifications of anti-pornography proponents to monolithically treat consumers as dangerous and in need of panoptic control. In fact, panoptic control may undermine creative mutuality in sexuality for some people. The discourse in academia that most resists monolithic definitions of the impact of porn as negative is the pro-sex/sex positive feminist argument. Through their behavior and the discourse they generate surrounding their behavior, consumers resist panoptic control in ways consistent with a pro-sex/sex positive viewpoint, which stresses the potential for mutuality in sexuality and in the use of pornography.

Overall, the expressions of consumers detailed in this chapter resist the anti-pornography discourses that attempt to frame and panoptically control them in society.

Consumers in this sample were not particularly interested in violent or degrading porn, and their reported behavior displayed a sense of mutuality rather than a desire for dominance. This produces a resistive discourse on the part of these consumers that justifies further examination of the assumptions of anti-pornography discourse in the ongoing debate regarding the effects of pornography on consumers.

CHAPTER 9

TALKING BACK TO THE GUARD: CONSUMER DISCOURSE

How do consumers construct their pornography consumption experiences? A major premise of this project is that there are popular discourses in culture that deploy sexual subject positions which exert panoptic control over porn consumers by constructing them as perverts. It is also a premise of this paper that discourses can be resisted from particular subject positions (as both Foucault and Radway suggest). This chapter will illustrate consumers' direct responses to hegemonic discourses and panoptic definitions that frame and seek to define them, specifically anti-pornography discourses which seem to have the most influence over the general view of consumers in society.

Considering the arguments consumers accessed as influential in popular culture were anti-pornography arguments it seems likely that anti-pornography discourses are the hegemonic discourses in culture. In general, these discourses attempt to frame the consumer negatively in order to justify a panoptic control of him. Consumers, however, seem capable of resisting panoptic control, evidenced by their ability to create discourse that challenges discursive framing of them.

Moral conservative discourse seems to be more influential than anti-porn feminist discourse in the minds of this sample. The major evidence for this is that the participants generated more spontaneous discussion of moral conservative arguments than they did

feminist arguments. Consumers are more aware of the attempted panoptic control of them from moral conservative positions, particularly religion, than they are of anti-pornography feminist arguments about male dominant sexuality, though they are aware that they are often seen as exploiting women.

That consumers seemed to interpret feminism as anti-porn suggests that anti-pornography feminist discourse is a noticeable presence in the popular debate around pornography in culture, certainly more of a presence than other feminist positions.

Either way, consumers do have understanding of and responses to both sets of anti-pornography discourse. Because understandings of moral conservative discourse seem more prevalent it is appropriate to begin with consumer understandings and responses to that position.

Researcher: Do you think guys that look at porn get a bad rap?

Subject: Oh yeah, I mean pornography itself gets a bad rap. I mean, that's just more of, you know, America's kind of more moralistic view towards sex. If you go to Europe, they don't have half of the--the kind of reservations that Americans have towards sex.

Researcher: Why do you think Americans have such a bad attitude towards sex?

Subject: Our history, I think. I mean, we were founded by Puritans in the north. We had the Great Awakening during the 1830s. We're still a lot more religious than a lot of Europe is. A lot of Europe has a bad attitude towards religion just because of what the Catholic Church did for so long over there, but we didn't really have that over here so we're a little more religious oriented.

This particular consumer is aware of the historical context that leads to moral conservative attitudes about sexuality and pornography. In addition he demonstrates an intuitive understanding of how such historical development leads to a trend toward that type of discourse achieving hegemonic influence in culture. Our historical development as a Puritan, morally conservative nation leads to a pervasiveness of moral conservative discourse in culture, at least to the point that some consumers are aware of it.

Interestingly, discussion of historical influence and the differences in Europe demonstrate

an understanding on the part of this consumer that morality around sexuality is a social construction, and his assertion that American attitudes toward sexuality are historically constructed constitutes a form of discursive resistance to religious hegemony in that that which is constructed can be demolished and reconstructed. This next consumer also perceives a hegemonic influence from religion around conceptions of sexuality and pornography.

Researcher: In today's society, what areas do you think influence that negative attitude toward sexuality that you mentioned?

Subject: Well, I mean, the media and the political culture and how the right wing is so strong. Not so much the right wing, but what do you call it, the Christian Coalition or the forces of morality and all that stuff. Well, their view of morality.

Researcher: Right.

Subject: They're pushing Jerry Falwell and all those people. They get a lot of play in the media and most people are afraid to oppose them publicly because that makes you--since they've already seized the moral high-ground that means if you are a person who disagrees you must be more low ground. You must be bad or evil. So, it's difficult to oppose people like that and come across in any kind of positive way yourself. And part of that is the way they are represented in the media.

Not only does this consumer demonstrate an awareness of the pervasiveness of moral conservative discourse around pornography in culture, but he theorizes that the media and political culture in the United States tend to forward such discourse by disseminating it widely in the cultural realm. In other words, he is aware of why moral conservatives seem to have such a large voice in the pornography debates. He is also aware that religious authority gives moral conservatives an automatic claim to the "moral high-ground" which is an excellent position from which to frame the pornography consumer. In fact, this consumer is acutely aware of just such a possibility, pointing out that those who control the moral high ground have the ability to define the consumer as immoral, bad, and/or evil. Since religious conservatives have the moral high ground, and since their position is so widely disseminated, or hegemonic, it is very difficult for

anyone that opposes their position to come off in a positive way. This is indicative of a potential to construct panoptic control of consumers in that the moral conservative argument has already succeeded in marginalizing the consumer as pervert, as less moral. However, the articulation of this awareness serves as discursive resistance in that it makes public the discursive deployment of a sexuality that is defined by moral conservatives.

Not only are consumers aware of religious hegemony and its ability to threaten panoptic control, but they are capable of articulating responses. There seem to be three major difficulties that consumers have with moral conservatism, particularly religious thought, around pornography. First, porn users feel that the moral conservative position is unrealistic in that it does not accurately understand human beings as sexual creatures. Second, moral conservatives are seen as hypocritical in that consumers tend to believe that the moral conservatives label some people perverse in order to assuage a perception of themselves as perverted. Finally, consumers tend to assert that religious teachings about pornography and sexuality are directed much more towards social control than toward preventing any kind of moral wrong.

In terms of moral conservative arguments not fitting human nature, consumers make a number of arguments. One consumer points out that religious people misread the scriptures to fit their own sense of morality even if those scriptures could also be read as advocating a different sexuality, one more closely associated with human nature. In addition, he points out that people often misread sexual choices of abstinence for religious purposes as a mandate that that type of choice is the moral choice.

Researcher: Why do you think they read scripture in that (anti-sex) way?

Subject: Because more than half of them don't know what they're reading or haven't really read the whole work. There are groups that do know that sex is a natural part of life, but many people don't realize that when you talk about various forms of abstinence is that it is imposed when you are trying to follow a certain path with attaining a certain goal in mind. It doesn't always apply. There isn't anything that says you have to do this. People that are doing these various forms of abstinence are people who choose to do this for some sort of custom as part of the path they choose.

Another consumer, responding to his Catholic upbringing expressed what he, and other consumers, considered to be a more natural understanding of human sexuality.

Subject: That's the kind of thing I was taught. It's hard to overcome the stuff you're taught as a child, it really is.

Researcher: Right.

Subject: And it (religious teachings) doesn't really agree with nature.

Researcher: What would you say is natural?

Subject: Probably it's much more natural for sex to be part of everybody's personality and to engage in sexual activity. And, you know, not just for procreation but for fun. It's gone beyond. We're more than animals now.

This consumer believes that moral conservatism puts constraints sexuality unnaturally. Human beings are creatures that enjoy sexual activity and it is normal for them to want to engage sexuality, whether it is in actual sexual relations or by viewing pornography. In fact, it is possible to expose some of the difficult conundrums around morality and sexuality in religion by arguing that moral conservatism ignores human nature. This is important in that the consumer is discursively deploying a different view of sexuality at the micro-political level (Foucault 1978) which resists the large-scale, hegemonic discourse of moral conservatism.

Researcher: If you could have an open debate with someone from the Religious Right, what would you say to them on the subject of pornography?

Subject: What would I say to them? Well, I'd tell them that I think pornography is a sexually good thing and it's in keeping with our nature, our human nature. I see nothing wrong with it, and then we'd debate I guess.

Researcher: What happens when they say human nature is evil and we need to resist that evil.

Subject: I'd just say I don't believe it.

Researcher: Okay.

Subject: You know, I just don't. I think human nature is good. I think human beings are basically good, and the Western religions that predominate, Judaism, Christianity, and those things I think cause more evil than anything else in the history of the world, frankly. As I've looked back and studied history, and I've studied history a lot, I find religion's been the justification for the most awful atrocities and terrible evils that have happened the last two or three thousand years. I don't think the people who believe the stuff are bad, but I think what they believe is harmful to the human race.

Researcher: How would you explain to this person that pornography is okay? How would you go about convincing them?

Subject: Well, I guess I would try to argue from human nature that obviously we have these sexual desires and needs and wants, and it must be there for a reason. I suppose I could turn things back on them, you know, if you want to try and make a religious argument and say, well God created us. God must have given us this and you can't say it's evil because that would say that God created evil and God is fostering evil, therefore, it must be good. They're not gonna buy that. That's one of the real problems with Christianity, how to get around the problem of evil. How do you account for it if you have a god who is--Christians say that god is all perfect, all good, all that stuff like that. How do you account for that? Well, you really can't. It's just one of those inconsistencies that is glossed over.

According to this participant, moral conservatives unnecessarily define pornography as immoral and evil though this consumer believes that pornography is consistent with human nature. He then goes on to point out the hypocrisy of religion claiming moral superiority and attempting to enforce their morality when they are responsible for any number of immoral acts. In other words, they don't deserve the moral high ground, and they have no right to attempt to surround pornography consumers with panoptic control. Finally this consumer points out that there are multiple interpretations regarding how God intended sexuality, there are contradictions within Christianity regarding sexuality, and therefore, the moral conservative position is preaching its message in reference to itself, not to any undeniable interpretation of God's will. All of these assertions by this participant represent an ability to identify and resist hegemonic discourses with his own discourse at a micro-political level. He resists in terms of his own identity and experience and expresses his problems with the overarching discourse

through his own discursive deployment of power against the threatened panoptic around him.

Contradictions are not necessarily limited to interpretation of the meaning of religious teaching either. It is possible in the minds of some consumers, for moral conservative arguments to backfire and create situations moral conservatives themselves would have problems with.

Researcher: You don't want to get into religion?

Subject: I will but I'll fill the tape, the whole tape, because I get really pissed off talking about this.

Researcher: I'd be happy to hear...

Subject: The whole thing with religion--I don't like people telling me that they think it's (having sex) is wrong, that you should wait until you get married to have sex. It's not true. Why would you want to wait until you get married because if you're not sexually compatible--a sexually compatible relationship is vital to your relationship in general. I mean, it's true.

Researcher: Right.

Subject: It's very true, you know. You can get two timid people and they'll be happy because they're both timid and they don't know how to fuck. But you have one person's real passionate and one person's real timid, you can try and turn that person. He or she can try and turn that timid person around to open up a little bit more, to express themselves more, and if they won't do it the relationship's not going to work because he's gonna, he or she is gonna go elsewhere to get satisfied. And that's a big reason why people cheat.

Researcher: So you think religion and it's kind of monogamy cause problems?

Subject: Oh no, no, no, not only monogamy, no, no. That's a bad stand because you need to be monogamous in a relationship, but still have sex before you're married. Monogamy means one person, it doesn't mean wait till you're married. It means one person.

Researcher: Do you think religion's take tends to cause more problems than it prevents?

Subject: It does, yeah, and I think that's because there's so many religions that have so many different takes on it. Oh yeah, we all agree there's a God, we can't agree on this you know? Fuck you guys. They're all hypocrites. They're all hypocrites so what do I do?

Researcher: Right.

Subject: You know? Actually I'm mad. You care about someone and there's nothing wrong with that. I like being with someone I care about, you know? And I like to learn about the woman I'm with, figure whether it's gonna work. If we're not sexually compatible then it's gonna end the relationship, it will.

Researcher: Right.

Subject: It will.

Consumer understanding that sex and different forms of sexual expression are natural conflict with conceptions from the moral conservative standpoint. The view that humans are naturally sexual leads to beliefs that not testing the sexual waters in a relationship before it is a marriage can create cheating or end the relationship. Both of those outcomes are unacceptable to moral conservatives. This consumer points out the way their own rules are structured can create violations of other rules. This respondent believes that moral conservative approaches are unrealistic because they do not account for a genuine human sexuality, which tends to lead to hypocrisy in religion from the consumer standpoint. Once again, the contradictions seen by the consumer in religious approaches to pornography leads to a resistance to the moral conservative claim to being in the right as the consumer articulates from his own subject position the problems he sees within the discourse which attempts to frame him.

A strand running through the previous quotes is the perceived hypocrisy on the part of religious conservatives regarding sexuality and pornography from the consumer point of view. They are seen as claiming to know what is moral while not always acting morally or consistently in terms of action or teaching.

Researcher: So do you think that men who look at porn tend to get a bad rap from people in society?

Subject: Well, the reality is that the people that are giving bad raps to people that watch porn are watching porn themselves, probably making porn. In my opinion man, those freaks that are against homosexuality, they're homosexual. They have these desires that are so overwhelming that the circuitry's been broken down because their whole life they've been pumped into the idea that people that suck dick are bad. If you take it up the ass you're bad. And you've got this desire to suck dick or take it up the ass right, but you're on the pulpit going, those homos are gonna burn in hell. I think there is something there when you're fighting against something that is none of your business. Like, if the guys next door to you are renting a house or own the house, and they go home and they close their door, and you're in your house worrying that they're having sex next door, that's some type of pathological disorder in your thinking because they could be over there putting together a puzzle just as easy as they could be fucking. If you have all these

images of two guys fucking in your head, no matter what they're doing, you obviously are the one with the problem and not the two people that are doing whatever they're doing.

Researcher: So can you put that in terms of people that get pissed off about pornography?

Subject: It's like drugs man. I don't think people should be incarcerated for doing drugs. Now if you go and steal because you want to do drugs, there's laws against stealing. If you want to be violent against someone because you do drugs, there's laws against being violent. But the act of doing that drug is not a bad thing. And the same goes for the people who want to stop pornography. I don't think making the pornography in itself is a terrible thing as long as you have all consenting people, but if you view the material and it makes you go and do something against someone's will, there are laws against that man. They're put in place to protect society, and so you have to be able to separate fantasy from reality, and you can sit and jack off all day long. That, in itself, is not bad. The time that becomes bad is when you go and forcibly do something to someone else.

This consumer's discussion traces two main threads of hypocrisy in the moral conservative mindset. First of all, he indicates that people that are overly concerned with the activities of others are obsessing on the activity themselves, most likely because they have and are ashamed of those desires. If one can't watch pornography, no one else should get to either. Simply stated, those caught in the panoptic of a deployment of sexuality that defines pornography consumption, premarital sex, homosexuality, and so on as perverse have a desire to pull others into the panoptic with them, in a "misery loves company" sense. Moreover, those that refuse to come into the panoptic can be labeled perverse justifying the other's conception of him/herself as a moral person that gives her/him permission to act as the panoptic guard.

The second string of hypocrisy traced above is the one that illustrates that moral conservatives know that their discourse can be resisted on plain moral grounds. They need to shore up their position by associating the morally wrong with the overtly dangerous. The use of drugs as wrong is a discourse that can be resisted if based exclusively on morality so those who oppose drug use stress the dangerousness of the drug user. Similarly, viewing porn as wrong is a discourse that can be resisted if based

purely on morality, so those that oppose pornography consumption stress the dangerousness of the pornography consumer. They link one discourse to another, increasing the number of panoptic framings possible. This consumer exposes a possible flaw in that approach as well as its potential hypocrisy by pointing out that they are attaching one questionable discursive framing (being a porn consumer is wrong) to a less questionable discursive framing (being a dangerous person is wrong). It is hypocritical to claim the rightness of one's position but still have to link it to another position in order to make it defensible, particularly if your persecution of the perverse group is based on a denial of your own perversity.

A very noticeable aspect in the above quotes is an underlying, and sometimes manifest, anger. To the degree that hegemonic discourses seek panoptic control, a control that is actually felt by the people who are subject to the panoptic gaze, anger is a likely outcome. What they have felt they are also discursively able to express, most directly by asserting that the main goal of moral conservative discourse is social control rather than protecting social morality.

Subject: Over the centuries, religion has been used just like it always was. People misuse or distort the words in the book as a way of attaining leverage and control over the people. And really what they're doing is they're building their nice temples and fattening themselves up as they're trying to impose their rules, they're dogmas on us.

Researcher: How do you think being down on looking at porn helps them, helps those groups to control?

Subject: That's something that puzzles me, I'm gonna be quite honest with you. That's something that really, totally puzzles me because it's not something that is prohibited the way people think. It puzzles me, it really does. Again, it's just another way of trying to impose their control on other people, creating worry that seeing this thing is going to cause somebody to do other things. They're stereotyping people, people are influenced by stereotyping them.

This particular bit of discussion from a consumer demonstrates an awareness of an attempt at panoptic control, specifically through the discursive technique of

stereotyping. Moral conservatives attempt to control people by either putting them in the position of the guard in the tower or as the prisoner. It doesn't matter if what they say is truly prohibited by religious text, it only matters that some people believe and that most people internalize the definitions of the pornography consumer that they offer, deviant and dangerous. They control and benefit from their ability to widely disseminate a discourse that puts them in charge of the shape and content of the panopticon. Other consumers, such as this one, agree.

Researcher: What's your feeling, your perception, about how religion in general approaches pornography and sexuality.

Subject: I'm not an atheist but an agnostic. A believer but not a practicer. Um, I guess it would vary depending on the religion, but I think that it's—I think that it serves to control and in some cases suppress attitudes about a lot of things, not just sex, somewhat keeping the flock, you know, under control.

Just as with the first consumer's comments, this participant makes similar points. The main goal of religion is to control "the flock". Though he does not elaborate as the first consumer did, the implication is that control equals power because those that control are assumed to have the moral high ground and the right to dictate control. Exposing this agenda of control is perhaps the most powerful form of resistance to hegemonic discursive domination by moral conservatives because it is the one discursive response that gives a clear motive for why moral conservatives would oppose pornography. They benefit as the warden in the panopticon, creating guards and prisoners, solidifying a position of power. Consumers' ability to identify this motive demonstrates that they resist their position as prisoners within a panoptic system that labels them perverse, and their ability to articulate what they identify serves as direct discursive resistance to hegemonic control.

Overall, religion is perceived by consumers as hegemonic. That is, they are aware that it is a framing discourse, that it is pervasive in culture, that it generally views pornography and pornography consumption negatively, and that it has real consequences for real people, including themselves. Consumers are aware that there is a discourse that threatens panoptic control of them, even if they wouldn't phrase it that way. Anti-pornography feminism has less impact on consumers in terms of impressing itself on their consciousness.

While consumers were often spontaneous in their generation of discourse regarding moral conservative positions, often they had to be prompted to discuss feminism. Questions about feminism were asked neutrally, without reference to any of the particular discourses from feminist positions. That the majority of consumers, when asked assumed that feminists were against pornography serves as evidence that, of the feminist positions toward pornography, anti-pornography feminist discourse is the most pervasive in culture, though a few consumers were aware of pro-sex feminist positions. Others expressed support for freedom of expression, consistent with anti-censorship feminist discourse, but none of the consumers expressed this support in feminist terms.

When asked, consumers did have responses to anti-pornography discourse. Interestingly, consumers often agreed with anti-pornography feminists in terms of pornography with extreme content; however, the majority of consumers felt that the approach of anti-pornography feminists was, in the words of one consumer, "too extreme." Another consumer put it this way.

Researcher: How do you feel about feminism and their take on porn?

Subject: I think a lot of it is misunderstood. I think a lot of it's too poor-headed and heavy-handed. Throwing the dishes out with dishwater, that kind of thing. But for the most part I agree with what they're doing.

This consumer agrees with what anti-pornography feminists are doing, that is trying to protect women from potential abuse related to pornography, but they extend their arguments and their attacks on pornography consumers too far. Another participant went into greater detail.

Researcher: What do you think you would say—say you were given the opportunity to sit down with a feminist and she was angry about porn, what would you say to her about that?

Subject: I would probably, seeing where they are coming from, I'd say that I agree that pornography leans toward the demeaning side toward women in many situations. And I don't think that that should be so. Now if you went one step further and said that porn should be outlawed, and anybody producing it should go to jail and whatever, no I don't agree with that, but, you know, should it be cleaned up or should it be made to be more respectful of the normal enjoyable fully expressive sexual relations between men and women, or women and women, or men and men? Yeah, I think so.

Researcher: What would you tell her was the best way to go about bringing pornography into that area?

Subject: You know, again, I think it's the educational process and—well, again, from the feminist's perspective the more extreme you are the more extreme your opposition's going to be. So, the more compromising or the more conciliatory you're willing to be—more conciliatory in your relationship throughout this—you know, don't fight so hard. How are we ever going to lose bad porn? I think just time and wisdom, education, your usual things will take people from that.

This participant also agrees with the basics of anti-pornography feminism in that he does not think women should be degraded in pornography. He also indicates, however, that the anti-pornography feminist position is too extreme. It is overarching to the point of being unreasonable which will generate extreme, unreasonable resistance. He suggests that pornography will be cleaned up and less demeaning given time and education on the part of consumers and people in society in general. Importantly, this demonstrates a strong resistance to framing by anti-pornography feminism on the part of this consumer. His agreement with basic anti-pornography feminist principles suggests that he is not interested in depictions that are demeaning to women or sexuality in

general, that he does not desire to feel domination of women through pornography. He demonstrates a sexual tolerance that extends beyond heterosexuality, including same sex depictions in pornography as in need of respect. He does not present himself in his discussion as anti-pornography feminists would expect him to present himself. In addition, his presentation undermines any justification for panoptically controlling him through anti-sex, anti-porn consumption ideology. He does not fit the definition of threatening pervert that anti-pornography discourse assumes he should.

The particular aspect of anti-pornography feminist discourse that consumers seem to be most familiar with, besides the claim that they are inherently violent discussed in the previous chapter, is the claim that pornography exploits women, both in terms of its creation and vicariously in terms of its consumption. They are also aware that their consumptive behavior is viewed negatively by anti-pornography feminists because it is considered exploitative. Most consumers vehemently and emphatically deny that charge.

Researcher: What would you say to a feminist, say you were in a conversation where she said, you use porn, you exploit women, what would you say to her?

Subject: I'd say, I'm sorry but that's not true. I do not exploit. I do not exploit women, and I am not against women, and I don't look down on women. I'd say that it's something that I feel is part of enhancing a woman's view. A woman's showing, you know, showing herself in her basic essence. To repress that part of a woman, or a denial of people from seeing that part of a woman, would be truly repressing this woman.

This consumer does not see himself as exploiting women. He resists the framing by anti-pornography feminists that if he looks at porn he must want to exploit women and therefore a deployment of sexuality that defines him as dangerously perverse is justified. Instead this participant expresses an appreciation of women, and a desire to understand and know more about women. This resists hegemonic discourse regarding the

pornography consumer and shows that an attempt to create panoptic control through definitions of perversion may be unjustified

Subject: I think feminists, when it comes to pornography, are just being idiots and are attacking an issue that they're never going to get changed. It's just a waste of time and they sound like idiots.

Researcher: What things do they say that you think are idiotic?

Subject: Oh well, you know, women in porns are exploited. They obviously don't know how much money they get paid. There's an automatic assumption that if a woman's in porn she's a poor victim of something. You know that highlights their own particular dynamics that they feel victimized by sex, so by extension everybody, every other woman, is too. I don't really understand it so I just don't particularly care a lot about it. I think they should have every opportunity a male does, but you know how the femi-nazis are.

Though perhaps somewhat overzealous, this participant demonstrates a good understanding of the implications of the anti-pornography feminist discourse for women. If men are automatically discursively framed as exploiting perverts, then the women who are the objects of their attention must be the victims of that exploitation. Obviously, this participant doesn't believe this is the case, citing in particular economic gains for women who participate in pornography. His argument, whether valid or not, resists attempted framing from the anti-pornography feminist position, to the point that he claims not to care about it. His disbelief in what he considers idiotic assumptions allows him to avoid a strong internalization of anti-pornography feminist discourse and resist the formation of a strong panoptic prison for his identity as a porn consumer.

A common strategy for resisting anti-pornography feminist discourse citing exploitation of women as a justification for negatively framing porn users is for the consumers to point out the potential benefits and empowering aspects of pornography for women. Specifically, consumers can avoid their own negative labeling as exploiters by proving that women are not exploited in porn thus resisting the discourses that justify

panoptic control of them. Therefore, they point out that women can benefit both economically and sexually from pornography. Economically, consumers believe that women benefit from making a good amount of money and from the increased opportunity to make that kind of money.

Researcher: How do you feel about feminism's take on porn?

Subject: Well, from what I know about that, and I don't know enough, it seems kind of like the feminists are opposed to pornography because they feel it's degrading to women and that kind of stuff. But, I don't see it like that. To me, it's just another job opportunity that's opening up. I mean, women have been engaging in sexual behavior for money for god only knows. There's prostitution and other kinds of activity for thousands of years, so, I don't see anything bad about it. From a perspective of today's attitudes in today's society where the women have more control and they get paid a lot of money for the work. I mean, when I go down to the clubs, when I go watch the girls dance, you know, they make a hell of a lot of money doing this stuff. You know, they make more money than I do. They make more money than Ph.D.s are around here. I just find it hard to believe that the person who walks off with all the money is somehow being abused. You know, it seems to me that if you're somehow being abused or taken advantage of, you don't get a pile of money, you're getting a lot of shit. You get mistreated, you're a slave or a serf or somebody like that. But if you get to go home with all the money, to me I don't see how that qualifies as somehow being used or abused. I mean, quite frankly, if I were a young, beautiful girl, I'd probably try to do something like that and make a lot of money, and if I was smart I'd invest my money. I could retire by the time I was thirty and never have to work a day in my life after that, or I'd be a millionaire. Now most girls unfortunately don't do that because they are young and they aren't mature enough yet to bank their money. They'd blow the money on clothes or stuff like that. I talk to them sometimes. But not all of them. I mean I've met some of the girls there who are saving money for a house and have made investments. So even at a young age, like early twenties, some of them are starting to get smart.

For this consumer, being able to perform in pornography, or working in other areas of the sex industry, represents an opportunity for women. Rather than being victims, these women are empowered because they have economic opportunity, in this consumer's mind even more than someone with a Ph.D. This discourse resists anti-pornography feminist views about what it means to be a woman in the sex industry as well as resisting the framing of the consumer in that he can see himself as someone contributing to the economic well-being of women rather than being an exploiter of them.

He resists the attempt at discursive framing by using his experience as a consumer to create a counter-hegemonic discourse that reverses anti-pornography claims that he must want to harm women to a conception of himself as helping them. Other consumers expressed similar sentiments.

Researcher: What do you think of feminism's take on porn?

Subject: Feminism's take on porn? I think it's good that they take a stand, but also, I feel that feminism says basically that this demeans women. Well the reality is that no porn maker, none out there, will tell you that they force women to do this. So, all this porn is being made by women that obviously don't agree with the feminist perspective So what the feminists should be doing is not saying, hey man, stop making porn. They should be going, hey women, why are you making this porn? Well, I'd be curious about that too. I don't have many false beliefs, and I know why they're doing it. They're doing it for money. You don't have to go out and flip a burger for \$6.50 and hour. You can get fucked for two hours and make however much you make. That's good money for two hours worth of work. And if a feminist comes up to a porn star and says anything, the porn star will probably say, fuck you. So really, unless the women are being forced to make porn the feminists have no reason to go after the men, they should be talking to the women.

Once again, this type of reasoning represents a discourse that resists anti-porn feminist discourse about male consumers. The women, in this consumer's estimation, volunteer to participate in pornography because it benefits them economically. He asserts that women are not forced to participate by men who produce porn. If that's the case, then he as the consumer is not doing anything wrong when he views pornographic material because he is viewing a consensual act. This protects him from a discursive framing of pervert in the anti-pornography feminist sense because he is not seeking to participate in an activity that demeans and exploits women. Instead, he is enjoying a product that harms no one and even supports women's interest because his purchase of the material is economical beneficial to the performer. He is helping rather than harming, which allows him to define himself differently than anti-pornography feminists would like to frame him.

That it is beneficial economically, or at least perceived as economically beneficial, for women to participate in pornography production provides an avenue of resistance for consumers when faced with discursive framing that asserts that they are exploiting women. They can discursively frame themselves as helping rather than harming women. Because they use this avenue to interpret their experience differently than what anti-pornography feminists say is true, they have an escape route out of complete suffusion in a controlling panoptic. They do not have to internalize the ideas of the guard because they can discursively “talk back” to the guard and construct their identities differently.

In addition to accessing the possibility of economic empowerment of women through pornography to create counter-hegemonic discourse, some consumers in this sample also showed a tendency to characterize pornography as potentially sexually liberating for women though not with the frequency that economic empowerment was discussed.

Subject: Don't come to me and say that just because I have a pornography thing that I'm degrading women. It's like, you've got women who are sacrificing their whole lives because they don't know how to tell a worthless piece of crap to get out and empower themselves. You don't even have your own sense of well-being if you're doing that. To come to me and say, I'm a pervert or I'm degrading women—well, you're degrading yourselves.

Researcher: Do you think pornography can be empowering for women?

Subject: I'd like to see it as empowering to them.

Researcher: How would that work?

Subject: The day women can take hold of a man and have their way with him, like we do with them, they'll stop complaining.

Researcher: Right.

Subject: They'll stop complaining.

Researcher: Do you think pornography can help with that?

Subject: Yeah, 'cause they don't know what men really want. It's like *Men are From Mars and Women are from Venus*, you know? Women always expect to be nurturing and whatever. Drop it for a couple of months. Go for the wild, animalistic. Get your rocks off baby. Then you wouldn't have much to complain about.

Researcher: Right.

Subject: You could still have the nurturing. You can still be feminine, but learn how to get what you want too. Learn to jump a guys bones like we do yours, and not feel bad about it.

This participant expresses an understanding of pornography as potentially liberating. He constructs a discourse from his point of view that makes pornography a potentially empowering force in the sexual lives of women. First he rejects the idea that he is exploiting women, instead pointing to the recurrent theme of victimization and perpetual victimhood that women are characterized with. He claims that pornography makes it possible not to be that way. Pornography can help women become more sexually satisfied, more sexually empowered. What is most interesting here is that he characterizes women's sexual empowerment in a way that also validates his own sexuality. His resistive discourse is filled with the idea that you (women) should act like we (men) do. This provides an escape route from negative discursive framing in that he characterizes that sexuality as good, good for him, good for women, good for everyone. If that is the case, then being a porn consumer is acceptable and his self-conception as a porn consumer, reflected in the discourse he produces, can be positive. Regardless of his argument's validity, he has found a way to discursively resist panoptic control consistent with anti-pornography feminist framing discourses.

Other consumers see pornography as sexually empowering because women can co-opt pornography production for themselves. Women can produce pornography that represents a sexuality that reflects their experience as women.

Subject: I've seen parts of adult entertainment that have been run by women and done certain ways. There's the Candida Royalle videos, those things. I've seen other like adult places where—like I've seen peep shows that are run by women in Seattle. And when I see that, I'm usually like pleasantly surprised and support that. I'm very excited that they

are taking an approach that's not necessarily against pornography, but is like, let's work with what we got and make it better.

This consumer resists anti-pornography feminist discourses by accessing an area of the market he sees as controlled by women for the benefit and sexual empowerment of women and applauding it. In doing so, he essentially sets up a protective discourse for himself as a consumer by putting himself in a position to say that he can't be exploiting women if he is supportive of efforts by women to make pornography more reflective of women's sexual point of view. He can also resist panoptic control, dependent on his internalization of hegemonic discourses, by internalizing a view of himself as a consumer willing to support pornography that supports women's sexual liberation.

Direct responses to what moral conservatives and anti-pornography feminists have to say about pornography consumption and the men who engage in it serves as direct discursive resistance to those framing discourses. Because the consumers can express lucid, if sometimes heated, arguments about what it means to consume porn from their perspective regardless of what anti-porn proponents say, they can create discourse that expresses a different self-conception than the one theorized. This discursive response marks resistance to the potential for panoptic control by anti-porn advocates because consumer ability to produce resistive discourse means they do not fully occupy both the tower and the cell within their own identity construction. One of the primary goals of this project has been to give a forum for this type of resistance to consumers, if they indeed resisted, and this chapter demonstrates that they do. In addition, the existence of these resistive discourses in this text permanently places them in an accessible form that can be considered by other consumers as well as those who would frame them as pervert.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper I have asked and addressed a number of questions. How is the identity construction of male pornography consumers influenced by discourses about them? How do the consumers themselves construct their pornography use experiences? How does consumption context affect identity construction in male consumers? How do porn users feel people in society at large will perceive them? Using in depth qualitative interviews to research these questions fills a void in the existing literature on the sociology of sex and gender, the sex industry, and pornography in particular. This is particularly important in that the gaps around pornography in the existing literature may be a result of anti-pornography panoptic discourses rendering pornography consumers invisible, silent, and fully inscribed as perverts undeserving of an opinion or response to their framing. Addressing this gap in literature may serve to widen the cracks in the panoptic prison and allow consumers to subject themselves and disrupt the panoptic gaze.

The focus of investigation regarding pornography in past research has generally been on the impact of pornography in sexually oppressing women and investigating the possibility that pornography causes sexual aggression in male consumers. This paper addresses a gap in such investigation by attempting to discern, albeit in an exploratory manner, the ways in which the male porn users themselves experience and construct the

consumption experience. While there have been a number of studies about male consumers, this research attempts to address the issue of pornography consumption from the subject position of the consumer.

As a starting point for this investigation are five major discourses about male porn consumers; moral conservatism, anti-pornography feminism, anti-censorship feminism, pro-sex/sex positive feminism, and scientific discourses. These were useful in establishing the hegemonic parameters of the pornography consumption experience. Reviewing these approaches to the male consumer allowed the construction of a framework from which to understand the possible ways men might construct their own identities around pornography consumption.

Beginning with these discourses, a methodology was developed which was intended to allow a preliminary understanding of which discourses most influenced the identity construction of consumers as consumers; as well as to provide consumers with the opportunity to speak candidly about their consumption experiences. Originally focus groups were tried as a method for generating discussion from consumers about their experiences; however, participation levels were not high enough to justify the continued use of them as a method. The second choice for generating discussion and collecting data, and the one used, was the one on one interview between the consumer and the researcher. Individual interviews allowed the researcher to ask questions that related to framing discourses, and allowed room for spontaneous expression from consumers about their pornography consumption experiences. These methods were based on assumptions implicit in Foucault (1978) and cultural studies, specifically that there are large-scale discourses which attempt to shape identity, but that individuals have the opportunity to

resist those hegemonic discourses through self-expression at the micro-political level. I have made an effort to create a research situation in which both dominant and resistive discourses could be analyzed.

The potential of large-scale discourses to lead to social control in the form of a panoptic (Foucault 1977), internalized control of the individual consumer was investigated. Particularly the potential for the anti-pornography discourses of moral conservatism and anti-pornography feminism to define pornography consumption as deviant and dangerous, with the potential effect of sanctioning consumers through feelings of guilt or shame, and thus establishing a panoptic control of them.

Alternatively, pro-sex and anti-censorship discourses were considered a potentially empowering resource for self-subjectivization and discursive resistance on the part of consumers. Specifically, it was thought that both discourses might provide justifications for the activity of pornography consumption leading to a potential positive identity construction for consumers around porn use, within the context of a potentially panoptic deployment of sexuality around porn consumption.

This research is intended to be exploratory, seeking findings that might inform the direction of future research on the impact of dominant and resistive discourses on male pornography consumers. In addition, it is hoped that the findings of this exploratory research might inform future research by generating thought about varying ways of being a pornography consumer. The most notable findings of this research are as follows.

It is clear that the discourses in culture that are most involved in the formation of hegemonic, and potentially panoptic, consumer subject positions are the anti-pornography discourses. Consumers in this study were concerned with the prospects of

being seen negatively, specifically as perverts, by people in the general culture. Evidence that these discourses have hegemonic effects that may create social panopticons is the diffuse nature of who might view consumers negatively. Consumers indicated that they had to be concerned with everyone framing them as perverts if their consumption habits became public. This is indicative of a large-scale, pervasive dissemination of anti-pornography discourse in culture. Certainly large enough that all the consumers in this sample were aware of it.

Of the two anti-pornography discourses discussed in this paper, moral conservative discourse seemed to be more widely disseminated in culture than anti-pornography feminist discourse. The evidence for this conclusion is that consumers were more likely to generate spontaneous discourse about the impact of moral conservatism on the pornography consumption experience. Though most were aware of some of the details of anti-pornography feminist discourse, they had to be asked about the impact of that discourse on porn consumption in general, and on themselves.

Further evidence that anti-pornography discourses are more pervasive and more involved in internalization of panoptic self-identity on the part of consumers is that, of the feminist discourses consumers were most aware of the anti-pornography feminist discourse. When asked about feminist views of pornography, it was generally assumed by consumers that feminist opinions about pornography were negative. Most consumers were not aware that a pro-sex feminist discourse existed, and comments related to free speech were not couched in terms of anti-censorship feminist arguments. Though many of their attitudes about their own consumption were consistent with both pro-sex and

anti-censorship feminism, consumers did not seem to draw directly on these discourses as a source of resistance.

Despite the pervasiveness of anti-pornography discourses compared to discourses supportive of pornography consumption, the pornography consumption experience is a conflicted rather than negative one for most consumers. This is characterized by conflicting guilt and excitement, nervousness and calm, and so on.

Early, youthful experiences were described as conflicted. Most consumers felt both excitement and a sense of doing something wrong during their early pornography consumption experiences, with the sense of nervousness tied to the potential perception of others from the outside. This suggests that the hegemonic discourse for these consumers as youths was anti-pornography discourse, but that the potentially panoptic gaze is fragmented, unable to dominate self-identity of consumers in a way that they feel negatively about their pornography consumption experiences. Resistance to the outside, framing discourse is apparent.

The source of this conflicted perception of their youthful pornography consumption experiences seems to be the interactional situations in which they find themselves, particularly within the family and in exposure to religious institutions. They fear how they will be thought of in those contexts, yet those contexts have mixed messages that might indicate pornography consumption is acceptable. Within the family, mothers, fathers, and brothers generate different kinds of interactions around pornography consumption and likely interpret discourses in culture differently.

Parents as a unit seemed to project an anti-sex discourse in their relationships with their sons simply because they did not often engage in conversation or instruction about

sex with them, making it an implicitly taboo subject. Since pornography falls within the realm of things that have to do with sexuality a general implicit taboo is associated with it as well. Sometimes anti-pornography attitudes were exemplified through action within interactive contexts, such as flipping the television channel when sexual material came on. It should be noted that though the message is usually one of implicit taboo, sometimes an ambiguity of interpretation was created in which some consumers took silence to mean permission. Certainly silence generated an atmosphere in which the fragmented nature of the anti-porn panoptic was revealed.

Overall, mothers seemed to convey the most negative attitude toward pornography within the family, and a more negative attitude toward sex in general. That mothers tended to view porn negatively does lead to an internalization of anti-pornography attitudes in sons and a sense that pornography consumption is wrong. Fear of being thought of negatively by mothers on the part of consumers suggests that mothers are a source of an anti-pornography panoptic gaze, evidenced by feelings of nervousness guilt, shame, and so on around consumption on the part of young consumers. Though a case can be made that mothers are influenced by anti-pornography feminist discourse, overall findings suggest that mothers are most influenced by moral conservative standpoints in terms of their anti-pornography views.

Fathers, on the other hand, tend to present a conflicted discourse about pornography to their sons. They consume pornography themselves, yet they don't tend to talk about sex to their sons. They own pornographic magazines yet they hide them. This indicates both that it is okay that men consume pornography, but also that there is something wrong about it. It seems that fathers disseminate a message of pornography

consumption as a vice or perversion. Fathers' influence on pornography consumers' self-identity seems to be one of a template for conflicted pornographic consumption experience.

Brothers seem to act as a kind of validating force in pornography consumption experience. They introduce their siblings to pornography oftentimes, or they share pornography that is mutually found and accessed. Likely this is a reflection of camaraderie in discovering the meaning of pornography that parents are so silent about. One interesting aspect of brother/male peer sharing of porn is that while it resists anti-porn discourse, it reinforces norms of heterosexuality through rules about what is appropriate arousal to display.

Those young consumers who were heavily exposed to religious institutions, particularly parochial schools, seem to be under greater control of an anti-pornography panoptic gaze in that they were more likely to feel they were violating rules that defined them as pervert. Thus they seemed to show more intense feelings of guilt, shame, and so on than young consumers not as heavily exposed to religious teachings, though even those not exposed to religious institutions were influenced by moral conservative discourse further evidencing its pervasiveness and influence in creating at least partial panoptic control of young consumers.

Overall, youthful experience with pornography is indicative of conflicted experience and competing discourses, though the anti-porn discourses have the most obvious influence in terms of instilling an understanding in young consumers that pornography consumption is seen as a perverted activity and could lead to negative reactions from others.

Adult experiences with pornography also are indicative of a conflicted experience, particularly in terms of consumption context. As adults, consumers are more aware of safe and dangerous areas. They are concerned that they will be seen as perverted if caught in an interaction with the wrong person in a place, but they are able to mitigate that panoptic gaze by consuming in comfortable places and around people they are comfortable with.

Consumers seem to feel most safe in places where pornography is pervasive, such as adult bookstores, or when they are alone. Places that are centers of consuming activity by many people like adult bookstores mitigate feelings that it is a negative activity because the place is suffused with “perversion” and there is a reaffirming presence of only other perverts. These spaces can become unsafe if outsiders invade the area and discursively define the place and the people in it as perverse. Consumers solitary pornography experiences are the most comfortable because they are at the least risk for outside discovery and negative perception. Fears are centered around their consumption experience being discovered by others who would not understand.

Consumers are especially concerned with females discovering their porn consumption. They are usually not comfortable with buying pornography from female clerks, and they are even more concerned about what women in their lives will think of them. Other people that concern them are co-workers and non-consuming friends.

This is an important and interesting group of findings. That consumers are comfortable in particular spaces, especially when they are alone, indicates that there is not a complete panoptic around pornography consumption as a negative activity. A full panoptic would show that they had completely internalized a view of themselves as

perverts. This is not the case. Instead they are concerned with the perceptions of those outside the consuming experience. In the language of the panoptic metaphor, this indicates that the guard cannot see everywhere and the prisoners can talk to each other. The consumers fear the gaze of the guard but they know they can escape it.

That consumers engage in pornography consumption despite widespread anti-pornography discourse indicates that they resist the panopticon in practice. Further, they have conceptions of themselves that resist the anti-pornography perception of what the porn consumer should be. In particular, they resist anti-pornography discourses that characterize pornography consumers as deviant and potentially dangerous.

Anti-pornography discourses attempt to monolithically define the pornography consumer as disrespectful of sex and sexual partners, and as extremely likely to engage in sexually violent behavior.

In terms of violence, anti-pornography consumers' self-conceptions strongly resist definitions that characterize them as dangerous. In general the consumers in this sample showed a low interest in violent pornography, including depictions of rape and images of bondage and sadomasochism. Anti-pornography feminists and moral conservatives alike characterize these types of depictions as pervasive, yet consumers seemed to be able to avoid them in general. Often depictions of violence that they had seen were mainstream media rather than pornography in the sense of adult material. In addition, when they did see such depictions they often identified with the pain of the victim rather than the display of dominance from the aggressor, and they expressed a desire to rescue the victim. This type of self-conception resists anti-pornography discourses that assume men will identify with the male aggressor. Overall, violence is

not an important part of this sample's consuming experience, contrary to what anti-porn advocates would suggest.

Instead of expressing an interest in violent pornography, most of these consumers expressed a preference for pornography that displayed sexuality as enjoyable for all participants. They preferred to see pleasure as opposed to pain. They did not enjoy depictions that showed one party enjoying him/herself at the expense of another.

In terms of their understandings of themselves as potentially violent, this sample universally believed they could not commit a violent act. Even the consumers with the most dominating attitudes toward women denied they could be physically violent toward women.

In terms of the types of behavior they actually reported, most consumers characterized their sexual relationships as sexually mutual. If consumers did seek to bring pornographic fantasy into reality they desisted if they perceived their partner was not interested. Some consumers also allowed women to try pornographic fantasies out on them, and/or reported that women brought pornography into the relationship.

All of their attitudes toward violent pornography and their actual behavior around pornography and real life sex suggest that they resist panoptic control of them. They have not internalized a discourse that would force them to see themselves as deviant and potentially dangerous.

When given the opportunity to respond directly to anti-pornography discourse, consumers had a number of resistive discourses. The most important of these is that they pointed out that attitudes about sex and pornography in America are related to a long religious history and a modern pervasiveness of religion. This suggests that they conceive

of anti-pornography discourse as socially constructed. This resists the panopticon which is dependent on reification for its inevitable internalization by those labeled as pervert.

In terms of responses to anti-pornography feminist discourse, consumers seemed to agree with some general goals of feminism, particularly in terms of equality, but felt that anti-pornography feminism was too extreme. They were particularly prone to resist anti-pornography feminist discourse that implied that porn consumers exploit women. Instead they were able to see ways that pornography empowered women sexually and economically which allowed them to conceive of themselves as helping women as they consumed porn rather than exploiting them.

Interestingly, though they do not seem aware of it, they utilize the same kind of resistive discourses as anti-censorship and pro-sex feminisms. Neither of these discourses recognizes that pornography is more violent or more likely to cause violence than other media. Additionally, pro-sex feminism articulates how the sex industry can have empowering effects on women both economically and sexually.

Overall, this research demonstrates that Foucault's (1978) concept of a deployment of sexuality that creates perversion that must be controlled in culture is useful for the analysis of pornography consumers. It is especially useful when coupled with the concept of the panopticon (Foucault 1977) which metaphorically demonstrates how a complete deployment of sexuality could result in complete sexual control. Anti-pornography discourses have hegemonic effects that threaten panoptic domination of the identity construction of pornography consumers.

That they don't is indicative of the type of resistance posited by Radway (1984) who suggests that even in the midst of hegemonic discourses, people find ways to resist

domination by those discourses. Like Radway's female romance readers, male pornography consumers construct validating discourses within an atmosphere that attempts to define them in a particular way and get them to believe it.

Future research in this area should be concerned with several goals. First, future research should attempt to find ways to draw subjects from the entire range of pornography consumers. Obviously the sample for this research is not representative of the overall pornography consuming population. Ways need to be found to access those consumers that may be less comfortable with their consumption experience.

Second, future research should attempt to document the actual range of consumption taste in porn users. That there were hints of a possible continuum of types of pornographic preference is compelling. If a continuum exists, then monolithic definitions of consumers becomes impractical and research can be directed to finding out what influences those consumers interested in problem areas of pornography. It also allows for the possibility of consumers who are concerned with sexual mutuality and empowerment between men and women and a use of pornography to that end.

Further research should also concentrate on the degree to which consumers actually fantasize about being in the pornographic texts they consume, or if there is a possibility that there are multiple ways of viewing and enjoying pornography, as educational, voyeuristic and so on. There were some indications of such ways of seeing pornography in this research but not enough to justify its inclusion in the general findings chapters.

Finally, future research should attempt to establish the parameters of discursive definition of consumers in other areas of the sex industry. Connections between

experiences with pornography, strip clubs, prostitution, phone sex, and so on, may have implications for illuminating the structure of the overall deployment of sexuality and perversion in today's society in ways that allow us to understand what sex really means to and for us. Knowing more about the general deployment of sexuality may allow us to pick what parts of the sexual panopticon we want to imprison ourselves in and which we wish to resist.

Pornography consumers are not locked in a panoptic system of control over their identity as pornography consumers. They are simply threatened with it. As long as they can find the cracks in the system they can avoid that domination. As such, I believe that they, and perhaps other consumers within the sex industry, show us how to resist having our own proclivities defined as perversion so that we may all resist panoptic domination and choose how we want to feel about sexually contentious issues and practices.

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE: ADULT EROTIC MATERIALS

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research. This is a brief questionnaire intended to provide me with some general details about who you are and tell me a little bit about your experiences with adult erotic materials.

I would like to reiterate that your participation in this research is voluntary. You can decide to stop participating at anytime. Also, I would like to reiterate that any information you provide me will be kept strictly confidential.

First, I am going to ask you a few questions that tell me a little bit about who you are.

1. How old are you?
Mean Age: 40.06
Median Age: 34
Range: 20-77
2. What is your gender?
 1. Male: 15
 2. Female: 0
3. Were you born in the United States?
 1. Yes: 15
 2. No. If not, where _____
4. What is your race?
 1. Black/African American: 0
 2. Hispanic: 0
 3. Asian/Asian American: 0
 4. Native American: 0
 5. Pacific Islander: 0
 6. White/Non-Hispanic: 15
 7. None of the above. Specify _____

5. What is your religious affiliation?
 1. Protestant: 4
 2. Catholic: 1
 3. Jewish: 1
 4. Muslim: 0
 5. Hindu: 0
 6. No Affiliation: 6
 7. Other: 3 Specify: 2 Taoist, 1 Universalist

6. What is your level of education?
 1. Did not graduate high school: 0
 2. GED: 1
 3. High school graduate: 0
 4. Some college/university: 8
 5. Bachelor's degree: 3
 6. Some graduate school: 0
 7. Master's degree
 8. Doctorate: 1
 9. Professional Degree: 1

7. Which category best describes your annual level of income?
 1. Under \$10,000: 3
 2. \$10,000-\$15,000: 1
 3. \$15,001-\$20,000: 4
 4. \$20,001-\$25,000: 0
 5. \$25,001-\$30,000: 1
 6. \$30,001-\$40,000: 2
 7. \$40,001-\$50,000: 0
 8. \$50,001-\$75,000: 3
 9. \$75,001-\$100,000: 1
 10. Over \$100,000: 0

8. In your opinion, which category best describes your economic situation?
 1. In Poverty: 1
 2. Working Class: 3
 3. Lower Middle-class: 3
 4. Middle Class: 5
 5. Upper Middle-class: 3
 6. Upper Class/Elite: 0

9. What is your sexual orientation?
 1. Heterosexual: 12
 2. Gay/Lesbian: 0
 3. Bisexual: 3
 4. Other: 0 Please Specify_____

The next part of this questionnaire focuses on your personal experiences with adult erotic materials. I'd like to take this opportunity to remind you that any information you provide will be kept strictly confidential.

10. At what age did you first encounter adult material?
11. In what setting (home, friend's house, store, etc)? _____

12. Where did you get it? _____

13. What type of adult material were you first exposed to? Circle the number of each response that applies.
 1. Magazines: 14/15
 2. Adult Video/Film: 0/15
 3. Adult Internet Site/s: 0/15
 4. Adult Written Material (Books/Stories): 3/15
 5. Other. Please Explain _____

14. If your first encounter involved magazines, what magazine was it? Circle the number of all that apply. If magazines were not involved, skip this question.
 1. *Playboy*: 14/14
 2. *Penthouse*: 6/14
 3. *Hustler*: 3/14
 4. Other: 1/14 Please Specify: Does not recall name
15. If your first encounter involved video/film, which of the following best describes the majority of its content? If video/film was not involved skip this question.
 1. Female Nudity/No explicit sex.
 2. Male Nudity/No explicit sex.
 3. Heterosexual Sex
 4. Gay Male Sex
 5. Lesbian Sex
 6. Other. Please explain _____

 7. More than one of the above. Explain _____

16. If your first encounter involved the Internet, which of the following best describes the majority of the content of the site/s you visited? If internet was not involved skip this item.

1. Female Nudity/No explicit sex.
2. Male Nudity/No explicit sex
3. Heterosexual Sex
4. Gay Male Sex
5. Lesbian Sex
6. Other. Please explain _____
7. More than one of the above. Specify _____

17. If your first encounter involved adult written materials, please indicate the type of publication and/or title/s of the publication.

-Erotic stories or novels.

18. Do you remember your feelings during your first encounter with adult materials?

1. Yes: 15
2. No: 0

18a. If you answered yes to question 18, check all that apply to how you felt.

- _ excitement: 14
- _ disgust: 0
- _ nervousness: 10
- _ anger: 0
- _ guilt: 2
- _ sadness: 1
- _ fear: 3
- _ power: 0
- _ happy: 5
- _ confused: 3
- _ curious: 13
- _ other: 3 Explain: Wanted to have sex with women, surprise, erection with masturbation.

19. In general, would you say the amount of adult material you consume has,

1. Increased a great deal: 4
2. Increased a bit: 2
3. Remained about the same: 6
4. Decreased a bit: 0
5. Decreased a great deal: 3
6. Ended/Stopped: 0

20. Over the last year, how often have you consumed adult material on average?
1. Daily: 1
 2. More than once a week: 4
 3. Once a week: 2
 4. Several times a month: 5
 5. Once a month: 2
 6. Less than once a month: 1
21. Would you consider the amount of your consumption of adult material over the last year to be,
1. Very heavy: 1
 2. Somewhat heavy: 3
 3. Moderate: 6
 4. Somewhat light: 2
 5. Very light: 3
22. What types of adult materials have you consumed over your life? Circle the number of all that apply.
1. Magazines: 15/15
 2. Videos/Film: 14/15
 3. Internet: 8/15
 4. Written Material (books/stories): 8/15
 5. Other: 3/15 Specify: Sex toys and voyeurism, photography/erotic art, gentlemen's club.
23. What types of adult materials have you consumed over the last year? Circle the number of each that applies.
1. Magazines: 10/15
 2. Videos/Film: 11/15
 3. Internet: 6/15
 4. Written Materials (books/stories): 6/15
Other: 1/15 Specify: Gentlemen's Club
24. How often to you consume each of the following materials?
- a. Magazines
 1. Very Often: 2
 2. Often: 1
 3. Sometimes: 8
 4. Rarely: 4
 5. Never: 0

- b. Videos/Films
 - 1. Very Often: 2
 - 2. Often: 5
 - 3. Sometimes: 5
 - 4. Rarely: 2
 - 5. Never: 1

- c. Internet
 - 1. Very Often: 0
 - 2. Often: 0
 - 3. Sometimes: 3
 - 4. Rarely: 5
 - 5. Never: 7

- d. Written Materials
 - 1. Very Often: 0
 - 2. Often: 1
 - 3. Sometimes: 5
 - 4. Rarely: 3
 - 5. Never: 6

25. Given a choice, which of the following materials do you most prefer to consume?

- 1. Magazines: 6/15
- 2. Videos/Film: 11/15
- 3. Internet: 0/15
- 4. Written Materials: 1/15
- Other: 1/15 Please Specify: Voyeurism
- 5. No preference: 0/15

26. Over the last year, in what locations have you consumed adult materials? Circle the number of each that applies.

- 1. At home: 14/15
- 2. Adult Arcade: 4/15
- 3. Adult Theater: 3/15
- 4. Hotel/Motel: 0/15
- 5. Other 4/15 Please Specify: Gentlemen's Club, Friend's, Work, Car/outdoors

27. Over the last year, where have you **most frequently** consumed adult materials?

- 1. At home: 12/15
- 2. Adult Arcade: 1/15
- 3. Adult theater: 2/15
- 4. Hotel/Motel: 0/15
- Other: 2/15 Specify: Friend's, Work

28. When consuming adult materials do you **usually**,
1. Consume alone: 12/15
 2. Consume with others: 5/15
29. Over the last year, who have you consumed adult material with? Circle the number of each that applies.
1. No one. I always do it alone. 4/15
 2. With a spouse: 3/15
 3. With sexual partner/s other than a spouse: 6/15
 4. With friends: 2/15
- Other: 3/15 Please Specify: Strangers in theater, mostly alone sometimes with others, co-workers.

This next group of questions deals with how important particular types of adult content are to you when you consume adult materials. Please circle the number of the response that best applies to each category.

30. How important is it that each of the following be present in adult materials you consume?
- a. Heterosexual Intercourse (penis penetrating a vagina)
 1. Very Important: 5
 2. Important: 5
 3. Somewhat important: 4
 4. Not at all important: 1
 - b. Gay Male Sex (all male)
 1. Very Important: 0
 2. Important: 1
 3. Somewhat important: 3
 4. Not at all important: 11
 - c. Lesbian Sex (all female)
 1. Very Important: 1
 2. Important: 2
 3. Somewhat important: 10
 4. Not at all important: 2
 - d. Oral sex performed on a man by a woman (fellatio/blowjobs)
 1. Very Important: 2
 2. Important: 8
 3. Somewhat important: 2
 4. Not at all important: 3

- e. Oral sex performed on a woman by a man (cunnilingus/eating out)
 - 1. Very Important: 3
 - 2. Important: 4
 - 3. Somewhat Important: 6
 - 4. Not at all important: 2
- f. Anal intercourse between a man and a woman
 - 1. Very Important: 3
 - 2. Important: 2
 - 3. Somewhat Important: 5
 - 4. Not at all important: 5
- g. Use of objects (dildos/vibrators/etc)
 - 1. Very Important: 3
 - 2. Important: 1
 - 3. Somewhat Important: 4
 - 4. Not at all important: 7
- h. Bondage (tying up, handcuffs, restrains)
 - 1. Very Important: 1
 - 2. Important: 0
 - 3. Somewhat Important: 5
 - 4. Not at all important: 9
- i. Sadomasochism (pain/pleasure, whipping)
 - 1. Very Important: 0
 - 2. Important: 1
 - 3. Somewhat Important: 4
 - 4. Not at all important: 10
- j. Forced Sex (violence/rape)
 - 1. Very Important: 1
 - 2. Important: 1
 - 3. Somewhat Important: 1
 - 4. Not at all important: 12
- k. Threesomes/Group sex
 - 1. Very Important: 1
 - 2. Important: 7
 - 3. Somewhat important: 2
 - 4. Not at all important: 5

31. What else do you look for in your adult materials?

32. What is most important to you in your adult materials?

33. When you consume pornography now, how do you feel? Circle the number of all that apply.

1. Excited: 14/15
2. Nervous: 1/15
3. Guilty: 2/15
4. Fearful: 0/15
5. Disgusted: 1/15
6. Angry: 2/15
7. Sad: 1/15
8. Powerful: 0/15
9. Happy: 9/15
10. Confusion: 1/15
11. Curious: 8/15
12. Other: 7/15 Specify: safety/relief, escape, amused, content w/self and spouse, hoping to get a rise, no guilt/positive experience, calm.

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW: ADULT MATERIALS

What interested you in this study?

Talk a little bit about your first or an early experience with pornography.

Feelings

Circumstances

Were the materials hidden or in the open? Why?

How did your parents feel about pornography? Why do you think that is?

Did your parents attitudes about pornography shape your opinion of pornography?

Of sexuality in general? How so?

Who or what else influenced your attitudes about pornography? Sexuality?

What kind of influence did pornography have on your early sexuality?

Did it create particular fantasies? Examples?

Compared to other things, did pornography have a greater or lesser influence on the development of your sexuality?

Did you learn things about sex from pornography?

Do you think pornography's influence on you as a younger person was positive or negative? How so?

Talk a little bit about your recent experiences with pornography...

Where did you watch or look at it?

How did you get it?

What does it feel like to buy or rent porn?

What does it feel like when you look at porn? Why?

How much influence does pornography have on your current sexuality?

Does pornography influence your sexual fantasies? How so?

Your actual sexual practices? How so?

Do you think pornography has a positive or negative influence on you now? How so?

Are there particular people you hide pornography from? Who? Why?

Are there particular people you share pornography with? Who? Why?

Does pornography influence your romantic relationships?

Does pornography influence you in terms of who you find attractive?

How do you think the average person would react if they knew you were looking at porn?

Has pornography influenced you to do something you wouldn't normally do?

Do you think it could?

Is that positive or negative?

Has pornography influenced the way you think about other's sexualities? How so?

Is that positive or negative?

Are you open about your pornography consumption to other people? Why or why not?

Is it different depending on who it is?

Do you think pornography displays women's sexuality accurately? Men's?

Explain...

What do you think are the best things about pornography? Why?

What do you think are the worst things about pornography? Why?

Do you think pornography is degrading to women? To men? Why or why not?

(Cumshots, anal sex, group sex, etc.)

Who do you think is shown as more powerful in pornography, women or men?

If applicable-Is gay porn different?

How would you define violent pornography?

Have you noticed a lot of that type of porn?

Do you ever watch pornography you consider violent? Why or why not?

How does it make you feel?

Have you ever seen pornography you consider to be violent?

How did it make you feel?

Why did it make you feel that way?

Do you think a lot of men like violent porn?

Do you consider bondage and S&M porn to be violent?

Do you believe that violent pornography could create real violence? Why or why not?

Do you think men who look at porn get a bad rap?

Why or why not?

By whom?

Have you ever felt ashamed for looking at porn? Why or why not? When?

Have you ever tried things in real life that you saw in porn? What?

Have you ever pressured someone to do something you saw in porn? Explain...

How do you feel about feminism's take on porn? Why?

What would you say to a feminist angry about porn? Why?

What is most important for you to see in porn? Why that thing?

What is most important about porn to you overall?

Is there anything you'd like to talk about that we haven't talked about?

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Andrew F. Harper
Department of Sociology, UNLV
Research on Male Pornography Consumers

Hello, my name is Andrew Harper. I am a graduate student conducting research on pornography use as part of the requirement to complete a degree at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. This form is intended to inform you of what is expected of you if you agree to participate in this research project as a subject. It is also a request on my part to participate in the research. Please read the following and sign below if you agree to participate.

The purpose of this research is to gather information about men who consume adult materials. It is also intended to give those men who choose to participate an opportunity to speak honestly about the adult materials they use and their understandings of their use of adult materials.

Participation in this research should take no more than a few hours of your time, and hopefully you will be able to gain some insight into your own use of adult materials as well as have the opportunity to tell others about how you think about your use of adult materials.

Your participation in this study will be kept strictly confidential. The only people who will be able to link you with the information you provide are myself, Andrew Harper, and my faculty advisor (Dr. Kathryn Hausbeck). Your name will not appear on any questionnaire you fill out. Tape recordings of interviews will be part of information gathering; however, your name will not appear on any tape and the only people that will have access to those tapes are myself and my faculty advisor. In the actual writing and possible publication of this research, your name will be changed so no link between you and the information you provide will be available.

I would like to stress that your participation in this research is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop your participation at any time.

If you require additional information or have any questions please contact me:

Andrew Harper
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For further information regarding the rights of research subjects contact:
Office of Sponsored Programs, UNLV
Phone: (702) 895-1357

Signature of Participant:

Date:

Signature of Researcher:

Date:

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