POST-SECONDARY WOMEN'S POSITIVE EXPRIENCES WITH PORNOGRAPHY: A GROUNDED THEORY EXPLANATION OF INITIAL EXPOSURE AND SUBSEQUENT USE OF SEXUALLY EXPLICIT MATERIALS

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Abstract

The intent of this research thesis is the examination of post-secondary women's positive experiences with pornography. Very little research has been conducted with women who enjoy pornography and yet recent statistics in Canada and the United States show that there is an increasing amount of female users of pornography (Cantor, Mares, & Hyde, 2003). This study presents an emerging grounded theory of the process through which a small group of post-secondary women come to label their experiences with pornography as positive. The study traces the experiences of four post-secondary women in Western Canada from their initial exposure to pornography to their current use of the material. Results showed the importance of personal control in the development of female sexual identity and the enjoyment of pornography. This study is embedded in a social constructionist theoretical framework and offers recommendations for further research in the area.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Pornographic materials such as pictures and magazines have been a part of human culture for a very long time (Zilbergeld, 1992). Even in the sexually oppressive Victorian era, spanning from 1837 to 1901, pornographic material was quite popular (Kimmel & Plante, 2004). The prevalence and impact of pornography cannot be denied whether one supports or opposes it, whether one wants it strictly censored or left unrestricted. The sheer popularity and widespread use of pornography can be illustrated by the enormous profits brought in by pornographic materials. It is a multi-billion dollar industry that is growing tremendously from year to year (Stack, Wasserman, & Kern, 2004). North Americans are spending more than $8 billion dollars annually on adult cable programming, hard-core videos, computer pornography, and sex magazines (Stack et al.). The amount spent on these adult materials surpasses the annual profits from all movie box office receipts in the United States (Thio, 2001). With the popularity of the internet, adult oriented websites are responsible for the greatest on-line commerce and profit worldwide (Thio). Search engine queries for sexually explicit material outnumber any other topics by a landslide (Parker & Wampler, 2003). Clearly, people are spending a great deal of money on adult entertainment and due to this popularity, pornography is an area of research that is both interesting and important.

Clarification Between Pornography and Sexually Explicit Materials

For the purpose of this study, the definition of pornography and sexually explicit materials will be explained. Sexually explicit materials are videos, photographs, and

writings that present sexual content without deliberately obscuring or hiding it (Ciclitira, 2002). Pornography is the visual or literal depiction and/or description of bodily features and acts aimed at arousing the viewer or reader (Ciclitira). The formal distinction between the two terms is the intent of the material. The purpose and intent of pornography is to arouse, where as sexually explicit materials can portray sexual acts without necessarily the intent of arousing the viewer. For example, an instructional video on safe sex practices portraying genitalia can be labeled as sexually explicit but not pornographic since its intent is to educate and not arouse (Juffer, 1998).

In this study, the focus of research was pornography since participants were asked to reflect on their experiences with materials whose purpose was arousal. When the term sexually explicit materials is used in this research document, it should be noted that the text refers to pornographic sexually explicit materials meaning materials that have been produced generally for the purpose of arousal. Therefore, in this thesis the terms pornography and sexually explicit materials are used interchangeably and refer to the same concept.

Diverging Views on Pornography

The issue of pornography is not a simple one due to the strong opinions for and against it, as exemplified by feminist theory, religious morals, societal values, and freedom of speech rights (Juffer, 1998; Kimmel & Plante, 2004; Kipnis, 1996). Radical feminists have argued that pornography is a direct abuse of women and its main purpose is to silence, disempower, and dehumanize females (MacKinnon & Dworkin, 1988). In

Britain, a campaign against pornography and censorship was created with similar assumptions, stating that pornography is a form of control over women that serves to maintain inequality and objectification (Shaw, 1999). These philosophies are often compared to the conservative religious right movement which criticizes the depictions of sexual acts, premarital sex, and homosexual relationships (Kimmel & Plante). The religious right and anti-pornography feminists contest that pornographic material turns women into victims and men into their victimizers, in the roles of rapists, child molesters, and dominators (Juffer). Religious authorities have opposed pornography because it promotes sexual arousal and pleasure, which is inherently one of the main purposes of the material (Zilbergeld, 1992).

Opposing such views are anti-censorship feminists, researchers, and activists who argue that censoring any form of cultural products is a violation of the right to freedom of speech (Rodgerson & Wilson, 1991). Kipnis (1996) even proposes that some forms of pornography are challenging the dominance of the white, rich male perspective in Western society. One example is the magazine *Hustler,* a monthly pornographic magazine geared towards heterosexual men and published in the United States of America. It was one of the first magazines to push boundaries by exploring socially taboo topics through its stories and images (Kipnis).

<center>Pornography as a Male-Dominated Arena</center>

Pornographic material is great revenue for profits (Thio, 2001) and with so many consumers, it is a phenomenon embedded in Western culture. Pornography is bought and

looked at by millions of people who may be purchasing videos, magazines, books, or utilizing the internet and cable services. The consumers of such products are, in the majority, male and most of the widely available pornographic material seems to be aimed at a male audience (Shaw, 1999). For instance, two thirds of internet users are male and they make up for about 77% of all online time (Cooper, Scherer, Boise, & Gordon, 1999).

These statistics represent pornography as a field dominated by male producers and aimed at a male audience. Although researchers have conducted studies on the relationship between men and pornography, the relationship between pornography and its use by women has not been thoroughly researched (Attwood, 2005). The assumption has been that men are interested consumers of pornography where as women are not (Juffer, 1998). Since men are statistically using more pornography than women (Cooper et al., 1999), the focus on pornography research has been on the potential effects of their use in regards to their female partners. The view point that women can also enjoy and consume pornography has not been widely entertained due to the fact that the majority of studies examining pornography have viewed the material as negative and concentrated on its potential negative effects on men and women (Juffer; MacKinnon & Dworkin, 1988; Shaw,1999). It has been only recently, that studies examining the possible positive effects of pornography use have emerged (Johansson & Hammaren, 2007; Morrison, Morrison, Bearden & Ellis, 2004). Generally, the focus of research in the area of pornography has been on effects and thus a gap in research addressing consumption has been created (Attwood).

For the most part, the assumption has been that women are not interested in pornography and that they have no reason to be (Attwood, 2005). Biological and evolutionary perspectives have placed women into the role of passive recipients in the realm of sexuality where men seem to be the only creatures allowed a strong sex drive and interest in the depictions of sexual acts (Kimmel, 2000; Zilbergeld, 1992). The assumption behind biological explanations of sexuality is that men are constantly looking for opportunities to engage in sexual behaviors with as many females as possible and therefore will be interested in explicit depictions of sex and nudity (Zilbergeld). On the other hand, women's sexual behavior is presumed to be tied to their need for protection and love and thus it is assumed that they are less likely to enjoy sexual acts for the sake of pleasure. This translates into the assumption that women will not enjoy pornography since its main focus is on the pleasure of sexual acts without an emotional prelude.

By only focusing on men's relations to pornography, researchers are alienating women, portraying them as sexual beings that have no to little interest in depictions of sexuality, and illustrating them as passive individuals that men can simply act upon (Boyle 2000; Shaw, 1999). Research directly examining how women actually come into contact with pornography and how they are affected by it has been limited (Parvez, 2006; Smith, 2003). There have been a few studies (Bridges, Bergner, & Hesson-McInnis, 2003; Ciclitira, 2004; Shaw, 1999) in the last seven years that have attempted to bridge this gap by researching the impact of pornography on women's intimate relationships. Bridges et al. and Shaw have conducted studies where the impact of men's leisure use of

pornography on women was explored, but their research still failed to integrate women's personal experiences with pornography. How women felt about their partner's use of pornography was reported but there was no exploration of the personal relationship between women and pornography. The researchers (Bridges et al.) were operating on the assumption that women do not use pornography even though it has been documented that many women enjoy and consume sexually explicit material (Carroll et al., 2008; Ciclitira, 2004; Kipnis, 1996).

Ciclitira (2004) addressed some of these issues by examining British women's experiences of viewing pornography, its effect on their self-image, what women specifically like or dislike about pornography, and how they relate their views to feminist ideas. Since there is increasing access to pornography for women through domestic outlets such as television cable and the internet (Ciclitira), as well as outlets outside of the home, research in the area of women's qualitative experience is needed in order to shed some light and understanding on the path of pornography in women's lives.

Women's Use of Pornography

To think that women don't use and enjoy pornography could be regarded as naïve. Debates have centered on reasons why women should feel degraded and offended by pornographic material while the rising numbers of female consumers of pornography has been ignored (Bower, 1986). In North America, the number of sexually explicit books, written by and most often directed at women, has increased 324% from 1991 to 1998 while the overall number of published books increased by only 83% (Juffer, 1998). This

trend has continued in recent years (Peter & Valkenburg, 2007). These figures speak to the fact that there is an increasing demand and supply for pornographic books geared towards a female audience.

The ever increasing popularity of the internet has given women and minorities greater opportunities to produce and distribute their own representations of pornographic material (Ciclitira, 2004). This has resulted in an increase of female producers and consumers of pornography. A recent study showed that nearly fifty percent of female students in colleges across the United States use pornography, and report it as an acceptable way to express their sexuality (Carroll et al., 2008). The authors' conclusion was that pornographic material is widely used by females but since this fact is fairly new and controversial, there are gaps in the information regarding women and their positive relationships to pornography. This thesis aims to partially fill this gap by interviewing four post-secondary women who describe their relationship and use of pornography as positive.

More current research in the area of pornography supports the idea that women use and enjoy pornography. Smith (2003) qualitatively documented women's enjoyment and use of sexually explicit publications. Recent studies suggest that use of pornography is positively correlated with lower levels of sexual anxiety and higher levels of sexual and genital esteem (Morrison et al., 2004). These findings move away from a harm-based approach and suggest the positive factors that may be associated with pornography use. Johansson and Hammaren (2007) found that some young women are positively disposed

toward and enjoy pornography. In their study, the two authors state that the group of women who consume pornography and express positive attitudes towards it need to be studied further. This is exactly what the present study aims to do. An important point to remember is that even with emerging current research into women's consumption of pornography, empirical work in the area is still very limited, especially when it comes to women as active pornography consumers (Parvez, 2006). In Attwood's (2005) words, research on women's consumption is "practically non-existent" (p. 72).

Focus of Thesis

The objective of this thesis was to uncover how four post-secondary women, who describe themselves as having positive experiences with sexually explicit materials, actually come to experience pornography and how such early experiences shape the way they consequently relate to sexually explicit materials. In a sense, this research outlines the process through which some post-secondary women go in order to label their experiences with sexually explicit materials as positive.

Early experiences with pornography can potentially have an impact on the later enjoyment of pornographic material (Morrison et al., 2004). Positive experiences with pornography can be defined as experiences that the participants classify as eliciting sexual arousal, enjoyment, a desire to explore their own sexuality, and further engagement with explicit materials. Identification of positive experiences with pornography includes a belief that such materials can be used to enhance one's sexuality and sexual identity. On the other hand, negative experiences with pornography include

the presence of coercion or abuse tied to the material, accompanied by feelings of shame, and the belief that women should not be aroused by pornographic images.

The reason for studying post-secondary women is that they are an easily accessible population that lends itself to the purpose of this thesis. Post-secondary students represent a portion of female consumers of pornography and they can be described as a generation that has embraced more liberal attitudes towards women and sexuality (Carroll et al., 2008). Thus, they present a potential pool of women who are likely to have positive experiences with pornography who may also be willing to talk openly about sexuality. The information generated from this study has the potential to shed light on how women relate to the widespread phenomenon of pornography and may also contribute to an understanding of women's sexuality. This is very important because historically, women have often been overlooked as autonomous beings with real sexual desires in the realm of scientific research as well as in lay person popular beliefs (Kimmel & Plante, 2004).

Conclusion

Through qualitative interviews and grounded theory analysis, this thesis explored four post-secondary women's unique and complex experiences with pornography. The focus of this research was women's positive experiences with pornography and thus the four women represented in this study described their experiences as positive. This thesis is important because it examines a fairly new area of sexual behavior for women since it is only recently that reports of women's enjoyment and use of pornography have surfaced

(Carroll et al., 2008). Hearing the voices of women who use pornography can be very valuable in understanding parts of female sexuality that have been suppressed by societal forces.

The next chapter is the literature review portion of this thesis. It describes previous research with pornography as well as its definition and cultural aspects. The literature review outlines the use of pornography by men and women as explained though different theories of human sexual behaviour. Special attention is paid to the development of the female sexual desire in Western society.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The research question I investigated in this study was the qualitative understanding of how four post-secondary women, who have positive experiences with pornography, first come to experience such materials in their lives and subsequently, what path pornography takes in their everyday reality. Researching how women first

experience and begin to think about pornography is important because subsequent use or disuse of pornography will be influenced by how males and females have been trained to view and respond to such materials by societal forces (Kimmel, 2000).

The literature review that follows will take the reader deeper into research on pornography and highlight how women have historically been sexually suppressed and silenced. Their supposed disinterest in pornography can be assumed to be related to the different social constructs placed on men and women. This chapter outlines the definition of pornography, describes previous research in the area, and concentrates on how women and men are socialized and taught to view and experience sexuality and pornography in very different and conflicting ways. The section will also provide the reader the necessary background to understand the societal forces that have suppressed women's sexuality. The literature review examines these areas in detail since the study is exploratory in the context of a research question that has not been previously explored at length. Before the full literature review, the following section will outline some of the personal assumptions that I hold towards pornography. It is important to outline these since my biases certainly influenced the way that I approached the research matter at hand.

Personal Assumptions and Biases

When I was ten years old, I saw a sexually explicit video for the first time. I was overcome with curiosity but also a lot of confusion because I didn't really understand and

fully know what I was seeing. A few years passed before I saw pornography again. This time, I was sixteen years old and my friends and I were bored and decided that we would rent a pornographic movie. What I remember is a lot of laughter, some to cover up our nervousness and some was genuine dismay at the plot line and dialogue. Throughout high school the only pornography that I continued to see was at some parties where others brought it for entertainment or the web sites that I would stumble upon when I was on the internet. What I remember is that I was still curious about what I was seeing and I was taking in the images as representations of what sex would be like. In a way, it was a form of sex education. As I moved into university, sexually explicit videos became very common in the dormitory residencies. The whole resident complex was connected to the same network and people were constantly uploading and sharing pornographic video clips. Outside of these experiences, I was not viewing pornography regularly. I would estimate that I would read an erotic story or look at an explicit website once every month or two. I would usually do this when I was feeling bored.

The experiences with pornography throughout my life have all been fairly positive. I have never been forced to view pornography against my will and I do not recall seeing any images that were really disturbing to me. Most of the material that I have viewed was sexually arousing to me on at least some level. The pornographic material that I have been exposed to has generally depicted activities that are fairly similar to what I consider normal sexual behavior. It should be noted that my interpretation of what sex is, has been influenced by the fact that pornography did serve

as an educational tool for me. Thus, what I consider normal sexual behavior is a sexual script that has been constructed by the pornography that I have been exposed to. My experiences with pornography have conditioned me to have certain thoughts and assumptions about pornography. It is important to outline these because the assumptions and beliefs that I hold will certainly affect the approach that I take in my research.

I believe that consuming pornography is something normal for both men and women. My views are that acting in pornography and producing pornography are an individual's right, as long as the depictions are of adults engaging in consensual activities. I see pornography as a form of free speech and I believe that its consumption can have benefits for women. Coming from a background where I would classify all of my experiences with pornography as positive, has influenced the research question that I chose to investigate in this study. I focused on women's positive experiences with pornography because I found that the research that I was finding in the area hardly focused on women's consumption (Attwood, 2005), and even less so on women's enjoyment of pornography. My personal experiences were at odds with the harm-based approach taken by many studies (Attwood) and I was also surrounded by female friends and couples who enjoyed and actively consumed pornography. Being surrounded by accounts of positive experiences in this area led me to want to research these experiences empirically.

In saying that, I would also like to acknowledge the validity of research that has spoken about women's negative experiences with pornography. I realize that not all

women enjoy pornography and also that many women can associate pornography with negative feelings and experiences. My assumption is that negative and positive reactions to pornography are not related to the material itself but are rather a reflection of the viewer's experiences, cognitions, and emotions. I believe that pornography cannot be looked at in a vacuum separated from the viewer since my assumption is that the two interact in order to produce a genuine experience.

My attitude and experiences with sexually explicit materials have been shaped by several factors. First of all, I grew up in Bulgaria and as with many European countries, the attitude towards sex and the body seemed more liberal when compared to North America. Throughout my childhood I would often go to community baths where I shared public pools with numerous nude women of all ages and sizes. It felt quite natural to look at the female naked body. I also became comfortable with being nude in front of women that I did not know. My culture seemed comfortable and accepting of male and female nudity. Advertisements in newspapers and billboards would often show male and female bare breasts and/or buttocks and this was never accompanied by public complaints or controversy. Due to this different cultural upbringing, my approach to viewing pornography is associated with my assumption that seeing nude people and people engaging in sexual acts is normal.

I think that this cultural undercurrent was also reinforced by my parents who were quite liberal and very open about sexuality. They normalized sex for me from an early age. Their belief was that I needed education and discussion around sex rather than

censorship. Since sex was something that was normalized for me, once I started watching pornography, it did not seem that what I was viewing was something that didn't happen in real life. My assumption that pornography is normal led me to the conclusion that it could be enjoyed by women and that there could be benefits to its consumption.

I approached this research with the assumption that in the arena of sexuality, women and men are still not depicted as equal. Although I have come across media portrayals of sexually aggressive women, having a high interest in sex is still mainly illustrated as a male characteristic. My personal belief is that men and women do have equal sexual needs and desires but the existence of a double standard has prevented women from openly pursuing and speaking about their sexual needs.

The assumptions that I have stated above should provide the reader with an overview of the biases that I approached this research with. I further elaborate on my biases and speak to reflexivity in chapter three. Following is a literature review of research in the area of pornography.

<div align="center">Defining Pornography</div>

When conducting research in the area of pornography, a major issue is the definition of the term. Pornography is often poorly defined because there are philosophical controversies over what the term pornography actually means (Boyle, 2000). Steinem (1980) argues that there are concrete differences between the terms erotica and pornography, and that women prefer erotica but are opposed to pornography. According to Steinem, the term erotica portrays mutually pleasurable sexual expressions

between people who have enough power to exercise free choice in their decision to partake in the depicted activities. Contrary to erotica, pornography shows some aspects of inequality where spontaneous yearnings for intimacy are replaced with domination and objectification. The Latin translation of the word pornography comes from 'porno' which means prostitute and 'graphos' which translates into the writing about or describing (Kipnis, 1996). Essentially, the literal translation of the term is to write about prostitutes. In itself, this definition implies inequality where women are dependent on men's sexual advances for their living (Steinem).

Some scholars (Berger, Searles, & Cottle, 1991; Brosius, Weave, & Staab, 1993) move away from the literal definition and define pornography as a form of entertainment revolving around sexual behaviors. Pornography is nothing more than the illustration of "sex for sex's sake, with no cover, no outside reference, no pretext or excuse – in short, sex with no other meaning" (Arcand, 1993, p.29). It is material that portrays men and women engaging in sexual activities ranging from soft to hardcore depictions that may include sado-masochism and violence (Bower, 1986).

Yet other researchers (Ciclitira, 2002; Donnerstein & Linz, 1986) have defined pornography in less simplistic terms. This definition postulates that pornography cannot be defined outside of its social implications because it revolves around the endorsement of the macho chauvinistic viewpoint towards sex and women. To label pornography as simple entertainment is seen as naïve because at its core is the degradation and dehumanization of women (Brosius, Weave, & Saab, 1993). The female body is the

central object of sexually explicit written and visual media, and the implied constant sexual willingness and availability of females are dominant themes in these productions (Ciclitira, 2004). This position stems from radical feminists who describe pornography as a male invention designed specifically for the objectification and subordination of women (Brownmiller, 1980). The inherent objectification and subordination of women applies to violent as well as non-violent pornography since even the most banal images portray women as 'things' (Russell, 2000). Whether a woman has consented to participate or has been coerced into pornography does not change this degradation factor. The point remains that any material that shows degrading sexual themes is endorsing those behaviors to the consumer (Longino, 1980).

Each different perspective on what pornography is has its roots in philosophical assumptions and values. How one defines pornography and erotica depends on morals, sexual preferences, personal taste, class, and cultural biases (Webster, 1986). There are no universal and concrete criteria for what constitutes sexually arousing images. Even if researchers could agree on a concrete definition of pornography, it might not be helpful in future research. Each individual has their own code of ethics and what may be obscene and degrading to one person, may be sexually arousing to another (Webster, 1986). Using a predetermined definition of pornography might hide the individual variances of meaning people assign to different material (Ciclitira, 2002).

In this study, I used the definition of pornography developed by Wendy McElroy (1995). She presents a value-neutral definition that labels pornography "as the explicit

artistic depiction of men and/or women as sexual beings" (p.51). The word explicit

eliminates grey areas such as romance novels while the term artistic differentiates

pornography from psychological analysis of sex found in textbooks or other learning

materials. The term depiction includes all varieties of expression such as video,

photography, painting, and literature. This definition points to the fact that pornography

is the depiction of the sexual nature of human beings. Based on the definition that I have

stated above, the terms pornography and sexually explicit materials are used

interchangeably throughout this research study.

Pornography Outside of North America

This study is based on a Western view of pornography and the majority of the

studies cited in the literature review conform to this cultural norm. In North America,

people's attitudes towards nudity and sexual acts are often clouded in shame (McElroy,

1995; Smith, 2003). Discussions about sexuality and pleasure are often not prevalent in

mainstream culture and this translates into an atmosphere where pornography is a taboo

topic (Juffer, 1998). The following section examines how pornography is viewed and

produced in cultures outside of North America. This information is useful because it

allows the reader to break away from the Western views on sexually explicit materials

and understand pornography from various cultural perspectives.

Greater Acceptance of Pornography

Western European countries tend to view sexuality and pornography in less

paranoid and shame ridden ways than North Americans (Slade, 1997; Smith, 2003).

Pornography is defined more narrowly than in North America because the naked human form is depicted without much restriction in the European media. Images portraying the naked human form in European fashion magazines and television ads are abundant and accepted as normal where as these same images are labeled as more risqué and offensive in North America (Slade). Although sexualization in the media is ever increasing in North America, attitudes towards nudity in film and advertising are still more permissive in European countries (Smith).

In Western Europe, there is a tendency to view sexuality and the human form as a work of beauty and art (Slade 1997; Smith, 2003). During the 1960s and 1970s, European governments revised their standards toward pornography by stating that if any aspect of the work had any artistic, historical, or literary merit, it was of social value and should not be censored (Sigel, 2005). These standards resulted in new types of pornography where the producers were beginning to defend works based on the social value of sexual pleasure. The focus on personal liberation resulted in a greater acceptance of sexually explicit materials that still exists today. Anti-porn feminist critiques have received little support in Western Europe, especially in France where female authors, such as Pauline Reage, resist that analysis of pornography by writing about the complexities of women's desires and sexuality (Sigel).

In post-communist Eastern Europe, the 'revolution' of 1989 was accompanied by liberation of the body, especially the female body (Kligman, 1996). The fall of communism resulted in a culture that became quite open and non-judgmental towards sex

and pornography. The recent freedom enjoyed by the press resulted in a surge of sexually explicit material that is currently available to the public (Kligman). It is now common to walk into a bookstore in any Eastern European country and find intellectual journals and pornographic magazines sharing the same shelves and clientele (Kligman).

Censorship

Censorship of sexually explicit material in Europe is also quite different than in North America (Slade, 1997; Smith, 2003). Cable and satellite service providers are increasingly broadcasting x-rated pornographic movies that most American cable companies cannot carry due to broadcasting legislations (Slade). In Italy, official broadcasting ends at midnight and sexually explicit fare is shown on the channels for the duration of the night (Slade). What is even more interesting is that in Italy, about 37% of women report that they watch hardcore pornographic channels during the day (Milter & Slade, 2005). Statistics predict that female audiences for televised pornographic movies would increase by 10% between the years 2006 to 2008 (Milter & Slade).

In France, most forms of cinema censorship were eradicated in order to protect the national pornography industry against American encroachment (Sigel, 2005). The production of high-quality French pornographic movies soared throughout the seventies and early eighties (Sigel). Hard-core films were being shown at mainstream theatres but the National Assembly soon passed the X-law which limited hard-core films to special theatres (Sigel). Currently and in the past, there has been a lot less censorship in France than in Britain or North America (Phillips, 2005). British censorship laws regarding

pornographic materials are deemed to be the most restrictive in Europe (Smith, 2005). Soft-core magazines, which portray nudity but no actual intercourse, are thoroughly filtered by strict publishing laws in order to mute 'offensiveness' before they ever reach the stands (Smith). Letters sent by readers to these magazines are carefully revised by the editors in order to abide with the rules, which limit descriptions of sexual acts to standards set by the distributors (Smith).

Censorship of soft-core material in Spain ended in 1977 due to a shift in political power (Slade, 1997). However, censorship was still heavily enforced on hard-core productions and this forced Spanish pornographers to produce soft-core movies for domestic exhibition and add scenes of intercourse for export. In 1984, the Spanish government permitted the showing of hard-core images in specialty licensed theatres in order to promote tourism but foreign competition quickly shut down most of the local productions (Slade). Today, most of the Spanish market is flooded with German and American pornography (Slade).

Deviant Pornographic Material

The majority of pornographic materials that are described as deviant and portraying fetishistic acts are produced in Western Europe (Slade, 1997; Smith, 2003). Germany has a reputation for producing pornography that is 'kinkier' and more hard-core than its North American competitors (Slade). The most profitable and wide-spread pornography distributor in Germany is a woman by the name of Beate Uhse (Slade). Known as the grand old lady of German pornography, Uhse controls the majority of the

domestic market through her chain of adult video stores. Holland also produces more fetishistic material but the major local companies, M. J. Produkties of Rotterdam and Scala D.V., are unusual because their S/M videos depict women as the masochists (Slade). Budapest has officially become the centre of production and distribution of the pornography world (Slade; Smith). In order to reduce foreign debt, the Hungarian government actively encourages pornography production and there are virtually no restrictions, save for the laws protecting children (Milter & Slade, 2005). Acts that are considered perversities in North America, such as sodomy and bestiality, are legal and normal in Hungarian pornography (Mitler & Slade,).

Pornography as an Expression of Rebellion

In reaction to the influx of capitalism and glossy *Playboy* style magazines, the former USSR has begun to create Russian pornography which centers around heterosexuality, defined by hyper-masculinity, references to a fictional past, and former military greatness (Sigel, 2005). The public of the former Eastern block country is constantly bombarded by sexualized images (Romanets, 2005). One of the most reputable Ukrainian magazines, *Pik*, advertises *Playboy* on its back-cover. Two glamorous fashion magazines for women (*Eva*) and men (*Lider*) feature regular pictorials that confront the traditional heterosexual orientation by showing lesbian eroticism in the men's magazine and gorgeous males engaged in homosexual encounters in the women's magazine (Romanets).

In Africa, pornography is openly available on street corners, newsstands and convenience stores (Maitse, 1998). The visual pornography that is available tends to be westernized but Lindfors (1973) explains that true African pornography is very different than its Western counterparts. Much of it centers on the triumph of black masculinity in a white world. True African pornography does not concern itself with personal inadequacies, moral hang-ups, permanent frustrations, or unattainable delights (Lindfors). The trademark that distinguished African pornography from Western material is the view that it expresses towards sexuality (Lindfors). While the African pornographer seeks to primarily entertain the customer, the goal of the American is to arouse (Lindfors). In African culture, extreme sexual behavior is treated with humor and the consumer is distanced from the sexual act by laughing at it. In opposition, the Western pornographer "tries to bring his reader close to the experience by immersing him in every slippery physiological detail" (Lindfors, p. 68). Lindfors explains that the characters in African pornography do not appear to be pathologically obsessed with sex because they take a more delightful and joyous attitude towards the pleasures that it offers.

Spiritual Views of Pornography

The Muslim culture honors and respects many literary erotic writings (Ahmad, 1994). Muslim societies revere and show great respect to numerous erotic classic poems and writings that talk of the beauty of the female form (Ahmad). Some examples include the poems of Ka'b ibn Zuhayr and Hassin ibn Thabit (Ahmad). Ahmad describes Muslim erotic writings as lofty, spiritual, and high-minded. When one turns to visual images, the

appreciation for eroticism and sexuality appears to change (Ahmad). What is considered erotic in Muslim literature is often described as pornographic and vulgar when it is depicted in photos, paintings, or sculptures. Although visual sexual images do not garner the same intellectual and philosophical acceptance as their literary counterparts, Ahmad contests that pornography is something to be enjoyed for its own sake in the Muslim view.

Hindu tradition is another culture that ascribes an element of spirituality to sexual acts and images (Ahmad, 1994). Ornamentation of Hindu temples is laden with nude images engaged in shameless love-making poses that are inscribed with great realistic details. Such images would certainly be considered pornographic and obscene from a Western point view (Ahmad) whereas the Hindus regard sex as an intrinsic spiritual element of religion. This is further supported by the more well known sensuous Indian literature of the Kama-Sutra (Aphorisms on Love) (Ahmad). The book is sort of a technical guide to the joys of sexual activity. In a free and explicit manner, it presents its contents as facts of life that acquire a quasi-religious tint (Ahmad).

Regardless of how different cultures view and censor pornography, the fact remains that pornographic materials are available and consumed throughout the world. The following section will outline how men use pornography in North America and the available research pertaining to its impact on their relationships with women.

Men and Pornography

Men's Use of Pornography

Loftus (2002) conducted an in-depth qualitative research study in which he interviewed 150 men about their experiences with pornography. The general themes that emerged from the interviews were the following: men would like to see more plot and romance in pornography; they do not particularly like close-ups of genitals; they find violence and domination of women to be a turn off; they do not seek out more vivid, kinky, and violent pornography but rather continue to use materials they like or return to what they preferred after exposure to violent and/or kinkier images; and they don't like the way men are generally portrayed in pornography. The findings of Loftus can be confirmed through later research examining men's experiences with pornography (Hald & Malamuth, 2008; Johansson & Hammaren, 2007; Peter & Valkenburg, 2007).

The average age for first exposure to erotic material in Loftus' study was less than 11.5 years old. A third of the respondents indicated that their first exposure was *Playboy* magazine. Some other men first saw more explicit depictions such as those in *Hustler* and *Penthouse*, while others reported playing cards with cheesecake nudes, and using adult comic books and paperback novels. Whatever the source was, the majority of men indicated that their first pornographic exposure depicted only women. The first exposure was not so much about intercourse and orgasm than it was about the female form. Pornography was somewhat imposed on the participants because the majority reported that they were not actively seeking pornography at the time of their first exposure

(Loftus, 2002). They either discovered it accidentally or someone they knew showed it to them. The people who introduced the pornographic materials were male friends, classmates at school, and brothers. Many boys ran into discarded pornography while they were out playing in public spaces. A few of the boys were introduced to pornography by girls, who were older siblings, babysitters, or peers. The experience of sharing pornography was described as free and egalitarian. Boys rarely charged others to look at their magazines—when one boy found something, he tended to share it with others freely.

The reactions to one's first exposure ranged from delight to shame and horror (Loftus, 2002). Fascinated, interested, and aroused were words used by 4 out of every 10 respondents. Not a single man responded that he enjoyed seeing women in humiliating positions or being dominated by men. The majority of the men talked about how their interest was captured by the beauty of the female form. One quarter of the men surveyed replied that their first reactions were a mixture of positive and negative emotions such as surprise and guilt, arousal and embarrassment, and repulsion and temptation.

Men reported several reasons for their positive reactions to pornography (Loftus, 2002). There was the pleasure of satisfying curiosity, the novelty factor, the thrill of doing something taboo, the sensation of being grown-up, the chance to bond with peers, and the chance to elevate their social status. Just as male bonding can be a product of sharing pornography; traditional male bonding situations, where a group of males meet for social or recreational purposes, can foster the sharing of pornographic magazine*s*.

Men's first exposure to *Playboy*, and other similar pornographic magazines, was associated with positive feelings that were related to fraternal bonding, sexual interest, and the transgressive nature of the magazines (Loftus).

Loftus' (2002) findings in relation to *Playboy* are also supported by Beggan and Allison (2003). Looking at the magazine in the company of others offered an opportunity to bond with other boys (Beggan & Allison). The nature of the act and the magazine are transgressive because the pursuit of sexual things is generally something that is hidden from parents and authority figures (Beggan & Allison). This secrecy also contributed to the establishment of fraternal bonding. Several respondents indicated that *Playboy* was given to them as a rite of passage by their fathers. Such sharing also strengthened male fraternal bonding and excluded women from the experience (Loftus).

The relationship participants in the study had with pornography was influenced by societal and cultural factors (Loftus, 2002). They reported that pornography was hardly ever mentioned by their parents and these men were left to piece "together their attitudes from hints, isolated incidents, vague and general social mores, and the guesses of their equally mystified peers, rather than through direct guidance from grown-ups" (p.21). They were left to form their opinions after being submerged in a society that gave them conflicting, indirect, and disapproving messages. The men in the study reported that by the time they graduated from high school, they knew that pornography was disapproved of by most of society (Loftus). This conclusion was supported by the way they observed their peers handling and hiding the material, the negative parental messages (which

included warning not to let the neighbors see), and the jokes surrounding masturbation and pornography. Some men also cited messages from the media which described pornography as filth used by lonely, anti-social 'freaks' (Loftus).

In terms of how men currently used pornography, the answers varied in the Loftus (2002) study. For some men pornography was just a masturbation tool. Others reported that they used it to relieve stress or just watch/read for entertainment. For the majority of men, pornography was a break in their routine that left them feeling relaxed and content. Relatively few respondents reported feelings of shame and guilt. The act of looking at pornography acted as a relaxant and many men reported that they went on to rest and nap afterwards. The frequency of use varied from a few times a year to once a day or more between different participants as well as different periods for the same individual. For some, use stopped when they were in relationship with a partner while others made it clear that they did not stop using when they were involved in a relationship.

In the study, it was found that shared viewing of pornography with other males steadily declined after adolescence and college (Loftus, 2002). Only 8 of the 150 men reported that they viewed pornography with other men as adults. The sharing of pornography that occurred in adulthood was in the context of relationships with significant others. Half of the respondents indicated that their wife or girlfriend was totally supportive of their use and half reported that their partner disapproved of it. When men reported taking acts they had observed in pornography and trying them out, it was intended to increase their partner's pleasure more than their own (Loftus). Only two men

in the survey reported that the ideas they had obtained from pornography were a source of conflict with their partner.

The interviews conducted by Loftus (2002) offer valuable information pertaining to how men experience pornography in their lives. The research traced experiences from first exposure to current use while also integrating men's feelings towards pornography into the results. What was striking about the results in the Loftus study was that they provided a strong contrast to the familiar stereotypes of male pornography consumers (Attwood, 2005). The next section will explore research studies that have attempted to explain the impact of pornography on men's behaviors and relationships.

Impact of Pornography on Men

Research in the area of pornography has centered on its potential effects on men and has operated on the assumption that pornography will have only negative effects (Ciclitira, 2002). Numerous correlational studies (Linz & Malamuth, 1993; Malamuth & Check, 1985; Zillman & Weaver, 1989) have studied the effects of sexually explicit videos and images on middle-to-upper-class, white, male undergraduate populations. In these studies, men were exposed to visual pornographic materials in a laboratory for a certain time period and then assessed on their attitudes towards women. Findings concluded that men who had been exposed to violent pornography had significant changes in their beliefs and attitudes towards women (Attwood, 2005; Linz & Malamuth, 1993; Malamuth, 1981; Malamuth & Check, 1985). The men in these studies reported an increase in violent fantasies, increase in their belief in rape myths, and decreased

sensitivity to rape victims. Studies exposing men to non-violent sexist pornography, categorized by it's portrayal of women, (Zillman & Weaver, 1989) found that males in relationships grew dissatisfied with their female partners' appearance and sexual performance. Other research (Donnerstein & Linz, 1986) found that only prolonged exposure to pornography that combines violence and sex could have potential harmful effects.

The majority of the above findings were reported before the year 2000. More recent studies (Hald & Malamuth, 2008; Morrison et al., 2004) have contradicted the harm-based results of the earlier studies and have documented positive associations between men's use of pornography and various aspects of their lives, including their relationships with women and their self-esteem. Hald and Malamuth (2008) studied the self-perceived effects of pornography through surveying a sample of 688 young adults between the ages of 18 and 30. For both males and females, the consumption of pornography was described as having mainly positive, and little to no negative, effects on one's sexual knowledge, attitudes towards sex, attitudes towards and perception of the opposite sex, sex life, and general quality of life. Morrison et al. (2004) examined pornography outside of a harm-based approach by researching 584 male and female Canadian post-secondary students. Their results showed positive significant correlations between exposure to sexually explicit materials and sexual self-esteem. Also the results indicated an inverse correlation between exposure to sexually explicit materials and levels of sexual anxiety. The results were observed for male and female students.

Limitations to Correlational Laboratory Studies

The potential negative effects shown in some correlational studies (Linz & Malamuth, 1993; Zillman & Weaver, 1989) could only be observed under laboratory conditions (Ciclitira, 2002). Any measures of arousal to sexual violence in the laboratory have occasionally been explained with the possibility that such arousal can be due to revulsion and anxiety (Ciclitira). Male arousal is automatically thought to be a result of the identification with the male aggressor, whereas in reality the male viewer may be identifying with the female victim (Sherif, 1980).

Findings in correlational laboratory studies cannot be generalized outside of the laboratory because the experimental conditions employed have little in common with the normal settings of viewing pornography (Ciclitira, 2002). An artificial environment is provided where males cannot stimulate themselves sexually while looking at the explicit sexual materials, which is usually central to the experience of pornographic media (Ciclitira). Also, very little information is given about the types of materials—such as the types of videos and images—used in the studies, and there is no consideration of how individual males use pornography in their daily lives (Boyle, 2000).
Several researchers have acknowledged the inconclusive nature of the studies and retracted claims that pornography causes men to be violent (Donnerstein & Linz, 1986; Zillman & Weaver, 1989).

Simply stating that pornography affects men negatively takes away from the personal responsibility for their actions (Boyle, 2000). Pornography does not have a

uniform and predictable effect on males. Research results cannot be analyzed separately from an audience's personal predispositions, character, and life history (Arcand, 1993). The personal analysis of the material by the viewer is hardly taken into consideration. The user's fantasies, context of pornography use, and personal history are vital pieces of information that need to be considered in the analysis of pornography research (Ciclitira, 2002). Interaction between material viewed and the viewer is largely ignored in reductionist approaches that fail to observe the boundaries between fantasy, actions, imagination, and ideas (Strossen, 1995). "No sexual imagery can be given one universal meaning" (p.155). Furthermore, most pornography on the market is non-violent (Attwood, 2005). Rape and violence towards women are themes that can be seen in numerous mainstream movies rated PG-13 or R but are hardly ever represented in X-rated films (Attwood; Zilbergeld, 1992).

Betzold (1990) argues that pornography provides men with unrealistic expectations teaching them that all women will look like *Playboy* bunnies and act like pornography stars. It also conditions men to believe that sex can be obtained anywhere, quickly and easily (Betzold). But do men actually buy into this? Steinberg (1990) reported that in his interviews with men, most described that they use pornography as a tool for masturbation. Pornography was not about partner sex or sexual reality. The majority of men in this study differentiated between the images in pornography and real people, the archetypes and the individual human beings, as well as the jet-setters and the

rest of the population. These users of pornography had no problems distinguishing the fantasies portrayed in pornography from their real experiences (Steinberg).

The most prominent issue discussed by men in the Steinberg (1990) study was that of sexual scarcity. The men in Steinberg's interviews referred to female resistance to sexual activity expressed through women by fear, disinterest, reluctance, and revulsion. Western culture has shaped women into taking on the role of sexual "purity defenders". Women are socialized to believe that their own sexual desire is low, or at least much lower than males (Steinberg, 1990).

The second most prominent issue expressed by men in Steinberg's (1990) interviews was rejection. Men reported that even in liberated and enlightened circles males are still expected to be the sexual initiators, the ones who desire and therefore the ones to be rejected. Over 75% of pornographic videos depict sexual scarcity, female lust, and female expression of male desirability (Steinberg). Clearly, pornography is reflecting some of the issues that accompany the dichotomous sexual scripting of gendered behavior. The social expectation for women's sexual behavior may dictate that they show less desire than their male partners (Ciclitira, 2002). In contrast men are expected to want and seek sexual encounters constantly in a society where women do not match these male tendencies for frequent sexual behaviors (Steinberg). The result is an atmosphere of scarcity where women are often conditioned to the role of protecting themselves against a strong male desire (Steinberg). Being rejected sexually is a fear that men do not generally

experience in pornography because the women are depicted as being equally attracted to sex and pleasure (Steinberg).

The above Steinberg (1990) study speaks to the issue of men and pornography but one limitation is the fact that it was conducted nearly eighteen years ago. To what extent the findings are still relevant in today's climate of changing gender roles and expectations is unknown since there has been a gap in pornography consumption research (Attwod, 2005). Little research has been done in the area of actually understanding the phenomenon of pornography and the personal meanings that individuals assign to it (Attwood). Interviews, although limited in number, have been conducted with men and their experiences with pornography but the same topics have not been covered for women. The next section outlines research in the area of pornography and women.

<div align="center">Women and Pornography</div>

Two qualitative interview based studies (Ciclitira, 2004; Shaw, 1999) have uncovered more detailed experiences of women in the area of pornography and sexuality. Results from these two studies have shown that due to social conditioning women are often conflicted over pornography use for themselves or their partners. Personal accounts of experiences with pornography show that many women use such materials to explore their sexuality and become aroused, but they also experience negative feelings associated with their use because many perceive women in pornography to be degraded or coerced (Ciclitira). Furthermore, women who have been exposed to feminist philosophies about

pornography often feel guilty and ashamed for being turned-on by pornographic materials (Ciclitira).

The experiences women have had with pornography cannot be placed into simple categories because pornography can elicit strong emotional reactions due to the fact that it can degrade and titillate people at the same time (Segal, 1992). Ciclitira (2004) interviewed women who bought and viewed pornography but at the same time felt very uneasy about these actions because of the impact of anti-porn feminist campaigns and their worries about the treatment of the pornography actresses. The participants talked about the difficulty of enjoying pornography while disagreeing with some of its political and social connotations at the same time. One participant expressed that she felt "angry and demeaned by the whole…experience of seeing pornography, and yet also being aroused by it" (p. 293). Such contradictions will be present in any study of human sexuality because sex is tied to contradictory and conflicting emotions ranging from guilt to moments of intense pleasure and surrender (Kimmel, 1990). Sex allows people to be "in full possession of [their] senses and in danger of utter annihilation" (p. 3).

Through qualitative research, some women expressed that pornography has allowed them to transgress the typical passive roles assigned to women's sexuality and become more active participants in their pleasure (Kimmel, 1990; Parvez, 2006). But even women who like to use pornography often experience great distress and shame over being aroused by materials which they can actually find offensive (Ciclitira, 2004). The analysis performed by Ciclitira uncovered that women in the study struggled with

ideological dilemmas spawning from the conflict between the desires of the individual versus the constrictions of society. This conflict speaks to the experience of being sexually aroused by viewing pornographic material while realizing that the pornographic depictions can represent actions and attitudes that may go against one's personal views and/or societal values.

Anti-pornography feminists argue that women who claim to enjoy pornography can only do so because they have learned how to enjoy being degraded by a patriarchal society (Russell, 2000). It is ironic that a political movement that strives to empower and free women denies them the simple right to consciously choose what material they will become aroused to. No room is given for the exploration of the conflicts arising between women and pornography and the contradictions present in their actions, beliefs, and feelings (Ciclitira, 2004). It is important to acknowledge that there is a cultural assumption that women should not enjoy pornography and this is an idea that is enforced by groups of women (Russell). Such social conditioning can easily discourage women from exploring and using pornography.

<center>*Women and Romance Novels*</center>

With the strong social stigma attached to women using pornography, explicit literary materials have become a safe form of cultural sexual expression for women. Romance novels can be labeled as pornography for people too afraid to read and view pornography (Snitow, 1995). Beneath all the clichés, it can be hypothesized that the real appeal of the novels is the description of sex; sex masqueraded behind the proprieties of

promised marriage and romance. This is certainly a comfort for those countless readers who were brought up to believe that sex without love and marriage is wrong. These books manage to uphold the social codes of the reader while allowing the enjoyment of sexual release and pleasure. As Snitow explains, "they are sex books for people who have plenty of good reasons to worry about sex" (p. 1995).

The heroine in mainstream romance novels does want sex but only in the constraints of the marriage bed (Lewallen, 1989). This showcases the lack of freedom women have in social and psychological realms to express their sexuality. Sex must be justified and this is done by tying it to an emotional attachment that will ensure marital fidelity and security. In a poll of romance readers, all subjects indicated that they approved of a heroine's sexual inexperience (Radway, 1984). This was in accordance with the belief that a woman must protect herself from the many men who desire her body but care little for her needs. According to the respondents, sex was something to be exchanged for love and commitment. Current research on romance novels has shown that the importance of sexual chastity and enforcement of strong patriarchal values is still a central component to contemporary romance novels (Wu, 2006).

In recent years, there has been a trend towards more explicit novels on the market for adult women. *Black Lace* novels provide a more up-to-date romance fiction with more sexually explicit scenes (Ciclitira, 2004). Calling books like *Black Lace* erotica is a marketing ploy devised to bring a wide variety of readers. In reality the books' characteristics are identical to pornography in the sense that they depict sexual acts in

detail with the purpose of arousing the reader (Ciclitira, 2002). As in mainstream pornography there are lesbian scenes involving heterosexual women, male homosexuality is suppressed, the female protagonist is the looked-at object, and sadomachistic acts are often present. In these novels, women are shown as capable of achieving social, economic, and sexual success (Lewallen, 1989). The heroines are not preoccupied with wanting to be mothers or getting married. Orgasm is portrayed as something that does not just happen when a man touches a woman but rather something that needs to be learned and acquired. Much attention is given to clitoral stimulation and the heroines are often given chances to act rather than just be acted upon.

The increasing supply of more explicit novels marketed to women can be seen as proof for the growing demand for these materials. The fact that women enjoy sexually explicit materials is also supported by the fact that women are renting more and more pornographic movies and accessing pornography from their personal computers (Carroll, et al., 2008; Ciclitira, 2004). It appears that women are beginning to take a more active role in acquiring sexually explicit materials for themselves and creating a market for pornography aimed at a female audience. Although this evidence highlights the fact that women enjoy and use pornography, social constructs and assumptions are present barriers. One of the core assumptions related to women's assumed disinterest in pornography is rooted in biological arguments.

Biological Arguments Related to Pornography

Biological explanations assume that sexual behaviors of males and females are rooted in evolutionary success (Rogers & Rogers, 2001). Men are supposed to be programmed for promiscuity and should engage in every opportunity to have sexual intercourse with as many women as possible. Conversely, women are assumed to have a desire for settling down and being selective about their partners (Buss, 1994). This perspective proposes that male and female sexual natures are completely different and separate from each other (Buss). In actuality, biological differences between men and women can be boiled down to only four characteristics: men impregnate, only women lactate, gestate and menstruate (Brooks, 1995).

Evolutionary explanations describe pornography in terms of gender differences and easily justify the gender discrepancy in consumption (Shepher & Reisman, 1985). Since men are predisposed to need more sexual variance, they will be excited by visual stimuli more easily. Men have been biologically programmed to be readily excitable since they can benefit from numerous sexual encounters and increase their offspring. Shepher and Reisman theorize that since the male is by nature polygamous, being forced to live in monogamist society, such as the one currently endorsed in Western cultures, would result in many tensions. Under this premise, men feel a lot of pressure being forced to mate with only one woman in the form of marriage or a monogamous dating relationship. Cultural coping mechanisms have developed so that men can deal with the tension of being culturally bound to one partner. One example of such a coping

mechanism is the use of prostitution which is described as an institution that allows men carry out premarital and extramarital affairs (Shepher & Reisman).

Another coping mechanism is the use of pornography because it provides males access to a world of polygynous fantasy filled with females willing to have numerous sexual encounters (Shepher & Reisman, 1985). Evolutionary explanations describe pornography in very simple terms. It is something that men are naturally attracted to because they want to have numerous partners and pornography achieves this by depicting impersonal sex (Walsh, 1999). No thought is given to the individual consuming the material and their unique perspective and background. It is very interesting that biology reverts us back to the hunter and gatherer era in order to explain social, gender, and economic structures of the 20th century (Goldberg, 1996). Even though there are more than 10 million female readers of pornographic magazines, Shepher and Reisman hypothesized that none of these women are using the material for their own sexual pleasure. They hypothesize that women read pornography to please their partners, to demonstrate sexual liberation, to better understand their male partners, to assess their female competition, or to fit into the cultural pressure of erasing sex differences. Those women who may have a general interest in pornographic materials are labeled as androgynous and not truly feminine.

When dealing with sexual behaviors, it is easier to turn to biological explanations because they allow for the shedding of personal responsibility for behavior (Kimmel, 1990). It is easier to say 'it's my genes' and retreat into a simplistic explanation that

proposes sexual attitudes and behaviors are the natural expression of innate feelings and instincts. Evolutionary explanations undermine personal choice by explaining everything in terms of reproduction. For example, women who have sexual relationships with younger men and men who have sex with older women are described as doing so not because they may choose to do so but because both groups have low bargaining power on the reproduction market (Buss, 1994). Young men do not have resources and older women are not as sexually attractive as they used to be and therefore both must settle for each other. The possibility that people can choose their sexual partners based on attraction and pleasure is not entertained.

Biological explanations of human behavior do not address relational aspects and power differences between individuals and groups since their primary focus is on physiological functions (Kimmel, 1990). The assumption is that what behaviors exist are supposed to exist because of evolution and survival of the fittest. In other words, biological explanations seek to justify present behaviors without looking deeply into their cause and acknowledging that social relations between people are greatly dependent on power structures and authority (Kimmel).

The danger of biological arguments is that they explain imbalances of power as 'natural', inevitable, and not subject to change or challenge (Kimmel, 1990). What is deemed to be 'normal' in our society begins to be described as natural and preprogrammed (Kimmel). This explanation in itself is riddled with power imbalances because it is derived from a place of dominant Western philosophy. Behaviors that are

considered 'normal' and unthreatening have been constructed by a society and enforced through its sanctions (Kimmel, 1990). The young are socialized and the deviants punished in order to arrive at this 'normative' state where what is normal seems to be equated to what is natural.

Kimmel (1990) concludes that what is deemed normal and natural is, in actuality, a long process of power struggles and social conflicts among groups. Our sexual behaviors are not natural but a product of social constructions that combine the images, values, meanings, behaviors, and prescriptions deemed valuable by our society (Kimmel). This perspective is known as the social-constructionist theory and it seeks to examine the variability of sexual attitudes and behaviors in humans (Kimmel). Human sexual behaviors and attitudes change across the life span of an individual, they differ across cultures, within the same culture in different historical periods, and they vary as a result of situational context (Kimmel).

These points alone illustrate that sexuality is in no way natural and innate because it takes numerous forms and expressions in individuals and groups as a whole. Aside from varying between cultures, sexuality also changes over the course of a person's life time (Kimmel, 1990). What used to arouse a person in adolescence may drastically change as he or she matures. For example, as men age they become more involved in behaviors such as cuddling and extended foreplay where as women report that their sexually explicit sensations begin to increase as they get older (Kimmel). Biological explanations can postulate that such changes are just a result of physical maturation but

such changes have not been documented in other cultures (Kimmel). Even individuals in North America have not consistently reported these changes over time. As women get older, their sex drive increases even though their estrogen levels actually decrease (Rogers & Rogers, 2001). Judging by this it is safe to say that sexual behavior is regulated by social factors, such as not worrying about pregnancy in menopause or enjoying the privacy of the empty nest, rather than biological destiny. If we subscribed to an evolutionary perspective, we would expect all post menopausal women to cease sexual activities since reproduction is no longer possible.

Evolutionary explanations are based on observations from animals (Buss, 1994). Their application to human behavior is overly simplistic because it ignores all the characteristics that make the human species human (Brooks, 1995). For example, rape in mallard ducks and scorpion flies can be explained as an attempt for reproductive access for weaker males but to apply this to an explanation of the human phenomenon of rape insults the intellectual level of the reader. No complex human behavior can be examined separate from its socio-cultural context. Human sexual behavior is so much more complex than the simple need of reproduction (Segal, 1992). In humans, sexual behavior comes to represent numerous emotional needs such as the need for approval, the expression of love or hostility, the exercising of domination or dependence, the release of anxiety, and the reparation of infantile and subconscious psychic wounds related to humiliation and rejection.

The explanation that society, rather than our genes, dictates many of our sexual behaviors lays the foundation for the exploration between the different use of pornography by men and women. Women will not use pornography in the same fashion as men because male and female roles are drastically differently constructed in our society. There are certain behaviors that each gender is expected to adhere by and this is especially prominent in the arena of sexuality

Social Construction of Sexuality

Social constructionist theories explain human sexuality as shaped primarily by socialization and cultural factors (Baumeister, 2000). Socialization refers to the acquisition of culturally appropriate behaviors, values, and attitudes (Archer & Lloyd, 1985). Individual differences are explained as a product of various social conditions of learning (Rogers & Rogers, 2001). This approach emphasizes the importance of meaning-making in human nature and the significance of individual and collective experiences. All experiences are tied to society and the outside world because everything happens in a historically and culturally specific structure (Rogers & Rogers). The practices of childcare, how affection will be displayed, who will care for the child, and how that care will be provided all fall within that social structure.

In the field of sexuality, social construction puts forward the idea that what we thought was 'natural' and unchangeable in human sexual behavior and preferences is actually a product of human culture (Vance, 1992). Physically identical sexual acts carry different meanings and social significance depending on the cultural context and

historical period. There is no universal meaning assigned to any sexual act and a person's culture provides very different categories and schemas for organizing personal sexual behavior.

Aside from the biological functions carried out by the human body due to arousal, most other aspects of human sexual behavior are a product of learning and conditioning. There are countless anthropological differences in sexual behaviors and attitudes (Kimmel, 1990). In some cultures people are only sexual at night, while in others having sex during the day is encouraged; some cultures restrict sexual activity to a couple's home, and others insist that it must take place outdoors and away from the food supplies. Historical differences in sexual behaviors support the fact that sexuality is shaped more by social construction than biological instincts (Kimmel).

In North America, sex and reproduction have increasingly become separated (Kimmel, 1990). Since the 19th century, sexual behavior has been slowly distanced from its ties to reproduction and the family. The result is that today, pursuing sexual pleasure does not need to be associated with wanting to have children or get married. For many people, having sex only for pleasure is not only possible but desirable (Kimmel). Emphasis on the physical pleasure of sexual activity has contributed to the diminished role of religion and resulted in looser attitudes towards premarital and un-reproductive sexuality (Kimmel). Individuals "improvise on the basis of the cultural scenarios and in the process change the sexual culture of the society…individual sexual actors as well as those who create representations of sexual life (e.g. the mass media, religious leaders,

educators, and researchers) are constantly reproducing and transforming sexual life in a society" (Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, & Michaels, 1994).

Shame towards sex has been deeply ingrained in the socialization and rearing of most people. In the Western tradition, attitudes toward sexuality have been very negative (Christensen, 1990). This could be traced to the strong hold of the religious movement. Believing that the body is corrupt while the mind is pure has been a part of Christian doctrine (Christensen). In the early rise of the church, sex, bathing, human companionship, and other worldly pleasures were seen as sinful. The view of the church was that sex was polluting and should only be tolerated for reproduction purposes.

Opposition to sexual openness and pornographic images stems from the shame that is attached to nudity (Christensen, 1990). In some people, this shame has been so deeply ingrained that they are scared to have sex with the lights on even when it is with their beloved partner. An attitude that there is something "less than noble about sexual desire" (p.14) seems to permeate our society. No one questions hunger, fatigue, or love but the need for sex is placed on a baser level and redeemed through the association with other needs. Sex is not valued for its own sake and its ability to bring pleasure and abandon. Instead, sex is tied to expressing love or commitment thus placing it in a category where legitimization by others is required (Christensen).

Shame and aversion to sex are socialized and ingrained in children from a very early age (Christensen, 1990). Even among parents who choose not to punish their children's erotic expressions, the message is still intact. If a child touches his or her

genitals then the hand is quickly pushed away. Any discussion of sex organs is avoided except when one talks about waste elimination. Nudity and sex talk are also handled with anxiety and avoided in conversation with children. Even if the message is subliminal, it is quite clear – there is something wrong with certain parts of the body and sexuality. This bodily shame is enforced to greater degrees in girls than in boys (Christensen). For example, requiring boys to shower together while girls have separate shower stalls has been widely practiced in the school system.

Children receive misinformation from peers, the media, and adults who are frightened of youthful sexuality and have grown up in a shame based society themselves (Kimmel, 1990). Sexuality is a battle ground for contradictions because it is a central part of an individual and yet at the same time, it is often attacked and criticized. There is great pressure to keep sexuality hidden and controlled. The National Endowment for the Arts Grants given out in the United States have been heavily attacked by right wing senators because depictions of feminism and homoeroticism are charged as being inconsistent with 'traditional family values' (Strossen, 1995).

As social beings, humans learn how to become sexual and use sexually explicit materials based on the learning and conditioning that they have been exposed to (Kimmel, 1990). Their teachers are their families, the media, religious organizations, political movements, peers, and other numerous social influences. The end results are the gendered scripts and schemas that individuals begin to use in order to organize their sexual identities. As was illustrated above, sex and the body in our culture are embedded

in shame. The next section of this literature review will elaborate on the ways that these attitudes towards sexuality are passed down to men and women in very different ways along with different behavioral expectations.

Sexual Scripts and Gender Schematas: Different Sexualities for Boys and Girls

One of the first theorists to conceptualize social learning was Bandura who hypothesized that gender, along with other human qualities, is a product of socialization rather than biology (Rogers & Rogers, 2001). The development of gender-role behaviors develops from psychosocial forces as opposed to instinctual drives. One of the most important contributions made by Bandura was the concept of observational learning (Rogers & Rogers). This explained that most human behaviors are constructed by first observing and then imitating the behaviors of others. In terms of the acquisition of gender roles, observational learning postulates that reinforcement in itself is not enough to cement a gender appropriate action. Imitation comes into play and because parents are one of the most accessible, powerful and nurturing figures in the life of a child, their behaviors are most likely to be modeled during the early years. As children gain more access to medial outlets, such as television, they also start to emulate role models from those sources (Rogers & Rogers).

Children are exposed to models of their own sex more frequently and they also tend to imitate role models of the same sex as themselves (Rogers & Rogers, 2001). Raskin and Israel (1981) showed that when children interacted with adults, they tended to imitate the behaviors of the same sex adults. Since imitation occurs when a role model is

similar to the observer, identification becomes a central part of the process (Rogers & Rogers). Modeling another's behavior involves higher cognitive processes that allow children to select whom to imitate. As children observe different models, they begin to notice consistencies in sex behavior and therefore begin to identify some masculine and feminine behaviors with the male or female sex (Rogers & Rogers, 2001). They learn that this is how boys act and that is how girls act and thus biological sex becomes a major guide for selecting which behaviors to model.

Children are more likely to imitate a behavior when they observe someone being rewarded for that same behavior (Rogers & Rogers, 2001). Men tend to be rewarded for acting in a powerful way while women are more frequently rewarded when they act in a nurturing way. Children who express strong gender stereotypical beliefs come from families where the parents hold conservative attitudes while more liberal children are reared in families where parents challenge the stereotypes and embrace less traditional attitudes (Weisner & Wilson-Mitchell, 1990).

Gender scripts dictate how men and women should act in certain situations in order to successfully pass as 'real' men and women (Rogers & Rogers, 2001).Gender scripts operate on several assumptions (Laumann et al., 1994). First is the assumption that sexual behavior in a culture is locally derived and therefore different cultures will exhibit different sexual behaviors. Scripts imply that biological instincts do not play a major role in the sexual behaviors of humans. The socially determined scripts of conduct are seen as the most important factor in the determination of one's sexual behavior. Through

socialization and acculturation lasting from birth until death, people acquire a script of sexual behaviors which patterns their intimate interactions in an appropriate manner for their culture. Aside from conformity patterns, there are also patterns and scripts for deviant sexual behavior. Men and women will not enact the scripts they learn to the exact detail but would rather work on a process that incorporates some individual variations to suit their unique needs. These adaptations will be quite diverse in complex and contradictory cultures, such as the present climate in North America. Sexual behavior is a process that involves the individual acting in a meaningful personal system while at the same time interacting with others in a society guided by social construction (Laumann et al.).

The socialization in Western cultures produces different male and female subcultures (Clark & Wiederman, 2000). What is appropriate sexual behavior for a male is not considered so for a female, and vice versa. This is otherwise known as the double standard. It provides men with a much more varied sexual repertoire that includes masturbating and watching pornography. On the other hand, women are culturally constrained in their sexual expression and as a result, would likely have more negative feelings and anxieties towards such behaviors (Clark & Wiederman). The things we learn in our sexual scripts are motivation, cues, props, scenery construction, and costumes (Kimmel). Adhering to a sexual script provides answers to the questions of who is an appropriate partner, who we should desire, what we should do with that person, when and

where we should have sex, how we should have sex, and why we should have sex (Kimmel).

As Kimmel (1990) states, these are simple questions but the answers have been formed through complex processes of socialization. Sexual desire passes through many layers and becomes so distant to pure lust, that understanding sexual behavior separate from one's personal history becomes nearly impossible. The organizing principle around our sexual behavior becomes gender (Kimmel). Experiences of masculinity and femininity guide the process through which a person becomes familiar with his or her self as a sexual being. One's sexual behavior and the meanings attached to that behavior become "confirmation of our gender identity, as badges that we are 'real' men or women" (Kimmel, p. 7).

Being interested in sex is central to being a man but certainly not essential for being a woman (Zilbergeld, 1992). Even with claims of liberation and equality, the double standard regarding sex is ever present. Boys learn sex as centered on the penis and the need for frequent and long lasting erections (Zilbergeld). The media also portrays sex for men as something largely impersonal, where a man does not need to even like a woman in order to have sex with her. For males, sex becomes something that is split off from the rest of life (Zilbergeld). It is a tool of proving masculinity that revolves around physical release. Boys are taught that sex is a big deal; they are told that it is a source of great pleasure, and they are encouraged to never pass up an opportunity to engage in it (Brooks, 1995).

The sex that girls learn about is mediated by the need for personal connection which in turn leads women to be less likely to seek sex for pleasure (Zilbergeld, 1992). Girls are not solely focused on 'getting off' and this is evident in their masturbatory practices. Even though girls have begun to masturbate more frequently and earlier in recent years, the percentage of girls that masturbate is still far smaller than the percentage of boys (Zilbergeld). This is not a biological trait because female sexual desire can be just as great as that of males (Christensen, 1990). In societies where children are taught more positive attitudes towards the act of sex, men and women tend to be equally sexually assertive. The change in female sexuality resulting from the sexual revolution cannot be accounted for by biological explanations and therefore provides evidence for the historical suppression of female sexuality (Baumeister & Twenge, 2002).

One claim against pornography is that it turns women into sex objects (McElroy, 1995). The shame our society holds about sex and the body is evident is such statements. As McElroy argues what is wrong with portraying women, and men, as sexual objects and body parts? People are as much their bodies as they are minds and souls. No one will get angry if one portrays a woman as a spiritual being and protests that her body is being totally ignored. Getting upset by images that focus on the human body is evidence of the fact that our society has a negative attitude towards what is physical. To concentrate solely on a woman's intellect is not degrading but to focus on her sexuality is?

There is a need to understand why human sexual behavior is still viewed this way and why it still remains hidden. In order to do this, sexuality must be studied in terms of

its development through social relations, with very little innate/biological forces

operating for either males or females (Segal, 1992). Socialization can contribute to how

men and women may relate to sexually explicit media differently and in this section,

these different socializations were explored. The next section examines how such

gendered and biased conditioning has led to the suppression of the female sexual desire.

The Female Sexual Desire in North America

Historically, women have not been depicted as highly sexual beings (Taylor,

1995). Physicians in the 1850s described women who masturbated and showed sexual

responsiveness as dysfunctional (Adesso, Redy, & Fleming, 1994). The needs and

pleasures of women were not discussed and sex was a duty the wife had to perform for

the purpose of reproduction. The present dominant ideology on heterosexual relationships

still functions on the premise that women are the passive creatures that must deal with the

unbridled sexual needs of men (Taylor). Women tend to define sex as vaginal intercourse

with the male orgasm as central (Holland et al., 1992).

There seems to be no sphere that allows for the free exploration and display of

female sexuality because women are marked as nonsexual creatures. When asked to rate

pornography actors, both men and women expressed that there was a much greater

difference between female pornography actors and women in the general public than

there was between male pornography actors and men in the general public (Evans-

DeCicco & Cowan, 2001). Respondents in the study (Evans-DeCicco & Cowan) assumed

that most men, whether pornography actors or not, are naturally attracted to the idea of

acting in pornography because of their presumed insatiable sexual desire and fantasies. When examining the motives of female actors, the majority of respondents believed that pornography did not hold such an appeal for women and thus the female actors in pornographic films were likely to be coerced into doing so and participating only for the money (Evans-DeCicco & Cowan). Also, women in the pornography business are believed to come from broken homes where they have been extensively abused in numerous ways in order to choose this particular profession. The gender stereotypes in Western culture hardly allow for any other explanations of why women would choose to do pornography - the only females participating in such activities are labeled as unhealthy women who are falling from the pedestal of femininity and womanhood (Zilbergeld, 1992).

Influences such as parents, schools, peers, legal and religious forces have in one form or another served to subordinate women's sexual desire through the process of socialization (Baumeister & Twenge, 2002). Religion is still a major socializing factor in Western society today (Baumester & Twenge, 2002). Women who are religious are less likely than less religious women to practice oral and anal sex, engage in lesbian acts, and masturbate (Laumann et al., 1994). Religion also appeals to more women than men, as indicated by the fact that women attend church more frequently than men and indicate more religious beliefs than men (Francis & Wilcox, 1998; Walter & Davie, 1998).

Biological explanations have also stressed the importance of female sexual chastity.

In his book on mating behavior, Buss (1994) notes that no man in his right mind would want to marry a sexually experienced woman. Remaining pure in order to express faithfulness to the husband is repeated many times in the book. A study of 19ᵗʰ century legal attitudes towards women reveals some roots of the subordination females experience today (Coward, 1983). Statutes dealing with sexual crimes assumed that only men had an active sexual drive and therefore only men could be punished for sexual crimes. However, women were only guaranteed protection under the law if they were sexually and morally respectable, meaning they were either virgins or respected married women. In cases of rape, women were not guaranteed protection if they could not be proven to be 'pure'. This remains true even today—women who are prostitutes or labeled promiscuous are often blamed for being raped. The message is that women must protect themselves against the beastly male desire by exercising restraint and only allowing socially respectable expressions of sexuality.

Interest in casual sex, masturbation, and pornography are usually labeled as male characteristics while love, commitment, and romance are illustrated as the exclusive realms of the female (Walsh, 1999). When a study (Strossen, 1992) reported that about 40% of American adult video tape rentals were rented out by women, researchers were quick to assume that the women renting these videos must be doing so for the sake of their male companions (Walsh). It seems that women's interest in and use of pornography needs to be justified. Walsh (1999) postulates that women who have a stronger interest in sex must have been abandoned by their fathers and experienced an unhealthy family life

since only someone with such a traumatic background would choose exploring her sexuality over chastity and fidelity.

The denial of women's sexuality leads to the still popular dichotomy of the Madonna and the whore—the degraded sexual object or the nurturing and pure mother and wife (Beneke, 1990). The Whore and the Madonna dichotomies both aim to destroy the sexuality of women (Beneke).The Madonna sexism sees women as too gentle to engage fully in the harsh reality of life and limits women's functioning to the home. The Madonna is denied a complex sexual identity and not allowed to experience lust or pleasure. The Whore sexism makes sexual expression and freedom dangerous to women through the sexual abuse and denigration directed towards women who are labeled as 'sluts', 'pieces of ass', and 'whores'. On the other hand, the Madonna complex robs women of the possibility for sexuality. Such competing models arise and struggle within the female psyche when a woman chooses to view pornography (Beneke). Sex education in the schools acknowledges male desire but fails to give females the same respect. Instead, girls are taught that they need to control the strong male desire without being provided with full information about their own (Tolman, 1991). Rather than educating girls, the system suppresses their bodies (Lesko, 1998). Social conditioning has limited female desire to such an extent that some couples report that they develop informal strategies in order to signal sexual availability and spare the women the experience of openly admitting and showing desire (Brewis & Linstead, 2004).

In regards to pornography, women also appear to give themselves permission to experience desire only when a male is present. Lawrence and Herold (1998) found that women usually viewed pornographic tapes with their partner and were much less likely to indicate use of pornography for solitary masturbation. Parts of the sexual scripts of the respondents included associating viewing of pornography with the presence of a partner and excluding pornography for self-pleasure. Women in the study held the belief that the acquisition of x-rated videos was not appropriate for women. Women have been taught that they should only experience sexual desire in the presence of emotional and romantic commitment (Steinberg, 1990). By definition, lust is unfeminine. There is no language and no models that portray positive female sexuality to young women (Holland et al., 1992).

Anti-pornography feminists have also patronized women in their right for desire and autonomy (McElroy, 1995). The anti-pornography feminist movement criticizes women who act and produce pornography by labeling them as brainwashed by patriarchy and capitalism. Their claim is that no psychologically healthy woman could agree to partake in the making of pornography. This can be seen as an attack on women's autonomy over their bodies and a conservative push for women to only express sexuality in politically correct ways. The fact that a woman can enjoy performing sexual acts in front of a camera is not considered. Aside from acting or producing pornography, women can also enjoy viewing these materials. The following section will outline the benefits that women may derive from using pornography.

Benefits of Pornography for Women

Pornography can have many benefits for women. It can be used as an educational tool that can aid in the processing of sexual information and it can present women with a portrayal of sexually confident females (Parvez, 2006; Steinberg, 1990). Pornography is also used by women for erotic arousal and masturbation (Parvez). It is one of the only outlets where a woman's desire and pleasure are given central attention. There is a great deal of production value put into the act of the female enjoyment; two thirds of all utterances are made by female actors (Brosious et al., 1993) which points to the fact that even though the viewer may know the woman is faking, there is great importance placed on portraying the satisfaction of the female. Recent research has shown that use of sexually explicit materials correlated positively with sexual esteem (Morrison et al., 2004).

Many people in traditional marriages report using pornography in order to enhance their sex lives (Zilbergeld, 1990). Couples describe that incorporating such material into their lives leads to more frequent and more intense sex. Aside from this, individuals can also learn new techniques and acquire ideas about new places and position to have sex in (Zilbergeld). Most importantly, exposure to sexually explicit material was found to lead to more open communication about sex between couples (Zilbergeld).

As Strossen (1995) states, "at the most basic level pornography provides information about women's bodies and techniques for facilitating female sexual pleasure,

which is otherwise lacking in our society" (p. 166). Pornography can enhance women's ability to experience pleasure on their own, as well as with partners. In one interview, a respondent noted that she became in complete control of her orgasm after she began viewing pornography and masturbating to it (Strossen). Women can actually use pornography to de-objectify themselves by validating their own pleasures and desires (Strossen). They can also take control of the fantasy portrayed and reinterpret it for themselves. For example, women can point out when a certain pictured position is uncomfortable or unappealing and just like men, they can make comparisons between the performers and their lovers (Gardiner, 1995). Women can also use pornography to instruct and show their partners how to please them.

McElroy (1995) states that pornography benefits women in several ways: it provides sexual information by illustrating a view of the world's sexual possibilities; it allows women to experience sexual alternatives safely; it provides different information than what is available in textbooks and social discussions; it breaks the cultural and political stereotypes so that women can individually define sex for themselves; and it can serve as sexual therapy. Pornography provides a panoramic view of what is sexually available to women (masturbation, sex with strangers, voyeurism, exhibitionism, sex as revenge, etc.). In times of sexual repression and ignorance of the female desire, it can be one of the only sources for education and exploration (Parvez, 2006). Pornography is one of the most benevolent ways a woman can experience sexuality because it is ultimately safe—there is not threat of disease or pregnancy, no one to apologize to the next

morning, no infidelity. Women who watch pornography can gather emotional knowledge about themselves by evaluating and judging their reactions to what they observe portrayed in the materials (Parvez). Pornography allows women to have a level of control that can hardly be achieved in the real world. If something in the pornographic tape upsets her, she can hit the stop button. If it is boring, then she can fast forward.

In itself, pornography is a form of expression that illustrates and pertains to sexual behavior (Kaplan, 1984). Just as some may view the images and acts portrayed as degrading, others have the choice to see pornography as a positive outlet that illustrates the pleasures of sex and abandon. Aside from being entertaining, pornography can also be used as a therapeutic and liberating educational tool that allows men and women to break free from the strict societal images imposed on sexual behavior (Kaplan). Pornography has been criticized because it does not portray sexual behavior within the constraints of a loving and committed relationship, and because it fails to incorporate expressions of cuddling and after play (Brosious et al., 1993). The underlying assumption is that there seems to be something inherently wrong in enjoying physical pleasure for its own sake.

The bulk of pornography research has focused on men and has marginalized women from the sphere of sexuality (Attwood, 2005). It has depicted females as nonsexual beings who do not use or enjoy pornography themselves, thus painting a passive picture where men act and women are acted upon (Boyle, 2000). In reality this is not the case. Women do use pornography and they are just as likely as males to

experience sexual arousal when exposed to visual or literary adult material (Grana, 2002; Griffitt, 1973; Johansson & Hammaren, 2007; Parvez, 2006; Smith, 2003; Zillman & Weaver, 1989). When Griffitt explored how men and women react to pornography, the results showed that the two genders did not differ on arousal measures across all pornography themes. When materials were examined separately, it was found that women reported significantly greater arousal than their male counterparts, to images of nude males and males wearing underwear. Men reported greater sexual arousal to the themes of group activities (two females, one male), nude female, nude female masturbating, and female-on-male oral-genital contact. There has been no support for the claim that females would be aroused by depictions of romantic components and not responsive to graphic sexual depictions (Davis & Bauserman, 1993).

The differences between male and female users of pornography seem to be changing (Kutchinsky, 1990). In 1953, Kinsey reported that pornography users in North America were almost exclusively male. This may have been due to the gender bias and expectations of the time for women to be asexual and passive (Ciclitira, 2002). Later studies showed that men and women had similar arousal levels to sexually explicit materials (Byrne & Lamberth, 1971; Fisher & Byrne, 1978; Smith, 2003). Also, some differences perplexed researchers who were expecting to observe the traditional dichotomy between males and females. Quackenbush, Strassberg, and Turner (1995) found out that both men and women rated high explicit/high romantic vignettes as more arousing than those low in romance content. As Byrne & Lamberth (1973) state, women

are less likely to consume pornography because of societal pressures and expectations rather than disinterest and non-arousal. In their study, they actually found that women were not only as sexually aroused as men but they were significantly more aroused than men to the themes of male nudity, male masturbation, and homosexual fellatio.

Knowing that men and women are equally aroused by pornography leads us to believe that the discrepancies in consumption by gender are due to the motivational factors that lead an individual to seek out sexually explicit materials (Symons, 1979). Although women are aroused by pornography, they are less likely to seek it out for several reasons. Public sites offering pornography, such as bookstores and video stores, can play a part in whether women feel comfortable in consuming pornographic materials due to the fact that these sites can offer public legitimization of female sexual desires (Juffer, 2004). For example, the presence of stores specifically catering to women's sexual needs can facilitate an environment where women may feel more comfortable in accessing pornographic material. The broader societal notion of whether it is acceptable for women to view pornography will influence whether women actually do so. Women do enjoy pornography but currently, many explicit texts have been labeled as erotica and women-friendly in order to take away the stigma associated with pornography and increase access to women. Even if different names are used, many of these 'erotica' works are as or even more explicit than pornographic images (Juffer).

In recent years, more women have started to use pornography (Attwood, 2005; Kutchinsky, 1990; Parvez, 2006). This is also paralleled by the slow, but emerging public

acceptance, or at least acknowledgement of female masturbation. Market research shows that nearly 40% of pornographic video rentals are by women (Strossen, 1995). This trend has maintained through the year 2000 (Grana, 2002). A survey of 26,000 *Redbook* (1987) *readers* indicated that nearly half of them regularly watched pornography videos. More recent statistics illustrate that the majority of post-secondary female students use pornography and see it as a positive influence on their sexuality (Carroll et al., 2008). The remaining differences between pornography use by men and women can be explained by the market rules of pornography, which still cater largely to a male audience (Grana, 2002; Kutchinsky).

Women have not only begun to consume more pornography but they also make-up a growing portion of pornography producers (Grana, 2002; Strossen, 1995). There have been increasing numbers of female pornography writers, filmmakers, and magazine editors who produce sexually explicit materials especially for a female audience (Grana). Some of these include Candida Royalle (filmmaker and head of Femme Productions), the Kensington Ladies Erotic Society (publisher of women's erotica), *Bad Attitude* and *On Our Backs* (lesbian feminist erotic magazines). Ciclitira (2002) interviewed women about their experiences with pornography and reported that women expressed a demand for different types of pornography. Since the current choice of pornography is somewhat limited for women, some have a hard time even deciding what they would like to see. The reports showed a great variation in the types of pornography sought after by women (Ciclitira). Some of these included a desire for lesbian scenes, erect penises, kissing,

whole bodies, attractive male bodies, good contexts, women making pornography, and dominant women.

Of course pornography objectifies people to some degree—it concentrates on portraying sexual acts and organs, this is its purpose (Zilbergeld, 1992). The bottom line however, is that it objectifies everyone. It does not discriminate against women because both men and women are turned into objects. As Ann Snitow states, pornography is exploitation of everything—a state where all social barriers are broken down by a surge of sexual energy (Strossen, 1995). Class, age, and custom seem to disappear and become insignificant in the face of desire. This precise point is why pornography has provoked such negative and anxious reactions amongst conservatives, moral, and religious traditionalists (Strossen). It challenges conventional constraints and threatens to break down powerful boundaries set in place to ensure social control; "the more unconventional the sexual expression is, the more revolutionary its social and political implications become" (Strossen, 1995, p.176).

The claims that pornography objectifies women are very subjective and deny any other interpretations (Attwood, 2005). Just because an image focuses on a particular body part instead of the whole body does not make it any less human or artistic (Myers, 1995). Pleasure can be taken in this fragmentation not from a malicious and objectifying stance but purely by deriving pleasure from looking at a curve of a neck or raised buttocks. As Myers states, "such images could be interpreted not as butchering of the female form but as a celebration of its constituent elements, giving a sense of the scope and complexity of

sensual pleasure" (p. 268). Videos and magazines do not make judgments regarding what is acceptable and what isn't (McElroy, 1995). Every aspect of the human body is eroticized, from the feet to the breasts and there is no wrong sexual preference or a wrong question to ask.

Pornographic videos and publications portray an array of different people engaged in different sexual acts. This serves an egalitarian and pluralistic function by providing all viewers an opportunity to identify with the material and affirm their own sexuality (Strossen, 1995). Feminist Myrna Kostash explains that until the institutional dynamics of the family, school, and the workplace (which are set in place to regulate sexuality) are radically changed, pornography will remain one of the only avenues through which men and women can experience a connection separate from the alienating forces of these powerful institutions. Pornography does convey many feminist values, including the fact that sexuality does not need to be tied to reproduction, men, or domesticity (Strossen). Both feminism and pornography insist that women are sexual beings and have therefore made sex public and open to debate and examination.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

So why is it important to research and examine women's positive experiences with pornography? The answer lies in acknowledging the fact that women are interested in pornography (Attwood, 2005; Parvez, 2006) and recent cultural shifts and technological advances have made it possible and more acceptable for women to consume pornography (Grana, 2002). There is a need for research that examines

women's use of pornography without terming it as negative and without imposing limits on female sexual desires. One of the leading philosophies of pornography is that one should not be ashamed. Most pornographic materials go against the traditional gender stereotypes by showing women as voluntary, excited and joyful participants in sexual encounters (Strossen, 1995).

The preceding literature review section outlined the gap in research in regards to women's positive experiences with pornography. It was shown that the socialization of men and women in Western society predisposes males and females to behave differently in regards to sexuality and pornography. The recent statistics outlining female use and interest in pornography show that women are interested in these materials and the numbers of female users are growing. In this changing cultural climate, it is important to investigate women's positive relationships with pornography. The research question investigated in this study was what is the process through which four post-secondary women come to experience pornography as a positive factor in their lives.

Post-secondary women were selected as the participant group because they tend to hold more liberal attitudes towards sexuality (Corrall et al., 2008) and therefore participants who use and enjoy pornography are likely to be present in this sample. If post-secondary students are potentially more liberal than the general population, then it was expected that post-secondary women would be willing to talk about their sexual experiences openly for the purpose of this research. Since over forty percent of post-secondary women report integrating pornography into their sexual identity (Corrall et al.,

2008), it can be postulated that this sample of potential research participants is embracing new expectations for women's sexuality and will therefore contribute important ideas regarding the changing sexual behaviors. It should be noted that this sample limits how the findings in this study can be applied to any other group of women.

The questions presented to the participants in this study explored the cultural and religious backgrounds of the women because I speculated that the socialization one receives will have a direct impact on how that individual perceives sex and pornography. The participants were also asked to speak about their first exposure to pornography and their subsequent use and disuse of the material. These questions were vital to the study because they illustrate the process and the factors through which these women were able to describe their experiences with pornography as positive. In order to find out what aspects of pornography appeal to these post-secondary women, some questions also explored what aspects of these materials would drive women to use less or more pornography. Taken together the answers to these questions illustrate the process through which some women integrate pornography into their lives as a positive factor.

This is an important contribution to research in the field of female sexuality because it allows for the exploration and further understanding of an area that has been considered taboo for women. By concentrating on women's positive experiences with pornography, this thesis explores an area of research that has previously been guided by the assumption that women do not use pornography. Examining women outside of this socially constructed stereotype is vital to the understanding of women's sexuality as well

as the exploration of the differences and similarities between male and female sexual

behaviors in regards to pornography.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHOD

The following section outlines the research methodology utilized in this study. It begins by describing the advantages of qualitative research for this thesis, the main characteristics of grounded theory, and the methodology of the constant comparative method. This is followed by a description of the participants, the selection process, instruments used in the research, and the data analysis of the participant interviews.

The research question investigated in this study was what was the process through which a small group of post-secondary women came to experience pornography as a positive factor in their lives. This involved looking at further use or disuse of pornography and the reasons behind why these women chose to use or not use pornography. Due to the complex nature of the research topic, the methods for gathering and analyzing data needed to suit the complexity of the research question and honor the unique stories of each participant.

Qualitative research was the best option for this research study because, as I have shown in chapter two, the sexuality of women has often been defined by others and imposed on women through many factors. Especially when dealing with pornography, it is crucial to have detailed accounts of personal experiences since one goal of this research is to understand how women relate to pornography and what factors affect that relationship. Finding these answers cannot be achieved through quantitative methods because structured and formulaic research methods will generally provide limited information on detailed and complex personal experiences. In order to understand how

women experience and make sense of pornography, I needed to move away from methods that downplay personal experience and move towards qualitative research methods that allow women to speak openly and freely about pornography, an area that has not been depicted as a domain to be explored and enjoyed by women.

When a specific area of research has not been widely studied grounded theory is an appropriate method of exploration (Charmaz, 2000). In order to gain understanding, one must look below the surface in order to extract a life story that uncovers valuable personal factors. This study proposes to explore the understanding of unique individual beings "who when stripped of all the conformities and regularities so dear to the heart of the scientist, [are] the supreme and only real objects of investigation" (Jung, 1958, p.11). The following section will outline the characteristics of grounded theory and its application to this thesis.

<div align="center">Grounded Theory</div>

The qualitative methods employed in this research was grounded theory. This is a general methodology for constructing a theory that is grounded in the process of systematically gathering and analyzing data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The theory itself develops during the actual research through the "continuous interplay between analysis and data collection" (p. 158). Researchers employing grounded theory seek to uncover patterns of behavior and interaction between different types of social units. Theory conceptualization is about discovering a social process and an analysis of action (Charmaz, 2006). In this study, the social process under study was the process through

which four Western post-secondary women came to experience pornography as a positive influence in their lives. The process through which pornography was labeled as positive integrates patterns of change under different conditions (Strauss & Corbin) of the participants' experiences by tracing the pattern of pornography use from initial exposure to current use.

Grounded theory is a qualitative approach where the results are an abstraction or generalization of the casual relationships found in the area of research (Dick, 2000). Research begins with a situation the researcher wishes to understand (Glaser, 1992). One of the requirements of grounded theory is the conceptualization of a social process (Glaser). However, Strauss's recent explanation of grounded theory postulates that no social process needs to be identified (Onions, 2006). Conceptual descriptions, or description of situations that have been generated through an inductive theory process where data reveal the theory, fall under the description of Straussian grounded theory (Onions).

Generating theory is interpretive work and it involves the inclusion of the voices and perspectives of the research participants being studied (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). These interpretations allow the researcher to understand and synthesize the actions of these individuals or collective groups. The researcher must fully step into this interpretive role and accept the responsibility of integrating and elaborating on what is read, heard, and observed rather than just strictly reporting the gathered data. Coding procedures employed in grounded theory, such as constant comparison, theoretical questioning,

theoretical sampling, and concept development work to ensure that the researcher does not conceptualize data according to his or her personal biases or preconceived notions (Strauss & Corbin).

This allows a researcher using grounded theory to develop a theory that is rich in meaningful variation and conceptual density—something that cannot be easily achieved through the use of quantitative methods. Since the field of pornography and personal experiences is complex and likely to yield many diverse and even contradictory responses, the methodology of grounded theory was a great fit for gathering and analyzing the data. The design of grounded theory is aimed at producing conceptually dense results (Glaser, 1992). This means that the data traces many conceptual relationships that are stated as propositions embedded in rich descriptions and conceptual writing. Discursive presentation lends itself to conceptual density and illustrates the substantive content far better than the scientific method of propositional presentation (Glaser).

The results, using grounded theory, describe the social process through which four post-secondary women came to experience pornography as a positive factor in their lives. Following grounded theory methods, the data gathered through the interviews guided the emergence of the theory (Onions, 2006). The emergent grounded theory in this study also fits the four most critical criteria for a well constructed grounded theory (Glaser, 1992). First there must be a fit, which means that the categories described will fit the experiences under study (Glaser). This was accomplished in this study since the

categories depicted reflect the subjective accounts of pornography consumption of the four post-secondary women who participated in the study. Second, the theory must work, meaning that it must explain major variations in behavior (Glaser). The present study uses the core category of control to account for the four women's positive experiences and consumption of pornography. It is hypothesized that any possible variations between accounts of the women in this study may likely be explained, to some extent, in terms of control. Third, the theory must have relevance which is achieved if 'fit' and 'work' are satisfied (Glaser). The present study does satisfy the two previous conditions and therefore it can be said that it has relevance. Fourth, a grounded theory must be readily modifiable with new data or incorporation of new concepts (Glaser). The present study satisfies this criterion since as a researcher, I acknowledge that the present theory only accounts for the experiences of four post-secondary women and categories can easily be modified with emergence of new research.

One important aspect of grounded theory is its fluidity (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This flexibility is possible because grounded theory stresses the interaction and processes of multiple actors. Each new situation is explored in detail and examined in order to see if it fits, how it might fit, or not fit with other similar categories emerging from the data. The strength of grounded theory also comes from the integration of the researcher's theoretical sensitivity (Glaser, 1992). This means that the professional and disciplinary knowledge of the researcher, combined with his or her personal experiences, adds to the complexity and depth of the theoretical conceptualization. A central feature of the

grounded theory method is the constant comparative analysis (Strauss & Corbin). The following section will describe the method of constant comparative analysis that was used in this research.

Constant Comparative Method

The constant comparative method as outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1999) was employed in order to organize and code the transcribed interviews. The method has four distinctive stages (Glaser and Strauss). Stage one involves comparing incidents applicable to each category. This entails coding the transcribed text, looking for similar categories to emerge from the codes, and comparing these categories to previous incidents in the same and different groups coded in the same category. Using this constant comparative model generates theoretical properties of the analyzed categories.

The second stage involves integrating the categories and their properties (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). As coding from stage one continues, the comparison units change from comparing incident to incident to comparing an incident with the already derived properties of the category that was formulated from the initial comparison of incidents. As Glaser and Strauss state, through constant comparison, the properties of a category begin to become readily integrated and therefore a part of a unified whole concept. Diverse properties, as well as those similar to each other, begin to become integrated into the formation of the theory.

This is followed by the third stage known as delimiting the theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). At this point, the original amount of categories is reduced because the

constant comparative method uncovers underlying uniformities in the original categories, thus making possible the creation of a smaller set of higher level concepts. Through delimiting, the theory becomes solidified because fewer and fewer major modifications are employed, as comparison of new incidents to a category's properties continues. Modifications occurring at this stage mainly involve dismissing non-relevant properties, clarifying, and reduction. Engaging in reduction means finding underlying uniformities in the original categories and their properties (Glaser & Strauss). This results in the reduction of the number of categories and properties and the formulation of a theory encompassing a smaller set of higher level concepts. By engaging in reduction of terminology and its consequent generalizing, two major requirements of a theory are fulfilled (Glaser & Strauss). First, the theory becomes parsimonious in its variables and formulation. Secondly, the theory's scope of applicability is widened.

Delimiting also occurs on the level of reduction in the original list of categories for coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). As work on the emerging theory continues, boundaries can be drawn around the current theory. These boundaries result in the reduction of the original concepts for collecting and coding the data. As the theory progresses, theoretical saturation also plays a part in the reduction of categories (Glaser & Strauss). Data analysis stops when a core category emerges and the researcher could "integrate the analysis and develop a story encapsulating the main themes of the study" (Dey, 2004, p. 80).

The fourth and final stage of the process is the actual writing of the theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). Coded data is processed into a series of memos and a theory. Memos provide the content encompassed in the categories and in turn, these categories become the themes of the theory to be presented in writing.

Coding

There are two main types of coding: substantive and theoretical (Glaser, 1992). Substantive coding is the first-order coding that is closely related to the data. Theoretical coding is the second-order conceptualization encompassing how the substantive codes fit and relate to each other as preliminary hypothesis to a theory. When coding data in this study I employed open, axial, and selective coding (Dey, 2004). Open coding is the preliminary process of breaking the raw data and categorizing it. Codes that capture the meaning of the data are created through the close examination and comparison between different parts of the interview transcripts. Ideas are generated through this detailed examination. This coding was done sentence by sentence and paragraph by paragraph. Questions that were used in determining categories were: What is this piece of data a study of? What category does the incident indicate? What is actually happening in the data? The data itself dictates the types of categories that emerge and therefore it is important that researchers approach open coding with an awareness of personal and professional preconceptions (Dey). Glaser encourages researchers to draw upon as many possible sources in order to increase theoretical sensitivity. Generating categories in open coding involves balancing knowledge and building on possible categories arising from

that knowledge without allowing preconceived notions to guide the emergence of concepts. Personal preconceived notions regarding this thesis are further addressed in the data analysis section of this chapter.

Axial coding is the process through which categories and codes that have emerged through the open coding are related to each other (Glaser, 1992). The properties of the different categories are compared and analyzed through inductive and deductive thinking. At this stage, relationships between the categories and their properties begin to emerge (Glaser). Selective coding is the process through which a core category is chosen (Glaser). All other categories must relate to the particular core category. In a sense, the core category is the concept which explains and unites the components of the grounded theory. The core category is more abstract in its description than other categories because its development is centered on the formulation of higher level concepts (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). The development of the core category requires the researcher to take on the role of interpreter, integrator, and elaborator rather than a mere reporter of the gathered data (Straus & Corbin, 1998).

Grounded Theory Methodology Applied in Practice

Participants

Recruitment

Subjects were recruited from the city of Calgary, Alberta which has a population of one million people (City of Calgary Statistics, 2007). In order to gain participants for the study, posters (Appendix A) were placed in the University of Calgary and Mount

Royal College in order to target post-secondary women. These two institutions were selected because they offer a variety of post-secondary programs and thus the posters were visible to potential participants of varied educational programs. The selected institutions also have the two largest post-secondary student populations in Calgary. In order to reach a wide pool of potential participants, posters were placed in high traffic areas. At the University of Calgary, posters were placed near food courts, libraries, and in the student meeting areas of varied lecture buildings. At the Mount Royal College, posters were placed near the food court and at varied designated poster boards outside the library and several classrooms.

The posters provided information on the nature of the study, possible benefits of participating, contact e-mail address and phone number for further information. The layout of the poster was designed to ensure that it would be eye-catching and simple to read. The term sexually explicit materials was used on the poster in order to address the inherent biases that some potential participants may have associated with the word pornography. The poster stated that all participants must meet the following criteria: They had to be female, engaged in post-secondary studies, over the age of 18 since the study dealt with topics of an adult nature, and all participants must have read or viewed sexually explicit material at some point in their life-time. The study examined positive experiences with sexually explicit materials and therefore, the participants also needed to self-identify these exposures as mainly positive.

One limitation to the recruitment process was that posters were placed only in post-secondary institutions. This was done in order to target the population that I was studying but another option would have been to place posters all over the city in venues such as gyms, clinics, and community centers. This could have potentially increased the number of participants in the study by still allowing me to maintain a sample of post-secondary women. Placing posters outside of post-secondary institutions could have resulted in participants who were attending online universities or colleges. Limiting the posters to post-secondary sites could have also resulted in a more limited sample for my study and thus it should be acknowledged as a limitation.

Selection process

Six interested women contacted me to be included in the research study. A pre-screening questionnaire (Appendix B) was administered to these six volunteers to ensure that they met the full criteria described in the preceding section. The prescreening questionnaire was administered over the telephone. The potential participants were asked to state their age, post-secondary status, confirm whether they have viewed sexually explicit materials, and identify whether these experiences were generally positive or negative. The pre-screening questionnaire assessed whether potential participants had generally positive experiences with pornography and whether they felt that they had any biases and/or concerns regarding pornography. This was central to the selection process because this pre-screening assured that the participants selected for the study were able to speak to the research question being studied. Since the study's purpose was to research

positive experiences with pornography, the participants selected had to identify their experiences with pornography as mainly positive.

One limitation in the prescreening questionnaire was that as a researcher, I did not ask the women to describe their personal definition of pornography. This is important to address since individual women will likely have different ideas on what constitutes pornography and thus the types of materials they may be thinking and talking about could be quite different. For example, the women who contacted me identified as having positive experiences with pornography but all of them could have been referring to experiences with very different types of sexually explicit materials. The implication of this is that I did not ensure that the participants and myself had a clear idea of their understanding of the term pornography and thus the types of materials they discussed could have been widely different.

The participants who came in for the face-to-face interviews were presented with the definition of pornography that I was using in the study. I informed the participants that I was using the definition presented by Wendy McElroy. I read out the definition to the participants and allowed them to ask questions or comment on the definition. Providing the participants with the definition that I was using in my research allowed me to ensure that the participants were aware of the materials that I was considering as pornography based on the selected definition. The limitation of this was that participants were presented with this definition in a top-down manner where I did not allow them to state what their definition of pornography was. This presents a limitation to the results

since I had no method in place that allowed me to study the participants' individual definitions of pornography. Although they knew the definition that I was using in the study, I did not investigate the specific types of materials and the differences between the types of materials that the participants were discussing.

Four of the women who contacted me met the full criteria and were included in the study. The other two interested participants were excluded because both were not currently involved in post-secondary studies. The decision to exclude these two women was made in order to keep the sample to the specified population, which was post-secondary female students. My excluding the two potential participants, I was staying true to the focus of the study but this resulted in a smaller sample size. The implications of this for the data were that my transcripts would have less theoretical saturation due to a smaller sample size. Also, excluding the two potential participants also meant that I was missing the opportunity to reflect on the experience of more women who identified themselves as having positive experiences with pornography.

The four participants included in the study were female, ranging in age 23 to 28. Three of the women were in committed relationships and one identified as single. They had varied cultural and religious backgrounds. The four participants were involved in different post-secondary programs. The detailed demographics of the participants are described in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant (Pseudonym)	Age	Year and Area of Study	Relationship Status	Cultural Background	Religious Background/ Current Religious Affiliation
Sarah	23	Journalism 3rd year	Committed Relationship	Canadian	Atheist
Megan	28	Psych. 3rd year Graduate Student	Committed Relationship	European (England)	Raised as Christian, identifies self as spiritual
Melissa	26	Event Planning 2nd year	Single	Eastern European	Non-religious
Lisa	25	Law 1st year	Committed Relationship	Japanese/ Canadian	Buddhist

Instruments/Materials

The method of data gathering utilized in this study was an in-depth, one-on-one

interview (Appendix C) conducted with eligible participants. The interviews followed a

semi-structured outline, the most commonly used form of data collection when engaging

in grounded theory research (Glaser & Straus, 1992). The interviews were classified as

semi-structured because although I had established questions for investigation, the

interview also allowed me to explore emergent themes and ideas though probing and asking additional questions around novel ideas (Glaser & Straus). Principles of grounded theory explain that interview questions need to be directly related to the topic being researched so as to maximize the collection of non-forced data (Glaser, 1992). The interview questions, presented in Appendix C, examined how women first come to experience pornography and their subsequent use or disuse of it. The interview questions explored areas associated with women's first experiences with pornography, subsequent interactions and viewing of these materials, current use of pornography, personal feelings towards pornography in all of these areas, and cultural and family background as it related to sexual education and general feeling towards sexuality. The ideas explored in the interview questions were selected based on their relevance to the topic being researched. The interview questions covered areas that, based on previous research (Baumeister, 2000; Bergner & Bridges, 2002; Carroll et al., 2008; Ciclitira, 2004; Loftus, 2002; Shaw, 1999) and discussions with my supervisor and committee members, were deemed instrumental in the understanding of the research question.

Interview Procedure

Pre-interview Contact

When interested potential participants contacted me regarding the study, I introduced myself as a graduate student in Counselling Psychology working on my master's thesis. They were informed that if they decided to participate, they would need to engage in a face-to-face interview that would be taped and transcribed. Potential

participants were informed that the interview would last 90 to 120 minutes. They were

also informed that they would have the opportunity to discuss the emerging data and their

experiences with the research in a follow-up interview. Participants were informed that

their participation in the study was completely voluntary. Also, participants were

informed that they could terminate their involvement with the study at any point with no

negative consequences.

At this point, the six potential subjects indicated that they would like to participate

and they were administered the prescreening questionnaire over the phone. The four

women who met the criteria were invited to participate further in a face-to-face interview.

The eligible participants and I agreed on a mutually convenient date and time. Three of

the interviews took place at the Calgary Counselling Centre. One interview took place in

a library since the participant could not travel to the Counselling Centre. The meeting

places for the interviews were selected because they offered privacy for the interview

while also providing safety for the participants and myself. Both interview locations were

easy to access and offered comfort in a neutral setting.

The First Interview

When participants arrived for the interview, they were provided with the

participant consent form outlining confidentiality and informed consent (Appendix D).

The consent form given to participants stated that each participant consented to the

following terms: to engage in a 90-120 minute interview; audio-taping and transcribing of

the interview; publication of the material as the researcher's thesis for the Masters of

Counselling Psychology Program; and possible future publications in academic journals, books, and presentations.

Risks. Topics of sexuality and pornography are very sensitive and the questions asked women to go into detail about their sexual experiences. It was possible for participants to potentially become emotional due to the feelings and experiences they discussed because not all recollections can be positive. Before beginning the interview, participants were notified of these risks in the consent form. The participants were informed that they could terminate the interview at any time if they wished to do so, without the need to give reasons.

To minimize the risks associated with this research, I had the contact information of two local counselling agencies that could offer psychological services. The referral information was printed on cards that were given to every participant at the end of their interview. All participants were told that if the interview had brought up issues which they would like to explore further, they could contact a specific person at one of the agencies and arrange for an appointment. The specific names of the contact person at the each agency were provided to the participants.

Confidentiality. The participant consent form outlined that statements disclosed in the interview would be kept in strict confidentiality and anonymity would be protected. No identifying information, such as last names and birthdays, would be recorded. All identifying information provided in the interviews would be changed in the transcripts. Participants were asked to provide their first name in order to schedule an interview time.

Subsequently, all interviews were assigned a pseudonym and interview tapes only bore

that pseudonym and no other identifying information. Participants were informed that

their transcripts would be seen by me, as the primary researcher, and my thesis

supervisor. Participants were provided with the contact information for me, my thesis

supervisor, and the University of Lethbridge Faculty of Human Subjects Chair so that

they could follow up and inquire about the thesis at any time. The participant consent

form was read and signed by the participants before the interview began. I gathered a

contact phone number and/or e-mail address so that participants could be sent a copy of

their transcript and a summary of the researcher findings. This information was also

needed in order to conduct a follow-up interview for data verification.

Follow-up Interview

After I transcribed the interviews and began the data analysis, I emailed all four

participants with a copy of their transcript and a written summary of the emerging results.

Through e-mail, we arranged follow-up interview sessions where the participants were

asked to provide feedback on the results and their experience with the research project.

Incorporating a follow-up interview ensured that my interpretation and analysis of the

data was reflective of the experiences described by the participants and not led by my

own preconceived notions on the research topic.

Data Analysis

When the data was collected from participants, each interview tape was transcribed by me. Analysis of the interviews was carried out by coding the data after the transcription was finished (Charmaz, 2000). The grounded theory approach entailed that any categories and concepts needed to be found through analysis of the data as opposed to being imposed by pre-conceived concepts (Charmaz). The theoretical concepts emerged through the use of open coding and constant comparison of the data. Theoretical constructs were derived from the data and then illustrated by characteristic examples of that gathered data (Glaser & Strauss, 1999).

Development of Categories

Engaging in open coding was the first step in the analysis of the data. I coded each sentence by writing down its initial code in the space between each line. For this purpose, all transcripts were double spaced. For example, the sentence "She was always so open and made time for us to talk about my life every night" was coded as mother involved in child's life. Data was broken down into incidents and closely examined and compared for similarities and differences between each participant and within the same participant. Open coding was applied to the text until it yielded a core category. For example, codes such as seeing dad's *Playboy* and being shown magazines by friends were grouped into a code entitled first exposure. As a researcher, I looked for patterns so that these patterns could be conceptualized as properties (Glaser, 1992). Glaser and Straus (1999) explain that noting of categories can be simple, such as writing them out on side margins, or more elaborate, such as using coding cards. In my analysis, categories

were transferred on to cue cards which I further analyzed and organized into specific properties. For example the category of changing feelings towards pornography was broken down into these properties: actively seeking out material, comfort with first exposure, understanding pornography, and aid in developing of sexual confidence.

Axial coding followed open coding and it consisted of putting the data back in new ways based on the connections made between categories identified in open coding (Dey, 2004). Another way to look at axial coding is to describe it as a method of integrating analysis by connecting categories though the exploration of the context, conditions, strategies, and consequences that characterize interaction. For example, the code of stigma associated with pornography and the code labeled as comfort in sex stores became categories which were properties of the larger category labeled accessibility. The two properties were factors that effected whether women were accessing sexually explicit materials.

Once the categories were integrated through the use of axial coding, selective coding begun (Dey, 2004). Selective coding is the process of selecting a category, relating it to other identified categories, and filling in and redefining categories which need further development. For example, the categories of liberal background and first exposure became integrated into the concept of the development of one's sexual identity. The already coded and categorized data was integrated further into a core category or a central concept where other categories were brought into the development of a coherent whole. In this research, I had developed three main categories with several sub-

categories. When I began to look for general themes and more abstract ways of describing the categories, it became clear that control was a core concept that emerged in every category and therefore it was labeled as the core category. Since the core category is more abstract and based on my interpretation of the data, it was important to verify its validity through the use of follow-up interviews and discussions with my supervisor. The rationale for using these tactics was to minimize the impact of my own preconceived notions and biases on the interpretation of the data.

When the outlined stages of coding were completed, I began to synthesize the information in a written format. Research findings were summarized and sent out to participants for feedback on the validity of the themes utilized in the theory conceptualization. I emailed the results to the four participants and arranged for a phone follow-up interview, where they were given the chance to provide their feedback and comments on the results.

Theoretical Sensitivity and Major Preconceptions

Taking account of the researcher's personal and professional biases is an important part of grounded theory research (Perakyla, 1997). Preconceptions are useful in developing theoretical sensitivity to a social process or phenomena without directing the research in a preconceived and rigid direction. As analysis of the data continues, preconceptions can be confirmed or abandoned (Glaser & Strauss, 1999).

Some of the preconceptions that I have extracted from previous research in the area include the following:

1. As a group, women have historically been discriminated against in the area of sexuality research. Although this trend is slowly changing, there is still a double standard present where women's sexual desires are supposed to be less than those of men.

2. Some feminist movements and scientific research advocate against the use of sexually explicit materials by women and ascribe such use as the surrender to patriarchal values.

3. Since it is not often socially acceptable for women to use and enjoy sexually explicit materials, women who do so may be facing judgment and accessibility issues.

In terms of personal preconceptions about the research thesis, I addressed some of the biases and assumptions pertinent to this research at the beginning of chapter two. Following is a further account of my assumptions regarding sexuality and pornography as they pertain to reflexivity.

My stance on pornography is that it is something that is aimed at arousing the viewer but whether that material is deemed as bad, good, derogatory, or any other adjective will be dependent on the unique viewer. My assumption is that pornographic material is screened based on personal experiences and no two individuals will feel the same about identical material.

Having viewed pornography in my life, I am also aware of the contradictions and mixed feelings that the medium can stir in us. Sometimes, I have found myself having

quite strong reactions to something that I was viewing without fully understanding the origin of these strong emotions. I wouldn't say that all of my experiences have been positive, but my preconceived belief about pornography is that it can be more helpful than harmful in terms of aiding women in the development of a sexual identity. A further understanding of the relationship between my personal experiences and this research is explained through Mauthner and Doucet's writings on reflexivity.

Reflexivity

The term reflexivity refers to a researcher's personal location within a research project in terms of their biography, experiences, and relationships to their ideas, subjects, ethics, and institutions (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). Data analysis is not a neutral method but rather a technique that carries the epistemological, ontological and theoretical assumptions of the researcher (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000). Even before the process of data analysis, my conceptions and experiences affected the way I entered the research process. From the beginning stages, my understanding of pornography affected my interest in the area, especially in the area of positive experiences. During my Bachelor's degree I studied feminism and women's studies for several semesters and was exposed to different ideas around women's sexuality. When it came to pornography, the majority of my classes presented the subject as negative and derogatory for women. This was in contrast to my own personal experience with the pornography and what I observed with female friends around me. The combination of my European liberal background and my rebellious nature caused me to seek out materials that would confirm the positive

experiences with pornography that occurred in my life. In my research, I was reflexively positioned as a white, middle-class woman who was raised in a working class family and who could identify with my research subjects on the basis of educational level and positive experiences with pornography (Doucet, 2008). As a feminist, I see the view point of every woman as valid and unique and thus the absence of research surrounding women's possible positive experiences with pornography affected my interest in the current research topic.

Instead of conducting a comparative study, I chose to pursue an area of research that was not widely popular and would possibly be quite controversial. Wanting to expose women's positive experiences with pornography, which I knew existed from my personal accounts with friends and acquaintances, I structured my research question to examine only women who had positive experiences with pornography. My quest to expand knowledge in the area of women's sexuality in a new direction affected how I constructed the interview questions and how I interpreted the data. Questions were largely structured towards exposing positive experiences because that was the bias that I was trying to understand in this research. Since there are numerous existing materials on women's negative experiences with pornography, my data analysis placed greater importance on uncovering women's positive experiences in the area. In this respect, I was biased towards concentrating heavily on positive experiences since this was the process under study. However, negative comments and experiences were not ignored and development of the theory included categories that acknowledged contradictions and

negative experiences. My biography and personal beliefs guided my research and thus constructed the particular ways through which I saw and heard the data that was being presented to me (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003).

It is important to note that Doucet (2008) speaks to the fact that our biases through which we enter and analyze our research are altered over time. Different memories and versions of myself will emerge at different periods of my lifetime and alter how I tell the story of my life and my research. This is also true for my participants since they may present their story differently depending on whom they are speaking to, their current mood, as well as premises and motivations that drive them to tell their experiences at that certain point in time (Doucet). No matter how reflexive a researcher tries to be, the personal intentions, emotions, and interior motives guiding the data are likely to be inaccessible to the readers as well as the researcher herself (Grosz, 1995). I cannot say that I am fully aware of all my motivations because many aspects of my psyche will remain hidden and will require distance from the research in order to emerge, or they may never emerge. Because of this, it is important that I address reflexivity in terms of degrees rather than completeness (Doucet).

Reflexivity also includes acknowledging the ontological and epistemological assumptions built into particular methods of data analysis by the people who developed these methods and by those who use them (Doucet & Mauthner, 2003). In this particular research project, I was attracted to grounded theory and qualitative methods because they appeared to be best suited for researching a new area with a historically marginalized

population. My decision is ethically and empirically justifiable but I also need to acknowledge the fact that grounded theory was construed from a masculine perspective and thus I was using a masculine construed data analysis method to illustrate a feminine point of view.

Reliability and Validity

The accuracy and trustworthiness of data derived through the constant comparative method needed to be addressed since grounded theory in qualitative research does not enforce strict procedures and methods of analysis (Perakyla, 1997). By attending to the participant's stories in an objective and sincere manner, I increased validity and reliability of the research because engaging in such practices will likely produce quality interpretation (Perakyla).

Reliability of the research is its constituency, stability, and replicability of measures. In this research project, reliability is context bound because the data is derived from one-on-one interviews with different people and therefore each interview has its own unique context and point of reference (Osborne, 1990).There are several things that were employed in order to increase the reliability of this research (Osborne). They included ensuring accuracy in the recording and transcribing of the interviews by discussions with my supervisor and follow-up interviews and feedback from the participants, making detailed notes of the procedures and data analysis methods used, and ensuring that records of transcriptions and interpretation were carefully maintained and protected (Perakyla, 1997).

Validity can be described as the extent of accuracy and trustworthiness of the interpreted data (Perakyla, 1997). In order to maintain a validity check in this research study, I sought out the feedback of participants by providing them with a summary of the data findings from their transcripts. This allowed the participants to verify whether the themes and categories extracted from the interviews, accurately portrayed their experience. This is also known as checking the goodness of fit (Osborne, 1990). Also, I utilized ongoing peer evaluation and analysis of the data (Robson, 1993) by constantly consulting with my supervisor and colleagues.

Summary

Grounded theory was the methodology employed as a best fit for the exploration of a theory that would represent the process through which post-secondary women come to experience pornography as a positive factor in their lives. The form of data collection was a semi-structured interview with four women. The specific approaches to recruitment, data analysis, and theoretical sensitivity were outlined in this chapter. The following chapter presents the results of the interviews and the emerging grounded theory of this research thesis.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This chapter describes the results of this study as an emerging grounded theory of four post-secondary women's positive experiences with pornography. The theory describes the internal and social process the women experienced in order to label their relationship with sexually explicit materials as positive. This chapter begins with an explanation of the emerging grounded theory, followed by an examination of each category and its respective subcategories. It concludes with feedback from the research participants and a concise overview of the results.

Detailed descriptions of the categories that emerged through the analysis are provided. Figure 1 represents a visual illustration of the results. It shows the three main categories: development of identity as a sexual being, struggling with double standards and duality, and forbidden fruit. Below each of these categories are their respective sub-categories. The core category of control is represented on the right side of the figure. Subcategories in Figure 1 are placed in random and not a particular order.

Evidence of the Emergent Grounded Theory

The grounded theory that emerged from this study can be summarized as follows. The category of development of identity as a sexual being illustrates the fact that all of the participants incorporated pornography into the development of their identity as a sexual being. Since all four women were raised in liberal backgrounds, they approached sexuality as normal and positive. These were also the attitudes associated with how the participants approached their first exposure to pornography.
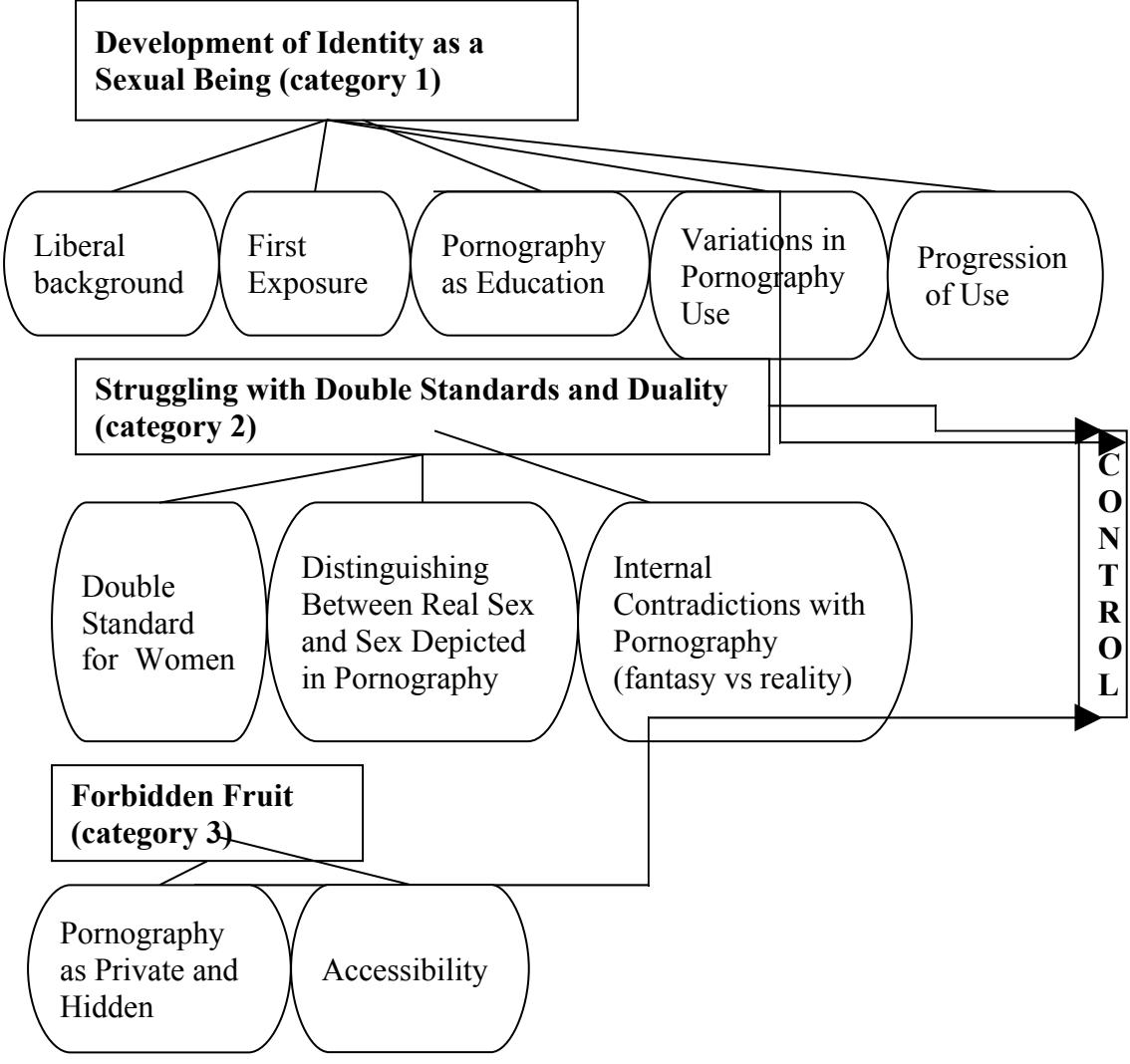
Figure 1. Post-secondary women's positive experiences with pornography: The emergent grounded theory

Associating first exposure with positive emotions and a general tendency to view sex as positive, due to their liberal background, likely allowed the women to integrate pornography into their identity as a sexual being. It appears they accomplished this by using these materials for sex education, and later for personal pleasure and use with partners. As the participants progressed through their relationship with pornography, use of the materials continued to evolve into different patterns and reasons. As the participants continued to use pornography, they went through the process of struggling with double standards and duality, which is labeled as category two (see Figure 1). In this category, the women talked about their struggles in coming to terms with liking pornography and being generally open and positive about their female sexual desire in a society that often condemned them for this. The third category, as noted in Figure 1, is the forbidden fruit and it is directly tied to societal double standards since it illustrates the difficulties that these women faced in obtaining sexually explicit materials in a social climate that still struggles with women's consumption of pornography. The categories described above are not linear. In sum, development of identity as a sexual being, struggling with double standards and the forbidden fruit factor are concepts that were frequently present in the participants' relationships with pornography.

What seems to be the anchoring factor for the core category is control. This emergent grounded theory postulates that through the analysis of the three categories, the

women in this study saw pornography as a positive factor in their lives due to the amount of personal control they were able to exercise over each category. Having personal control over one's beliefs and the freedom to explore sexuality likely resulted in control over one's development of identity as a sexual being. Having a sense of control likely gave the participants the coping skills to progress through societal double standards and pressures. This emerging grounded theory is a fairly new concept since no similar research, to this author's knowledge, has been carried out.

Following are detailed descriptions of each category and their relevance to other research findings. I tried to incorporate direct quotations from participants as much as possible because I believe that the vividness and effect of their experiences is most effectively portrayed in their own words.

Category I: Development of Identity as a Sexual Being

The theme of the development of identity as a sexual being emerged through the characterization and coding of five separate sub-categories: liberal background, first exposure, pornography as education, variations in pornography use, and progression of use. This section will explain the five sub-categories and describe how they fit as characteristics of the development of identity as a sexual being.

Liberal Background

A theme that emerged common to all participants was the fact that they were raised in family environments that facilitated open communication about sexuality and encouraged personal choice in regards to sex, as opposed to enforcing certain religious,

societal, or moral expectations. Participants were raised in family backgrounds that

presented sex as a normal human function and thus facilitated a climate of tolerance and

comfort within the participants. The connection between parental attitudes and the four

women's experiences with pornography is supported in recent research examining adults'

use of internet pornography (Stack, Wasserman, & Kern, 2004). The study (Stack et al.)

validated the assumption that people with strong ties to conventional society are less

likely to use and endorse the use of pornography. Sarah illustrated this in the following

passage:

> My mom was a major hippie so I think that had a lot of influence on me
>
> and the fact that she's really open about sex. As a kid growing up and going
>
> through adolescence, I never had to hide anything from her. I was always free to
>
> go to her. Also she's a nurse so she got that background where she could be
>
> honest about what was going on or whatever…. I mean [my mom's] all for
>
> explore your sexuality, that's how she was raised and how I am.

 Sexuality is in part shaped by socialization and cultural factors that can be passed down

from one generation to another (Baumeister, 2000). This implies that more liberal parents

are likely to have more liberal children (Baumeister). The openness of the participants'

parents was further reinforced by an example from Megan:

> My mom was like when I had my first serious boyfriend, she kind of like threw
>
> me on the pill and my dad totally knew what was going on and they just would
>
> not try and stop me or have the wait till marriage kind of talk…. I don't know,

they were just kind of open about it and they knew that it would happen and they

didn't discourage it, that's for sure…. They were more like, "Be safe and be ready

for the consequences if they come"…. Regular parent things but they were just a

lot more open minded I guess, than maybe some other parents…. My parents

aren't religious, my mom's spiritual but….I think definitely because they could

talk about it, there was no rules or guidelines saying that we were sinning or that

it was immoral.

Individual differences in how children are likely to view sex can be seen as a

product of social conditions of learning (Rogers & Rogers, 2001). Having parents that

were more liberal was talked about by Melissa who recalled a childhood incident which

made her aware of the fact that not all of her peers were raised in the same way:

One day, my mom's friend was over and they were talking about the show Twin

Peaks. It was really popular at the time, and this lady was shocked, it sounded

like, because my mother let me watch that show. And I remember her clearly

saying that there was sex scenes in it and my mom's reply was "well they are

going to do it one day, they should see it and not be afraid or confused by it"…. I

was never pushed into thinking that I had to wait to have sex until marriage or

anything like that. They firmly believe that it is a part of life, and a very healthy

part of life.

Growing up in Western society can often mean that children are brought up to

view sexual needs as less normal or acceptable than other functions (Christensen, 1990;

Smith, 2003). The women in this study talked about the fact that a liberal background

allowed them to feel less shame towards sex in general.

> Sarah: I am really happy that I don't have that [religious stigma]. I don't think I'd
>
> want to feel ashamed about something that is a basic human need. Cause I mean I
>
> don't feel ashamed when I eat. I don't feel ashamed when I eat a pie or two.
>
> Lisa: You know it's something where [others] are a bit ashamed to talk about it
>
> and that sort of thing but I didn't necessarily have that because my family is two
>
> completely separate religions in that sense and are quite a bit more open about it.
>
> So I think that was a bit of an impact. I think it probably influenced me in terms
>
> of my background and how my parents raised me that it wasn't something that
>
> you know they wanted me to wait.... It taught me to at least have respect for the
>
> other person definitely. I think that's the biggest impact of it. Not to be ashamed
>
> you know about using my body and loving it. You know, I don't want to be
>
> ashamed for being a sexual being.

Since some religious dogmas can often be disapproving of sex used for pleasure

as opposed to reproduction in the confinements of marriage, it was expected that the

participants would have more liberal views on religion (Baumeister & Twenge, 2002).

Being liberal was not associated with having no religious affiliation or devotion. Two of

the women identified themselves with the affiliations of being spiritual and a Buddhist

respectively. Having a liberal background, according to these four women, implied

having a choice regarding one's beliefs towards sexuality rather than an absence of a

religious view towards sexuality. Not having a strong religious upbringing could have contributed to the four women's experiences with pornography since weak ties to religion have been shown as strong predictors of cyber-pornography use (Stack et al., 2004). The element of being able to choose their beliefs in regards to sexuality was something that was regarded as highly important to the participants, as illustrated by the following quotes from Sarah and Melissa:

Sarah: Well I think that just the matter that I was brought up as an atheist and that no religion was ever pushed on me. Like if I wanted to choose that, it was my own choice.

Melissa: So I was never taught about sex from a religious stand point. The whole your body is a present and the wrapping stuff, it just wasn't what my parents believed and it was something that I never agreed with. So not having that pressure to be aligned with a religious sex drive, definitely gave me the opportunity to actually see sex as something pleasurable and very normal and something I want in my life, regardless of whether it's in a relationship or not.

Having a liberal background present in all of the participants was classified as a sub-category to the development of identity as a sexual being because it appeared to be a factor that influenced how an individual is likely to perceive and approach sexuality in his or her future (Haggstom-Nordin, Sandberg, Hanson, & Tyden, 2006). In this study, that translated into the four women's experiences with pornography. The next section

will outline the sub-category of the participants' first experiences with pornography and its relation to the development of identity as a sexual being.

First Exposure

This sub-category focuses on the descriptions of the participants' first experiences with pornography. About 30% of first exposures to pornography occur by accident, where the child stumbles upon the materials of a relative or friend (Cantor, Mares, & Hyde, 2003). This also seemed to be the pattern for the participants in this study. For Megan, her first experience involved finding her father's *Playboy* magazines:

I guess it would be father's *Playboys* when I was little. And yeah anything, they'd go walk the dog I'd be in those things and like what is this? I guess that'd be my first pornography experience….It was just kind of the female form and they were naked and happy so I didn't really think much of it…. Like sometimes we'd go to the park and we'd see like ripped up old *Playboys* and stuff like that. But definitely our curiosity drove us to kind of research stuff out. We didn't have the internet so I can't even imagine what kids do now. We actually had to work to find this stuff…. Yeah, and it was like "Ok so that's how it's done". And this is this and you knew it was kinky but you just was just like, "Oh that was kind of like whatever" or "That's the way they do it" or "Oh I can see that's kind of hot or whatever" but you didn't really. I was in grad five so I kind of got it but I mostly didn't get it so that's what that was like. I was pretty young.

Melissa echoed the theme of coming across pornography that was being used by one's parents:

> I remember that we had this library and I went in there…. I was looking around and came across this videotape that was tucked in behind some books….And I was quite curious because we had a video library and this wasn't in it so I was quite curious to find out what this hidden tape was about. And so I put it in the vcr and all of a sudden…Ah…It was so funny, looking back on it now, this naked woman pops up on the screen and she had these huge plastic breasts. Something I'd never seen before….And, it's interesting that I remember this so clearly, but she was hitchhiking and got picked-up in a car and then all of a sudden the screen was just filled with flesh and I had no idea what was going on…. And of course, confusion about what's really going on and what body parts look like and so on….I mean that's probably the first penis that I had seen in my life. Yeah, first grown man penis.

The above passage supports previous research which found that the most common reaction to first pornography exposure w disgust, quickly followed by shock and surprise (Cantor et al., 2003). After the initial reaction to the exposure, retrospective evaluations of the first exposure experience were described as positive by males and a mix of positive and negative by females (Cantor et al.). The reactions of the participants in this study were actually positive and even encouraged these four women to seek out other similar

materials. Lisa was exposed to pornography through her brother as well as her circle of friends:

> I think probably the first time I was exposed to it was likely on tv cause some of the cable channels were a bit racier and you watch it late at night and you go "Oh what is that!" You know that's probably the first exposure I had. And I think my little brother brought home like a *Playboy* magazine and I saw the photos from that…. I think my very first concrete experience with pornography is with a whole bunch of friends that have wanted to see an x-rated video.

For Sarah first experiences with pornography involved exposure through friends:

> I think my first exposure was in a magazine, I don't even know what kind it was…. There was this one kid that I could not stand but we hung out with him all the time, just because he was quite a bully you know what I mean. It was a wooded area, we were walking and he had stashed some porn somewhere and he wanted me to look at it. And I was like pretty horrified, not what about what I was seeing but about the situation with him. I was really uncomfortable with him. I don't think it was anything explicit really it was just some big titted blond like naked….Like it was just the human form but it was the situation with him that made me rather uncomfortable and then past that I never really went out of my way to go find like magazines or watch porn until later on.

Sarah was the only participant who described her first experience with pornography as negative. By examining her description it can be concluded that her

negative reaction was not associated with the material she was seeing but rather the manner in which she was exposed to it. Sarah was shown pornography by someone she did not trust and she had very little control over the situation. This is contradictory to the rest of the experiences described by the participants since Melissa, Lisa, and Megan had an active role in seeking out and looking at pornographic material. Also the element of being forced to view these images by someone external was absent. When children were not forced to view pornography but rather chose to do so, the experience was described as free and egalitarian where materials could be shared among friends (Loftus, 2002). Due to this, the emotions associated with their first experiences were positive as described in more detail by Melissa and Lisa. Their accounts seem almost identical to those of several men interviewed by Loftus. When asked about their first experiences with pornography, the men in the Loftus interviews expressed that the satisfaction of curiosity was a major emotion associated with the material. Melissa echoes this, saying:

> And I think the overall feeling underlying all of it was just extreme curiosity about the tape, what I had seen, why my parents had it, what were they doing with it, just everything. Everything I was curious about. And that curiosity didn't go away. I remember going back into the library and looking for any other hidden things that I could find….In the following weeks I probably went through every room in the house looking for more forbidden hidden stuff.

Lisa: I think it definitely has influences in terms of you know I, because I saw it

as something that was fun and interesting and stimulating it then convinced me

that it was something that I could continue to use.

From the comments above, it can be concluded that for three of the participants, their

initial positive experiences with pornography predisposed them to seek out similar

material in the future

Pornography as Education

One of the benefits of viewing pornography described by the women in this study

was the ability to use it as a tool for sexual education. Pornography can become an

important sexual education tool because sexual education in schools often acknowledges

the male desire but does not do so equally for women (Lesko, 2003). Women are often

taught how to control a seemingly endless male desire but not educated about their own

sexuality (Lesko). As illustrated in the following quotes, pornography was a way of

satisfying that gap in information:

Megan: I think your first porn experiences are always like "Ok, like oh all right,

didn't know about that". It's kind of always pushing the limits even from then to

now. It always pushes the limits I think. And when you're not sexually engaged,

you're just learning about it, you don't really know what that means for you,

you're kind of just learning about it.

Melissa: What I remember is being really, again curious at all the stuff that I was

seeing because there were people having sex and doing all of these things on

screen that I had never seen before. And I wasn't having sex as a teenager so it's

not like I knew what all of this looked like or felt like in real life. And so it was

really interesting to just look. And so I started to even seek out free porn sites on

the net that I would just go into and explore and be you know bombarded with

this plethora so to speak of sexual images.... It satisfied my curiosity to a point

and then it increased it to a level where I sought it out more later on to find out

more about sex. It didn't scare me off or make me think that sex was bad or

something that you shouldn't do…. Curiosity led me to seek out pornography

later in life in order to educate myself about sex and to kind of learn what to

expect, what to do. I mean who knows how to give a blowjob! You have to see it

to get even what the heck it means. So definitely, I think that my first exposure

showed me that sex was interesting and there was a lot to learn and porn was a

way to educate myself. I think that I built up sexual confidence for my later

encounters.

Using pornography as sex education has been previously documented in research

(Haggstrom-Nordin et al., 2006; Hald & Malamuth, 2008; Trostle, 1993). It was also

found that male and female students who consumed pornography had a higher sexual

self-esteem (Hald & Malamuth). Aside from being a way of learning about the mechanics

of sex (Steinberg, 1990; Trostle), pornography was used as a tool for learning how

women should act in order to be desirable to men. Pornography can often enforce gender

scripts (Laumann et al., 1994) as well as challenge existing stereotypes (Zilbergeld,

1992). Lisa spoke to how these materials could guide one's sexual behavior and also addressed some perceived misconceptions about women and pornography:

> I think it was quite intriguing and I was like "Wow, these girls are beautiful". And it was sort of like, it taught me how women perhaps in some ways were supposed to look like sexually, you now. You know even like the facial expressions and all of those sorts of things and I found it like, I think for a lot of studies and you know you watch those info shows about sex and they say women are less visually stimulated but I don't think that's necessarily true. I think it's just in a different way. Like because I can find that a *Playboy* is just as stimulating to me sexually as something else. It helped me develop my sexuality. I guess finding those things and learning about it.

Using sexually explicit materials as education lends support to the notion that by watching, an individual can learn through observation and therefore use pornography as a construct in his or her sexual behavior (Rogers & Rogers, 2001). Pornography can also be one of the only spheres that allows for free exploration and display of female sexuality (Smith, 2003; Holland et al., 1991). It should also be noted that mainstream pornography can also present a narrow view of sexuality, in terms of enforcing heterosexual behavior or stereotypical gender roles. Pornography has been criticized for its unrealistic portrayal of lesbian and gay relationships (Hollinger, 1998). Unless individuals are exposed to non-mainstream pornography, the education they receive from pornography can be narrow and restricting. Being a part of the four women's sexual education was only a fragment of

how the participants used pornography in their lives. The following sub-category addresses the other uses of such materials.

Variations in Pornography Use

As the women spoke about the role of pornography in their lives, it became apparent that it was used as entertainment, a masturbation tool, and material used to enhance current sex life with partners. These are the exact same forms of use that were reported by male consumers of pornography (Loftus, 2002). Walsh (1999) postulated that women who have stronger interest in pornography and sex must have been abandoned by their fathers or experienced similar traumatic events in their past. There were no comments from the participants to support the preceding claims. On the contrary, their forms of use and motivation for use did not differ from those expressed by men in past research (Loftus). Past qualitative research has shown that women enjoy and value pornography for entertainment, sexual arousal, pleasure, and sexual education (Parvez, 2006). The ways in which the women incorporated pornography into their sexualities contributed to the development of their identity as a sexual being.

Using pornography for entertainment with friends was a common theme in the interviews. This can be one of the reasons why more and more women are renting pornographic videos with each passing year (Smith, 2003; Shaw, 1999).

> Megan: In university me and my friends, when we'd have a girls night, we'd get out pot and drink and talk and then we'd throw on like a porn and like laugh and whatever. It was just a really good time.

Lisa: Yeah it was more just out of curiosity and something fun to do. I mean you

grow up in a smallish town and there's nothing to do because you're not old

enough to go to the bar. Well let's watch some porn.

As Sarah described, pornography could also be used for entertainment or even

background noise when one finds herself bored or alone:

Porn kind of turns me on sometimes. Sometimes it doesn't but I watch it anyway.

Depends on what you're viewing, right. Cos there's a lot of stuff that will be on

Playboy that I'm into and love but I can leave just as easy. I could be cooking

dinner and watching *Playboy*…. I think depending on what I'm viewing, it

sometimes it gets me in the mood, other times it doesn't…. I mean now that I am

older and I have found who I am sexually, definitely I do sometimes use it as like

a turn on tool but other than that it's entertainment…. It's just kind of like "Wow,

I don't think I want to be looking at this but I might as well causes it's on the tv.

I'm too lazy to turn on the channel. What's on? Friends? I've already seen that

one."

Since pornography depicts people engaged in sexual acts, generally aimed at

arousing the viewer, participants spoke of the fact that they were often turned-on and

used the material as a masturbation tool. Using pornography for self-pleasure was

something the women talked about engaging in currently as well as in the past. The fact

that these women were using pornography for personal pleasure contradicts the biological

theory of Shepher and Reisman (1985) who stated that women cannot naturally enjoy

sexually explicit materials and that those who do must be faking it in order to arouse men or to assess female competition. Recent research has shown that some women consume pornography for erotic arousal and masturbation (Parvez, 2006). In qualitative interviews with thirty women, masturbation and sexual arousal were the number one reasons given for use of pornography (Parvez). Melissa's quote below echoes the fact that women can become aroused to pornography and use it for masturbation, much like men (Steinberg, 1990):

> You know naturally as I watched porn, I became aroused to a lot of it. I mean it's natural, you are seeing people have sex. So I would masturbate from time to time thinking about things that I have seen or just running through images.

> Using pornography for masturbation often involved finding material that was readily available as opposed to searching for things that were tailored to individual needs and preferences. It appeared that these women were more concerned with finding a sexual outlet when they were not engaged in a sexual relationship. Melissa spoke to this point:

> I was having sex. I knew what it was all about so the only times that I turned to porn in university was when I was feeling horny, and lonely and had no partner. And I would just use it for sexual arousal. Go on the net and find something that I liked…. Not even that because I have never paid for porn so it was looking at free sites and so on so it was what I could get to get off, I suppose.

Further, Lisa elaborated on the types of material used:

You know there's ones that are done quite tastefully and well, and there's others that are just completely, you can tell that they are set for a certain market and you're only meant to watch it for like five minutes and get yourself of and you're good so. I think when I'm not in a relationship I use it more for self-stimulation and so it's you know books and videos and those sorts of things.

In the context of the development of an identity as a sexual being within a relationship, pornography was described as a positive factor that contributed to greater communication and increased sexual satisfaction within committed relationships. This trend has been documented by Zilbergeld (1990) who found that pornography can lead to open communication between couples. Better communication with partners and alleviating sexual boredom with partners were associated with women's pornography consumption in recent research (Parvez, 2006). For Sarah pornography increased communication between her and her partner:

I mean when Bryan and I have sex we are very vocal with each other about what we want and I think pornography has actually helped us get there. I think with me being so open about it and us watching things together, it's kind of made him express to me what he wants and therefore you know it turns me on and he's telling me what he wants and vice versa. So I think in a lot of ways it's heightened our sexuality because we can be so open with each other.

It can be argued that using pornography can allow women to move past their traditional passive sexual role and become more active in pursuing their pleasure

(Kimmel, 1990; Smith, 2003). For Megan, viewing pornography aided in normalizing different types of sexual scenarios and moods:

> Because I remember seeing porn and I decided it was naughty, kind of like indulgent kind of thing. And as far as it shaping my sex life, it just kind of made it more normal. That you, that having a sex life is ok. And it also made experimentation or trying stuff a little more normal and that if you wanted to be dirty and funny that was fine, and if you wanted to have romantic sex that was ok too.

Increased tolerance for broader expressions of sexuality also contributed to a participant seeing pornography as an art form.

> Lisa: I think it went from something initially, before let's say I even had my first experience with it or even after that first experience, something that was a little bit perverse. Extreme version of, you know, of sexuality to being something that if done right can be beautiful, almost an art form. And otherwise something if done well can inspire you. And actually be healthy in a relationship. It becomes more of an art form I guess than something that's just something "Oh look at these people humping."

Progression of Use

Looking at the different uses of pornography naturally leads to the last sub-category of the development of identity as a sexual being: the progression of use. This

refers to the participants' changing feelings and practices towards pornography – from the initial exposure to their current involvement.

All of the participants talked about the fact that as their exposure to pornography increased, they were forced to evaluate their own views on sexuality and come to terms with what they deemed as acceptable. Loftus (2002) found that as men matured, their relationships with pornography and their sexual behaviors in general also changed. What emerged through the interviews was the consensus that viewing pornography helped the women to become more open and tolerant of different expressions of sexuality. Part of becoming more open towards the material included using pornography as a means of generating new ideas for one's own sex life. Megan and Lisa elaborated on this:

> Megan: I think as you get older you get cooler with more stuff. And for me it started out experimental and it kind of, I'm constantly developing new ideas around it and I think the more open you are and the more experimental and challenging you are in your thinking about it then maybe you can use it in a more positive way in your life or at least let your partner use it.

> Lisa: Well initially it was more just curiosity and experimentation and I think sort of later on, I would use it and I got more into like literature and that sort of thing. Because like just reading things can stimulate your mind and you create a story in there. It's also something that I use sometimes when I decide that I want to masturbate or something like that. It's definitely a tool for me because you know you have to get into the proper mindset, at least I do in order to do that.... So I

think it's gone from being something that was purely curiosity to something that can be used as a tool to actually help a relationship. Because I mean if you don't have anything to inspire you and you just are going on your own knowledge, you don't have that variation.

Moving from the initial exposure to later uses of pornography resulted in a progression where the women moved from a state of curiosity and excitement to arriving at a place of experimentation and enjoyment.

Megan: When I was first saw porn, it was about curiosity and about checking out something that we can't check out anywhere. And it was like a socializing thing. It was curiosity, then socially like a girl thing to do with the girls, like that's what we did sometimes, not all the time, once in a while. And then, then it's just kind of faded out and I moved into a romantic relationship. Now it's about adding spice into my relationship.

This progression of use, paired with the participants' first exposure, liberal background, and various uses of pornography contributed to the development of identity as sexual beings of the women in this study. The sub-categories created conditions that allowed the women to view pornography in positive ways and made way for incorporation of this media into their personal lives. Examining the development of the women's sexual identities showed how much influence pornography can have in shaping one's sexual persona.

Category II: Struggling with Double Standards and Duality

The emergence of this category speaks to the importance of addressing power struggles in the realm of sexual behavior (Kimmel, 1990). Using pornography as a part of the development of their identity as sexual beings, the women found themselves navigating through the struggles with double standards and duality imposed on females in Western society. They spoke about different norms and acceptable sexual behaviors for men and women and therefore the resulting difficulties a woman can face in exploring pornography and her sexuality. This leads to the first sub-category entitled double standard for women.

Double Standards for Women

Evidence from the interviews supported the existence of the Madonna/Whore dichotomy in Western society (Tishkoff, 2005; Beneke, 1990). From an early age, it was easy to learn that girls were frequently put down with insults regarding sexual promiscuity. Insinuating that a girl was sexually experienced was an insult thrown around regardless of facts.

> Sarah: There's always you know, the other side of it where you are called a whore no matter what you do. Those will always be insults for girls even when you don't do anything at all. I was called a whore when I was in grade 11 and was like really, I haven't slept with anybody.

This suggests that from an early age, Sarah was taught that having a strong sexual persona is something negative (Tishkoff, 2005). In terms of gender script theory, this fits in with the idea that being interested in sex is not central to being a woman (Kimmel,

2007; Zilbergeld, 1992). No interest in sex seems to transfer to no interest in pornography (Tishkoff). The message the participants received was that it was not acceptable for women to enjoy pornography and be open about it. As Melissa stated, there is a stigma attached to pornography and it is a lot more apparent for women:

> Pornography was something that I wasn't and still am not very open about with to other people because there is a stigma still attached to it somehow I think. You know, it's still, I don't know if you want to call it forbidden or whatever but I would say that it's not that acceptable to talk about pornography with people. Women in general more so than men because I think that society is still far away from accepting that women like to watch pornography. At least I do and I doubt that I am alone.

Due to the different socializations that men and women receive, masturbation and watching pornography are not deemed as acceptable for women (Clark & Wilderman, 2000). This was reinforced by Lisa who discussed the inability of women to openly buy pornography and talk about engaging in masturbation:

> I think that when I go to buy sexy items like that and I go to the stores and things it's still something where you look around you a bit cause you don't want people to see. Like this blue haired granny watching you pick up porn. Or even your friend's mom or that kind of thing, right. Because it's, you're still aware of the cultural norms. I think overall in North America it's supposed to be hidden still, people don't want to acknowledge that you should be open sexually that way or I

think for some people, you know I've talked to other friends and they don't even

masturbate. They don't want to try toys, they don't want to do any of that and it's

almost looked at negatively.

As a result of a cultural climate where women's sexuality is more oppressed and

controlled than that of men (Tishkoff, 2005), Megan spoke to the fact that even though

she enjoyed pornography, many elements of it were tailored towards a male audience

(Juffer, 1998).

Megan: The hottest guys you see on the cover of porns are usually for the gay

videos. Like come on, like I've seen a lot of interviews with porn stars and things

like that and I even read somewhere that they make a lot of the videos for the men

because number one they are the most consumer. For them you're a man, you

start reading porn. For them it's socialized and it's ok. And so the other thing is

they make some of the characters to be average looking banging these really hot

chicks, playing into the fantasy. And I don't blame them at all – god I'd love to

see an ugly chick bang a really hot guy, like come on.

Living with the double standard that pornography should not be used and enjoyed

by women creates an atmosphere where women, who do have positive experiences with

pornography, can face barriers to finding materials more suited to their tastes (McElroy,

1995). One obstacle that emerged in this study, and has been mentioned in previous

research with women (Davis & Bauserman, 1993; Grana, 2002), was the lack of female

leadership in the pornography industry. Further, women who enjoy pornography can

rarely share and be open about this with other women (Shaw, 1999). Megan spoke to these points:

> It would be nice to see more women making scripts and stuff and production companies. I would love to see more female voices in it….There's a bit, there's a few hassles, girls don't really talk about porn….So it's not like someone came up to me last week and was like, I saw this really wicked porn you have to see it. I would be fine with that conversation. It would probably get me more enticed because I would know what to look for. But girls, I've never had anyone never.

Double standards were internalized by Lisa to a point where they didn't necessarily apply to her but she was wary of the effects that pornography might have on others:

> So I think it's definitely becoming more mainstream and acceptable and more women are interested and want to buy pornography and different sort of toys and experiment and be much more open about their sexuality. But I think there is still that feeling by a good portion of society, especially our parents' generation where it's wrong. And admittedly I think if I had a daughter, I still think, I'd try to overcome it, but there's part of me that would want to shield her from that…. Just from you know some sexual content and things of that nature. Like I mean yes there are some beautiful videos and imagery and texts and things like that but I think it's still you have that protective instinct where you don't want them to loose their innocence too fast so that's sort of where I think it comes in.

Lisa's comments illustrate the complexities of pornography and lead us into the second sub-category in which the women discussed the duality between real sex and the sex depicted in pornography.

Distinguishing Between Real Sex and Sex Depicted in Pornography

The women in this study spoke about the fact that they enjoyed using pornography for masturbation as well as using it along with a partner. One obstacle described was distinguishing between the types of sex that they viewed depicted in pornography and the sex in their real lives. A common theme was understanding that pornography had an aim of portraying sex as purely pleasurable and did not concern itself with consequences and safety. The distinctions made by the participants echoed very similar results from interviews with men (Loftus, 2002). When men talked about pornography, they were also very aware of the fact that the sexual acts depicted were not completely realistic.

> Lisa: It's supposed to be a fun pleasurable experience…You watch a porn and it's completely concentrated on the pleasure aspect of it.

Melissa also spoke of the importance of being able to evaluate and place into context what you were seeing in pornography:

> It's like having that double standard of it where I'm completely fine with it, I'm happy that I've been introduced and that I make use of pornographic material but at the same time I think it's something that you have to be careful with. Because I

think if someone doesn't have the proper understanding perhaps of it or they are

exposed to the wrong type of material it can have a negative effect.

Since a great deal of pornography was deemed as male oriented by the

participants, it was also challenging to understand the scenarios and power struggles that

did not mimic the participants' more flexible sexual behavior. Megan's quote was an

example:

> I'm just like "Well how come the girl can't be like more aggressive [in porn]?" Or
>
> they are aggressive with each other? Or why is it always this dominant submissive
>
> kind of thing? I don't really get it because that's not quite the way it plays out in
>
> your sex life. Like usually each partner, as long as you don't get too lazy, is
>
> taking a role and sometimes one of you is dominant and sometimes the other one
>
> is dominant and sometimes you tear each other apart….I don't know. I have a
>
> problem with that, like it annoys me.

Building on the importance of the distinction between real sex and sex portrayed in

pornography is tied to the third sub-category – struggling to make sense of the internal

contradictions in sexually explicit materials.

Internal Contradictions with Pornography (fantasy vs reality)

Using pornography can be a safe way of experimenting with many different

sexual scenarios and fantasies (Parvez, 2006; Zilbergeld, 1990). The responses from the

women cemented the idea that one of the big advantages of using sexually explicit

materials is the fact that the viewer can watch and enjoy fantasy scenarios without ever

having to engage in them in real life. For example, Melissa talked about how pornography could be a safe way of experimenting:

> So it's just the element of fantasy that I think is really great about porn because you can go into a world of doing, so to speak, or more so witnessing things that are taboo. Or not accepted in a way that puts them on a sexually appealing level but only in this circumstance when you know that it is not real and you know that you are just watching and will probably not likely enjoy this happening in real life.

It has been documented that women can become conflicted over their pornography use and enjoyment because some scenarios they find arousing may be deemed as unacceptable or strange by society at large (Ciclitira, 2004; Shaw, 1999). Occasional feelings of contradiction and discomfort can also be due to uncertainty about the well-being and pleasure of the actresses in the materials, as well as the viewers' own sexual histories (Parvez, 2006). The four women in this study seemed to experience a process of internal contradictions and conflicts. As Lisa further elaborated, the fantasies one plays out through pornography can be completely different from what a woman desires in her actual relationships:

> So something where those stories or those situations where the female characters would lose control you know and just let's go you know, that was really appealing to me. I think that's what I was looking for at that point in time because I was definitely, I admit I am a bit of a control freak, and I like my routines and all

that…. When I am in a relationship and having sex with a guy, I don't necessarily

want to be dominated.

The distance and depersonalization that pornography can create, appeared to give these

four women an opportunity to create a fantasy completely separate from their reality.

Pornography could become a safe vehicle for transgressive sexual desires (Kipnis, 1996).

Sarah: When I'm watching porn, and I mentioned before that multiple partners is

one of the things that really turns me on, but I don't, maybe it's the voyeuristic

aspect, I don't think that I could actually watch that in front of me but on the tv

where there's this barrier, that's ok.

The duality that arises from this is that the fantasy material can be very

contradictory to the values and experiences an individual follows in real life.

Contradictions arose from this because the four women found themselves being aroused

by themes and scenarios that would be unacceptable to them in reality. The challenge

seemed to be accepting their arousal on one level but also struggling to fit that fantasy

aspect into what was deemed acceptable by society. Melissa talked more about this in the

following passage:

I think that the weirdest thing that I found and this is, it is weird to say and this is

still true to this day - the fact that you can be aroused and turned on by things on

one level and yet despise and revolt against these things on another…. Well it was

the shock almost that I could watch somebody being degraded in some way on

camera – be it name calling, or pretending they are being forced. I mean anything

like that, seeing that and realizing that on some level yes that is turning me on, watching it. I mean that's huge when I know that it's something that I don't want to happen to me in real life and I know that being forced to have sex would be awful and it is awful but seeing it simulated in a way where you know that it's fake and it's just role playing and its about fantasy. It can be arousing. And that is something quite hard to come to terms with when you are bombarded by society to think that it's not ok to be turned on by that and that you are just a product of a male driven society if you are.

The fact that the women were able to acknowledge the contradictions of pornography but still maintain a positive relationship with the materials and continue using them supports an idea brought forward by Kipnis (1996). Her theory is that embracing pornography can sometimes be seen as a challenge to the dominance of the white male perspective. The ability of the participants to find pleasure and personal empowerment in a sphere mainly dominated by males speaks to their strong coping mechanisms.

<center>Category III: The Forbidden Fruit</center>

Coming to terms with the complexities of sexuality and struggling to find a balance amongst constant double standards and dualities can be challenging tasks. As the interviews progressed, it was clear that these tasks were even more difficult because the participants were developing their sexual identity and exploring pornography in a culture where pornography was often hidden and regarded as the forbidden fruit, especially for

women. Although currently sexualization in the media is increasing (Haggstrom-Nordin et al., 2006) and more pornography is available to adolescents (Hald & Malamuth, 2007), when the women in this study were growing up during the late eighties and early nineties, sex was still hidden from children (Segal, 1992). The first sub-category of this section is pornography as private and hidden and it addresses how the atmosphere the participants grew- up in contributed to the creation of a culturally specific kind of sexuality, and in turn pornography was the forbidden fruit. The second sub-category is labeled accessibility and it describes how the participants acquired pornography in this climate.

Pornography as Private and Hidden

Growing up, even with the presence of liberal parents, these women learned from an early age that sex was something to be hidden and not talked about openly with others. Research pertaining to the time-period in which the participants were reared (Kimmel, 1990) supports this by describing the tendency of Western culture to raise children to believe that sex is something shameful and dirty.

Megan and Melissa illustrate:

> Megan: Like you never saw people having sex, you didn't talk about sex, you just knew it was out there and like some sort of mystery or something.
>
> Melissa: [Sex] was very forbidden – you somehow knew that you were not supposed to look at it and it was bad and the people in it were bad and it was just this scene, you know not something you're supposed to do. And it beats me where that came from cause it was like the collective unconscious, group ego telling you

that no this is no good and you knew that, so hiding it was of utmost importance. Naturally, somehow you just knew. I mean very few people talked about sex when we were little and they were grown ups, so you get to think that hey this is not something good and it's got be hidden away so that's what you do. You don't know why, but you do it.

Viewing sex in this manner translated into how the participants experienced their first exposure to pornography. Even when parents teach children that sex is dirty and shameful, children also quickly realize that it is something pleasurable (Kimmel, 1990). Loftus (2002) described that the men researched in his study believed that it was taboo to watch pornography when they were young. It has also been documented that male children's pursuits of pornographic materials were hidden from authority figures and parents (Beggan & Allison, 2003). The statements from the participants in this research were parallel to those outlined in previous research with males. All accounts were characterized by feelings of excitement and being afraid of what would happen if they were caught looking at the material as children. Here Megan talks about her experience:

> I remember me and my sister, my parents would come home later on at 5:30 and we had satellite back in the day when they were huge, and we used to get an illegal channel something called the Spice channel. And we used to watch porn there until, one of us would be the look out and the other would be watching porn and we'd be laughing and giggling and the other would look out. I was mostly scared that mom and dad were going to come home basically. And then my sister

was always flipping out that they were going to come home so I was always like

this mixture of like stress and like excitement and curiosity all together. And it

was partially so exciting and something we sought after so many times, way past

curiosity because mom and dad were gone and they wouldn't be so pleased of a 9

year old and 10 year old watching hard core porn. And I'd say like as far as

getting personally aroused by it, I'd say that maybe sometimes I could have but it

was rough. Like I don't remember, I don't remember much about it. I don't think

we really had the opportunity cause we had to run back and forth and switching

channels.

Melissa also knew that, as a child, she was looking at something forbidden:

I just stopped the [porn] tape and put it back because I was really scared of getting

caught looking at this. I mean really petrified because you know it's hidden and I

knew after seeing it that obviously it was not the kind of movie that I have ever

seen with my parents…. In terms of what the experience was like, I would say

that it was scary, scared of being caught, exhilarating, exciting, just feeling all

your senses heightened cause you have the forbidden fruit so to speak and you

don't really know what it is but you know it's special.

The atmosphere in which the women first accessed pornography also affected

their current level of comfort with the material. In research with women consumers of

pornography, Parvez (2006) reported that consumption was also associated with a

rebellious nature. The women in the study (Parvez) felt that they were going against the

norm for women. Pornography consumption is not considered the societal norm for female behavior (Attwood, 2005; Kimmel, 2007; Parvez; Peter & Valkenburg, 2007). Therefore, even women who were raised in a more liberal fashion are likely to face struggles. Although the women in this study reported that they enjoyed pornography, they were still worried about the reactions of others since it was a subject that was considered taboo. For example, Melissa talked about the fact that she did not want people to know that she purchases pornography:

> It's in the privacy of my own home and you don't need to worry about your boss or somebody you know seeing you get out of that store and then asking you the next day, "Hey what were you doing there?".

Lisa also addressed her viewpoint that pornography is still viewed as the forbidden fruit for women:

> When you talk to parents or things like that you try to learn about it, they are going to tell you of course "Oh you don't want to watch porn! it's you know dirty and it's something that is meant for men only and only they are going to enjoy it." But watching, I'm like well actually it's something that I actually enjoy as well.

The women talked about the fact that due to this, accessibility to pornography for women was limited by several factors. The following section outlines the category of accessibility.

Accessibility

Research in the area shows that, even with a growing number of female consumers, a large percentage of sexually explicit materials are still tailored towards a male audience (Shaw, 1999). The outlets selling these materials also seem to be tailored towards males. The overwhelming theme from the responses in this study was that the majority of stores that sell pornography were not deemed as very accessible because they were described as uninviting to women. Melissa gave an example:

> I would like to go and rent movies or buy magazines but those stores are so uninviting to women. I cannot tell you of one place that caters to women in Calgary, not one. I have lived in Toronto where there was a store in my neighborhood that was run by women and was for women so the set up was just open and cheery and you did not feel dirty walking in there. Whereas most stores that I have been to in Calgary are seedy, the people working there are dirty men and the only people in the store are men who are just lurking at you and I don't feel comfortable in that place. Because you feel abnormal cause you're there, it's like this isn't for women and its taboo and that is such bullshit.

Having places that are uninviting for women adds to the lack of role models for a positive female sexuality (Holland et al., 1992). Megan added to this by addressing that it was awkward to go into these stores because there were hardly any other female customers present:

> When I go in [sex stores] I just think everyone looks creepy and like, it makes it seems not like sexy dirty but like dirty dirty….Would be nice if, if it was a little

more like it's ok to have sex parties and I just wish they had more stuff that was not like a sex shop/porn store but a little more tasteful….And I just never see other girls in there by themselves and I get kind of shy in that sense.

Due to these reasons, the women talked about the easy accessibility of the internet and its huge anonymity benefit. The internet has given women and other minorities greater opportunities to produce and distribute their own representations of sexuality (Ciclitira, 2004).

Lisa: I get so much more from the internet now because it's so readily available. Really I mean, this is such a small town that I live in that there's no access to pornographic material at video stores and those sorts of things. I think if I lived in a large metropolitan area where there is greater access and more anonymity, I definitely would be more apt to go to a store and buy more material, like buy magazines buy videos, like those sorts of things. But it's just the nature of where I live.

The problem with accessing sexually explicit materials on the internet was tied to the double standard set up for males and females and the inability for the participants to find female produced materials in a plethora of websites catering to males.

Megan: I've heard that there might be some [female produced] stuff out there but I have no idea what that is. And I'm afraid of looking it up on the internet because you get every male dominated site ever created and it's like sifting through a hay stack trying to find a needle.

Research in the area has confirmed that the need for women producers and directors in the pornography industry is present and clear (Ciclitira, 2004; Grana, 2002). If there were more female voices, it could be speculated that there would also be a greater amount of female viewers.

Core Category: Control

Taken together, the categories of development of identity as a sexual being, struggling with double standards/duality, and the forbidden fruit make-up the emergent grounded theory categories of this study. They represent the major themes that were common among all of the interviews from the four participants that emerged through examining the process of pornography consumption for the participants. The core category that united these themes was control. Ultimately, it can be stated that the women in this study have had and continue to have positive experiences with pornography due to the fact that they can exercise control over choices regarding their sexuality and particularly, their experiences and exposure to pornography. The central part that control plays in women's positive experiences with pornography speaks to the notion that pornography does not turn women into victims and men into their victimizers (Juffer, 1998). With the presence of control over the development of identity as a sexual being, duality, and the conflict of the forbidden fruit, the women in the study developed a positive relationship with their pornography consumption.

The way the participants were raised to think about sex and the human body had a certain impact on their positive initial and subsequent exposures to pornography. Megan

talked about how having control over her decisions influenced her development as a sexual being:

I was allowed to make decisions for myself. And I think if someone would have said don't have sex and didn't expose me at all, heck yeah I'd be all over that. My curiosity and excitement would have played out in a different arena where I stood or what I thought was important to me sexually wouldn't have come into play until I was much older.

Being able to exercise control over what they chose to believe regarding sex, as opposed to adopting a set religious or moral stance was central in the development of a liberal and largely positive predisposition to sexuality and sexual explicit materials. Participants relished the fact that they were allowed to set-up their own belief system in regards to sex as opposed to taking on a predetermined one without challenge. Having the control to develop one's own belief system resulted in the participants moving away from the stereotypical role of a sexually passive female (Taylor, 1995). Megan illustrates this below:

Along with the way my parents socialized me, because they made me more open to [pornography] and I think because I was more open to it, I was more curious about it. And then experimented a lot more with it when I was younger and just between all of that it helped shape me. But at the same time, it also allowed me to figure out what I thought was ok for sex and not ok for sex. Because it was more

open and it was more out there, I could figure out where I stood not where

someone told me I should stand about it.

Sarah also speaks about the role of control in regards to the creation of negative beliefs

towards sexuality:

If I had been brought up in a much more strict, let's say religious background, I

think with a lot of societies it is frowned upon to have sex before marriage and it

sort of created a negative image for a lot of people, especially women in their

minds…They don't have control or choice in what they believe because they are

just brought up that way.

The element of control played a part in initially experiencing pornography. As

stated in the development of identity as a sexual being section, the only negative first

exposure was associated with a lack of control in regards to being active in the process of

seeking out and wanting to look at the pornography. Megan's exposure was associated

with bullying and force which differed from the other examples of active curiosity and

experimentation. Most studies examining women and pornography report that subjects

usually become exposed to pornography under male influence rather than their own

choosing (Shaw, 1999). It is possible that researchers, such as Shaw, are reporting

women as not enjoying pornography because the element of control in their experiences

has been absent.

Examining the progression of use of pornography illustrated that initial positive experiences with the materials, which were associated with control, predisposed the participants to continue using these materials in their lives as well as integrating them as tools for sex education. Changing the purpose and uses of the materials, but still associating them with largely positive emotions and experiences, was a result of the control participants perceived themselves as having over the development of their identity as sexual beings. Since there is virtually no previous research pertaining to this area, the emerging comments of the participants illustrated these novel concepts.

Melissa: I think that the way my parents handled sex and taught me about sex really gave me the opportunity to make up my own mind about it and to really do what I wanted to do. I feel really blessed at the fact that I never felt like I had some social expectations or religious dogmas or parental echoes in my head of what I should be doing in my sex life. It was up to me and I loved that about my history. I knew that certain groups of society judged sexual behavior differently but I did not feel the pressure to succumb to that. For me it was about personal growth and decision making.

Melissa and Lisa talked about how they enjoyed having control over the pornographic materials they were viewing and how this contributed to an increase in their own pleasure. Lisa sought more control over her pornography exposure by seeking out materials that were a fit for her rather than what was she was given from friends:

I explored a bit more and found things that were a bit more appropriate for me because what was interesting and what this girl's boyfriend liked was not necessarily what I was wanting and what would stimulate me.

Melissa illustrated having control and compromise in the use of pornography with a partner:

I suggested that we do it just so spice things up a bit and it was a lot of fun because we could laugh at porn together and go in the store together, pick it out. So I think it was quite a good bonding thing. We both had a say in what we wanted to watch and one of us would not dominate or control the other's decisions.

Ultimately, regardless of how the participants were using and progressing in their use of pornography, being able to exercise control over what they were viewing was very important. The ability to interpret the materials for themselves and have control over their opinions and experiences was related to their positive experiences.

Lisa: I mean I've seen documentaries where they talk about pornography and how awful it is and all they show is snuff videos, right. Which isn't true to what it can be. I would like to make-up my mind about what I am seeing… They take the most negative versions of it to prove their point where as it's so much broader what pornography can be for people. And how it can be presented. And what it means to me and how I interpret it.

.   In the second category control emerged as an underlying theme to the struggles with double standards and duality. Participants acknowledged the presence of double standards for male and female behavior and openly talked about challenges they faced when using pornography in a society that apparently did not endorse this behavior for them as women. Challenging the double standard shows that female desire can be just as great as male desire (Christensen, 1990).The participants spoke about being in control of their pleasure and accessing pornography.

> Melissa: Whenever I want it, it's there and there really isn't anything stopping me from accessing porn whenever I want to, even if society tells me it's not ok because I am a woman.

> Lisa: If I want to try something new I feel comfortable in going and just buying it. And I've had good experiences so far so. I can own the experience and just go into the store and buy what I want.

The assertiveness and control of the women in the study echoed the research from societies where female and male children are taught more positively about sex thus resulting in a culture where men and women tend to be equally assertive regarding sex (Christensen). When reflecting on their experience with this thesis in the follow-up interview, the women spoke to the fact that being open about their experiences and sharing their responses was a way of addressing these inequalities and looking at personal responsibility.

Sarah: But now I'm the one that's like ok, we're getting the porn channel and I love it! I watch it all the time.

This speaks to the idea of needing to have personal control over one's sexuality in order to objectively deal with the struggles of double standards.

The duality of real sex and sex depicted in pornography, along with the contradictions that arose when looking at fantasy material, exposed an underlying theme of control because the participants were acknowledging the contradictions in sexual explicit materials but at the same time asserting that the main responsibility for interpretation was still with the viewer. Dangers of pornography were acknowledged but the ultimate control over how the material would be interpreted and contradictions addressed lay with the individual viewer. Megan illustrated this:

I think I fully understand what I am seeing and not trying to sound like I know everything, but I do think I understand what I am watching. And I know what it's there for. And I know that even though the women are incredibly beautiful and they are pumped full of silicone and stuff but they are the money makers. It's an industry driven towards men… I can find ways to honor my needs in that scenario and get sexually aroused and have control over my orgasm.

The participants expressed a desire for more female control in the industry in reference to the small percentages of female directors and operators in pornography (Grana, 2002). The ultimate form of control was seen as the production of one's own pornography, as in the form of an erotic story that was written by Sarah.

Sarah: Writing my own erotic story, it was better writing it because you could make it what you wanted or what I wanted at the time, thought I wanted at the time, rather than reading other people's.

In the category of the forbidden fruit, personal control was illustrated by the fact that the participants actively sought out and continued to seek out material that was sometimes deemed forbidden or inappropriate by society. This speaks to the ability to make the choice for one's self instead of incorporating the beliefs of others.

Lisa: I think it was good that I had that experience in my life because if I had always gone with what other people told me about pornography, I maybe wouldn't have even ventured into the area.

Taken together, the three categories and the core category of control make up the emerging grounded theory of these four post-secondary women's positive experiences with pornography. The next section describes the results of the follow-up interview with the participants as they relate to the validity of the emerging categories.

Feedback from Follow-Up Interviews

In order to assess the correctness of the results and to double check my interpretations, I conducted follow-up phone interviews with the participants. This is in accordance with the principles of grounded theory as outlined in chapter 3. The feedback I collected from the four women was in agreement with the categories and the main theme of control. The experience of talking about enjoying pornography was described as liberating since all four women stated that they had not discussed their relationship with

pornography in great detail with other people. The process of participating in the research was a form of self-discovery and an opportunity to reflect on one's sexual persona and role as a woman.

During the follow-up interview, Megan spoke about the importance of the accessibility category and stated that many of her friends also feel that sex stores are unwelcoming to women. She believed that use of pornography by women will rise dramatically if it were more socially acceptable for women to patronize these establishments. Megan stated that when she examined the results chart (Figure 1), she made a connection between accessibility and the double standard that she had not previously thought about. She spoke about the need for more sexually aggressive and confident women because after the interview, she was thinking about our discussion and was actively looking for women in the media who appeared to be in charge of their sexuality. She stated that she had very little luck finding such role models, aside from the women in the show *Sex and the City*. Looking at the results helped Megan to associate sexual confidence with control, where she explained that it would be healthy for younger women to have examples of women who are in control of their sexuality. Megan expressed appreciation for being included in the study since she identified it as one of the only times in her life where she has been able to talk to another woman about her enjoyment of pornography.

In her follow-up interview, Lisa was surprised at the commonalities in the participants' backgrounds. She stated that she expected a lot of variation in terms of

religion and personal beliefs about sex as opposed to a uniform liberal upbringing. Lisa thought that the category speaking to the difference between real sex and the sex depicted in pornographic material was crucial because not having the proper information could lead to the formulation of stereotypical and narrow views of sexuality. Lisa acknowledged that watching pornography could be misleading in its portrayals of sexual acts if the viewer does not have an adequate understanding of sexuality from other sources. This led to Lisa talking about the importance of the contradictions category. She felt that there needed to be a lot of discussion and understanding of the complexities of feelings associated with pornography since she reported feeling that she would be judged by others if she decided to talk about what materials she finds arousing.

Sarah's feedback in the follow-up interview was closely tied to her surprise at the importance of control. She stated that she had never thought of the role of control herself but once she read the results, she commented on how well control fits what she discussed her interview. Sarah stated that a large part of a woman's healthy sexual identity is tied to feelings of control. Sarah said that the ability to have control over one's sexuality translated to an increased level of comfort in talking about sex with others and consequently, more personal power. Both Sarah and Lisa wondered how women would describe their experiences with pornography if the materials were forced on them as opposed to having the freedom and choice to view or not view them.

In Melissa's follow-up interview, the category that stood out the most for her was the progression of use. It resonated with Melissa because she stated that she has been

quite reflective of her own experiences throughout the years and could see an actual evolution and progress of use as she went through different stages of her life. Melissa was wondering how the study and the results would be perceived by others since she stated that whenever she shares her participation with friends and acquaintances she is faced with the same response. The common reaction she spoke about was people's surprise in regards to the fact there are women who use and enjoy pornography.

Summary of the Emergent Grounded Theory

The four post-secondary women established positive experiences and use of pornography through a process that began with the early development of their identity as sexual beings. Being raised in a liberal background allowed them to approach their first exposure to pornography in a positive and open manner. Evaluating their initial exposure to pornography as positive led to the active seeking out of similar materials for further use. As the women matured, they experienced a progression in their use of pornography. The use of pornography varied from sex education, to entertainment with friends, and further to solitary and partner use for pleasure. This progression of change was not linear and the women spoke about engaging in different forms of use at different times. The women's positive evaluations of pornography remained constant as their sexual personas developed further. The struggles that these women faced were ongoing double standards in a society that did not facilitate the enjoyment of pornography for them as women. Aside from societal conflicts, these four women faced internal struggles with the contradictions in and fantasy aspects of the material. They had to mediate their

consumption in a climate where pornography was viewed as forbidden and thus its accessibility to these women was limited. The buffer that allowed the participants to navigate through these conditions and still experience pornography as a positive factor in their lives was personal control. Being able to exercise control in the development of one's identity as a sexual being, personal beliefs, use of pornography, and struggles with societal pressures provided autonomy in regards to the participants' sexual behaviors and thus enjoyment of pornography.

The above paragraph captures the grounded theory that emerged from the data. It provided a detailed illustration of the main categories that were discovered through the analysis of the participant interviews. Each category was explained in terms of its sub-categories. A core category of personal control united the three main categories. The following chapter provides discussion of the results, limitations of the thesis, and future directions for research.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this chapter is the integration of the theoretical findings of this study with existing research in the area. Each of the emergent categories will be discussed within a framework of previous scholarly work in the field. Study limitations and implications for future research will be presented.

The research inquiry investigated in this study was the process through which four post-secondary women came to experience their relationships with pornography as positive. The data was collected through qualitative interviews and analyzed by a grounded theory approach. The emergent grounded theory was made up of three categories, their respective subcategories, and a core category. The first category was the development of identity as a sexual being, which is congruent with patterns of social conditioning and normalization (Rogers & Rogers, 2001). The sub-category labeled as liberal background illustrated that the parental social conditioning the four women received was in environments that were more open about sexuality and encouraged personal exploration and freedom over one's decisions and beliefs regarding sex. As Weisner and Wilson-Mitchell (1990) demonstrated, children with liberal attitudes towards sex come from families where parents challenge traditional stereotypes and beliefs. Hald and Malamuth (2008) found that self-perceived positive effects of pornography were associated with liberal cultural backgrounds where attitudes towards sexuality have not been traditionally negative. Other research with pornography and young people also supports the presence of a liberal background (Haggstrom-Nordin et

al., 2006). The study (Haggstrom-Nordin et al.) indicated that a liberal background was correlated to a person's belief that consumption of pornography was an individual's right. Influences of peers and religion acting upon the four participants seemed to be mediated by an already formulated open and accepting attitude towards sexuality. Having been socialized in this fashion, the participants were predisposed to evaluate pornography as positive upon exposure. Having such initial experiences and attitudes will in turn influence future behavior (Kimmel, 1990). This was clearly evident from the fact that after first exposure, all of the women continued to use pornography, reported current use of it, and described most of these experiences as very positive. Seeing pornography as positive initially and continuing to seek it out can also be attributed to the process of normalization where an individual may begin to have greater acceptance of pornography due to increased exposure (Hald & Malamuth, 2008).

When speaking about their first exposure to pornography, it seems the women in the study had similar emotional reactions to those documented by research on men. Men spoke of curiosity and the novelty of seeing something forbidden when they recall first exposures (Loftus, 2002). Curiosity and excitement were the emotions that the women in this study also talked about when they described their first experiences. Curiosity and excitement may be described as characteristics of openness to experience (Lam & Chan, 2007). Openness to experience may be one characteristic of individuals who actively seek out pornography since results of previous studies indicate a positive correlation between openness to experience and use of pornography (Lam & Chan).What was missing was the

bonding element. Beggan and Allison (2003) describe bonding over pornography as a major factor in a young boy's life. Often, this included trading magazines in school, using pornography as a rite of passage, and being handed down pornography by older brothers or fathers. The participants in the study talked about some similar forms of bonding. One participant shared her first experiences with pornography with her sister. All four participants talked about viewing pornography as entertainment with their friends. However, the four women also spoke about the inability to discuss pornography and their enjoyment of it with other women.

In the subcategory of using pornography, which is part of the development of identity as a sexual being, the participants spoke about how they used pornography in their lives and their answers pointed to the fact that the four women were quite similar to men in this regard. Steinberg (1990) reported that men use pornography in large percentages as a masturbation tool. This was echoed by the four women in this study who all reported being sexually aroused by pornography and using it for masturbation. Steinberg's study (1990) also described pornography as a source for education on sexual practices for males. One of the themes in the development of identity as a sexual being of the female participants in this study was the discussion of how pornography served as sex education for them. It was a way of learning about what sex looked like and in later years, a tool used to enhance one's own sexual pleasure.

Tracing the progression of use as a subcategory showed the changing role of pornography in the women's lives – from a tool for sex education to a relationship

enhancer. In his interviews with hundreds of men on the subject, Loftus (2002) uncovered a similar pattern of progression in men. As men entered late-teen years and college, they often viewed pornography in groups for the purpose of entertainment. This was later replaced by more solitary use or use with a partner. The women in this study followed a similar progression of use – moving from watching pornography with groups of friends to seeking it out through the internet or sex stores for solitary or partner use.

The theme of struggling with double standards in Western society has been widely talked about in previous research (Tishkoff, 2005). In general women tend to be socialized to believe that their own sexual desire is low, at least much lower than that of men (Steinberg, 1990; Tishkoff). Therefore, women who enjoy pornography might often find themselves, as was illustrated in the interviews, fighting this double standard and attempting to regain personal control over their sexuality. This can be extremely difficult in a society that still employs the Whore/Madonna dichotomy, a narrow classification that further aims to limit the sexuality of women (Beneke, 1990; Tishkoff).

Also, there was a category speaking to the double standard between sex portrayed in pornography and sex in real life. The women in this study talked about the fact that there were differences between the two and that they could distinguish between the portrayals of sex in pornography and real-life sex since pornography's aim was often associated with illustration of pleasure at the expense of safety, emotions, and diversity. Differentiating between reality and fiction has also been documented in another study

(Haggstrom-Nordin et al., 2006) where participants considered pornography fiction and thus could distance themselves from the medium and not take pornography seriously.

At the same time, participants in this study talked about the fact that they used pornography as sex education. Although they distinguished between sex in real life and sex in pornography, the four women still used pornography to learn about sex. Other research also supports the notion that women can use pornography to learn about sex (Haggstrom-Nordin et al., 2006; Parvez, 2006; Trostle, 1993). Such findings can be linked to Bandura's social learning theory which suggests that people can educate themselves about sex expectations and demands through observation of others depicted in the media (Kimmel, 2007), which in this case is the media of pornography.

There is also an inherent struggle due the contradictions that are present in pornography since human sexual behavior cannot be as simple as black or white. The contradictory emotions the women in this study experienced in regards to becoming aroused to fantasy material is a common struggle for female viewers of pornography recorded in previous research. Contradictory feelings can often be generated from watching pornography (Haggstrom-Nordin et al., 2006). On one hand, the viewer can be sexually excited while at the same time feeling shame, detest, and disgust (Haggstrom-Nordin et al.). Material that women use for arousal and expression of sexuality can also elicit emotions of concern over possible abuse or degradation of the women portrayed in the material (Ciclitira 2004; Shaw 1999). The result is shame over arousal due to potentially offensive material even if viewers are skilled at distinguishing the boundaries

between fantasy and actions in reality (Strossen, 1995). The fact is that pornography portrays many faces of human sexuality and this results in complexities over material that seems to degrade and titillate viewers at the same time (Segal, 1994).

The second category of the emergent grounded theory was labeled as the forbidden fruit. Shame towards the naked human body and masturbation in the Western tradition can serve as oppositions to sexual openness (Christensen, 1990) and as such may present barriers to be overcome by women who consume pornography. Over the last decade, the social acceptance of sexually explicit materials has increased due to the mainstreaming of such materials and the increasing portrayals of sexuality in the mass media (Smith, 2003). However, media portrayals of sexually independent and aggressive women are in large part, still considered somewhat outside of the social norm for female behavior (Tishkoff, 2005). Expectations created by the media can result in conflicting portrayals where women are expected to be sexual but inexperienced and submissive at the same time (Tishkoff). Although, the climate for sexual expectations is changing, a strong sexual drive and the need to use pornography are still domains associated with males in Western society (Kimmel, 2007). Living in such a conflicting culture climate may be tough for some women who may already feel cultural constraint in their sexual expression and are thus likely to have some negative feelings towards masturbation and pornography (Clark & Wiederman, 2000).

Research into the area of female pornography consumption has shown that one of the reasons why women may choose to use pornography is due to its rebellious nature

(Parvez, 2006). Women in the Parvez study talked about the fact that they felt like they were challenging the social norm and partaking in something rebellious and forbidden by watching pornography. This was enforced by the four women in the present study who also talked about pornography as a forbidden area. This may also suggest that women who consume pornography may be looking to actively challenge the social stereotype of female sexual behavior. The idea that pornography is a somewhat forbidden area for women is still robust (Parvez, 2006) and women who enjoy such materials may be faced with the dilemma of accessing them. The women in this study experienced several barriers to accessing pornography: non women-friendly stores, websites targeted to males, and the need to maintain anonymity due to social stigma. Accessing the right material in the right environment was challenging for the participants because they felt that a lot of the materials were targeted towards men. Research shows that mainstream pornography has been produced to mainly appeal to male consumers (Juffer, 1998). Approximately ten years later the market for women's pornography remains largely untapped (Grana, 2002). There are emerging female producers and directors of pornography aimed at a female audience but in comparison, the vast variety of pornography is still produced mainly for men. Therefore, representations of female sexuality in America are blooming later and at a much slower pace (Grana).

As the core category, personal control over the development of one's identity as a sexual being, the struggle with duality, and the accessibility of the forbidden fruit was tied to the four women's positive experiences with pornography. Unless they were able to

exercise this control in their sexual behavior, it is doubtful that they would have the ability to relate to pornography in a very positive manner. Control is equated with taking ownership over one's sexuality and therefore the participants could potentially use pornography to de-objectify themselves by validating their own pleasures and desires (Strossen, 1995). Exposure to pornography has also been linked to increases in sexual esteem and communication with sexual partners (Morrison et al., 2004). Research speaks to the fact that women can take control of fantasies and scenarios portrayed in pornography and reinterpret it for themselves (Gardiner, 1995). This involves interacting with the material through the lenses of each individual viewer and his or her personal experiences.

Control and positive experiences with pornography appear to be strongly interlinked due to their ability to give power to the participants. In this study, the four women actively used pornography to initially learn about sex, to explore their fantasies and sexual personas, and to bring new life into their intimate relationships. Pornography became a part of their sexual identity, but all four women had different sexual histories and experiences. This brings us to the theory proposed by McElroy (1995) which postulates that being open to explore pornography allows women to break the cultural and political stereotypes in Western culture so that each person can individually define sex for themselves. The ability to have control over the construction of one's sexual identity is the tie that unites all four women interviewed in this research.

The four women's positive experiences with pornography could also be explained through the Sexual Behavior Sequence (Fisher & Barak, 2001). Fisher and Barak suggest that people acquire affective and evaluative responses to erotic stimuli as a function of the association of rewarding and punishing experiences over one's life-span. What this means is that an individual who has predominantly rewarding experiences with sexuality will likely respond to sexual cues, such as pornography, with positive affects and evaluations. In contrast, an individual with predominantly punishing experiences in association with sexuality will be expected to respond with negative affect and evaluations. Positive responses will strengthen the future likelihood of further contact with similar sexual stimuli. In relation to this research, it can be postulated that the participants initially approached pornography with a positive disposition since they were able to exercise control over their beliefs about sexuality and pornography. Having an initially positive experience predisposed the participants to further seek out pornography. Based on the Sexual Behavior Sequence (Fisher & Barak) it can be postulated that further contact with sexual media was evaluated positively.

The variation in above explanation was the participant who did not have control over her first exposure to pornography since she was forced to see the material by a bully. She did not evaluate the experience as positive due to the presence of coercion. From her account of the experience, she did not associate the negative feelings of that experience with the material she was viewing but attributed them to the presence of the bully. Her capability to recognize and separate the negative emotions she experienced from the

materials that she was viewing would appear to be the reason why she was able to approach subsequent exposures to pornography in a positive manner. Also, as per her account, all further exposure to pornography in her life were free of coercion.

Having control over the strategies relating to the handling of the double standard and the forbidden aspect of pornography, could have allowed the participants to handle these perceived negative and conflicting aspects of pornography consumption with a more positive evaluation. Thus, consumption of pornography continued to be employed and seen as positive by the participants since they were still able to pair sexually explicit materials with positive affective responses (Fisher & Barak, 2001). The Sexual Behavior Sequence represents contact with pornography as a self-regulated activity (Fisher & Barak) and thus incorporation of personal control over use and reactions can easily be incorporated into its structure.

It is important to note that due to the lack of previous research with women's positive experiences with pornography (Attwood, 2005), the emerging grounded theory in this thesis study is a fairly novel concept. The different categories encompassing the process through which the four post-secondary women came to see pornography as a positive experience in their lives have theoretical support and therefore we can conclude that even though the theory is still in its early stages of synthesis and research, its components are empirically supported. Evidence for the social learning of one's sexuality has been strongly supported by theory (Kimmel, 2007), which showcases the importance

of one's family environment and attitudes toward sexuality as primal in equipping an individual with an open mind towards sexuality and pornography.

The three categories encompassed in the theory are not representations of a linear model but rather represent categories that can be occurring in a participant's life constantly. The issues of development of identity as a sexual being, double standards, and accessibility as pertaining to pornography and sexuality in general are ever present and ongoing (Parvez, 2006). What dictated the four women's coping skills and tendency to describe their experiences with pornography as positive was the amount of personal control these women perceived as having over these events. Increased control over the participants' own sexuality appeared to be tied to a sexual identity that allowed for the incorporation and exploration of pornography.

<div align="center">Limitations and Suggested Future Research</div>

The main limitation of this study is that the results cannot be generalized to the female post-secondary population at large. The results can only be applied to the experiences of the four women interviewed in this study. Limitations of this thesis include a small sample size and a limited demographic profile of participants. Having interviewed four women in a post-secondary setting who were of similar age limits the applicability of the results to other populations of varied backgrounds or different geographical locations. Also, women in other countries will likely have different views on pornography and thus varied social constructions will yield an array of new relationships.

Another limitation of the study is that the women who responded to the recruitment poster were already open and willing to discuss matters of sexual nature. This predisposes the results to pertain to individuals who hold a similar philosophical outlook on sexuality. It is possible that there may be women who use and enjoy pornography but would not be willing to talk openly about their experiences to a researcher, due to societal or personal reasons. It can be speculated that their experiences may be different than those of women who are more open about their sexuality. Research suggests that volunteers for sexological studies may differ from non-volunteers on dimensions such as sensation-seeking, sexual esteem, self-monitoring, and antisocial non-conformity (Bogaert, 1996; Wielderman, 1999). The applicability of the result to women who did not feel comfortable to volunteer for the study is unclear.

Characteristics of post-secondary students also limit the generalization of the results. Higher education has been linked to more support for women's emancipation (Townsend, 1993). What this implies is that since the participants in this study were post-secondary students, their use of pornography may be tied to female emancipation and thus differ from pornography consumption of women with different educational backgrounds. It would be interesting to conduct further research on how women's feminist views and ideals affect their consumption of pornography. Another major limitation of the study is by limiting the sample size to only post-secondary women, I excluded valuable information on the research topic from women who use pornography but are not post-secondary students.

The issue of generalization is not as relevant in grounded theory as in other research methods because the main goal of grounded theory is the discovery of theoretical relationships in the area of study which offer future opportunities for theory testing and refinement. Pornography and human sexual behavior in general are such complex issues that future opportunities in the area are vast. Some possibilities for expanding on the current research could involve studying women of different age groups, cultures, and religious backgrounds in order to assess whether the theory can withstand maturation effects and strong social construction forces. Also, research can examine women who identify as having negative experiences with pornography in order to assess the differences between women who enjoy pornography and those who do not.

It would also be interesting to pose the same interview questions to men and examine how control plays a part in the male development of sexual identity. This would be an interesting area to pursue since men are already given societal permission to enjoy pornography. With constantly changing expectations of gender roles in today's society, future studies can examine how increasing sexual images in the mainstream media outlets affect women's and men's attitudes towards pornography. Since accessibility and content of the materials were sometimes a barrier to use and to the level of enjoyment, future research can also concentrate on elements of pornography and characteristics of sex stores that will allow women to feel more comfortable in acquiring these materials and talking about their experiences with them.

In conclusion, my research is only a small part of the beginning of an area of scientific research which looks at women's sexual behaviors and desires as equal to and as important as those of men. Acknowledging that women can enjoy pornography and the complex processes through which they navigate these feelings, in a society that can sometimes challenge these experiences, is only a small step towards understanding the complex relationship between women and pornography. Contradictions, emotions, and the presence or absence of control are inherent to this topic and as researchers and clinicians, we need to respect these feelings and seek to further understand how women can continue to develop healthy sexual identities in the face of double standards and societal expectations often working against them.

CHAPTER SIX: REFLECTIVE SUMMARY OF RESULTS AND LIMITATIONS

The following chapter will address further limitations of the methodology and the results of the study. The limitations addressed in this section represent a personal reflective critique of aspects of the study that became apparent after the research was complete. The chapter outlines limitations to the validity of the data, assumptions made in the design of the study, a reflective analysis of the methodology used, and critiques of the results. This final chapter concludes with a summary of the results presented as a conceptualization of the participants' experiences as opposed to an emergent grounded theory.

Limitations in Validity

In regards to limitations to the validity of the results, my choices in data analysis and presentation of data to the participants could have contributed to the potential compromise of the participants' voices. As a researcher, I had the responsibility of interpreting, integrating, and elaborating on what was read, heard, and observed (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This is different than just reporting the data because interpretation involves the process of putting data together in new ways and making connections between the accounts of the four women. In the data analysis, integrating and developing the properties of the categories and subcategories involved the inclusion of the participants' voices and perspectives (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I collected feedback on the categories from the participants through follow-up interviews in order to satisfy this

condition. However, I need to acknowledge that the way that I presented the data back to the participants for their feedback had some limitations.

The emerging results were emailed to the participants in order to allow them to examine the data and form their opinions about the categories and the emerging data. The reason why I chose to email the results was to create distance between the participants and myself in an attempt to remove myself from the process of the participants' feedback as much as possible. I was making the assumption that by not being physically present when the participants were looking at the emerging results, I would minimize my influence and any perceived power as a researcher. However, I need to acknowledge that by presenting the participants with my interpretive results from the data, I was engaging in a top-down process where the participants were placed in a position where they were confirming or disconfirming my findings rather than openly talking about what terminology and concepts they would use to summarize their experiences.

The four women's voices could have been potentially most compromised in the core category of control. Based on the principles of data analysis in grounded theory, the core category requires the most interpretation on the part of the researcher and is also more abstract and encompassing than the other categories (Straus & Corbin, 1998). Since the core category is most abstract and interpretive, it can be argued that it can present a challenge where the participants' voices need to reflect the exact interpretation of the researcher. A limitation of this study is that the core category was labeled as control based on my interpretations of the data as a researcher. How I arrived at the naming of

the core category involved close examination of all sub-categories, categories, and their properties. I was looking for an underlying theme that united the experiences of the four women. The label that I saw as most fit to describe the core category was control. The women did mention control in their interviews and from the data analysis of the previous three categories and their subcategories, my interpretations were that the core category uniting all of the data was control.

My label of the core category was confirmed by the supervisor and the four participants. I presented my supervisor with the emerging categories and she agreed that control was an appropriate core category. The four participants also confirmed and agreed with the core category being control. The limitation is that my interpretation and labeling of the core category as control could have compromised the authenticity of the women's voices because I presented them with the already formulated label of the core category. Thus, the participants had the option of confirming or rejecting my terminology rather than coming up with their own term for the core category. Participants could have potentially felt pressure to agree with me as a researcher. In a sense, they were validating my own interpretation. Although I asked for the participants' feedback and encouraged any feedback or criticism, I could not control how they would have perceived the pressure to be agreeable with me.

In order to arrive at a core category that would better reflect the voices of the four women, I could have presented the participants with the emerging three categories and sub-categories and asked them to describe what theme they saw as primary and most

influential in their positive experiences with pornography. Although, this would have also entailed interpretive work on my part as a researcher, the core category would have emerged first from the participants rather than be presented to them, as was the case in this current study. The next section outlines the assumptions that I made when designing this study.

Assumptions in the Design of the Study

When I began this research, I had formulated some assumptions regarding the characteristics of post-secondary women. In turn, these assumptions guided the way that I recruited and selected participants for the study. I will first explain my assumptions regarding the characteristics of post-secondary women and follow that with an explanation of the limitations that these assumptions presented to the recruitment and selection process.

I made several assumptions that guided my choice to use post-secondary women as participants for the study. First of all, I made the assumption that post-secondary women may be an easily accessible population to me since the there were two post-secondary institutions with large student populations in the city where the research was carried out. I made the assumptions that post-secondary women would be a suitable population to study. The assumption that I was making was that post-secondary women will likely have more positive experiences with pornography since they were currently reported to be consumers of pornography (Carroll et al., 2008). Selecting a population

that was reported to use pornography increased the potential of finding participants that had positive experiences with pornography and thus fit the criteria for the study. Based on the research that over forty percent of post-secondary women regularly used pornography (Carroll et al., 2008), I made the assumption that post-secondary women may be hold more liberal attitudes towards sexuality than the general population. These assumptions regarding the characteristics of post-secondary students were solely based on the statistics for the Carroll et al.(2008) study. It should be noted that the Carroll et al. (2008) study only examined post-secondary women and had no comparison rates for use for non post-secondary women. I had no direct research stating that post-secondary hold more liberal attitudes towards pornography or sexuality and was making educated postulations based on previous research. This is a major flaw of this study because I eliminated a large pool of potential participants by only recruiting post-secondary women based on my flawed assumptions regarding this population. I had no research to support that post-secondary actually used pornography more than non post-secondary women. In future research, I believe that it would be of vital importance to take extra precautions in order to avoid this bias and select a more appropriate sample of participants. I think that it would be important to duplicate this research in the future with a sample that does not limit the participants to being post-secondary students. It would be valuable to have an open sample size of women that come from different backgrounds.

Making the above assumptions had several limitations in regards to the selection and recruitment of participants. First of all, the sample was very limited to only four post-

secondary women in the city of Calgary. Using post-secondary students meant that the

results could not be generalized to any other population and the small sample meant that

results could not speak to any other experiences other than the experiences of the four

participants. Based on the assumptions stated above, recruiting post-secondary women

with positive experiences with pornography meant that my sample would likely be made

up of participants who held liberal views on sexuality and were willing to openly discuss

their pornography use. A limitation of this study is that I did not seek to confirm or

disconfirm my assumptions regarding the four participants.

The pre-screening questionnaire was designed as a selection tool that would allow

me to leave out participants who did not fit the criteria for the study. Participants were

asked whether they had positive experiences with pornography and if they had any biases

or concerns regarding pornography. The purpose of these questions was to allow me to

select participants who fit the criteria of having positive experiences with pornography.

During the pre-screening interviews, I did not ask the participants about their definition

of pornography and thus I did not extrapolate what types of pornography the participants

were referring to. I was making the assumption that all positive experiences with

pornography, regardless of the types of pornography, would be suitable for the purpose of

the study. Another assumption that I made in the selection process was assuming that the

potential participants understood what I meant by positive experiences with pornography.

All four participants stated that their experiences with pornography were positive at the

pre-screening interview. I did not have a method of checking whether all four women conceptualized positive experiences in the same way.

Another limitation to the pre-screening questionnaire as a form of selection was the question about whether the potential participants had any biases or concerns about pornography. All four participants answered no to that question which implies that the sample of this research was further restricted to women who did not see themselves as having biases towards pornography or did not wish to share them with me. Looking back at the research, I can say that all four participants held the view that pornography was something that they enjoyed and were using in their lives. In itself, this can be a bias and speaks to the fact that the questions in the pre-screening questionnaire did not successfully address biases of the participants.

The pre-screening questionnaire was also the reason why I made the decision not to include two potential participants. Both women were not post-secondary students. I made the decision not to include them in the study based on the fact that the focus of the research was on post-secondary women. Although this allowed me to stay consistent with the population that I was studying, the decision negatively contributed to a smaller sample and thus limited theoretical saturation. Also, not including the two women could have potentially robbed me of rich and meaningful data regarding the positive experiences with pornography of women outside of the post-secondary population.

Reflective Analysis of Methodological Decisions and Limitations to Results

The two methodological decisions that contributed to the limitations of the results were the decision to not distinguish between different types of sexually explicit materials and the decision to use grounded theory. First I will focus on the distinction between different parts of sexually explicit materials and following that section, I will speak to the use of grounded theory. I will conclude this chapter by presenting the results in a simplified way and speaking to how the study can be improved for future research.

I made the decision to not distinguish between different sexually explicit materials, such as distinguishing between erotica and pornography, because the definition of pornography that I used encompassed all materials that present an artistic depiction of men and/or women as sexual beings (McElroy, 1995). At the beginning of the research interviews, I explained the definition that I was using to all four participants. However, I did not ask the participants to talk about their own definitions of pornography. By presenting the definition in such a top-down manner, I was not addressing the different types of materials that the women could potentially classify as pornography. Looking back at the results, all four women talked about different types of sexually explicit materials and they also used these different types of pornography in varying degrees. One participant was engaged in watching pornography daily while another was contemplative about her use and engaged in infrequent and brief consumption. My data focused on the process through which the four women could label their experiences with pornography but it did not account for the different types of materials that the women were using and also the different ways in which the four women chose to consume pornography.

The implication for this in the data is that the women could have been using and talking about different types of pornography and thus the conclusions that were made based on the data do not address these differences. Each of the women used pornography in varying degrees. In combination with their backgrounds, this presented participants with a wide variety of experiences with pornography. Although all of them described their experiences as positive and thus contributed to the research focus, further research into the area should examine the differences between the materials and types of pornography these women were using.

The methods used in this study were those of grounded theory; a theory where the data is an abstraction and generalization of the casual relationships found in the data (Dick, 2000). The ways that I analyzed the data through coding and the constant comparative method were true to the methods of grounded theory and the results fit the criteria of fit, work, relevance, and were readily modifiable (Glaser, 1992). A limitation of this study is that although grounded theory was used as a method of data analysis, the results do not represent a complete grounded theory but rather an emergent conceptualization of the four women's positive experiences with pornography. The results in this study cannot be labeled as a grounded theory explaining the four post-secondary women's positive experiences with pornography due to the following reasons.

First of all, the sample of size of participants was not large enough to satisfy the conditions for theoretical saturation. As Glaser (1992) states, the minimum number of participants required to comprise a valid grounded theory is 30. With only four

participants, I was able to use the grounded theory methods to analyze my data but I cannot make the claim that my results represent a grounded theory. The small sample size has an implication for the applicability of grounded theory to the results. Due to the small sample size, I cannot make the confident claim that the results are a grounded theory because four participants cannot provide enough theoretical saturation.

Aside from the problem of theoretical saturation, the results of this study cannot be labeled as a complete grounded theory due to lack of theoretical sampling. I began analyzing and organizing the data after all four interviews were completed and transcribed. Theoretical sampling would have required that analysis of the data to be taking place in parallel with data collection (Glaser, 1992). This would allow the researcher to change interview questions and if necessary, seek out new and different participants in order to gather richer data. The methodology of grounded theory calls for constant checking and rechecking of analyzed data against emerging new data and seeking out further participants and theoretical saturation (Glaser). In this study, I was constantly comparing data within the four transcribed interviews but I did not fully satisfy the condition of theoretical sampling due to the fact that I did not seek out new participants or change the interview questions. If I was to duplicate this study in the future, I would change the methods that I used and incorporate further theoretical sampling by striving to include new participants and interview questions as dictated by the emerging categories and ideas in the data.

Based on my inability to define the results as a complete grounded theory, I am critical of the conclusions that I make and can label my results as a conceptualization of four post-secondary women's positive experiences with pornography rather than a grounded theory. If I can present this conceptualization in a simpler form, without using the labels of the categories and the core category, I would explain the results in the following fashion. The four post-secondary women shared a liberal background that contributed to the positive evaluation of their first exposure to pornography. Since they evaluated their first exposure in a positive manner, the participants continued their consumption of pornography in different ways. The four participants talked about using pornography as sexual education, viewing it with friends, partners, and using it for pleasure and masturbation. The participants' different uses of pornography contributed to the integration of pornography into their identity as a sexual being. In the process of this development, the participants were struggling with internal and external double standards. Using pornography was a challenge since they faced internal contradictions over the material as well as societal criticism of their use as women. Struggling with these double standards presented issues in accessing pornography and the participants spoke about the fact that pornography was still presented as forbidden by society.

The above paragraph illustrates the data of this research in a simpler way by not using specific categories, properties, and the core category. It is a conceptualization of the four women's experiences but it does not speak to the label of control or the three distinct

categories. It is an alternative way of presenting the data since the theoretical saturation is not satisfied for a complete grounded theory.

In future research, this study can be improved in order to yield data that would be more suitable to the development of a full grounded theory. First of all, more participants would be needed in order to increase and satisfy theoretical saturation. In order to avoid assumptions about post-secondary students, the study can be expanded to include women of all educational backgrounds and thus the selection process can be less rigid and constricting. The interview questions will need to explore, in further detail, the types of materials the women are using and how they are using them. Having more detail in this area can potentially increase understanding of their positive experiences with the materials. Also, the participants should discuss their own personal definitions of pornography. Analyzed data and assumptions of the researcher should be presented in an open rather than a top-down manner that would minimize the influence of the researcher's interpretations of the data.

This study represents a good starting point for future research and the building blocks of a grounded theory that would seek to further elaborate on women's positive experiences with pornography. This reflective summary of the limitations of the study speaks to the importance of being critical of one's results. This study represents an important area of research and the need for further research and understanding.

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Appendix A

Recruitment Poster

WOULD YOU LIKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO TALK ABOUT YOUR EXPERINCES WITH SEXUALLY EXPLICIT MATERIALS IN A NON-JUDGEMENTAL AND CONFIDENTAL ENVIRONMENT?

<u>This can be your change to contribute to the understanding of women's sexuality and experiences!</u>

I am a graduate student conducting a research thesis that examines women's positive experiences with sexually explicit materials, such as videos and internet sites.

If you are a woman over the age of 18, who has viewed pornography in her life, and is willing to talk about the experience, please contact:

403-691-5943 or iordanka.petzanova@uleth.ca

All participation is completely voluntary and strictly confidential.

Your participation in this study will assist me greatly in completing my thesis requirement for the Masters of Education in Counselling Psychology degree at the University of Lethbridge.

Thank you for you assistance.

Iordanka Petzanova
B. A., Graduate Student, University of Lethbridge

Appendix B

Pre-Screening Questionnaire

Post-Secondary Women's Positive Experiences with Pornography: A Qualitative Exploration of Initial Exposure and Subsequent Use of Sexually Explicit Materials

Age_____

Gender_____

Year and Area of Study_____

Employment/Area of study_____

Relationship status_____

Cultural background_____

Religious background/ Current religion_____

1. Have you viewed sexually explicit visual materials such as movies and magazines in your lifetime?

2. Would you describe your experiences with sexually explicit materials as generally positive or negative? (Do you enjoy sexually explicit visual materials).

3. Do you feel that you have any biases or concerns about pornography?

Appendix C

Interview Questions

Post-Secondary Women's Positive Experiences with Pornography: A Qualitative Exploration of Initial Exposure and Subsequent Use of Sexually Explicit Materials

Describe how you were brought up to view and think about sex? Pornography?
What were your parent's attitudes towards sexually explicit materials and sexuality in general?

What form of sexual education did you receive?

Do you feel that your cultural background influenced the way you view sex?

Describe your fist exposure to pornography. What was the experience like for you?
Elaborate on how you felt about what you saw and experienced.
What aspects of what you saw appealed to you/what did you like about the material?

What has been the course of your experience with pornography from the first
 exposure that you described to your current use/disuse of it.

How did your first experience with sexually explicit materials influence how you felt
about sex? How did it influence your subsequent use of the material?

Describe how you currently experience pornography in your life. (Do you use
any adult materials, alone or with a partner, do you purchase erotic novels, etc.)

Have your feelings towards pornography changed? How?

Are you satisfied with your current experience and use of adult materials?
If not, what would you change about your involvement in this area?

What factors would drive you to use more pornography?

What factors would drive you to use less pornography?

Is there anything else that you wish to add?

Appendix D

Participant Consent Form

Post-Secondary Women's Positive Experiences with Pornography: A Qualitative Exploration of Initial Exposure and Subsequent Use of Sexually Explicit Materials

You are being invited to participate in a study entitled 'Post-Secondary Women's Positive Experiences with Pornography: A Qualitative Exploration of Initial Exposure and Subsequent Use of Sexually Explicit Materials**'** being conducted by Iordanka Petzanova. Iordanka is a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Lethbridge and you may contact her if you have further questions by e-mail at iordanka.petzanova@uleth.ca or by phone at 403-691-5943.

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Counselling Psychology, Faculty of Education at the U of Lethbridge. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Noella Piquette-Tomei. You may contact my supervisor at 403-394-3954.

The purpose of this research project is to uncover women's positive experiences with sexually explicit materials by examining how women initially come to experience pornography and how such early experiences shape the way they consequently relate to sexually explicit material. The research will concentrate on women who are currently attending a post-secondary institution. Through qualitative interviews, this study will explore the phenomenological experiences of these women, an area that has been generally overlooked in the field of pornography research.

Research of this type is important because the information that this study will not only shed light on how women relate to the widespread phenomenon of pornography but it will also contribute to an understanding of women's sexuality. This is very important because historically, women have been overlooked as autonomous beings with real sexual desires. This type of research needs to be carried out because pornography is a very prevalent force in western society and as thus, it will likely have widespread effects on men and women. I am choosing to concentrate on women's positive experiences because I feel that it is important to give a voice to a group that has previously been silenced, especially in the area of sexuality.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you meet the following criteria for inclusion: you are 18 years or older, female, a post-secondary student, have viewed sexually explicit materials in your life time, and have deemed your experiences with these materials as generally positive. It is important that each participant meets these

criteria in order to ensure that the research centers on women who have actual experiences and direct exposure to sexually explicit materials.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include being involved in an individual interview with the researcher, Iordanka Petzanova. Your interview will be tape recorded and transcribed. You will be asked to provide information on some demographic factors, such as your age and educational level, and to talk in detail about your experiences with sexually explicit materials. The interview will last between 1.5 and 2 hours. Your participation in this study will also include a follow-up phone interview where you can have the opportunity to look at the emerging results and provide your feedback to the researcher. If you prefer, the follow-up interview can be arranged as a face-to-face meeting.

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including requiring you to come to the Calgary Counselling Centre for the interview. This will require approximately two hours of direct contact time with the primary researcher. You will be supplied with free parking on-site or compensated for your public transit expenses.

There are some potential risks to you by participating in this research and they include emotional and psychological risks because the topic of pornography and sexuality is very sensitive and the study asks women to go into detail and describe their feelings and experiences in the area. Participants may become emotional due to the feelings and experiences they discuss since not all recollections/past experiences are anticipated to be positive. Discussing intimate relationships may cause some participants psychological distress because they may become emotional over the state if their current or past relationships.

To prevent or to deal with these risks the following steps will be taken: you will be provided with the contact information for the Distress Centre and Calgary Counselling Centre. You can contact one of these organizations if you decide that you would like to further explore possible issues that the interview may have brought up for you.

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include gaining a better understanding of your feelings towards pornographic materials and personal sexual identity. The results of this study may also contribute to the greater understanding of women's sexuality.

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you withdraw from the study, your data will destroyed and not used in the research analysis.

Anonymity will be protected through ensuring that, other than asking for a first name, no other identifying information will be gathered from the participants. Participants will be assigned numbers when they come in for the interviews and therefore, their name will not appear anywhere in discussion and analysis of the data. Demographic data such as age, marital status, religious views, and occupation will be collected for statistical purposes. Any identifying details (i.e. names of places, companies, streets, other people) will be removed and replaced with pseudonyms.

As a participant, you will need to provide a mailing or e-mail address in order to receive the interview questions prior to the actual interview. Also, contact information will be collected so that your feedback can be incorporated into the emerging grounded theory analysis.

Participant confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by only giving the researcher, Iordanka Petzanova, and her supervisor Dr. Noella Piquette-Tomei, access to the raw data. Analysis will be conducted for research purposes only and the interview tapes will be transcribed by the primary researcher. When not in use, all data will be kept in a locked cabinet throughout the process of data collection and analysis.

Other planned uses of this data include publishing the results in scholarly journals and presenting the research findings at professional conferences. A copy of the thesis will be kept at the University of Lethbridge Library.

Data from this study will be disposed of by shredding all transcripts and tapes after five years. Until then, the transcripts and tapes will be kept in a locked cabinet.

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: they will be discussed with a thesis committee, scientific journal publications, and scholarly conferences.

In addition to being able to contact the researcher [and, if applicable, the supervisor] at the above phone numbers, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Chair of the Faculty of Education Human Subjects Research Committee at the University of Lethbridge (403-329-2425).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

_____   _____   _____
Name of Participant   *Signature*   *Date*

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.