



Smith ScholarWorks

Theses, Dissertations, and Projects

2013

Feminist values and pornography consumption amongst women and its relationship to sexual self-esteem and body esteem

Laura E. Burnham

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.smith.edu/theses>



Part of the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Burnham, Laura E., "Feminist values and pornography consumption amongst women and its relationship to sexual self-esteem and body esteem" (2013). Masters Thesis, Smith College, Northampton, MA.
<https://scholarworks.smith.edu/theses/589>

This Masters Thesis has been accepted for inclusion in Theses, Dissertations, and Projects by an authorized administrator of Smith ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@smith.edu.

Laura Burnham
Feminist Values and Pornography
Consumption Amongst Women and
its Relationship to Sexual Self-
esteem and Body Esteem

ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken to investigate the relationship between women's pornography consumption, degree of feminist identification, and sexual and body self-esteem. Until recently, the literature on pornography use has maintained a heteronormative bias, largely focused on the male experience. The researchers conducting this study wished to better understand women's self-motivated pornography consumption and its possible impacts on various aspects of experience. Participants in this study were 109 women over the age of 18 years of age, living in the United States, who had willingly viewed pornography online within the past year. These participants completed an online survey. This sample group scored relatively low on the body esteem scale and high on the sexual self-esteem scale. Results also showed that sexual self-esteem and body esteem were highly correlated, and the higher the degree of feminist values, the less frequently one spent viewing pornography. Further investigation into the female experience with pornography consumption is needed to better understand this complex relationship.

KEYWORDS: Pornography, Women, feminism, sexual self-esteem, body esteem

**FEMINIST VALUES AND PORNOGRAPHY CONSUMPTION AMONGST WOMEN
AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO SEXUAL SELF-ESTEEM AND BODY ESTEEM**

A project based on an independent investigation,
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Social Work

Laura Burnham

Smith College, School for Social Work
Northampton, MA 01063

2013

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to a number of people who helped co-create and guide this research project, without whom I would have been lost. A special thank you to my research supervisors Dr. David Burton and Dr. George Leibowitz, who have helped to guide, reassure, and support me through this process, and who generously shared their enthusiasm for this project and the field of social work. I would also like to thank the members of the research team for all of their hard work in helping to create the survey: Hannah Fegley, Julia Burton, Carrie Curtis, Andy Dunlap, Dane Frost, Hye-Kyung Kang, James Pittman, and Terry Humphreys. Lastly, I would like to thank my friends for spending countless hours discussing and brainstorming with me about this topic; your input was invaluable to my process.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iii
LIST OF TABLES	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	v
CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION	1
II LITERATURE REVIEW.....	3
III METHODOLOGY	7
IV FINDINGS	11
V DISCUSSION.....	14
REFERENCES	19
APPENDICES	
Appendix A: Human Subject Review Board Letter.....	x
Appendix B: Informed Consent.....	x
Appendix C: Participation Plea.....	x

LIST OF TABLES

Table

1.	Frequency of pornography viewing.....	25
2.	Amount of Time Spent Viewing Pornography.....	25
3.	Primary Medium Used for Viewing Pornography	25
4.	Descriptives of Primary Variables.....	26
5.	Correlations Between Variables.....	26

LIST OF FIGURES

Figures

1. Household Income of Participants..... 27
2. Educational levels of Participants 27

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Consumption of online pornographic videos is at an all time high in the United States. As of 2006, there were an estimated 4.2 million websites dedicated to pornography, and an estimated 28,000 individuals per second seek pornography on the Internet (Ropelato, 2007). Internet pornography comprises approximately 12% of the all Internet traffic and the industry grosses \$13 billion annually (Internet Filter Learning Center, 2008). Given the vastness and popularity of the industry, there are a surprisingly small number of researchers that explore pornography's social, psychological, and/or political effects. Specifically, researchers have yet to fully investigate the role of pornography in women's lives. As indicated below in the literature review, the majority of this research has a hetero-normative bias and is male-dominated in that it largely includes male participants only, focuses solely on the male experience and/or the "problem" of male pornography use, and/or fails to take into account the female experience of pornography independent of a male partner (Benjamin & Tlusten, 2010; Bridges, 2003; Ciclitira, 2004, Lambert, Negash, Stillman, Olmstead, & Fincham, 2012; Clark, & Widerman, 2000). Until recently, researchers have rarely considered the possibility that women may enjoy consuming pornography. It is arguable that this omission may be a derivative of the societal attitude that women are lacking in sexual desire and relatively non-sexual in comparison to men (Averett, Benson, & Vaillancourt, 2008).

This omission of women's sexuality in the literature has left a gap in the research for which to explore the role of pornography in women's lives, including women's pornography consumption behavior. Furthermore, past research has demonstrated that pornography has influence on women's sexual self-esteem and body esteem, but this research has often been

conducted from a male perspective; therefore there is a gap in the literature for which to explore women's self-motivated pornography consumption and its effects on sexual self-esteem and body esteem. Mayers, Heller, and Heller (2010) define sexual self-esteem as "the value one places on oneself as a sexual being, including sexual identity and perceptions of sexual acceptability" (p. 207) and body esteem encompasses attitudes towards one's body (Oswald, Franzoi, & Frost, 2010).

The pornography industry has a tradition and history of male domination, both in terms of its content as well as its audience (Bridges, Wosnitzer, Scharrer, Sun, & Liberman, 2010; Cowan & Dunn, 1994). It is arguable, however, that this tradition is shifting. The industry now includes and promotes genres of pornography that are described as "feminist" or "female focused" as well as lesbian and queer, potentially opening up the market for consumers that were previously overlooked or excluded (Boyle, 2000; Paasonen, 2009). With the Internet, people are now able to access pornography like never before and more people than ever, including women, are actively seeking out and consuming pornography (Ciclitira, 2004, Ropelato, 2007). This shift in thinking about gender and pornography can be better understood through a 2nd and 3rd wave feminist theoretical lens. Adherents of both of these feminist movements have observed and conceptualized the pornography industry in divergent ways, yet there is mutual agreement that pornography is influential in the lives of women. Feminist theory will be explored in relationship to views of pornography in this paper.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Feminist Theory And Pornography

Historically, feminism and pornography have had somewhat of a contentious relationship. Over the past century, however, attitudes have greatly shifted regarding sexual behavior, ideology, and values, and new insights have arisen about women's relationship to pornography. The leaders of the second wave feminist movement in the 1970's and 80's, Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon, asserted that pornography promotes violence against women and is inherently anti-feminist; therefore true feminists must also be constitutionally anti-pornography (MacKinnon & Dworkin, 1998; Schussler, 2012). In line with this belief system is that pornography perpetuates the degradation of women and further entrenches their second-class status within society; these feminists believed that pornography should be made illegal (Ciclitira, 2004, Cowan, Chase, & Stahly, 1989; Philipson, 1984). The more recent emergence of third wave feminism is based upon a framework that values the protection of free speech and women's power and agency over their own sexuality. Proponents believed pornography censorship encourages attitudes about censorship of female sexuality in general, and that such a legislative decision would limit the power that women have to make regarding their expression of sexuality (Cowan, 1992; McGlynn, 2010; Weinberg, Williams, Kleiner & Irizarry, 2010). Despite this shift in ideology about women's sexuality, few researchers have explored the correlation between women's feminist values, pornography consumption behavior, and sexual and body self-esteem. The theoretical frame for this paper is feminist theory, which has helped scholars analyze gender differences as well as deconstruct potential meanings of pornography from the point of view of women.

Relationship Among Sexual Self-Esteem, Body Esteem And Pornography

Researchers have demonstrated that pornography is related to women's sexual self-esteem and body esteem. Women whose male partners consume pornography have reported decreased sexual and body self-esteem, and women who were exposed to pornography in a controlled setting reported feelings of decreased body image and sexual self-esteem (Aubrey, 2006). The data include evidence that women have viewed their partners' use of pornography as a breach of fidelity as well as engendering within the women a sense of sexual unworthiness and unattractiveness to their partners (Benjamin et al., 2010; Bergner & Bridges, 2002; Bridges, Bergner, & Hesson-McInnis, 2003; Ciclitira, 2004, Clark & Widerman, 2000; Lambert, et al., 2012; Sprecher, Regan & McKinney, 1998; Stewart & Szymanski, 2012; Zitzman & Butler, 2009). Similarly, repeated exposure to nonviolent but sexist and dehumanizing pornography was shown to decrease men's satisfaction with their female partners and decrease respect for "female sexual autonomy and self-determination" (Zillmann & Bryant, 1987, p. vii) in agreement with other researchers (Donnerstein, 1980, 1983; Malamuth, 1981; Malamuth & Check, 1980, 1985; Malamuth, Heim, & Feshbach, 1980).

Historically, the majority of the research on pornography has correlated with the industry's male-dominated focus, with researchers biased towards the male experience, at least in terms of their assumption that only men were consumers, or that women only consume pornography with their male partners (Senn & Desmarais, 2004). Past researchers have included women as participants in their studies, but almost without exception the researchers "merely extended hypotheses made about pornography from men to women. This approach has meant that the results have lacked grounding in social reality" (Senn, 1993, p.320). Given the omission of women's self-motivated experience with pornography, therefore creating a bias amongst the

researchers of these studies, much of the current data supports the hypothesis that women overwhelmingly hold negative attitudes regarding men's consumption of pornography (Bergner et al., 2002; Lambert et al., 2012; Sprecher et al., 1998; Zitzman et al., 2009). While these researchers were trying to apply research to women, they naturally inherited a bias towards men from the research that was previously known to them.

A small but growing group of researchers, however, have demonstrated that women engage in their own pornography consumption (Ciclitira, 2003; Daneback, Træen, & Månsson, 2009; Hald & Malamuth, 2008; Maddox, Rhoades, & Markman, 2011; Morrison & Tallack, 2005; Parvez, 2006; Paasonen, 2009; Senn, 1993). With this new data, these researchers have also demonstrated the often complicated and ambivalent feelings and ideologies that women experience in response to their own pornography use, especially in relation to the degree of their feminist identification (Benjamin & Tlusten, 2010; Lawrence & Herold, 1988; Parker & Wampler, 2003; Parvez, 2006; Senn, 1993). Some researchers, for example, have demonstrated that there are women who experience ideological contradictions between their concerns about the exploitation of women by the pornography industry and the fact that watching pornography was very arousing and made them feel sexy (Ciclitira, 2004; Parvez, 2006). These researchers support the notion that consuming pornography may be sexually liberating for some women and increase feelings of bodily and sexual self esteem, a tenet of the third wave feminist belief system (Ciclitira, 2004; Hald et al., 2008; Weinberg, et al, 2010).

These researchers demonstrated that women's experiences with pornography are variegated, individual, and complex, with the intricacy of responses compounded by myriad influencing factors such as sexual orientation, political views, religiosity, relationship status, and level of education. An example of this complexity might be that some of the women in these

studies self-identified as feminists and enjoyed pornography despite the subjugation of women woven into some pornography narratives (Bridges et al., 2010; MacKinnon & Dworkin, 1998; Schussler, 2012). Likewise, some women may derive a sense of female sexual normalization from pornography yet feel unable to live up to the unrealistic standards of the female body ideal that is generally depicted in pornography. These findings highlight a complicated and nuanced relationship between women and pornography that most researchers have yet to truly explore.

Pro-sex feminist adherents posit that pornography has the potential to act as a positive agent for women's sexual politics and women's rights (Ciclitira, 1998; Ciclitira, 2004; Paasonen, 2009; Parvez, 2006). There are a number of relatively unexplored potential benefits of pornography, including improved access to sex education and learning safe sex (Ciclitira, 1998), opportunity for sexual identity-bending (Ciclitira, 1998), as well as opportunities for women to produce and distribute their own representations of their sexual selves (Williams, 1991). From this angle it is possible to hypothesize how pornography, with its controversial and multifaceted complexity, may hold a similarly intricate and ambiguous meaning in the lives of women. This leaves room to explore women's pornography consumption behavior and correlations with feminist beliefs and values, sexual self-esteem, and body esteem.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Participant Criteria

Criteria for this study included that participants must have actively engaged in watching pornographic videos in the past 12 months, have access to the Internet, read English and live in the United States and be 18 years or older. Participants were included regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, marital status, religion, physical ability, and institutional or political affiliation and participation in the survey was conducted on a voluntary basis with an opportunity to receive an incentive by entering a lottery if so desired.

Definitions

Pornography, as defined by the researchers of this study based on several meetings and a review of the literature, is

“The explicit portrayal of sexual activity or sexual organs through recorded (i.e. not live) visual media (including, video, film, video games, magazines, photos, and animation) found on the internet, pay-per-view, in stores, or from friends/acquaintances.

Pornography can be free or purchased using money. Pornography can be used for sexual excitement and arousal. Written descriptions of sexual activity and live exhibitions (online or in-person), such as sex shows, striptease, online sex chats, phone sex, and sexting are **not** considered pornography.”

This definition was provided to participants at the start of the survey and participants were reminded of this definition two more times throughout the survey.

Sample Description

Participants for this part of the study included 109 self-identified women. They ranged in age from 19 to 63, with an average age of 30.19 years ($SD = 8.64$ years). The majority (81.3%) of the participants indicated that their preferred race was White or Euro American, with 5.6% identifying as multiracial, 3.7%, and the 9.4% identifying as Hispanic or Latino Native American or American Indian, Black or African American, and Asian or Pacific Islander, and no response.

The majority (43%) of the participants had a Bachelor degree, while 33.6% had a Master's degree, 14% had some college but no degree, and 9.4% had a PhD, MD, or a PsyD, Associate degree, and/or high school degree or equivalent. The socioeconomic status for participants was lower to middle class, with an average household income of \$23,934.92, reflecting a low class income for these respondents.

Recruitment and Procedure

The Smith College Human Subject Review Board in Northampton, Massachusetts approved the measures for the survey (see Appendix A). Prior to responding to any questions for the survey, participants agreed to an informed consent (see Appendix B) which explained the nature of the voluntary participation, the minimal risks of participating in the study and a list of referral sources should participants experience discomfort or negative reactions during the survey.

The researchers in this study utilized a non-probability “snowball” sampling technique to recruit participants through: (a) social media (Facebook, Reddit, Twitter) recruitment to our website (<http://pornsurvey.info>), (b) Online pornography websites and forums, and, (c) e-mail advertisements sent to personal contacts of the researchers. The recruitment ads and pleas consisted of a brief description of the questionnaire and eligibility requirements with a link to the questionnaire. The potential participants were then directed to the informed consent, and upon

clicking to indicate agreement to the informed consent were then asked three screening questions. If a potential participant answered “yes” to all of the questions, they were directed to the study and if a potential participant did not fit these questions, they were redirected to a screen that explained that they are ineligible to participate in the study.

The survey was administered through SurveyMonkey, an anonymous online survey host that is set up to protect email and IP addresses. Participants were automatically entered in a lottery for a random drawing of forty online gift certificates to amazon.com. Participants were also referred to informational sites regarding pornography and healthy sexuality. In addition, participants had an opportunity to further explore and examine their experiences and reactions to a very controversial yet omnipresent industry.

Measures

The demographic measures included preferred gender identity, age, highest level of educational attainment, level of household income and number of people in the household.

There were three questions about pornography that were asked of participants. The first asked, “On average, how often do you view pornography” with 8 mutually exclusive response options from one times per year to more than three times per day (see Table 1). The second question asked respondents, “On average how much time do you spend viewing pornography?” with 8 mutually exclusive categories from less than one hour per month to more than 3 hours per day (see table 2). The third question was descriptive and asked about the device they most often use to view porn such as cell phone or television (see Table 3).

The bodily esteem scale was adapted from Story’s Body Attitudes Questionnaire scale (1988) and included 8 items, using a 5 point scale running from 1= strong negative feelings and wish somehow change could be made to 5 = have strong positive feelings and desire no change

to be made, including “Body Build”, “Chest/Breasts” and “Penis/Vagina.” For the current sample the response were summed into one scale with solid inter-item reliability (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .84$).

The sexual self esteem scale was adapted from Snell Sexuality Scale (1989) and included 9 items, using a 5 point Likert scale running from 1= strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree, including “I am a good sexual partner”, “I sometimes have doubts about my sexual competence” and “I feel comfortable initiating sex” . For the current sample the response were summed into one scale with solid interitem reliability (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .78$).

The feminist value scale was created for the purposes of this study and included 1 item asking for agreement the statement “I am a feminist” using a 5 point Likert scale running from 1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree.

CHAPTER IV

Findings

Because the participant criteria required that respondents had consumed pornography within the past 12 months, all of the women in this study had consumed pornography on their own volition. Knowing this was an actively consuming sample of women, the researchers aimed to examine a possible relationship between one's degree of feminist values, sexual self-esteem, and body esteem.

Within the sample, more than half of women actively consumed pornography one time per month or more, while very few women consumed pornography daily. One quarter of participants reported watching 1-4 hours of pornography per month, followed by slightly half who reported watching an average of less than one hour or less per month. These findings demonstrate that these women actively consume pornography at their own will with frequency and time spent viewing averaging about one hour one time per month.

Most women in this study preferred to watch pornography using a computer or tablet instead of a television or smart phone. No respondents in the sample reported watching pornography on an Xbox or other video game console.

Respondents scored somewhat low on the body esteem measure ($M = 27.60$, $SD = 6.15$) out of a possible minimum score of 9 and maximum score of 45, representing a score that is slightly below the median score for this category (see Table 4).

Compared to the body esteem measure, the women in this study scored much higher on the sexual self-esteem measure ($M = 34.4$, $SD = 5.47$) out of a possible minimum score of 9 and possible maximum score of 45.

This group of women identified as highly feminist ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 1.03$) representing a possible feminist bias within the study sample.

Correlations

To evaluate the relationship between variables, correlations between variables were examined. There was a positive correlation between sexual self-esteem and body esteem ($r = .339$), indicating that the higher the sexual self-esteem of a participant, the more likely that her body esteem would also be high and vice versa. Degree of feminist identification and sexual self-esteem were also correlated ($r = .210$, $p < .05$), indicating a positive relationship between these two variables. There was no significant correlation between degree of feminist identification and body esteem ($r = 0.62$).

The frequency of viewing and time spent viewing pornography were also positively correlated ($r = .796$, $p < .01$), indicating a mutual relationship between these two variables. Frequency of viewing pornography and sexual self-esteem were correlated ($r = .271$, $p < .05$) as well as body esteem and frequency of viewing pornography ($r = .214$, $p < .05$) and body esteem and amount of time spent viewing pornography ($r = .210$, $p < .05$) indicating that within this group of respondents, the pornography consumption increased feelings of sexual self-esteem and body esteem, or perhaps one would be more likely to engage in viewing pornography based on high sexual self-esteem and body esteem.

There was a negative correlation between higher degree of feminist identification and amount of time spent viewing pornography ($r = -.353$, $p < .01$) supporting the hypothesis that there is a relationship between feminist identification and pornography consumption behavior; in this particular sample, the higher the degree of feminist identification, the less likely one would be to engage in pornography consumption despite the findings that amongst other respondents,

pornography consumption increased feelings of sexual self-esteem and body esteem and vice versa.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

Studying pornography poses challenges in many ways due to its vastly varying content, societal stigma and controversial status, and heteronormative bias within the industry itself as well as within the literature (Benjamin et al., 2010; Ciclitira, 2004; Senn, 1993). The researchers of this study aimed to better understand the effects of women's self-reported pornography consumption on sexual self-esteem and body esteem without a hetero-normative bias. The findings support the hypothesis that there are relationships between and amongst these variables; furthermore, the findings are congruent with more recent literature whose researchers demonstrated that women's relationship to pornography can be more complex and multifaceted than previously assumed (Ciclitira, 2004; Bridges et al., 2003).

Consistent with past research I expected to find a correlation between degree of feminist values and frequency and time spent viewing pornography. According to second wave feminist beliefs, in which pornography is generally conceptualized as violent and degrading towards women, participants who adhered to these beliefs about pornography would likely consume less pornography and might hold contradictory feelings about their use of it (Cowan et al., 1989; Cowan, 1992; McKinnon et al., 1998; Schussler, 2012). Adherents of third wave feminist beliefs, however, might have different feelings about pornography as this tenet of feminist thought celebrates the liberation of women's sexuality with a generally pro-sex, anti-censorship foundation.

In agreement with my expectations to find a correlation between feminist beliefs and pornography consumption behavior, the higher the degree of feminist identification amongst the participants in this study, the less amount of time and frequency they spent consuming

pornography. As I asked in general about degree of feminist values and did not break down which particular feminist belief system participants adhered to (i.e. second or third wave) it is difficult to know how this variable may have informed the results.

Somewhat surprising was the finding that feminist identification and sexual self-esteem were not that significantly positively correlated. Based on the previous literature I would have expected there to be a stronger positive correlation between these two variables, where a higher degree of feminist identification would increase sexual self-esteem, at least according to third wave feminist ideals of female sexual empowerment and ownership of one's body. Once again, perhaps because I do not know which "brand" of feminism the participants identified with, further investigation about the particular influence of feminism on the beliefs of the participants is required.

It was also interesting to me that women who align with pro-feminist ideals, which usually align with combating ideas about women's sexuality and body images reported lower body esteem than women who identified as less feminist (although the sample identified as a whole as having a high degree of feminist values). The sample group as a whole reported much lower body esteem than sexual self-esteem. This leads me to wonder if there is a missing variable within this relationship, such as a sense of internalized societal expectation of ideal body image. A recent meta-analysis of exposure to media-portrayed thin ideal images have revealed small but statistically significant increases in body dissatisfaction amongst women (Groesz, Levine, & Murnen, 2002 in Aubrey, 2006). Similarly, Sun, et al argue that while pro-pornography feminists have long argued that it is false to assume that women are not as easily aroused by sexually explicit material as men, these women have also acknowledged that male-

dominated pornography often ignores and disregards women's sexuality and has the potential to decrease overall body satisfaction (Sun, Bridges, Wosnitzer, Scharrer, & Liberman, 2008).

Another finding was that sexual self-esteem and body esteem were highly correlated, which indicates a mutual relationship between these two variables. The influence of pornography within this relationship is yet unclear. The frequency and time spent viewing pornography were positively correlated, which indicates that the more often a participant in this study viewed pornography, the more time she spent per month watching it. It should be noted, however that 44% of women view pornography less than one hour per month, representing a relatively infrequent consumption.

Perhaps as with similar recent findings about the role of pornography in women's lives, the relationship between women's feminist ideology, body and sexual esteem, and pornography consumption is quite complex and enigmatic, and possibly infused with ambivalence. For example, women who identify as feminist who consume pornography might experience ideological contradictions about the exploitation and degradation of women in the pornography industry and the fact that watching pornography is sexually exciting to them.

Limitations And Future Research

The current study had several strengths, although they should be considered within the context of the study's limitations. As previously noted, the researchers of this study aimed to collect and analyze women's experience with pornography. The participants from the sample were an educated group of women, with over 80% holding a bachelor's degree or higher. The women in this sample may have been more informed about feminist identification and values; this may have influenced the findings. It would be worthwhile, for example, to collect data about women's pornography use amongst a sample of women with varying degrees of feminist

identification to examine whether lower degrees of feminist identification effect pornography consumption behavior.

Another possible variable to further explore that might inform results is women's identification with 2nd or 3rd wave feminist belief systems. Because these two feminist belief systems encompass greatly differing attitudes regarding pornography and its implications for women, findings would likely vary depending on which feminist school of thought women identify more strongly with.

Also something to examine further is a possible relationship between feminist values and feelings about self-perceived contradictory behavior in terms of pornography consumption. For example, what is the experience of a woman who believes that she is actively contributing to the sexual degradation of women, including herself, by willfully consuming pornography? Or, on the contrary, what is the experience of a feminist woman who believes she is actively sexually liberating herself by consuming and enjoying pornography? There is certainly more to be gleaned from the nuances inherent in the relationships between women, feminism and pornography.

Further analyses could also be done to examine possible correlations between sexual orientation as the majority of the women in this study sample self-identified as heterosexual. There are many sub-genres of pornography that cater to the LGBT community; an analyses of a more varied group of female sexual orientations and pornography consumption behavior could perhaps reveal different results from this study.

It would also be of value to further analyze what types and which genres of pornography women are consuming. Pornography that is degrading towards women (in which women are recipients of violent acts/words) may indeed be a more visceral and rarefied portrayal of

women's societal status. The majority of the current literature focuses on this particular arena of the pornography industry, while less attention is paid to amateur porn or LGBT that emphasizes the female experience of pleasure.

References

- Aubrey, J. S. (2006). Exposure to sexually objectifying media and body self-perceptions among college women: An examination of the selective exposure hypothesis and the role of moderating variables. *Sex Roles, 55*, 159-172. doi:10.1007/s11199-006-9070-7
- Averett, P., Benson, M., & Vaillancourt, K. (2008). Young women's struggle for sexual agency: the role of parental messages. *Journal Of Gender Studies, 17(4)*, 331-344.
- Benjamin, O., & Tlusten, D. (2010). Intimacy and/or degradation: Heterosexual images of togetherness and women's embracement of pornography. *Sexualities, 13(5)*, 599-623. doi:10.1177/1363460710376492
- Bergner, R., & Bridges, A. (2002). The significance of heavy pornography involvement for romantic partners: Research and clinical implications. *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy, 28*. 193-206. doi:10.1080/009262302760328235
- Boyle, K. (2000). The pornography debates: Beyond cause and effect. *Women's Studies International Forum, 23(2)*, 187-195. doi:10.1016/S0277-5395(00)00077-7
- Bridges, A. J., Bergner, R. M., & Hesson-McInnis, M. (2003). Romantic partners' use of pornography: Its significance for women. *Journal Of Sex & Marital Therapy, 29(1)*, 1-14. doi:10.1080/713847097
- Bridges, A. J., Wosnitzer, R., Scharrer, E., Sun, C., & Liberman, R. (2010). Aggression and sexual behavior in best-selling pornography videos: A content analysis update. *Violence Against Women, 16(10)*, 1065-1085. doi:10.1177/1077801210382866
- Ciclitira, K. (2004). Pornography, women, and feminism: between pleasure and politics. *Journal of Sexualities 7(3)*, 281-301. doi:10.1177/1363460704040143
- Clark, C. A., & Wideman, M. W. (2000). Gender Reactions to a hypothetical relationship

- partner's masturbation and use of sexually explicit material. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 37(2), 133-141.
- Cowan, G. (1992). Feminist attitudes toward pornography control. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 16, 165-177. doi:10.1111/j.1471-6402.1992.tb00247.x
- Cowan, G., Chase, C. J., & Stahly, G.B., (1989). Feminist and fundamentalist attitudes toward pornography control. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 13, 97-112. doi:10.1111/j.1471-6402.1989.tb00988.x
- Cowan, G., & Dunn, K.F. (1994). What themes in pornography lead to perceptions of the degradation of women? *Journal of Sex Research*, 31(1), 11-21.
doi:10.1080/00224499409551726
- Daneback, K., Træen, B., & Månsson, S. (2009). Use of pornography in a random sample of Norwegian heterosexual couples. *Archives Of Sexual Behavior*, 38(5), 746-753.
doi:10.1007/s10508-008-9314-4
- Donnerstein, E. (1980). Aggressive-erotica and violence against women. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 39, 269-277. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.39.2.269
- Donnerstein, E. (1983). Erotica and human aggression. In R. Green & E. Donnerstein (Eds), *Aggression: Theoretical and Empirical Reviews*, 2, 127-154. New York: Academic Press.
- Glascook, J. (2005). Degrading content and character sex: Accounting for men and women's differential reactions to pornography. *Communication Reports*, 18(1), 43-53.
doi:10.1080/08934210500084230
- Groesz, L. M., Levine, M. P., & Murnen, S. K. (2002). The effect of experimental presentation of thin media images on body satisfaction: A meta-analytic review. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 31, 1-16.

- Hald, G. M. & Malamuth, N. M. (2008). Self-perceived effects of pornography consumption. *Archive of Sexual Behaviors, 37*: 614-625. doi:10.1007/s10508-007-9212-1
- Internet Filter Learning Center (2008). Pornography Statistics. <http://www.internet-filter-review.toptenreviews.com/internet-pornographystatistics.html>. Accessed on November 6, 2008.
- Lambert, N. M., Negash, S., Stillman, T.F., Olmstead, S. B., & Fincham, F.D. (2012). A love that doesn't last: Pornography consumption and weakened commitment to one's romantic partner. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 31(4)*, 410-438. doi:10.1521/jscp.2012.31.4.410
- Lawrence, K. & Herold, E. S., (1988). Women's attitudes toward and experience with sexually explicit materials. *The Journal of Sex Research, 24*, 161-169. doi:10.1080/00224498809551406
- Maddox, A. M., Rhoades, G. K., & Markman, H. J. (2011). Viewing sexually-explicit materials alone or together: Associations with relationship quality. *Archives Of Sexual Behavior, 40(2)*, 441-448. doi:10.1007/s10508-009-9585-4
- MacKinnon, C., & Dworkin, A. (1989). In harm's way: The pornography civil rights hearings. Harvard University Press.
- Malamuth, N. (1981). Rape proclivity among males. *Journal of Social Issues, 37(4)*, 138-157. doi:10.1111/j.1540-4560.1981.tb01075.x
- Malamuth, N., & Check, J.V.P. (1980). Penile tumescence and perceptual responses to rape as a function of victim's perceived reactions. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 10*, 528-547. doi:10.1111/j.1559-1816.1980.tb00730.x
- Malamuth, N., & Check, J.V.P. (1985). The effects of aggressive pornography on beliefs in rape myths: Individual differences. *Journal of Research in Personality, 19*, 299-320.

doi:10.1016/0092-6566(85)90021-2

Malamuth, N., Heim, M., & Feshbach, S., (1980). The sexual responsiveness of college students to rape depictions: Inhibitory and dis-inhibitory effects. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 38, 399-408.

Mayers, K.S., Heller, D.K., & Heller, J.A. (2003). Damaged sexual self-esteem: A kind of disability. *Sexuality and Disability*, 21, 269-282.

doi:10.1023/B:SEDI.0000010069.08844.04

McGlynn, C. (2010). Marginalizing feminism?: Debating extreme pornography laws in public and policy discourse. *Everyday Pornography*, 190-202. New York, NY US: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.

Morrison, T. G., & Tallack, D. (2005). Lesbian and bisexual women's interpretation of lesbian and ersatz lesbian pornography. *Sexuality and Culture*, 9(2), 3-30. doi:10.1007/s12119-005-1005-x

Paasonen, S. (2009). Healthy sex and pop porn: Pornography, feminism and the Finnish context. *Sexualities*, 12, 586-604. doi:10.1177/1363460709340369

Oswald, D. L., Franzoi, S. L. & Frost, K.A. (2012). Experiencing sexism and young women's body esteem. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 31(10), 1112-1137.

doi:10.1521/jscp.2012.31.10.1112

Parker, T.S. & Wampler, K. S. (2003). How bad is it? Perceptions of the relationship impact of different types of internet sexual activities. *Contemporary Family Therapy*, 25(4), 415-429.

Parvez, Z. F. (2006). The labor of pleasure: how perceptions of emotional labor impact women's enjoyment of pornography. *Gender & Society*, 20, 605-631.

doi:10.1177/0891243206291109

- Philipson, I. (1984). The repression of history and gender: A critical perspective on the feminist sexuality debate. *Signs, 10(1)*, 113-118. doi:10.1086/494118
- Ropelato, J. (2007). Internet pornography statistics. Retrieved November 1, 2010 from <http://internet-filter-review.toptenreview.com/internet-pornography-statistics.html>.
- Schussler, A. (2012). The relation between feminism and pornography. *Scientific Journal of Humanistic Studies, 4(6)*, 66-71.
- Senn, C. (1993). Women's multiple perspectives and experiences with porn. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 17*, 319-341.
- Senn, C. & Desmarais, S. 2004. Impact of interaction with a partner or friend on the exposure effects of pornography and erotica. *Violence and victims, 19*, 645-658.
doi:10.1891/vivi.19.6.645.66347
- Snell, W. E., Jr. & Papini, D. R. (1989). The sexuality scale: An instrument to measure sexual-esteem, sexual-depression, and sexual-preoccupation. *The Journal of Sex Research, 26*, 256-263.
- Sprecher, S., Regan, P. C., & McKinney, K. (1998). Beliefs about the outcomes of extramarital sexual relationships as a function of the gender of the "cheating spouse." *Sex Roles, 38*, 301-311. doi:10.1023/A:1018793302286
- Stack, S., Wasserman, I. & Kern, R. (2004). Adult social bonds and use of internet pornography. *Social Science Quarterly, 85(1)*, 75-88. doi:10.1111/j.0038-4941.2004.08501006.x
- Stewart, D. N., & Szymanski, D. M. (2012). Young adult women's reports of their male romantic partner's pornography use as a correlate of their self-esteem, relationship quality, and sexual satisfaction. *Sex Roles 67*, 257-271. doi:10.1007/s11199-012-0164-0
- Story, M. D. (1988). *Body Attitudes Questionnaire*. Lake Mills, Iowa: Graphic.
- Sun, C., Bridges, A., Wosnitzer, R., Scharrer, E., & Liberman, R. 2008. A comparison of male

and female directors in popular pornography: what happens when women are at the helm? *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 32, 312-325.

Weinberg, M. S., Williams, C. J., Kleiner, S., & Irizarry, Y. (2010). Pornography, normalization, and empowerment. *Archives Of Sexual Behavior*, 39(6), 1389-1401. doi:10.1007/s10508-009-9592-5

Williams, Linda (1991) *Hard Core*. London: Pandora.

Zillman, D., & Bryant, J. (1988). Pornography's impact on sexual satisfaction. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 18, 438-453. doi:10.1111/j.1559-1816.1988.tb00027.x

Zitzman, S. T. & Butler, M.H. (2009). Wives' experience of husband's pornography use and concomitant deception as an attachment threat in the adult pair-bonding relationship. *Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity*, 16, 210-240.

Table 1: On average, how often do you view pornography:

	Women	Percentage
1 time per year	6	6%
1 time in three months	20	18%
1 time per month	28	26%
1 time per week	27	25%
2-4 times per week	19	17%
1 time per day	2	2%
3 times per day	1	1%
More than 3 times per day	1	1%
Missing	5	5%
Total	109	100%

Modal category Italicized and Emboldened

Table 2: On average how much time do you spend viewing pornography?

	Women	Percentage
Less than one hour per month	48	44%
1-4 hours per month	26	24%
1 hour per week	13	12%
2-4 hours per week	13	12%
5-6 hours per week	1	1%
1 hour per day	1	1%
2-3 hours per day	1	1%
Missing	6	6%
TOTAL	109	100%

Modal category Italicized and Emboldened

Table 3: What do you primarily use to view pornography?

	Women	Percentage
Cell Phone	7	6%
Computer/Tablet	84	77%
Television	11	10%
Xbox/Playstation/Other videogame console	0	0%
Magazines	2	2%
Missing	5	5%
TOTAL	109	100%

Modal category Italicized and Emboldened

Table 4: descriptives of primary variables

	<i>Possible Minimum</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Possible Maximum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Bodily Self Esteem Total	9	9	45	39	27.60	6.15
Sexual Self Esteem Total	9	21	45	45	34.44	5.47
Feminist Identification	1	1	5	5	4.14	1.03

Table 5: Correlations Between Variables

	Sexual Self Esteem	Bodily Self Esteem	Feminist Identification	Frequency of Pornography Viewing	Amount of time Viewing Pornography
Sexual Self Esteem	1.0				
Bodily Self Esteem	.339***	1.0			
Feminist Identification	.210*	.062	1.0		
Frequency of Pornography Viewing	.271*	.214*	-.176	1.0	
Amount of time Viewing Pornography	.176	.210*	-.353**	.796**	1.0

* = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$

Figure 1: Household Income

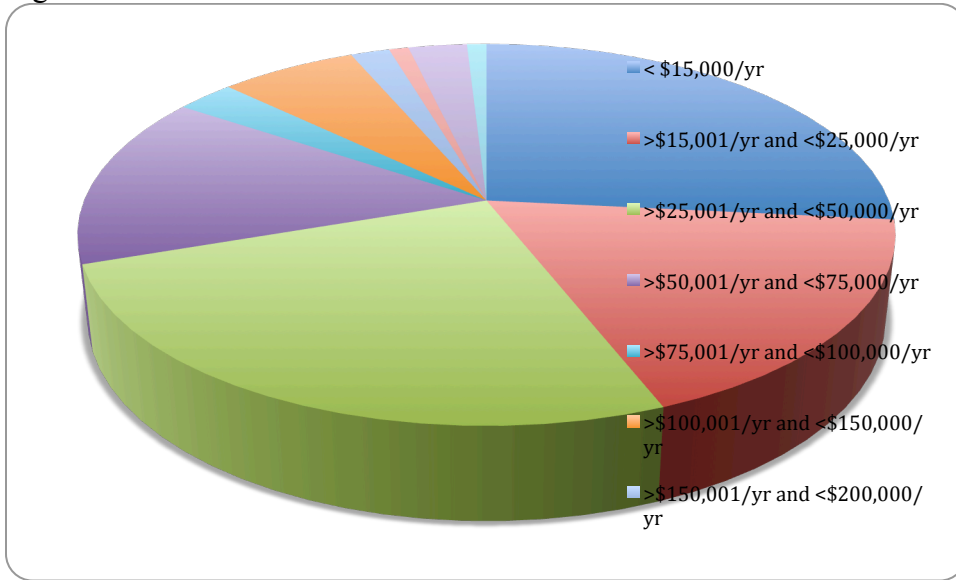
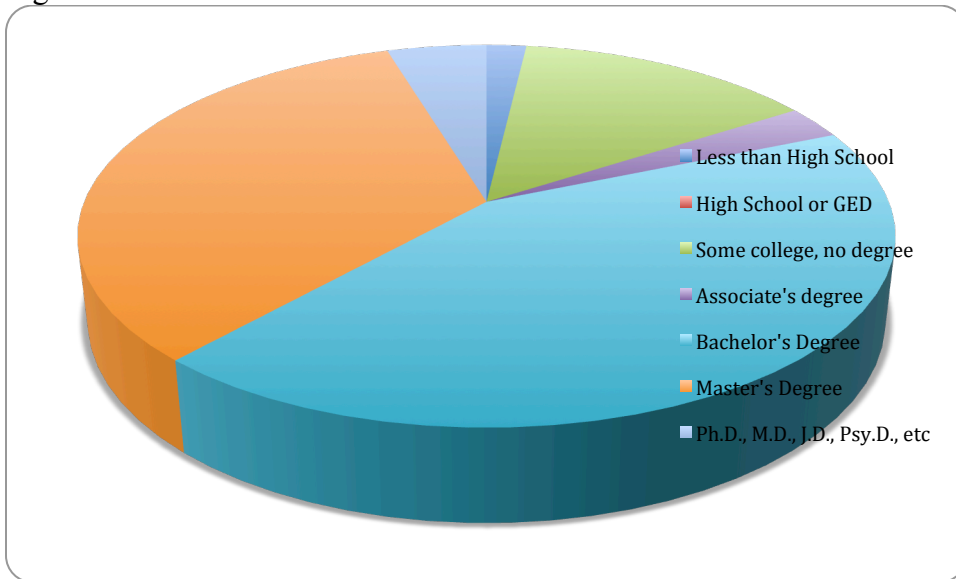


Figure 2: Educational Attainment



Appendix A

Human Subject Review Board Letter



School for Social Work
Smith College
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063
T (413) 585-7950 F (413) 585-7994

March 7, 2013

David L. Burton, M.S.W., Ph.D.
George Leibowitz, Ph.D., LICSW

Dear David & George,

Thank you for making all the requested revisions to your application. Your project is now approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee.

Please note the following requirements:

Consent Forms: All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

Maintaining Data: You must retain all data and other documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

Renewal: You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

Completion: You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished).

Sincerely and best of luck with your project,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Marsha Pruett'.

Marsha Pruett, PhD, MSL
Vice Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

Appendix B

Informed Consent

Dear Potential Participant,

David Burton, PhD is a professor at Smith College School for Social Work in Northampton, MA, and George Leibowitz, PhD is a professor at the University of Vermont. We are doing research with a group of students and colleagues to try to understand how pornography use is related to attitudes about sexual beliefs and behaviors. The information we collect will be used for graduate-level theses and in possible future presentations, publications, and/or dissertations.

To participate you must:

1. be 18 or older,
2. be able to read and write in English,
3. currently live in the United States, and
4. have viewed pornography in the last 12 months.

The study will be conducted with an online survey that will be available on a secure web page. We are asking some very personal and sensitive questions. You will be asked a series of questions regarding your age, race, sexual identity, income level, current state residence, and relationship status. You will also be asked about some of your sexual beliefs and behaviors, as well as questions about pornography use, emotions, personality, religion, and self esteem. If you indicate that you are a sexual offender, you will be asked specific questions about your offenses. You will not be asked for any information that would tell us who you are, and all your answers will be anonymous.

There is a risk that your participation in this study could cause uncomfortable or negative emotions to arise. If you feel a need or desire to leave the survey at any time, please do so. Our goal is not to upset you. We have included some referrals below for you to use if you feel a need to get help.

Possible benefits include the opportunity to reflect on your use of pornography and sexual behaviors and to enter into a lottery to get one of forty \$30 Amazon.com gift certificates to be drawn at the end of the project in September, 2013. You may also receive some satisfaction by helping to contribute to an understanding of the use and effects of pornography, which is an under-researched area.

This survey is totally anonymous. It will take about 30 to 40 minutes. All data from the questionnaire will be kept in a secure location for a period of three years, as required by Federal guidelines. Data stored electronically will be fully protected in encrypted files. If the material is needed beyond a three year period, it will continue to be kept in a secure location and will be destroyed when it is no longer needed.

If you enter the lottery for one of the \$30 gift certificates, you will be asked to do so using another database- we will not be able to link your survey responses to your name or email in any

way. We will have your email address to be used ONLY for the drawing. It will not be shared with anyone for any purpose. In other words, while your answers will be anonymous, your participation will not be if you enter the drawing. Only we will see the list and we will destroy it after the drawing.

Your participation in this questionnaire is voluntary. You have the right to refuse to answer any question on the survey. You may also withdraw from the study at any time by navigating away from the webpage on your browser. If you do this and have completed less than 25 percent of the survey, any answers you provided to any previous questions will be immediately deleted. However, once you complete 25 percent or more of the survey, it will not be possible to withdraw your data.

If you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact us directly at dlburton@smith.edu or gleibowi@uvm.edu. Should you have any concerns about your rights or any aspect of the study, you are encouraged to contact Dr. David Burton at (413) 585-7985 or the Co-Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee at (413) 585-7974.

*

BY CHECKING THE BOX BELOW THAT SAYS “I AGREE,” YOU ARE INDICATING THAT YOU HAVE READ AND HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, YOUR PARTICIPATION, AND YOUR RIGHTS; AND THAT YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.

Please print a copy of this page for your records.

I disagree

I agree

Appendix C

Participation Plea

Dear potential participant,

I am currently working on my Masters in Social Work at Smith College, School for Social Work. Over the past nine months I have been working with a team of MSWs and PhDs to craft a survey about Internet pornography use. Our hope is that this survey will produce new researching findings that will shed light onto the multifaceted world of this under-studied area.

You are receiving this email because you, or someone you know, may qualify to participate in my quantitative research study. To be eligible for participation one must meet all of the following criteria:

- Are 18 or older
- Are able to read and write in English
- Are currently living in the United States
- You have viewed pornography in the past 12 months and/or you currently view pornography

This survey is completely anonymous.

Researchers do not understand how pornography affects people. Correlations between pornography and beliefs about sex and sexual consent have not been tested. Or about effects on self esteem, positive or negative. Almost nothing has been written about women, clergy members, mental health providers, or LGBT people, and pornography.

If this sounds interesting to you, and even if it doesn't, we would be delighted if you would take part in this study! **All participants are eligible to enter into a raffle for \$30 [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) gift cards.**

If you qualify to participate in the anonymous survey, you can take the survey by following this link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/HYVM2JP>

The survey will take approximately 30-40 minutes to complete.

Because the questionnaire asks for information regarding your sexual beliefs and behaviors as well as questions about pornography use, there is a small risk that your participation in this study could cause uncomfortable or negative emotions to arise. Our website (see link below) has a referral list should you feel you need help.

Your help is vital to us! Thanks for forwarding this to other potential participants!

Best,
Laura

Check us out online (survey, facebook, website):

Survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/HYVM2JP>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Potential-Multiple-Meanings-of-Pornography-Research-Project/563188263696093>

Website: <http://pornsurvey.info/>