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Baring it All:

Hot Girls ' Representation of Workers' Experiences in Internet
Pornography Production

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Meg-Ellen Sarah Tatton-Brown

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Abstract

This thesis uses the Netflix feature documentary, *Hot Girls Wanted* (2015), and Netflix TV series, *Hot Girls Wanted: Turned On* (2017), as a lens for exploring the issues and challenges faced by workers in the contemporary internet pornography industries. It analyses connected representational concerns, both in terms of how these individuals' workplace experiences are framed in the documentary and TV series, and in terms of the representational implications in online pornography and broader 'pornified' culture. The documentary and the TV series episodes (including "Money Shot", "Take Me Private", "Owning It", and "Women on Top") have been utilised as case studies to focus the discussion in each chapter around the representational issues they raise, including those related to gender, race, violence, coercion and mediated intimacy. I have examined interviews with the subjects, mise-en-scène, and cinematography and editing techniques chosen by the filmmakers, to highlight the ways in which *Hot Girls* represents the various emotional and physical struggles experienced by workers in the pornography industry. I then compare and contextualise this close scene analysis with what academic literature evidences about the experiences and representations of these workers, arguing that along with the proliferation of opportunities in the expanded internet pornography industries, there has also been an expansion of workplace and representational concerns.

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Chapter One: Introduction

This thesis explores how the Netflix feature documentary *Hot Girls Wanted* (2015) and the Netflix TV series *Hot Girls Wanted: Turned On* (2017) represent the experiences of pornography workers and how they frame the social and political issues raised by internet pornography. I use the phrase “*Hot Girls*” throughout this thesis when referring to both the documentary and TV series. *Hot Girls Wanted* is a 2015 feature-length Netflix documentary directed by Jill Bauer and Ronna Gradus. It focuses on the experiences of five young women between the ages of 18-25 involved in Florida’s amateur pornography industry. In 2017, a six-part TV series sequel to *Hot Girls Wanted* (2015) was released on Netflix: *Hot Girls Wanted: Turned On*, which includes analysis into some of the experiences faced by both male and female workers. Both Bauer and Gradus returned to help direct and produce some of the episodes. Each episode focuses on a different aspect of the industry and the associated issues for industry workers, looking at the implications of the complex ways in which sex, technology and relationships intertwine. Both the documentary and TV series present the challenging aspects of working in the pornography industry, exploring the concept of exploitation as young workers struggle physically and emotionally with the various issues raised by employment in the profession. These issues include violence and racism in interracial pornography; the struggles faced by feminist pornographers in a market saturated with free, mainstream content; the challenges faced by cam girls regarding their personas and the conflict between on and off screen realities; and the consequences of a societal obsession with the ‘teenybopper’ trend and coercion that arises with young (amateur) workers new to the industry. By the end of *Hot Girls*, many of the workers decide to leave the industry, or question their place in pornography production.

The global pornography industry is estimated at \$97 billion, with approximately \$12 billion of this stemming from the United States (NBC News, 2015). Over 5.5 billion hours of pornography was consumed in just 2018 alone, with *Pornhub* (the world’s largest pornography site) receiving more than 33.5 billion visits during the year (Fight the New Drug, 2019). This explosion of internet pornography has brought with it new trends, categories and niche content that is becoming increasingly popular and which creates challenges for workers involved in the industry. As is evident throughout *Hot Girls*, it is now common for mainstream pornography

to offer material depicting sexual violence against women in the form of ‘punishment’ videos and forced blowjobs, adult women dolled up to look like schoolgirls and underage teens, or to highlight negative racial stereotypes in interracial pornography. By focusing my thesis around the challenges that workers face in internet pornography production, I am suggesting it is important to explore how these popular trends impact on these workers in the industry. I use the documentary *Hot Girls Wanted* (2015) and TV series *Hot Girls Wanted: Turned On* (2017) as a lens for examining these issues and how they are represented to Netflix’s audiences.

Methodology

Throughout this thesis, I present close scene analysis of *Hot Girls Wanted* (2015) and various episodes in *Hot Girls Wanted: Turned On* (2017), in order to unpack key contemporary issues that directly affect workers in the pornography industry and find echo in broader inequalities related to gender, race and sexuality outside the industry. Building on this analysis, I compare and contextualise *Hot Girls* within the findings and arguments of academic literature in pornography studies, to tease out the deeper social and cultural concerns reflected in these popular representations.

Film style

Hot Girls was filmed in cinéma vérité style (meaning ‘truthful cinema’ or ‘cinema of truth’), wherein the subjects face the camera lens and speak to the audience without visible interference from the filmmakers (Hassard, 1998). The camera also follows the subjects through their daily activities, capturing their impromptu actions, thoughts and feelings as naturally as possible. Filmmaker, Ronna Gradus says, “we enjoy vérité storytelling, so we really just wanted to let the people in the film speak for themselves and not have talking heads” (Cassel, 2015, para. 7). In this way, cinéma vérité provides subjects with greater authenticity when sharing information, allowing viewers to relate to their stories to a greater extent. *Hot Girls* adheres to Nash’s (2011) definition of “observational documentary”, where showing takes priority over telling, “providing the audience with the impression that they are witnessing lived time” (p. 225). With this style of documentary, the filmmakers usually spend a significant amount of time with the subjects, or “social actors”, in order to develop a trusting relationship (Nash, 2011). Researchers, Debby Herbenick and Bryant Paul from the Kinsey Institute for Sex

Research, provide snippets of factual information and statistics that appear intermittently on the screen throughout *Hot Girls*, creating context for the ideas explored. As the main focus of *Hot Girls* is the subjects' discussion of their experiences, *Hot Girls* plays quiet background instrumental music so as not to take attention away from the dialogue. When workers discuss key issues, this music often becomes melancholy as a tool to encourage negative feelings in the viewer. Maccarone (2010) explains this by saying that documentary film usually has little "image and sound manipulation", as "such manipulation represents a distortion of the actual and thus not something to be a part of documenting the actual" (p. 195). According to Maccarone (2010), to appear as 'truthful' as possible, documentaries typically aim to appear as though they have not been heavily edited, yet still display a level of artistry in their execution.

Hot Girls does face limitations as a text. A documentary is a careful representation in which the filmmakers present a particular viewpoint or context. What we may assume are 'realities' in a documentary, are in fact constructed/framed by the filmmakers, and all of the choices in composition, editing, choice of subject and mise-en-scène, portray issues in particular ways. Viewers must acknowledge that there could be additional information being withheld from the viewer, comments from subjects may be taken out of context, or there may be positive aspects of the industry that have not been explored. A famous quote by documentarian, John Grierson sums up this argument by saying, "the presence of the actual does not make a documentary film because what one does with actual can be as meretricious and synthetic and phony as Hollywood at its worst" (Grierson, 1946, p. 159). In his view, a documentary "goes to the actual, and photographs it and edits and shapes it" (Grierson, 1946, p 159). Maccarone (2010) also provides similar analysis, saying that the goal of a documentary is to change minds and ideas, therefore it cannot be balanced or objective. It must also be acknowledged that 'truth' (particularly within film) is often "something in the realm of opinion" (Butchart, 2006, p. 429), meaning that what one person considers to be the truth, may not be what another person considers the truth. For example, while the filmmakers of *Hot Girls* explore a range of challenges faced by workers in the pornography industry, emphasising that a career in the industry can be difficult, there may be others who would take an alternate stance and highlight the positive aspects of such a career.

Academics including Nash (2011) have identified ethical implications that arise, particularly with observational documentary filmmaking. Nash (2011) references Pryluck's (2005) article

“Ultimately We Are All Outsiders: The Ethics of Documentary Filming”, who raises concern regarding intrusion into the lives of documentary subjects. For Pryluck, observational documentary denies subjects the right “to privacy, to be free of humiliation, shame and indignity, and the right to control of their personality” (Nash, 2011, p. 228). Pryluck says that because documentary commonly focuses on the ‘private’ (family life, or individuals facing difficult emotional situations for example), specific ethical issues arise, ultimately arguing that “the filmmaker is an outsider who cannot understand the world of those he or she films. The filmmaker will ultimately take his or her gear and go home, leaving the participants to face the consequences alone” (Nash, 2011, p. 228). This can be applied to *Hot Girls*, in which the filmmakers are attempting to shed light on an industry they are not permanently a part of. *Hot Girls* places emphasis on the experiences and issues faced by pornography workers. Many of these challenges are physically or emotionally problematic, with *Hot Girls* forcing its subjects to acknowledge and discuss these difficulties, while ultimately leaving them to make their own decisions and face their own consequences.

Henry (2018) identifies an ethical dilemma that arose after the release of *Hot Girls Wanted: Turned On* (2017). Pornography performer, Gia Page (a pseudonym), had her personal Facebook page displayed on-screen, with her legal names made visible (Henry, 2018). Two cam girls also had their livestreams included in a montage, without having given consent (Henry, 2018). The filmmakers argued that Page had signed all the necessary documents giving her permission, and that because the two cam girls were streaming on a public website, it was legally acceptable to use this footage (Henry, 2018). Henry (2018) emphasises however, that it was not the concept of legality that upset the women; instead “their problem was that the filmmakers were more concerned about presenting their chosen narrative than prioritising the privacy and anonymity of sex workers, who can often be stigmatised for participating in the sex industry (p. 4). The women also thought it unfair that “the filmmakers claimed that their priority was illuminating online sex work practices that may be concerning or dangerous, while arguably putting online sex workers in more danger by increasing the likelihood of them being stalked and harassed” (Henry, 2018, p. 4). This particular example highlights the filmmaker’s priority to showcase a particular narrative, even if it means disregarding the concerns of their subjects.

We can see throughout *Hot Girls* that the filmmakers have employed specific techniques to represent the experiences and issues faced by workers. Close-up shots are used to show subject

emotion and to force viewers to closely watch distressing sexual acts. This is evident when the viewer is shown clips of performer, Ava being physically violated in a *Latina Abuse* scene depicted in *Hot Girls Wanted* (2015) for example. Juxtaposition is another technique used which creates a contrasting effect. In *Hot Girls Wanted: Turned On* (2017) episode “Money Shot”, male African American performer, Jax is shown telling the viewer how much he enjoys pleasing a woman during sex, before the episode cuts to the filming of an interracial sex scene in which Jax is shown having violently aggressive sex as instructed by the filmmaker.

These techniques work together to create an uneasy atmosphere in which the viewer is positioned by the filmmaker to consider the issues created by the pornography industry.

Film Review

An internet search indicates that *Hot Girls Wanted* (2015) has received its fair share of criticism from viewers. A common complaint is that the filmmakers have edited the documentary to undermine any autonomy the girls feel they have. I would argue that, to the contrary, the filmmakers draw attention to the seriousness of the issues the girls face. Freelance film critic and writer, Kyle Turner says that *Hot Girls Wanted* (2015) “takes the cognizance of its subjects and casts it aside in favour of portraying its performers as infantilized victims” (Turner, 2015, para. 1). Turner (2015) argues that the girls featured are intelligent females who are aware of the choices they are making and why they are making them, but that the film takes away their agency. He says that rather than suggesting ways that these women can be protected from exploitation in the pornography industry, it instead emphasises that they should not be involved in the industry in the first place. Turner (2015) says that the filmmakers “take specific steps to invalidate their [the girls’] words” (para. 5). In one scene, Tressa (aka Stella May) says that working in the pornography industry makes her happy, but Turner (2015) says that “moribund music cues underline [her] declaration” (para. 5). In my opinion, these music cues are used as a foreshadowing technique, rather than a way to discredit Stella’s comment. At the end of the documentary, Stella leaves the industry after only a few months, claiming that she is extremely relieved to be out and that it was the best decision she had made. The foreshadowing suggests to viewers that Stella’s opinion of her work may not remain consistent following the struggles she faces with physical health, abusive scenes, and family and relationship conflicts while in the industry.

In another scene, Jade (aka Ava Kelly), explains that the “facial abuse” (forced blowjob) trend is performative and not as bad as it seems. Turner (2015) feels that “the scene leans on the actual performance to undercut her agency in the matter” (para. 5). In my view, by including juxtaposition between Ava’s words and footage of the performance, the filmmakers are wanting viewers to see the severity of facial abuse and understand that no matter Ava’s justifications, the performance is physically harmful and degrading to women. Ultimately, Turner (2015) argues that *Hot Girls Wanted* (2015) treats its female subjects as young girls who have no idea what they have gotten themselves into, and that “the terrible things they’ll experience here [in the industry] will teach them a lesson” (para. 5). I think the filmmakers are shedding light on an industry which many people only see the surface of. The documentary instead emphasises that these amateur performers are young, inexperienced and therefore vulnerable women at risk of exploitation. The filmmakers’ exploration of a range of issues they face, aims to raise awareness of what work in the industry can be like, and perhaps indicates that these women deserve greater protection than they currently have.

Opening Sequence Close Analysis-*Hot Girls Wanted* (2015)

I have included analysis of the opening montage as it suggests that pop culture may act as a catalyst of sorts for the pornography industry, providing background context for the viewer. The industry itself does not really feature in the opening sequence. Aside from brief footage of Belle Knox (a young woman— known as the “Duke Porn Star”— who opted for work as a performer to pay for her college tuition), the montage consists of pop culture references as well as news clips discussing the sexualisation of modern day culture, particularly among teenagers and young adults. Some content displayed includes a clip from the *Fifty Shades of Grey* film, a provocative music video featuring Jennifer Lopez, images of Nicki Minaj in erotic clothing twerking to her song *Anaconda*, and reference to *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*. The concept of narcissism among young adults is also highlighted. For instance, the montage emphasises an obsession with selfie-taking, with a newsreader saying, “taking a good selfie can turn just about anyone into an insta-lebrity”, as the camera flicks through a range of photos featuring young women posing seductively. To further accentuate this, Facebook status posts are displayed with the text “Look at what I’m doing” and “Look at ME”. Played over the top of the montage is repeating techno funk music with an intense beat, creating a frenzied, almost stressful atmosphere.

It appears that the montage is framing the pornography industry through a ‘pornification of culture’ lens. By displaying images of influential celebrities flaunting their bodies and sexuality for fame and profit, emphasis is placed on pop culture now contributing to the mainstreaming of pornography. The montage positions the viewer to feel a sense of panic regarding how pornography may be infiltrating young minds and mainstream culture; hence the music contributes to this feeling of franticness. For young women aspiring to be like celebrities who are often seen as the ultimate ‘role model’ (such as Nicki Minaj and Jennifer Lopez), they may look at pornography as a desirable industry to be involved in. Alternatively, many will see the pornography industry as the root cause of our sexualised society and will not view it in a favourable light. By forcing the viewer from the beginning to consider the implications of pop culture and pornography, a clear transition is made when *Hot Girls Wanted* (2015) then moves into representing the issues faced by workers in the pornography industry.

Opening Sequence Close Analysis: *Hot Girls Wanted: Turned On* (2017)

The opening sequence of the TV series consists of a montage of images and footage depicting the ways that love and relationships have changed over the years, following the development of technology and the increasing sexualisation of our culture. The display of these images evokes concern in the viewer about the overall impact of pornography on love, relationships and broader culture. While this is not the topic of the main part of the TV series, the emotive montage brings the viewer to a state of worry, concern or moral panic for all of the issues that lie ahead. At the beginning, we are shown black and white imagery depicting society before our present day. We see footage of couples kissing and hugging passionately with an emphasis on chivalry, as a male opens the car door for his female partner. Another shot shows a handwritten love letter being passed on. The importance of knowledge surrounding female anatomy and safe sex practices are emphasised with a diagram of the female reproductive system and images of condom packets with the slogan “NO GLOVE NO LOVE”.

As the opening sequence progresses and we move closer to the present day, we see a shift in the way sexual relationships are navigated, as a hook-up culture is evident and technology is utilised to satisfy sexual appetites. Images start to be displayed more rapidly as adult VCR titles are shown on the screen. Juxtaposition is used here as a close-up of an older newspaper article titled “Looking for Love” is depicted, featuring a “seeking-arrangements” listing for men

wanting serious relationships with women. The camera then jumps to a modern seeking arrangements internet search, but this time for casual encounters. Footage and stills from webcam sites are displayed, as are images of a sexual build-your-own cyber soulmate online game and dating websites like Tinder. The opening sequence ends by placing emphasis on social media as the camera scrolls increasingly fast through a selection of text messages, 'likes' and view counts. Vastly different from the handwritten love note at the beginning of the sequence, the messages shown are all sexual in nature, such as "What would you do to me right now if you were here?" and "I want you. Right. Now". By speeding up the pace of editing, the different elements blur together to create a muddle of ideas, perhaps signalling that the sexualisation of our culture paired with technology, can cause confusion and complications within relationships. The song "Keep Your Head" by David O'Dowda plays in the background throughout the sequence. The title may hold significance as "Keep Your Head" could refer to the need for people to keep their wits about them as they navigate a new digital society so focused on a culture of sex.

Ultimately, the montage emphasises society's shift towards a casual hook-up culture, accentuating the difference between past and present-day attitudes. By first showing the viewer images of couples in love, who are respecting each other and navigating sexual relationships in a safe and healthy way, to then showing images of people hiding behind their screens viewing and sending explicit content to one another, the montage portrays a sexual landscape that has drastically and rapidly changed. It encourages feelings of concern as the viewer questions the impacts of pornography on sexual and romantic relationships. This montage is significant as it shows just how much of an effect technology advancement has had on intimate relationships, as well as emphasising how *easy* it has become to communicate sexually with another person. It forces the viewer to question just how much more sexualised our culture may end up and provoke thinking into what this may mean for society if we continue in such a way. It also suggests to viewers that if sex and sexuality are now seen as inherently 'casual', this could suggest reasoning as to why many young adults are inclined to find work in the pornography industry.

Chapter Overview

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter introduced and provided context on the key screen texts, outlined the methodology and explored a critic response to *Hot Girls Wanted* (2015). A close scene analysis of the opening sequences of *Hot Girls* has critically analysed the meaning behind the images presented and how they connect to the pornography industry. It suggested that pop culture and technology advancement has contributed to a ‘pornification’ of society, in which we have seen a shift to a more casual attitude towards sexuality. This desensitization of sexualised behaviour could suggest why an increasing number of young adults are choosing to exchange sex for money. Chapter two provides some context on the pornography industry today, looking at the trends and demand that underpins the types of sub-industries and issues explored in the thesis, and the relevant academic literature available in this field.

In chapter three, I begin my analysis with *Hot Girls Wanted: Turned On* (2017) episode “Money Shot”, looking at interracial pornography involving African American and Latin American performers, arguing that this popular category is often violent and racist. “Money Shot” suggests that abusive interracial pornography not only physically harms a female performer, but that for both male and female performers, it reduces them to nothing but negative stereotypes, influencing the way society views those of African American and Latin American ethnicity.

In chapter four, I investigate the female camming profession as represented in *Hot Girls Wanted: Turned On* (2017) episode “Take Me Private” and “Owning It”. I argue that a computer screen creates conflict between the real and adopted self, positions women as objects of the male gaze, and encourages women to disregard their health. The episodes emphasise that while camming does have enjoyable aspects for performers, it is ultimately a challenging profession which may not be sustainable long-term due to both physical and emotional demands.

In chapter five, I look at the work of two feminist pornographers, explored in *Hot Girls Wanted: Turned On* (2017) episode “Women on Top”. I argue that these women have to compete against misogynistic mainstream pornography, face time and money constraints, and are forced to

contend with pornography stigma and the belief that being anti-mainstream pornography equates to an anti-sex mindset. At the end of the episode, one pornographer becomes unsure of her place in the industry and questions whether she will be able to continue her work for much longer. “Women on Top” ultimately shows that creating feminist pornography is difficult and suggests that the career may not be viable for some.

In chapter six, I look at *Hot Girls Wanted* (2015), which features young women new to the pornography industry. I argue that these amateur performers are exposed to exploitative practices involving physical health, sexual assault and coercion, and an obsession with pseudo-child appearances. Throughout the documentary, we see five young performers who are initially optimistic and excited about their new careers in the pornography industry. As time progresses however, the girls are faced with an increasing number of challenges along the way, affecting them both physically and emotionally. By the end of the documentary, viewers are told that many of the girls decided to leave the industry after only a few months. *Hot Girls Wanted* (2015) emphasises that work in the industry is challenging for young women, which results in some performers being unable to cope with the physical and emotional demands for a long period of time.

Finally, in the concluding chapter I end by arguing that workers face many issues within the industry, which they are forced to individually navigate. Through interviews with subjects, footage from pornography shoots and a range of film and editing techniques, *Hot Girls* draws attention to these challenges, emphasising the physical and emotional consequences of pornography work.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

A range of academic research is currently being done on pornography. Looking at the effects of pornography on our society, culture and sexuality through a media studies or screen studies/cultural lens is one such aspect that is explored. This thesis examines the pornography industry itself, including the challenges and issues it creates for workers, and the ways these are represented in documentary film.

I have utilised many academic sources throughout this thesis, to gain a critical understanding into the issues faced by workers in the pornography industry. The following are some which have aided in developing my thinking. In chapter three: “Interracial Pornography- Violence and Racism”, I draw on literature such as “Reflections on Race and Sex” in *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics* (Hooks, 1990), which explores the stereotype of African American men as being aggressive, hypersexualised brutes; a concept I discuss when analysing an interracial sex scene. In chapter four: “Cam Girls”, literature including, “I Get Paid to Have Orgasms” (Jones, 2016) is used with reference to the camming profession, particularly in terms of the conflict between a cam girl’s real self and adopted persona. In chapter five: “Feminist Pornographers”, the article “Not Safe for Work: Why Feminist Pornography Matters” (Potter, 2016) provides some thinking around pornography stigma, a concept I show is relevant to pornographers. Finally, in chapter six: “Young Performers and Sexual Exploitation”, I draw on the articles “A Content Analysis of Youth Sexualised Language and Imagery in Adult Film Packaging, 1995-2007” (Jensen, 2007) and “The Effects of Exposure to Virtual Child Pornography on Viewer Cognitions and Attitudes Towards Deviant Sexual Behaviour” (Paul & Linz, 2008), to look at some of the implications that arise around the pseudo-child image. Two additional academic articles, as well as two non-academic sources discussed in detail below, also encouraged critical thinking around my topic.

Porn Studies, developed in 2014, is the first international peer-reviewed journal which examines “specifically sexual and explicit media forms, their connections to wider media landscapes and their links to the broader spheres of (sex) work across historical periods and national contexts” (Taylor and Francis Online, 2019, para. 1). The article “Porn *and* sex education, porn *as* sex education” (2014) by Kath Albury argues that while academics have

“acknowledged the educational qualities of pornography, there is no universal consensus as to *what* porn teaches its consumers and *how* it works as an educator” (p. 172). The significance of the impact of pornography on young people’s sexual identities, which Attwood, Smith and Barker (2018) point to, highlights the need to also examine industrial and representational issues in contemporary internet pornography, an area of research which this thesis aims to contribute to. Albury (2014) says that questioning consumer impact is made even more complicated as pornography consumers consist of many diverse groups, including different genders, cultures, religions and sexualities; they are not a homogeneous group (p. 172). Johnson (2012) as cited in (Albury, 2014, p. 172) says that young people have such easy access to pornography, “and need to be taught to view it critically if they are going to access it and with a healthy lens that values their own well-being and the well-being of others”. Researchers from Australia, New Zealand and the United States say that because sex education is often lacking, young people commonly seek out pornography for “detailed illustrations of genitalia or of bodies engaged in sexual acts”, as well as to gain instruction on how to perform specific sexual activities (Albury, 2014, p. 173). Albury (2014) says that pornography can be viewed alongside other media representations such as music videos, websites and adverts “as part of a broader social tendency towards the ‘pornographication’ or ‘sexualisation’ of popular culture” (p. 174). This concept is represented in the opening sequence of *Hot Girls Wanted* (2015), where we are presented with a montage consisting of provocative images, emphasising the abundance of sexualised content in the media.

The article also acknowledges discussion on the commonly held argument that pornography negatively influences beliefs around sexuality. Research has been conducted by health researchers, feminist scholars and popular commentators to see whether the consumption of pornography among young men is linked to sexually aggressive views towards women (Albury, 2014, p. 174). Studies have shown that consumption can encourage unfavourable behaviour among young adults, leading to pornography critics claiming that pornography “has served as a ‘bad educator’ for these young people” (Albury, 2014, p. 174). Pornography has also faced criticism for normalising common mainstream pornographic trends. Academics and popular commentators have focused specifically on the female body, where they have identified a link between the availability and popularity of pornography and female grooming trends— specifically women removing their pubic hair (Albury, 2014). With inspiration from these studies, this thesis devotes analysis to looking at different trends common to pornography, including the abusive *Latina Abuse* and sadism trends targeted towards women in the industry.

Dr Feona Attwood, a Professor of Cultural Studies, Communication and Media is another key academic in the pornography field, who like Albury (2014), also looks at the way pornography influences the developing minds of young adults. Attwood, along with Clarissa Smith and Martin Barker, published the article “‘I’m just curious and still exploring myself’: Young people and pornography” (2018), where they explore the ways that sexually explicit media is responsible for constructing sexual identities among young people. Part of their research involved a comprehensive survey, with the aim to “develop a rich data resource which would illuminate engagements with, experiences of, and feelings about, pornography” (Attwood, Smith & Barker, 2018, p. 3741). The authors aim to move from “simplistic notions of media engagement” (p. 3755), which tend to argue that a media genre can be deemed as having a purely ‘good’ or ‘bad’ influence on a person’s life. Attwood, Smith and Barker (2018) have found that many previous studies looking at pornography consumption among young people have focused on “exposure and effects”, which they say does not allow for an understanding of the significance of pornography in the lives of individuals (p.3738). Ultimately, the authors argue that we need to “understand pornography as a site for developing sexual identities and relationships, as a form of sexual leisure and play, and in relation to the broader emergence of mediated intimacies” (p. 3738). Leading on from this concept, this thesis looks at the ways in which workers in the pornography industry view their careers, and how their understandings of sex and sexuality are shaped around their experiences.

As well as academic literature exploring the challenges and issues of the pornography industry, there are non-academic sources such as Matt Fradd’s book, *The Porn Myth: Exposing the Reality Behind the Fantasy of Pornography* (2017), which is promoted as a “non-religious” look into the harmful effects of pornography. Fradd’s (2017) work is focused around a series of pro-pornography myths, which he discredits with evidence from scientific research, content analysis and the experiences of pornography performers. While *The Porn Myth* is classed as “non-religious”, it is important to note that the publisher, Ignatius Press, is a Catholic publishing house, so the content is likely to be influenced by religious thinking, and is therefore unlikely to favour the pornography industry.

Many of the chapters look at the ways in which women are negatively affected by the industry. In one chapter, Fradd (2017) looks at the consumption of violent pornography and explores whether this means men are more likely to sexually assault women in real-life; a similar concept discussed by Albury (2014). His analysis, with reference to anti-pornography

feminists, Andrea Dworkin and Gail Dines, says that violent pornography can contribute to men developing a misogynistic view of sexuality, cause difficulties between distinguishing sexual fantasy from reality and provide potential abusers with “a training manual” (Fradd, 2017, p. 110). Fradd (2017) discusses a survey conducted for the journal article “Sexual Behaviour among Young Men in Sweden and the Impact of Pornography” (Tyden & Rogala, 2004), which showed that men “take sexual cues from pornography”, with 53 per cent of male respondents saying that pornography had “inspired” them (Fradd, 2017, p. 110). Ultimately, Fradd argues that pornography consumption neither prevents, nor causes men to sexually assault, rather it encourages unhealthy thinking towards female sexuality. As Fradd (2017) incorporates the personal experiences of pornography performers to form part of his evidence (p. 28), his work is an ideal starting point for gaining a first-hand understanding into some of the issues faced by workers in the industry.

During my research, it was sometimes difficult to locate relevant academic literature. Professor Gail Dines, a scholar specialising in the area of pornography, has written a number of peer-reviewed journal articles, some of which I have utilised throughout my thesis. These include “King Kong and the White Woman: Hustler Magazine and the Demonization of Black Masculinity” (Dines, 1998) and “The White Man’s Burden: Gonzo Pornography and the Construction of Black Masculinity” (Dines, 2006). In her book *Pornland: How Porn Has Hijacked our Sexuality* (2010), Dines addresses particular subtopics featured in my thesis (see chapter six: “Young Performers and Sexual Exploitation”), including sexual sadism and pseudo-child pornography. While I was not able to locate any journal articles discussing female performers involved in sadism pornography, Dines (2010) devotes part of chapter eight to the trend. She directly explores why sadism is appealing to viewers and the harmful effects it has on young female performers (Dines, 2010, p. 152). Dines (2010) says that the violence in these scenes is heightened and intensified as due to their innocence, these women are able to be manipulated into doing painful and humiliating acts (p. 152). She also says that as their bodies are yet to be fully developed, they are at greater risk of being physically injured, making reference to pornography video titles that emphasise the damage done to a young performer’s body after being ‘ravaged’ or ‘destroyed’ by an adult male’s penis (p. 152). In addition, Dines (2010) has a section in chapter eight on pseudo-child pornography, where she discusses the techniques used by pornographers to make their female performers appear more childlike, with the use of clothing, props and settings (p. 146). I discuss this concept in chapter six of my thesis, with reference to *Hot Girls Wanted* (2015).

Dines (2010) does not reference many academic sources throughout *Pornland*, instead relying on much of her own arguments, and she is known for possessing a strictly anti-pornography stance, so her content is biased against the industry, rather than presenting an objective, factually based analysis. However, although *Pornland* is not an academic source, Dines' (2010) background in pornography studies provides her with a comprehensive understanding of the issues workers face in the industry, so I have utilised this text. Additionally, as Dines (2010) identifies as a feminist, she is very much in favour of equality and respect for women. This means she provides critical thinking into the ways in which the pornography industry conflicts with this approach.

A review of current literature has indicated that there is limited academic research looking broadly at the issues workers face within the pornography industry. While texts like *Pornland* and *The Porn Myth* do look at some implications, they are not peer-reviewed academic sources. Academic journal articles such as “Porn *and* sex education, porn *as* sex education” (Albury, 2014), and “I’m just curious and still exploring myself’: Young people and pornography” (Attwood, Smith & Barker, 2018), raise important questions around the ways in which pornography influences the developing sexuality of young adult consumers, but do not touch on workers in the industry, and how they are affected by their careers. Therefore, I have chosen to expand on the current literature with this thesis which will explore a range of challenges and issues faced by workers in the industry, looking at the ways in which these are represented by a Netflix documentary and TV series.

Chapter Three: Interracial Pornography - Violence and Racism

Mainstream online pornography featuring violent and racist content is unfortunately sought out and enjoyed by many viewers. This chapter will explore the common trend of violence and aggression directed towards female performers through analysis of *Hot Girls Wanted* (2015) and *Hot Girls Wanted: Turned On* (2017) episode “Money Shot”. Through these popular representations, analysis will be conducted on how this trend has arisen due to negative racial stereotypes regarding male African American and female Latin American (Latina) performers. Exploration of the documentaries show that common societal and media stereotypes are often reflected in pornography at the levels of production and representation, and the particular impacts on workers is highlighted through *Hot Girls*. Latina performers are often subjected to verbal and physical sexual aggression and are negatively stereotyped as belonging to the lower-class, with a promiscuous sexuality. African American men are forced to conform to historical prejudices which say that they are hypersexualised brutes with a desire to punish white women. These labels affect both ethnicities negatively, as it reduces the performers to nothing more than their stereotypes, influencing the way they are viewed by society.

A content analysis conducted by sociologist, Michael Flood on the top-selling and top-renting pornography titles showed that 88.2 per cent of scenes displayed violence towards women (Matthews, 2018). A quick Google search brings up a myriad of pornography sites dedicated to this trend. GagFactor.com, a popular forced blowjob website, invites the user to “Join our quest for throatfucking excellence!” (Gag Factor, 2019). The homepage features profiles of “This Week’s Victim” and the date that each female was “degraded on”. One such profile for performer “Missy Mayhem”, comes with the spiel:

These filthy little sluts thought they can handle multiple dicks hammering down on their throats like a plunger does a toilet. They couldn't be more wrong! Watch as these gagging whores choke, spit and slobber all over our cocks while we mercilessly jam our dicks down their windpipes. Don't worry, all these girls get their just rewards in the end... Loads of Semen and SPIT plastered all over their pretty little FACES (Gag Factor, 2019).

It isn't just hardcore websites like GagFactor.com that promote violent material. Even the more 'mainstream' and highly popular pornography sites such as *Pornhub* display banner ads featuring "ExxxxtraSmall.com Teens Get Destroyed" and "18 & Abused" and video titles such as, "Sexually Broken Fuck Compilation" and "Struggling Slut Fights Rough Anal Abuse-Fails Miserably". Many violent pornography videos place an emphasis on race. A popular category is "interracial", a term which specifically encompasses sexual acts between a white female and a black (African American) male. The three most popular interracial pornography sites receive over 10 million visits per month (Herbenick & Paul, 2017). "Huge Black Dick Slowly Fucks Cute White Girl" and "Big Black Cock in Tiny White Teen Pussy" are representative video titles, where emphasis is placed on the difference in skin colour and size between the male and female talent. In pornography, black males are dehumanized and presented as the sexual "other", engaging in the once thought 'taboo' act of sex between a black male and white female, as according to Hooks (2004, p. 47), they are "out of control, wild, uncivilized, natural-born predators". Often, the female is depicted as though she is being taken advantage of by the hypersexualised 'brute' that is the black man, supposedly the first she has ever been with. These white female performers are typically paid a premium to shoot scenes with African American talent, called the "Interracial Rate" (Herbenick & Paul, 2017). Other popular categories include "Latina", which is the fetishization of young women of Latin American (Hispanic) descent. Within this, the *Latina Abuse* trend is highly prevalent. Countless websites offer hardcore content featuring 'ghetto' themed women who are viciously orally (aka "facial abuse"), vaginally and anally penetrated while being subjected to racial and sexist slurs. This trend reflects wider cultural discourses of racism towards Latina women, through mainstream culture (such as films that depict Latina characters), where they typically adhere to stereotypes of being "easy, promiscuous and weak" (Rodriguez, 1997, p. 2), as well as being of lower class (Rivadeneira, Ward & Gordon, 2007). *Latina Abuse* scenes often echo and amplify these stereotypes, as we will see discussed further in this chapter.

The Black Man

The implications of violence and racism in interracial pornography are represented in *Hot Girls Wanted: Turned On* (2017) episode "Money Shot", through the filming of a hardcore sex scene for the *Hussie Models* agency, which perpetuates the stereotype of black males as inherently aggressive and of a less-than-human status. "Money Shot" features four protagonists;

pornography entrepreneur Riley Reynolds (founder and CEO of the *Hussie Models* agency), the African American male talent, Jax Slayher and Tyler Knight, and the white female talent, Kylie Quinn. Kylie is classed as an “amateur” performer, meaning she has just reached legal pornography age (18-years-old at the time of filming) with no previous experience in the pornography industry, only having been employed for a little over three months. “Money Shot” is the only episode in which *Hot Girls* explores the struggles faced by male pornography performers. The filmmakers use careful film and editing techniques to capture this stereotype in action and suggest its implications.

At the beginning of the shoot, we see Jax bonding with a puppy on set. The camera focuses directly on Jax holding and cuddling the animal, while Tony, the producer of the shoot, says, “let’s get your sensitive side”. Intercut with this are shots of Kylie preparing her makeup, and her and Jax introducing themselves to one other. Jax is open about his willingness to bond with female talent prior to filming in order “to build some type of quick connection... I just keep everything, like, very professional, laid back. And I think a lot of women like that”, he says. Through including this footage, the filmmakers construct a sensitive and perceptive persona for Jax. Hooks (2004) says that a common stereotype of the black man is a “lack of emotional responsiveness... described as a missing conscience” (p. 47). Jax’s behaviour directly counteracts this belief as we see him responding positively in his interactions.

Once filming for the shoot begins, the respectful and empathetic individual is lost as Jax assumes his societally prescribed role as the “ultimate idealized ‘other’” (Shor & Golriz, 2019, p. 741). Dines (1998) describes white men having separated black men “as outside the normal realm of (White) masculinity by constructing them as the ‘other’” (p. 291-292). Through the use of close-ups and mid-shots, we see Jax holding Kylie on his back, clearly emphasising the noticeable size difference between the two. The performers soon move onto a white couch, which accentuates Jax’s blackness. Through dialogue, we see how the separation of race is so clearly constructed. Riley exclaims that Kylie wanted her “first big black dick!” and Tony asks whether she has ever been with a black man before. She hadn’t, but was quick to reply, “I feel like it’s something everyone should try once in their life”. When Tony says to Jax, “you don’t mind being the transition man, do you?”, Jax’s reply of “no, not at all”, essentially reinforces his acceptance of the stereotype—of being the “other”.

The Black Penis

Emphasis on Jax's "big, black dick" is further elaborated when the viewer is shown two different interviews with Kylie. While Kylie is preparing her makeup in the bathroom, she says, "I am most nervous about his dick size!" Kylie consoles herself with the fact that she knows of friends in the pornography industry who have performed with Jax before and are "still walking". In another interview, Kylie talks of the pornography industry's obsession with the "big, black" penis. "They're like, oh, make sure you say, like, big black cock. And to me, that just sounds fake. It's not a big black cock, it's a big cock. Why you gotta call it black?" In non-interracial pornography, no mention is made regarding the "whiteness" of the male talent; no one refers to "big white cock" or "white pussy". Introduce an African American male however, and sexuality becomes racialized, resulting in this hypermasculinisation. Kylie's comments perhaps indicate that the 'big black dick' discourse is broader than the pornography scene in general. This is a common representation in culture which has been adopted into pornography, resulting in a stereotype.

Lehman (2006) says that the "mythic, large black penis has been analysed and talked to death in American society" (p. 226), and is often represented in our culture through movies, books and jokes. The "big, black dick" discourse has existed since colonial times. According to Williams (2000), it "once was given by the white master as a reason for white women to abhor and fear black men", as it was "used to elicit fear and revulsion that would enforce separation" (p. 76). Lehman (2006) says that the lynching of black men in the past held "sexual connotations that both create the public fascination with the erection that hanging produces and symbolically contain its threat by reducing the entire male body to a limp, castrated...unthreatening one" (p. 227). Williams (2000) references the work of Franz Fanon who argues that a fear of the black man is "a form of white sexual anxiety" (p. 76). Fanon says that the 'white gaze' sees a black penis and is immediately frightened, and according to him, "the deepest cause of this fear is the reduction of the black man to a penis which is ultimately a pathological projection on the part of the white man of his own repressed homosexuality. The white man's fear is...also his desire" (p. 76), as a white man is in comparison, averagely endowed. The black penis hence becomes a "phobic object", cementing "one of the deepest mythological fears and anxieties in the racist imagination, namely that all black men have huge willies" (Williams, 2000, p. 77). Like the sexual fascination with lynching in the past, male

viewers of interracial pornography are drawn with a curious desire to witness something both feared, yet secretly desired.

To further accentuate the size of Jax's penis when the filming of the scene begins, the camera shows a close up of Kylie's face as Tony instructs her to hold her hands up in an exaggerated display of shock as she supposedly witnesses "the biggest dick you've ever seen in your life". "And remember during the video", Tony reminds her to emphasise, "oh my god, big black dick!" Dines (2010, p. 136-137) says that the focal point is typically the various ways in which a "big, black cock" can ravage small white cavities, and constant reference is made to whether the petite white female talent can handle the ridiculously large penis. Cowan and Campbell (1994, p. 326) quote Walker (1980) who says that "the black man is defined solely by the size, readiness, and unselectivity of his penis". By placing such importance on the black man's penis, it becomes his defining feature and "his wholeness as a human being is thus rendered invisible" (Dines, 1998, p. 295). We can infer that the filmmakers have specifically focused on this aspect to show how Jax's self has been compromised by what he is made to do in interracial pornography and how he's represented in this genre, reducing him to nothing more than a valuable, coloured penis.

Violence and Aggression

As the filming of the scene progresses, Jax is eventually asked to display physical acts of aggression towards Kylie, in order to reinforce the stereotype that black men are sexually violent. Prior to this, we witness an interview with Jax in his bedroom. Here, the filmmakers have carefully planned the *mise-en-scène* to give the appearance that we are listening to the 'real' or unscripted Jax. He sits on his messy, unmade bed and a clothes basket filled with dirty laundry is placed in the background, as he discusses his first sexual experience with a girlfriend, presenting an atmosphere of normalcy. He talks of how enjoyable the event was for him and how his girlfriend taught him a lot of what to do. "It [sex] doesn't have to be bang, bang, bang, you know", is an important lesson he learnt from his girlfriend. Jax says, "Jonte [Jax's real name] off-camera is very sensual. The biggest thing for me is just pleasing a woman", emphasising a desire for sex to be an experience that is enjoyable for both partners.

The filmmakers once again juxtapose the ‘sensitive Jax persona’ with the ‘porn Jax persona’ to emphasise contrast. As Jax finishes talking, the episode cuts to a shot of Riley saying, “choke her [Kylie]”. We then see a fleeting close-up of Jax’s face as he looks momentarily uncomfortable at the request. Suddenly, the camera display changes to a lower quality handheld camera seen through a point-of-view shot where Jax is over top of Kylie looking down at her, with his hands wrapped around her throat while he penetrates her. Riley says that camera shots like this look good in pictures because it appears as though the person is being dominated. Jax (through a voice over) starts to verbally describe the distinct shift between his own supposedly ‘real’ personality, compared to his pornography persona. He says, “when I perform as Jax, I mean, he puts aside that whole thing of pleasing [a woman]”. Riley then confirms Jax’s supposed real personality, saying that Jax doesn’t like to do rough scenes and has a more passionate, romantic personality. It is important to remember here that while it may seem as though we are seeing a contrast between the real and false Jax, the filmmakers have used mise-en-scène, carefully chosen dialogue and editing techniques to aid in the construction of a contrasting persona, to emphasise that African American performers are forced to adhere to prescribed stereotypes.

Since the earliest recorded history, black men have been stereotyped as sexual predators and rapists (Welch, 2007). Scholars such as Cowan and Campbell (1994) and Dines (1998) say that this representation can be traced back to an era of slavery; a time where black men were constructed as crazed, sexual beasts with an insatiable appetite for white women. To reflect this, the scene starts to become increasingly violent as both Tony and Riley continue their demands. Once again, we see a close-up of Jax’s face while Tony says forcefully, “Jax, I want you smashing her face....be a bit abusive”. Jax looks hesitant and uncertain as the camera switches between close-ups of his face and close-ups of Kylie’s, with her head pushed into the couch and Jax’s hands covering her face. As Tony and Riley shout their requests, the camera’s view becomes wobblier, almost frantic-like as it alternates between the two performers. Jax looks like he is struggling mentally as he is told to “cover her nose”, “cover her eyes”, “fish hook her”, and pull a “mean face”. It is most common for pornography and media to represent black men as well-endowed pimps, thugs, rapists or gorillas, the supposed root of savagery (Shor & Golriz, 2019; Dines, 2006). Jax confirms this stereotype when he tells the viewer that he is playing the character of the creep, the pervert that they want him to be, as he is reduced to his lowest common denominator. Even his porn name emphasises this stereotype—*Slayher* holds connotations of violence, suggesting that Jax has slayed, demolished or destroyed the

female talent through penetration and sexual acts. The resulting image constructed in the viewer's head through these connotations perfectly encompasses the black man image presented in pornography as described by Dines (2006). She talks of Eric Decetis, a 1980s cartoonist who published a drawing for *Hustler* magazine, depicting an enormous black man closely resembling a gorilla. He has his arm around a petite white woman who is sporting a black eye and a very stretched, swollen, red vagina hanging down to the ground. The man wears a shirt saying 'Fucker', while the woman wears one saying 'Fuckee'. Dines (2006) emphasises that while in pornography all women are classed as 'fuckees', it is the woman seen alongside a black man that has become a victim; satiated, battered and bruised, "completely and utterly feminized by being well and truly turned into a 'fuckee'" (p. 297). Kylie embodies the 'fuckee' image at the end of the scene, as she is asked to tell the viewers how much she enjoyed her first interracial experience. Her face is covered in ejaculate, her hair is plastered down with sweat and most of her makeup has come off, giving her the appearance of having been thoroughly used.

Female Blame

Dines (2006) argues that the sexual pleasure viewers receive from interracial pornography can be heightened by increased violence towards the female. Put simply, the more the female talent is violated and abused, the stronger the sexual excitement for some. Similar arguments have been voiced which claim that the (predominantly white) viewership of interracial pornography engages in its consumption because of their "partial identification...with the hypersexual black male" (Dines, 2006, p. 296), therefore constructing a link between the white and black man. In pornography, Dines (2006) says that being a white man can be a problem, as this demands limitations and self-discipline. She argues that the viewing of interracial pornography with its hypersexual black men is exciting and freeing, as it gives the white man a chance to forget his whiteness, dismiss self-control and submit to animalistic urges. Interracial pornography provides white men a glimpse into the "authentic black life" where all of the rules that govern a white civilised society are forgotten for a time (Dines, 2006, p. 296). These white men can become as sexually talented and crazed as the black man. They can momentarily forget about worrying if they have a big enough penis to satisfy the female, or whether their sexual performance is strong enough. Shor and Golriz (2019) discuss a study done by researchers regarding the pornography viewing patterns of young white American men. These men

emphasised their feelings of powerlessness when it comes to sex, where they admitted to often feeling annoyed and frustrated when sex—which they consider their fundamental right—is ‘withheld’ by the opposite sex. In the world of pornography however, sex is always on tap. Interracial pornography is a way of getting back at these girls, as men watch them pay for withholding their bodies (Shor & Golriz, 2019). What better punishment is there, than to see these girls aggressively violated by uncivilized black brutes? By being forced to bend to the perverse desires of the black man, “they are ‘put back in their place’, restoring the gendered balance of power and white men’s sense of lost privilege and entitlement” (Shor & Golriz, 2019, p. 749). Dines (2006) also makes a similar argument. The best way to degrade a white female is to have her physically used and abused time and again “by a body that has been constructed, coded, and demonized as a carrier for all that is sexually debased” (p. 285). Dines (2010) quotes one pornography retailer who says, “my customers don’t want to see a loving interracial couple; they want to see massive black dicks, satisfying or defiling pretty white girls”. She also quotes a pornography producer who stated that his most popular pornography movies are the ones where “the purity of the sacred white woman is compromised...even if the white girl is as dirty and diseased-riddled as humanly possible”. Throughout the filming of Kylie and Jax’s scene, both Tony and Riley could be viewed as the white men who are provided an opportunity to carry out their sexual fantasies through Jax. While their whiteness demands limitations and self-discipline, by instructing Jax to manipulate Kylie’s body in various (rough and degrading) ways, Tony and Riley are able to get as close as possible to seeing what it is like to perform as a black man submitting to animalistic urges. Through the camera showing Jax looking uncomfortable to conform to such violent requests, and both Riley and Tony’s eagerness at seeing it performed, we could argue that the filmmakers are aiming to subvert the stereotype that claims black men are sexual brutes.

Episode “Money Shot” clearly frames the impacts of violence and racism that arise with interracial pornography, through the use of film and editing techniques, *mise-en-scène* and interviews/voice overs with the subjects. What it doesn’t do, however, is comment on the subjects’ feelings towards the stereotypes and messages portrayed, and whether they consider them harmful or not. Through commentary, the episode shows that the subjects are aware of the structure of interracial pornography and its requirements, yet they neither speak positively nor negatively in their responses, purely factually. Throughout the episode, there is only a single instance where a comment is made that directly suggests a potential impact of violent interracial pornography on viewers. Jax says, “male performers choking women, slapping

women...you know in reality, you can't do that to some women because some women don't like that. A 15-year-old boy, you know, that's watching pornography, you can't expect to perform like that". Jax doesn't develop this comment any further, however. It could be argued that the filmmakers have purposely constructed the documentary with a level of objectivity, so as to provoke thinking and raise questions on the topic without emphasising a direct viewpoint, making any concrete claims, or creating bias. While we can infer that the issues portrayed are inherently detrimental to both black males and white females, this style of objective filmmaking is carefully constructed so it almost appears as though we have come to these conclusions ourselves.

The Latina

Hot Girls Wanted (2015) explores physical and verbal violence and racism directed towards Latina women. In pornography featuring Latina women, emphasis is put on the female talent who is typically of Latin American descent, which includes countries such as Puerto Rico, Mexico and Chile. According to a study by Shor and Golriz (2019), Latina performers are featured more prominently in videos depicting visible aggression compared with those featuring white or black female performers, with more than half of the videos analysed portraying aggression or violence. Representation of Latina women in television and film is still relatively rare (Tukachinsky, Mastro & Tarchi, 2015). Shor and Golriz (2019) acknowledge that pornography is one of the few media types where Latina women feature prominently, which suggests the importance of the pornography industry in "shaping and reproducing stereotypes" of those of Latina descent (p. 742). These stereotypes of violent men and victimised women are further accentuated "by the scarcity of alternative representations" of Latina women in differing media. Sensoy (2017) also says that aside from pornography, Latina representation is pretty much non-existent, "unless specifically named by their race...and fetishised" (p. 114), resulting in an overly negative, exaggerated stereotype.

Throughout *Hot Girls Wanted* (2015) we follow the journey of Ava Kelly, a 25-year-old pornography actress of Spanish descent who has been in and out of the industry for five years. Although Spain is not part of Latin America, because Ava encompasses the characteristics of a Latina woman (dark features and an accent), she is considered suitable by pornography producers for the role. One of the first times we see Ava is when she receives a call from a

producer regarding her required outfit for a shoot. Ava looks confused and unsure as she questions, “and get...ghetto things?” ‘Ghetto’, a term stemming from a slum-like area of a community in which a minority group resides, typically due to social and economic strain, is usually described as “sexually lawless, debauched and brimming with hos, pimps and gang-bangers” (Dines, 2010, p. 127). Dines (2010) argues that by introducing the term ‘ghetto’ into the scenario, women are further dehumanized; they become ghetto sluts and whores rather than just sluts and whores. Usually, black African American women (often labelled “Ebony” in pornography video titles) are recruited for ghetto pornography, as seen on websites like *Ghetto Gaggers* and *Ebony Cum Dumps*, however it is not uncommon for the brown-skinned Latina woman to be recruited for the part. Ava says to the camera, “they want me to go get skullies [a beanie], wife-beaters [a thin, white singlet], white t-shirts, sweatpants and jeans. I’m like, what?”, which further accentuates her incredulousness at the request. A follow shot is used to track Ava as she walks from the carpark into a Walmart store. The first thing the viewer notices is how Ava’s appearance contrasts significantly with the ghetto persona she is expected to adopt. Far from wearing drab, ghetto style clothes, she sports a very bright multicoloured dress. To accompany this, she carries a shiny, expensive looking bag, her nails are freshly manicured, she’s wearing rings on her fingers and is holding a large coffee cup. The use of the follow shot allows us to feel as though the viewer is in Ava’s shoes. In addition to the documentary’s efforts to contrast Ava’s appearance with the ‘ghetto’ image, the camera movement encourages the viewer to identify with Ava’s feelings of disconnect towards the stereotype that she is being asked to conform to.

Class

The clothing Ava is required to wear stems from a societal stereotype relating to Latin American ethnicity and class. As Ava looks intently at the rows of sweatpants while holding a pair in purposely the drabest colour (grey), she says, “I feel terrible saying it [ghetto] because I’m like, what do you mean by that? But apparently there are some guys who go to pawn shops and see girls and be like, damn, I wish I could fuck her”. Like Jax in *Hot Girls Wanted: Turned On* (2017) episode “Money Shot”, Ava never specifically gives an opinion on what she thinks about ‘ghetto’ pornography and Latina females being recruited for its production, but saying, “I feel terrible saying it” signifies that she is clearly aware of the negative connotations that accompany the word “ghetto”. Likewise, by mentioning pawn shops, Ava indirectly confirms

the stereotype that to be “ghetto” is to be associated with poverty and the lower class. A link between race and class among Latin American immigrants has been previously analysed by academics. Vallejo (2009) talks of Mexican immigrants in particular, and says that they “typically migrate to the United States with low levels of human capital, work in low-wage occupations upon arrival and often thereafter, and usually live in communities that are characterized as poor and working class with few opportunities for upward mobility” (p. 129). Media portrayals of Latin American individuals also draw on the idea of class. Rivadeneyra, Ward and Gordon (2007) analysed the stereotypes of Latino characters on primetime television. According to their observations, “Latino characters are more likely than characters of other ethnic groups to be cast as having low-status occupations, including being four times as likely to portray domestic workers than any other ethnic group and having lower job authority than European-American characters” (p. 263). Through Ava having to alter her appearance to look as though she is a poverty-stricken immigrant, we can see that pornography echoes and amplifies stereotypes in mainstream culture and media.

Latina Abuse

The scene soon switches to Ava discussing the first pornography shoot she filmed, *Latina Abuse*, which emphasises the stereotype of the ‘over sexualised Latina’. The episode begins showing close-up images of websites dedicated to this trend, with video titles like, “See them gag on Gringo cocks”, (‘gringo’ is a term used by people of Hispanic or Latin American descent to describe white men). Intercut with this are definitions displayed on screen by Herbenick and Paul (2015) describing *Latina Abuse* as “extreme oral sex aimed at making a girl vomit”, with sites like *Facial Abuse* and *Face Fucking.com* available online. Ava is heard through a voice over where she says that facial abuse is especially degrading compared to the more general acts depicted in pornography. A shot of Ava’s profile on the *Latina Abuse* website presents a spiel saying, “If she [Ava] was smart, she’d be doing something more than pornography but fortunately for us, she’s not. What she lacks in smarts, she makes up in whoredom”. Lack of smarts is a typical stereotype associated with the Latina individual. Tukachinsky, Mastro and Tarchi (2015) say that Latinas are designated to few roles in society, with these often featuring “sexuality, criminality, subservience or intellectual ineptitude” (p. 19). Drawing on the sexuality stereotype, Martinez (1993) says that Latinas are considered morally inept, which is reflected in the *Latina Abuse* website’s description, emphasising Ava’s sexually promiscuous

behaviour: “She must have been practicing sucking off mandingo cock because this bitch was deepthroating like a mother fucking champ”. Brooks (2010) discusses the theme of Latina women and overt sexuality. Like African Americans, Latinas are defined by “controlling images of them as hypersexualised resulting in their being presented as animalistic....and thus more sexually available” (Brooks, 2010, p. 72). Other common classifications include being labelled sexually provocative, the seductress, the ‘spitfire’, sexy, fiery and spicy (Talbot, 2012 & Vasquez, 2010). Vasquez (2010) defines these stereotypes as highly powerful ‘controlling images’ responsible for creating and sustaining oppression against a minority. Tukachinsky, Mastro and Yarchi (2015) argue that the more the ethnic minority is relegated to these controlling images, the more this will “cultivate racial stereotypes and/or make them more salient and readily available” (p. 32). Vasquez (2010) believes this will have an especially profound effect on individuals who have limited knowledge towards Latin American individuals.

As Ava’s *Latina Abuse* video plays, the episode employs continuous extreme close-up shots of her face which is useful in two ways: to censor the documentary to an extent so the viewer is not explicitly viewing genitalia and the sexual act in full, but also at the same time to greater emphasise the violence being depicted, creating a more harrowing and shocking experience for the viewer. The camera is extremely close to Ava’s face which is being handled roughly, slapped and spat on, so what we witness appears more intrusive and traumatising. Accompanying these images, the sounds of Ava retching and the male talent throwing insults and vicious commands produces a very intense and hard-to-stomach scene. By employing such intrusive film techniques, the viewer is also drawn into the scene and put in Ava’s shoes; forced to get as close as possible to the scenario without having to be the physical victim.

A key part of *Latina Abuse* involves the male talent making derogatory remarks purposely stereotypical to Spanish-speaking people. The male talent says to Ava, “Hola, puta [bitch], you speak Spanish?”, followed by “thought you uh, Mexican chicks are good at this shit, cleaning up”, as we assume Ava is being forced to eat her own vomit off the floor. The stereotype of Latinas possessing a talent for domestic duty is perpetuated through the media (television shows and films), which frequently depict them as “maids, housekeepers and nannies” who are “submissive and obedient” (Lopez, 2013, p. 100). Lopez (2013) says that some Latina stereotypes have come from the Hispanic culture itself and have then been adopted within the United States. Hurtado (2005) says that the concept of the “good woman” and the “bad woman”

was developed by Hispanic culture. The “good woman” is seen as willing to serve, and is often a mother, caregiver or nurturer, while the “bad woman” represents the opposite (Hurtado, 2005, p. 122). Possessing the qualities associated with the “good woman” means that Latinas are “perceived as submissive, emotional and weak, making them more vulnerable to mistreatment and abuse” (Lopez, 2013, p. 102), as displayed through the aggression in *Latina Abuse*. Lopez (2013) also suggests that these stereotypes make “people perceive Latinas as undeserving and as a threat to the U.S. culture and society in general” (p. 102). Guzman and Valdivia (2004) make the same argument; holding this view towards the ethnicity ensures Latinas remain “continual foreigners” (p. 217), which suggests why they are commonly subjected to violence and racial degradation.

The documentary has been edited so Ava appears to contradict herself, appearing confused regarding her feelings towards *Latina Abuse*. The film and editing techniques used also work to frame the act in a highly negative light. During an interview, Ava describes how the combination of being insulted, penetrated and forced to vomit creates a really unpleasant situation, worse than if she was only having to endure one act at a time. While she talks, sombre instrumental music plays quietly in the background. Right as Ava finishes this sentence, she says, “it looks like it’s much rougher than it is,” as if she is suddenly trying to justify the act and emphasise that it’s not so bad. At the same time though, the filmmakers display the most brutal parts of the scene: Ava with her hair saturated as the male talent roughly handles her face; a close-up of her bloodshot, watering eyes as she is being forced to retch; and a large dildo being pushed down her throat. Again, to both sanitize the viewing experience and emphasise its brutality, the scene is filmed through extreme close-ups, so the screen appears quite pixelated. Through these film techniques, we can see that the filmmakers are emphasising that facial abuse really is ‘that bad’.

Influential Violence

Ava makes a comparison between pornography and the real world, which appears to both validate the facial abuse trend, as well as show acceptance of her participation as a fetishized woman of colour. She tells the viewers that she doesn’t judge anyone and is happy for them to engage with anything that makes them happy (in terms of pornography viewing): “they’re watching it on the computer, and they’re not going out and doing it to an actual girl. So, look

at it that way. At least it's me acting". Ava says that many people outside of pornography experience abusive situations in relationships, but with her, "it's all fake". A description like this reinforces the idea that women in pornography are not 'real women', and therefore Ava believes she herself, is not 'real'. Sensoy (2017) talks of "internalized racial oppression" which is "when a person of colour, consciously and unconsciously accepts [their] negative representation" (p. 135). Sensoy (2017) says that over time, the individual starts to deem themselves as less valuable (or as Ava implies, "less real"), where they end up isolating themselves from the dominant culture. This occurs for Ava when she is told that white Duke University student and former pornography star, Belle Knox's, first scene in the industry was facial abuse. She appears shocked and says that facial abuse is not "pretty girl porn". Like Jax in *Hot Girls Wanted: Turned On* (2017) episode "Money Shot", Ava is unconsciously reinforcing her own stereotype of being the "other", belonging to an ethnicity that is more 'suited' to abusive niche pornography. Ava also fights to hide her disdain, acknowledging that when a white girl decides to make facial abuse pornography, she is given huge media attention and praise for being an autonomous 'feminist' who has *chosen* to go down this path, whereas it is considered not surprising and much more predictable when someone of Ava's ethnicity does.

An Effect on Men

Research conducted in the *NZ Youth and Porn* report suggests that young people believe pornography consumption may negatively influence the way their peers think (OFLC, 2018). Surveys completed among adolescents showed that they feel pornography can have a detrimental effect, as they say it sometimes creates unrealistic expectations, fosters unhealthy views towards relationships and sexuality, and ultimately, that it can normalise violence and aggression (OFLC, 2018, p. 39). OFLC (2018, p. 11) have found that 1 in 5 viewers between the ages of 14-17 years old, have tried something they've seen in pornography. Wright and Tokunaga (2016) conducted a confidential online survey among 187 male undergraduate students, where they were asked questions relating to their own pornography consumption, their exposure to men's magazines and reality TV, their attitudes towards women as sex objects and whether they were supportive of violence directed towards women in pornography. Results showed that the more men are exposed to the objectification of women in media, the more they may start to think that women exist to gratify the male desire. It may mean that men resort to

violence if denied the sexual relations they feel entitled to, as they view women “who violate their role as sexually subservient to men are deserving of retaliation” (p. 956). In Ava’s *Latina Abuse* scene, the male talent is never fully shown, we typically only hear his voice and see his hands. Much of the scene is made up of point-of-view shots, where we are looking down at Ava’s face as she is assaulted. Gossett and Byrne (2002) say that in violent pornography, the male remains more or less invisible, with no attention drawn specifically to him. They argue that this acts as a way for the viewer to pretend they are the perpetrator of the assault, looking through the eyes of the male. These point-of-view camera shots essentially position the viewer as the assailant, accentuating the notion that violence and aggression is acceptable and encouraged behaviour.

Conclusion

Through analysis of violence and aggression relating to black African American men in *Hot Girls Wanted: Turned On* (2017) episode “Money Shot” and Latina women in *Hot Girls Wanted* (2015), the question is raised as to what racial stereotypes mean for these ethnic minority groups in society. While the degradation of females may be sexually stimulating for some males, issues arise. Dines (2010) says that all types of oppression, including gender and race “require a system of beliefs that justify why one group has power over another” (p. 140). She says this manifests itself in the dehumanization of another group and it is this status “that makes them especially deserving of exploitation, abuse and degradation” (p. 140). With Jax, we see this as his sensitive persona gives way to that of an animalistic savage, devoid of any empathetic human emotion, and with Ava, as she becomes nothing but a sexually deviant “Mexican chick”. In pornography, everyone is reduced to a less than human status, as a performer’s worth is placed solely on physical aspects such as their physical appearance, race, gender, age or class. Because whiteness is considered ‘colourless’ and superior in mainstream society, those of differing ethnicity or of darker skin are always going to be marked as ‘other’. This is why we will continue to see emphasis on the ‘big, black cock’ or the ‘horny Latina slut’.

This trend works to constantly strengthen old racial prejudices that have been evident in society for many years, as they are reflected in pornographic scenes. As Dines (2010) says, “they [stereotypes] are cemented in the present every time a user masturbates to them” (p. 140). This is a highly effective way of promoting racist thought, “as it not only makes visible the supposed

sexual debauchery of the targeted group, but also sexualises the racism in ways that make the actual racism invisible in the minds of ...consumers” (p. 140). We are never explicitly told why Jax and Ava, who have both clearly shown recognition of their stereotypes, still choose to conform to them through their participation in violent interracial pornography, thereby allowing this oppression to flourish. Jax simply tells the viewers that he loves sex and enjoys getting to perform with beautiful girls, and Ava justifies her facial abuse scenes by saying that it’s purely ‘acting’; perhaps a way of disconnecting herself from both the performance and the stereotyping. These negative and socially complex racial stereotypes remain popular trends among viewers of pornography, with performers willing to partake in these scenes. As Ava explains pointedly, “I think that what I do is an outlet for something that’s already there”.

Chapter Four: Cam Girls

A cam girl performs live shows on a webcam, typically engaging in solo sexual acts or physical displays in exchange for money. Viewers worldwide can access sites such as *MyFreeCams* and browse through pages of available performers, before using a credit card or PayPal account to buy ‘tokens’. Tokens are used to ‘tip’ a cam girl for her performance, or to pay for a private one-on-one show (Bleakley, 2014). *Hot Girls Wanted: Turned On* (2017) episodes “Owning It” and “Take Me Private” both present the viewer with a glimpse into the lives of two real-life cam girls, Alice Frost and Bailey Rayne, while exploring the impacts of the career on each model and their personal relationships. These episodes highlight the emotional complexities that arise with camming, allowing the viewer an understanding into the emotional and physical demands of the profession. Early on in the episodes, the filmmakers present positive aspects of camming as experienced by Alice and Bailey; some of which do not apply to online mainstream pornography production. While camming does involve women displaying sexual acts for male gratification (much like pornography), the ability to be self-employed and the use of a live webcam creates opportunities for increased self-esteem and a sense of empowerment and autonomy for the female performer. Both Alice and Bailey enjoy these aspects of camming, so they have been explored throughout the episodes to emphasise the initial appeal of the career for the girls. As the episodes progress, the challenges involved with this line of work are introduced, suggesting that camming may not be as easy and enjoyable as it appears on the surface. These include women as objects of commodity who are required to adhere to the male gaze, and the implications of on-and-off-screen personas. We see a blurring of the line between reality and fantasy, as the struggles faced by the girls have direct consequences on their personal lives and relationships. The filmmakers emphasise that camming creates issues for performers and present it as an ultimately difficult profession.

Camming first started in 1996, when Jenny Ringley, a college student in America, created a website called *JenniCam* (BBC, 2016). She installed a webcam in her dorm room which took automatic photos at intermittent intervals of her going about daily chores, which were then posted to the internet. Two years later, Jenny decided to add a paid section to her site (Bartlett, 2014). That same year, *AmandaCam*, a commercial camming site was developed. While *AmandaCam* was similar to *JenniCam*, *AmandaCam* added a break-through feature; allowing

cam girls to converse directly with the audience via a chat option (Senft, 2008). As technology has developed over the years, camming has only become more advanced. Herbenick and Paul (2017) say there are a minimum of 5000 girls livestreaming on the top five adult camming sites at any given time, and that these sites receive over 30 million visitors from around the world each month. Generally, cam girls are ‘amateurs’ that work from home and are distinct from pornography performers in the pornography industry, who are recruited by agencies and work under management. The camming industry is now a multibillion-dollar industry (Rabouin, 2016). Fattorosi as cited in Orsini (2011) says that with the “proliferation of free pornography on the internet”, camming has become more popular as it allows for live interaction, which traditional pornography cannot offer. Bleakly (2014) argues that camming complicates traditional ideas of sex work. Cam girls are able to offer a display just as visually explicit as what is depicted in mainstream pornography, accompanied with the personal communication and interaction seen in real-life sexual encounters such as prostitution, but are “protected through the buffer provided by the webcam medium similarly to the passive performance of a stripper” (p. 901). Unlike a career in the pornography industry, cam girls are entirely their own agents. Sex, or physical relations with a male are not required and the cam girl is able to set her own boundaries; whether this is choosing her performance hours or deciding on the acts she is comfortable with displaying.

Empowerment and Autonomy

In episode “Owing It”, we are introduced to Bailey Rayne, a young woman who has created her own successful pornography brand through camming and other sex-related revenues. Camming differs from mainstream online pornography, as cam girls can interact directly with their audience in real-time and receive personalised requests regarding what the viewer(s) want to see. This contrasts with mainstream pornography, where scenes are pre-recorded, formulaic and edited. As Bailey says, “you don’t have to go to a strip club to entertain men and get tips anymore. We have the ability to sit in our home and maybe flash every once in a while and get tips”. Henry and Farvid (2017, p. 118) say that online media in terms of outlets such as social media and adult forums are used by sex workers, “allowing them to promote their services independently for low or no fees (and therefore to profit as fully as possible from their own labour)”. Bailey uses many entrepreneurial tactics to expand her brand. She advertises her Bailey Rayne issue of *Penthouse* magazine on cam, she sells her used underwear that come

with a polaroid photo of her wearing them, and she creates paintings with her breasts that she sells along with a video of the design process. Much of this is done through websites like *eBay* where the seller has full control of the buy and sell process, and people can purchase items globally. Additionally, by choosing to appear in *Hot Girls Wanted: Turned On* (2017), Bailey is employing yet another effective way of promoting her brand.

Camming allows women to hone their entrepreneurial skills without the requirement of outside management that comes with working in pornography production companies. Bleakley (2014) say that this debunks the stereotype “of the pornography business as an inherently exploitative patriarchy”, allowing women to reclaim their own bodies and retain “maximum profits for the performer rather than a production company” (p. 893). Ultimately, Bleakley (2014) expresses a positive view towards camming, as it “places entrepreneurial amateurs firmly at the forefront of the industry’s evolution, paving the way for independent operators to take control of the adult entertainment business in a revolutionary form of sexual feminism” (p. 893). This stance mirrors Bailey’s feelings towards camming, as evident when she says, “I’ve had a very successful, empowering, positive career in pornography. I am a feminist working in this industry. I know I’m a sex object, but I control everything”. Bailey also expresses this autonomy by ‘choosing’ her clients. With each person that enters her chat room, she can check their ‘stats’, which allows her to see how many tokens they’ve ever purchased and how many tokens they currently have, to decide whether or not she wants to “give them the time of day”. Bailey says that she has to pick and choose who she gives her attention to in order to maximise profits. Henry (2018) says that because camming does not involve physical contact with clients, cam girls are not subject to the violence that is often present in pornography. Furthermore, Henry (2018) says that cam girls are able to evade anti-sex work laws, “likely as an oversight given the novelty of the practice” (p. 25). Stuart (2016) talks about anti-pornography legislation in the pornography industry, saying that the “laws focus on recordings, rather than live streaming; in effect, they turn a blind eye to webcamming. This creates something of a paradox: performing an explicitly pornographic act via a webcam carries no repercussions, but if the same show is recorded and uploaded, the performer can be liable” (para. 8), providing another incentive for women to become involved in camming.

Viewing camming as empowering reinforces Bleakley’s (2014) claims that Bailey is essentially in charge of the men that she interacts with, rather than submitting to stereotypical patriarchal dominance. Weiss (2018) argues that many sex workers like Bailey feel a sense of satisfaction

with their work, where women “may enjoy exploring their sexuality in a remunerative space, coercing money from men and controlling the terms of their employment” (p. 734). Weiss (2018) talks about the individual agency displayed by sex workers, where instead of “conceptualizing sex workers as passive victims...scholars see sex workers as in control of their bodies and sexualities” (p. 734). Bailey discusses the economic and entrepreneurial benefits of camming, but does not delve into the hidden costs involved. According to Medium Corporation (2017), many adult entertainment sites have to adhere to strict government regulations and are not supported by traditional payment companies such as Visa and American Express. Due to this, cam sites feature elevated operational costs which cam girls are required to pay. Cam sites instead have to utilise high-risk payment services which can charge between five and ten per cent of revenue for the processing of payments (Medium Corporation, 2017). Medium Corporation (2017) says that “the high-risk designation also forces sites to pay an annual \$1,000 fee to card networks for the ability to accept card payments”, (para. 8) and as well as this, “cam sites take their own cut of revenue, resulting in dismally low payouts for models. Tip-based sites on average take around half of a model’s earnings; private sites take as much as 65% to 75%” (para. 9). Ultimately, Medium Corporation (2017) emphasises that cam girls end up losing a significant portion of the money they make. While Bailey only speaks positively of her earnings as a cam girl, the episode could have been strengthened with further analysis of the hidden costs involved with camming, so as to present viewers with a more realistic insight into the profession.

Self-esteem

Both Alice and Bailey claim to enjoy camming, so exploration into positive aspects of the career is necessary, in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the profession. Increased self-esteem is something both Alice and Bailey say has heightened their experience of camming. Query et al. (2000) says that women happy with their sexuality will enjoy work such as camming, which enables them to express this sexuality how they please. In *Hot Girls Wanted: Turned On* (2017) episode “Owning It”, Bailey emphasises that camming has allowed her to develop a healthy sexuality, a concept that was foreign to her before. She describes growing up in conservative Indiana where sex was considered ‘taboo’. “We tried to have sex ed [education] in my high school and the parents stormed the office because they saw it as promoting sex”, Bailey says. While she speaks, the camera zooms in on images of her as a high

school student resembling a completely different person. She has naturally brown hair, glasses, no makeup, is wearing conservative clothing and her body language portrays an awkward and shy demeanour. To reinforce Bailey's comments, the filmmakers have inserted a statistic on the screen reading, "More than half of American teens have had two days or less of sex education" (Herbenick & Paul, 2017). As the camera slowly zooms in on this, Bailey emphasises through a voice over that her hometown had the second highest pregnancy rate in the state. She goes on to explain that she didn't even know what an orgasm was until she was in college experimenting with a male partner and was confused at what had happened. "I didn't even know what my body looked like until I started camming", Bailey exclaims.

Through recorded footage of Bailey performing on camera inserted right after this, we are suddenly presented with Bailey as she is today— a sexually confident young woman. Her hair is now blonde (a desirable colour choice for women aiming for the 'hot blonde' stereotype popular among males), she wears a small black dress, and she smiles and flirts with the men in her chatroom. The camera simultaneously zooms in on a spin board labelled with the different sexual acts she is willing to perform, emphasising her newfound promiscuity. Benoit et al. (2018) develops the self-esteem concept with a study on sex workers, where results showed that many female performers experience greater levels of self-esteem as their work allows them to develop different parts of their identity that were previously undiscovered. One worker confirmed that sex work "allows me to explore all these kinds of sex that I wouldn't have explored otherwise, and explore, like, me as a more sexual person" (p. 76). Another was quoted as saying, "I think that after doing this work, I found myself. I was like, wow, okay there's this part of me that I didn't really know existed" (p. 76). By developing a healthy sexuality, Bailey is able to enjoy her camming experience; presenting a naturally confident self that she is proud of and was self-discovered.

Screen Personas

In *Hot Girls Wanted: Turned On* (2017) episode "Take Me Private", emphasis is placed on the ability of an individual to 'become another' through the use of a webcam and internet connection, which can cause tension between the off-screen and adopted self. Comparisons are made between cam girl Alice's personality and physical appearance before and after beginning camming. In one scene, Alice is chatting with her friend who describes her as being a cool,

outgoing and fun-spirited individual. Here, the filmmakers have employed juxtaposition by then showing Alice saying, “growing up, I never really fit in with anybody”. She clarifies that she was quiet and introverted, with very low self-esteem. Simultaneously, the camera slowly zooms in on a Facebook photo of Alice from a number of years ago, looking young and awkward with her natural brunette, to help reiterate her description. Using juxtaposition again, the next shot we see is a photo of Alice today. She switches her tone by saying that when she discovered camming, “I just created a new persona. I got more attention. People treated me a little bit differently, and honestly, my confidence went through the roof...just knowing that they’re watching me, makes you feel good”. Her appearance in the second photo has changed drastically. She’s posing suggestively with her legs splayed, her hair has been bleached blonde like Bailey’s, she has a heavy face of makeup on and is wearing a large bejewelled necklace and a short black and red dress. Again, it is a photo taken from Alice’s Facebook page, and it is noticeable to see that it received a much greater number of ‘likes’ compared to the previous photo featuring her ‘pre-cam girl’ self.

The adoption of a new persona is common among sex workers, including cam girls. Sanders (2005) talks of a “manufactured identity” (p. 322), where a separate character is created in order to fulfil the ‘prostitute’ role. The goal is to “make financial gain by exploiting the male customers’ desire for a stereotypical display of female sexuality” (Sanders, 2005 p. 323). The changes made by both Bailey and Alice to their physical appearance (blonde hair, makeup, sexualised attire) all carefully adopted with the aim of impressing the male audience, and the practiced confidence that they present on screen, shows their adherence to this manufactured identity. As Sanders (2005) says, conforming to this imagery is “a calculated response made by sex workers to capitalize on their own sexuality and the cultural ideals of the client” (p. 323). While Alice loves what she does, she ultimately faces struggles between her off-screen self and manufactured identity in the end, when she meets Tom (aka ‘Approximate’—a regular who pays to watch her cam), in person for the first time. When Alice arrives in Australia to meet him, it is evident that her on-screen persona differs from the way she acts off-screen. Her physical appearance is noticeably different; she has no makeup on and is wearing big, dark, baggy clothing and a large cap. This contrasts significantly with her on-screen appearance, where she emphasises her femininity with carefully applied makeup and sexy lingerie.

As Alice’s stay with Tom progresses, she begins to recognise and voice the inner conflict she feels with her adopted persona. Instead of staying with him in his home, she opts for a motel

and says, “I need some place to kind of be me, not just be the bright, cheery person that I know he knows me as”, and “[I’m] just tryin’ to...to be myself...”. Alice’s struggle makes sense if we refer to Jones (2016)’s clarification of the manufactured identity being only employed in a sex worker’s professional life. While on-screen together, Alice and Tom get along extremely well, Alice struggles to find a connection off-screen. Although she tries to, she is incapable of enjoying her stay and feels increasingly uncomfortable as she senses she is not the person Tom expects her to be. Alice realizes that the computer screen holds more significance than one might assume, as the contributing factor to the disconnect she feels between her off-screen and manufactured self. Jones (2016) says that the computer screen used during camming creates a “psychological barrier” (p. 232). This barrier enables the worker to experience greater pleasure than they would in real-life scenarios, and “becomes the primary tool that models use as part of emotional management” (p. 233). Hertlein and Stevenson (2010) say that due to this, some may experience conflict between their off-screen and adopted self. Their belief is that one might feel trapped in daily life due to conforming to societal beliefs and expectations, so when given the chance (through online camming in this case) can behave in the opposite way. Hertlein and Stevenson (2010) talk about online interactions in general. They say that people may lead a double life “because they perceive their lives as rule-driven, confined or constrained” (para. 25). The computer screen allows for “one to act in a certain way in ‘real time’ but to have a different persona when it comes to online behaviour and activities, especially when there are no outward or obvious signs of this other, seemingly contradictory persona” (Hertlein & Stevenson, 2010, para. 25). We can see this through Alice who found that camming allowed her to become a different person and therefore shed her suffocating image of self-consciousness, and Bailey, who was brought up in an environment that discouraged sexuality.

McKenna, Green and Gleason (2002) say that those who struggle socially in daily life are more inclined to turn to the computer screen to express themselves. We can again relate this back to Alice saying that she always struggled to fit in with everyone before she began camming. Albright and Conran (2003) develop this further by discussing the ‘virtual mirror’. This is when “one throws out a best self and sees in the reflection another shaped to one’s desires” (Albright & Conran, 2003, p. 48). They clarify this as where “one may be accommodating what you see in another in order to shape them into what you want to see” (Albright & Conran, 2003, p. 48). This may be interpreted in two ways. We could relate this to Alice who changes her whole physical appearance in order to feel sexually desirable. Through bleaching her hair blonde and

changing her clothing and makeup, Alice is mirroring what she feels are the necessary requirements for 'attractiveness'. Alternatively, with regards to Tom, we could view this as him trying to 'shape' Alice into what he wants to see, through the acts that he asks her to perform and the physical appearance he likes her to maintain. Hertlein and Stevenson (2010) argue that individuals (like Alice) who rely heavily on a computer screen often face increased struggle "between the 'natural' versus 'ought' self" (para. 26). At the end of the episode we see Alice confessing to Tom that she didn't realize how much she enjoyed being a computer fantasy. "When I'm on cam or even when we're on Skype, no matter how personal, I still portray this kind of fantasy girl that I don't think I actually am", she says. She goes on to clarify that the persona she displays online is not who she is off-screen. While Tom has been hoping that her stay would result in a private cam show-style performance, Alice decides against it, saying that she doesn't want to show something that isn't her "real" self. Benoit et al. (2018) says that these feelings develop "because there is a gulf between who they feel they can be on the job and their inner self" (p. 79), resulting in feelings of internal authenticity. Alice concludes the conversation by exclaiming that she didn't expect the computer screen to mean so much and is surprised that how she feels online does not transfer easily to real-life encounters.

It must be acknowledged that the episode is a construction presenting a representation of Alice and Tom, meaning that we cannot assume to be witnessing Alice's real thoughts and feelings. The episode is structured in such a way that follows a predictable three-part narrative structure, typical to traditional story telling. At the beginning we see that Alice and Tom are enthusiastic about their online relationship, as the viewer learns of their friendship and enjoyment of online sex. Alice then travels to Australia to meet Tom and tension arises as Alice struggles to feel comfortable and enjoy the trip. Additional tension is introduced when it becomes evident that Tom has strong off-screen feelings for Alice which are not reciprocated. Finally, a resolution is reached as Alice decides she can no longer continue the online relationship, as she isn't being true to herself. By following this structure, the episode becomes almost like a soap opera, leaving the viewer to question whether what they are seeing is authentic, or whether it has been constructed or enhanced by the filmmaker to tell a particular story.

‘The Girlfriend Experience’

Camming differs from traditional work in the pornography industry as it is sometimes possible for friendships and connections to be formed (Cassano, 2017), creating a heightened experience that goes beyond just sexual gratification. In episode “Take Me Private”, although Alice and Tom engage primarily in an online sexual relationship, they also feel very strongly towards one another on a friendship level and are seen chatting to each other on cam about the daily comings and goings of their lives. Reed Amber, a successful webcam model says that she feels camming is particularly appealing because it becomes a personal one-on-one interaction tailored to your specific preferences (Cassano, 2017). She says, “most of the time you build up a relationship. I talk to you as a friend and I respect you as a person. ‘How has your day been, what did you get from the shops, what are you cooking for dinner...’ it’s like an online relationship” (Cassano, 2017, para. 4). EevieLain, another successful cam model describes her career in much the same way. She says, “this level of emotional investment is exactly where the appeal of webcams resides— it’s not like any other kind of pornography. It’s real, it’s live, it’s interactive, and its relationship based (McGehee, 2015, para. 12). EevieLain talks of an “instant connection”, and says, “people need that outlet...camming is like love on tap, and as the community grows and evolves, it only becomes more nuanced and plentiful” (McGehee, 2015, para. 18). Hertlein and Stevenson (2010) draw on Young’s (2006) research who found that online communication allows individuals to feel more confident and less self-conscious, resulting in greater ease of communication. Emotions can be expressed “more openly and honestly at a much quicker pace than in the physical world leaving people with a sense of deeper intimacy, sense of trust and acceptance” (Hartlein & Stevenson, 2010, para. 30; Young, 2006). This is evident with Alice and Tom, who even before meeting in person, would openly tell the camera how much they cared for one another, with Alice often saying that she “loves” Tom. Tom says that with camming, he gets a kind of relationship that he has trouble with in real life, in a safe and anonymous way.

Young’s (2006) research says that the internet may be even more appealing to a user as it allows the individual an opportunity to interact with people they would otherwise be unlikely to form a relationship with off-screen. The online interactions between the cam model and the client “are both physical and affectual” (Jones, 2016, p. 237). Walby (2012) says that connecting with online sex workers appeals to a clientele that are wanting camaraderie and brief companionship

and calls these interactions ‘touching encounters’. These ‘touching encounters’ are enjoyed not just for the resulting sexual pleasure, but also for the emotional connection that is formed between two people (Walby, 2012). Sexual behaviour is only one component of an intimate encounter according to Jones (2016). Given the “mutual perception of safety in the digitally mediated space, a friendship can often emerge” (Jones, 2016, p. 238), stemming from platonic communication. This is evident with Alice and Tom, who converse as friends genuinely interested in each other’s lives, as well as engaging in sexual activity. The two are shown laughing and joking together on cam, and they ask about each other’s personal lives, as well as chatting about the latest films they are excited to watch, creating the impression that their relationship goes deeper than just sexual gratification.

Health

At the end of *Hot Girls Wanted: Turned On* (2017) episode “Owning It”, the filmmakers use careful editing techniques to emphasise that camming poses emotional and physical challenges for girls in the profession. During an interview, Bailey talks briefly about the struggles that she faces. “It doesn’t matter how I’m feeling, it’s 14 hours a day of happy”, she says. Bailey elaborates by saying that bringing her personal life into the cam room results in unsympathetic attitudes, as men assume she just wants ‘pity tokens’. She says that she can’t leave and has no choice but to stare constantly at the screen saying, “oh, hey! Hello bigguy99”. As Bailey speaks, the camera positions her to the right of the frame, leaving a clear shot of an alcohol bottle in view. The scene then switches to show a time lapse of Bailey’s computer screen to emphasise the many hours she spends online, before focusing back on her as she says, “I start drinking and I...don’t know why it helps but it does”. This careful framing is used as a foreshadowing technique. We now see close-up shots of a different alcohol bottle and Bailey filling up a shot glass before proceeding to drink. Here, the filmmakers duplicate the scene of Bailey drinking, so it appears as though she is consuming copious amounts of alcohol. The camera style suddenly changes to Bailey being filmed by her webcam at a later date, as she sits and talks about having been bleeding for two weeks as a result of purposely skipping some contraception pills (to avoid her period for camming) and its “taking a toll on [her] body”. The need to appear sexually desirable and available at all times is a requirement for cam girls when filming; yet this can be challenging when performers are forced to realise that they are only human and have to look after their physical health.

Bailey's appearance combined with the *mise-en-scène* constructs the image of her struggling to cope with the physical demands of camming. She looks exhausted, her hair is dishevelled and in a messy bun and she's wearing no makeup. Again, carefully positioned to the left of the frame is a bottle of alcohol and what appears to be a couple of energy drinks sitting on her bedside table. While the health trouble Bailey describes stems from a personal choice she made, the scene gives the illusion that Bailey's work is wearing her down and making her 'unwell'. This is strengthened by Bailey saying that she's just going to stay on cam for the whole time that she's supposed to, making it seem as though she is being forced to continue working, despite feeling ill. If we refer back to Bailey's earlier statement where she happily says, "I control everything", we can see this is in fact inaccurate. The scene undermines the empowerment Bailey feels, by suggesting that she is rather a 'slave' to the webcam and is incapable of extricating herself from its grasp.

Bailey's failure to maintain her health can be linked to the concept of the "Damaged Goods Hypothesis" discussed by Griffith, Mitchell, Hart and Gu (2012). They argue that a common public perception assumes that sex workers are not as psychologically healthy as those outside of the industry. Griffith, Mitchell, Hart and Gu (2012) conducted a study among 117 female performers in the adult entertainment industry and a matched comparison group, with their results showing that pornography actresses were more likely to have struggled with alcohol issues. Both cam girls and pornography performers face careers that are mentally and physically draining. These women are expected to present an idealized version of themselves for hours at a time, often being asked to perform acts which may be unpleasant or uncomfortable—all while maintaining the ultimate 'fantasy' persona. For some in the adult industry (like Bailey), alcohol may be a coping mechanism; a way to numb the senses when work becomes challenging.

Female Commodities and the Male Gaze

Throughout episode "Take me Private", there are many comments made primarily by Alice where she refers to herself as a commodity, creating the impression that she is a sexual object designed for male enjoyment. Alice describes herself as a luxury and says that Tom has "earned the right to meet [her]... [Tom] has definitely paid his dues. He actually owns a sixth, or like a

fifth of my boobs”, referring to the payments he made for her breast enlargements. When Alice finishes saying this, the camera lingers on her face for an additional, seemingly unnecessary few seconds. It is almost as if the filmmakers have purposely done this to place emphasis on her words and perhaps give the viewer a moment to consider the implications of what she is saying. While Alice never discusses her feelings towards being a sexual commodity, she does say, “it sounds so weird to talk about myself like that”, which highlights an awareness of it being unusual and not the ‘norm’ for a female to describe herself as an object purchased by viewers. Tom also reinforces the idea of women as commodities when he browses through pages of available performers on a cam site and says, “it’s a smorgasbord. It’s a shopping list. That sounds gross. And it is a little bit”. His comment emphasises an awareness that viewing women purely as erotic objects is a form of degradation and not completely morally sound.

Laura Mulvey, a scholar whose research on narrative cinema has been ground-breaking in discussions of women as objects and subjects of the ‘male gaze’, has previously analysed women as a commodity. Mulvey (1975) says that “in their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness” (para. 13). Oliver (2017) also argues that “women’s bodies are objects that give pleasure through voyeuristic and fetishistic forms of scopophilia, pleasure in looking” (p. 451-452); where in the context of camming, men can watch through the anonymous safety of a webcam. Gill (2003) says that women are engaging in “deliberate re-sexualisation and re-commodification of [their] bodies, which signals a movement from “an external male judging gaze to a self-policing narcissistic gaze” (p. 104), resulting in anxiety around physical appearance. This means that while sexual performance and the display of a sexy body may be seen as an act of agency offering “a strong and positive subject position to women” (Attwood, 2011, p. 204), not only does it reduce women to an object for the male gaze, it also positions them as an object for themselves.

Attwood (2011) explains that this results in the women’s body being their main identity, where they have to conform to unrealistic expectations that likely result in feelings of stress and anxiety and continuous “self-monitoring” (p. 204). Here, agency encompasses “an injunction to constantly remake the self in ways which do nothing to benefit women” (Attwood, 2011, p. 204-205). Women are unrealistically positioned to appear as though they are their own agents, with this having been self-chosen (Attwood, 2011, p. 204-205). We can see these feelings of stress and anxiety through Alice who says, “sometimes I’m anxious to get online. You know,

like, are people gonna like me today?” As Alice says this, the camera focuses on her and a cam friend who have just started a live performance together. We see both girls carefully applying makeup before they connect to the chat room and begin welcoming the viewers. The scene alternates between showing a close-up of Alice’s computer screen where it is clear to see that there are few responses from the viewers, and shots of Alice and her friend awkwardly standing around asking the viewers what they would like to see. In the end, Alice resorts to beginning a sex game for free to try and entice some engagement. The inclusion of this scene effectively illustrates the more difficult side of camming, where we see glimpses of cam girls’ insecurities come through, and we see just how reliant they are on adhering to the male gaze, as it is what is required to make money. Like Alice says, “it’s me trying to entice the guys. That’s what I’m there for”. Alice and her friend do not appear as though they are agents of their own bodies; rather we see them as objects or ‘pawns’ that are anxious about whether their male viewers will like what they see, and who seem unsure of what to do when not being directed.

Atwood (2011) suggests a contrasting viewpoint, which argues that cam girls do not always have to be viewed as sexually submissive. She says that:

Camgirls present themselves as cultural producers, challenging the representation of women as technologically inept and as passive sexual objects. They take on the power relations of looking, defying objectification and experimenting with ways of refusing, commanding and controlling the spectator’s gaze (p. 212).

White (2003; 2006, as cited in Atwood, 2011) develops this idea by saying that cam girls control what they make visible, and also set the rules around what they consider acceptable viewing practices by their audience. In essence, viewers are shown only what a cam girl chooses to display, and the cam girl has the power to refuse interaction if she so wishes. Bailey discusses this idea where she talks about having the ability to decide who she wants to perform for in a private chat room. In a study conducted by White (2006), it was reported that many cam girls felt safe and comfortable while performing for an audience. This suggests that “the controlled forms of visibility, which they choose, provide a much more empowering position than submitting to traditional forms of the gaze” (White, 2006, p. 72). This enables cam girls to “maintain control of their representations and develop a form of power through the ways in which they become visible”, resulting in an empowered gaze. (White, 2003). Salena Storm, a popular cam girl recruited by Bailey into the pornography industry, says it is “possible to be

empowered and still be a sex object”, suggesting that many cam girls feel a level of control and power over the display of their sexuality.

Conclusion

Both “Take Me Private” and “Owning It” conclude on a more negative note. The episodes emphasise some of the struggles Alice and Bailey face as cam girls, and ultimately present camming as a challenging career. Alice and Tom’s strong online relationship disintegrates after their awkward real-life meeting, and the last clip we see of Bailey is when she is ill and seemingly struggling to cope physically with her job. While the filmmakers have presented the viewer with many insights into the life of a cam girl, by concluding the episodes in such a way we can assume they are suggesting it is a job that women may struggle to remain in long term. At the end of both episodes, the viewer is left questioning whether Alice and Bailey will stay in the camming industry after a disappointing end to their journeys. While camming is distinct from a career in mainstream pornography, a link can be made here in that it is difficult to sustain a career in the sex industry. Many women entering the pornography industry do not last long; often their careers span only a few months. *Hot Girls Wanted* (2015) follows several stories in this vein, wherein newcomers to the industry who set out with enthusiasm and optimism face a range of struggles and become disillusioned. A group of amateur pornography actresses (aged 18-25) were documented for a time, with a number of them leaving the industry after less than a year, due to struggles with family and relationship pressure, and both mental and physical difficulty with the sexual acts they were expected to participate in. It is likely that while cam girls are in a separate category of their own, the filmmakers are emphasising that all types of sex work create issues for females involved in this line of work.

Chapter Five: Feminist Pornographers

Part of a niche market, feminist pornography is a genre of erotic film that differs from mainstream pornography as it foregrounds women's pleasure. As shown in *Hot Girls Wanted: Turned On* (2017) episode "Women on Top", it tends to be marked by higher production values, with less physical violence and abusive language. According to the *Feminist Porn Book*, it uses "sexually explicit imagery to contest and complicate dominant representations of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, ability, age, body type, and other identity markers" (Weber, 2013, para. 3). Additional defining features of feminist pornography as suggested in the episode are the importance of consent on set, as well as a positive representation of sex, focusing on equality between the male and female. Ms Naughty, a feminist filmmaker, author and webmistress, says "feminist porn seeks to take back the landscape of sexually explicit media, offering a more positive and inclusive way of depicting and looking at sex" (Naughty, 2011, para. 3). Ms Naughty's viewpoint highlights feminist pornography's desire to subvert the traditional stereotype seen in mainstream pornography, where females are seen as sexualised objects for male gratification.

Hot Girls Wanted: Turned On (2017) episode "Women on Top" follows the careers of two prominent feminist pornographers, Holly Randall and Erika Lust. Throughout the episode, the viewer is provided with an insight into how their films are produced and the various issues these women face. Because mainstream pornography is so easily accessible and can generally be viewed for free, feminist pornographers are struggling to produce original content that people are prepared to pay for, and which promotes healthy female sexuality. The themes explored in the episode include: the negative stigma associated with working in the pornography industry; time and money constraints when producing high quality feminist pornography; and the belief that an anti-porn attitude also equals an anti-sex attitude. The episode emphasises that a career as a feminist pornographer is challenging and questions whether it really is viable in a market so saturated with mainstream pornography. Additionally, female workers in the industry (in this case, filmmakers rather than performers) are affected by the misogyny of some men in the industry, as well as male viewers, and this impacts upon their ability to sustain a career and a healthy working context for themselves.

The Beginning of Feminist Pornography

Feminist pornography was first introduced to society in 1984 (Potter, 2016). Porn star, Candace Vadala questioned whether people would be interested in consuming a different kind of pornography, rather than the mainstream content available. As a pro-pornography feminist, Vadala wanted to see content with a focus on female sexuality, that would educate men on how to engage in healthy sexual relationships (Potter, 2016). That year, Vadala created her own company *Femme Productions*, which featured film-length videos, developed plot lines, detailed settings and well-thought-out dialogue. Her motto for the company was “positive sexual role modelling” (Potter, 2016, p. 106). Vadala wanted to ensure that strict hygiene measures were put in place and that her female performers had a say on how they were portrayed, which continues to be a priority for feminist pornographers today. She specifically sought to feature performers of colour and those that were older in age (Potter, 2016). What was most important to Vadala however, was to change the way women were embodied in pornography. She felt that while women were the main feature in pornographic films, it was unfair that their sexuality and sexual pleasure was completely disregarded (Potter, 2016). Initially, Vadala was met with criticism as pornography was seen as something exclusive to men. However, the next decade proved to be revolutionary for the pornography industry. Sex stores selling erotic films and toys were becoming more common, encouraging “sex as something that could be both enjoyed and learned” (Potter, 2016, p. 107) for those engaging in intercourse.

Vadala’s films directly countered the sexist and predictable mainstream content produced by male filmmakers, which is again a feature of feminist pornography today and something that both Holly and Erika strive to achieve in their work. These mainstream films would feature a very basic plot line and simple dialogue, with a rush to reach the ‘money shot’, where the camera captures male ejaculate in the woman’s mouth or body. Men took control of all the action and were depicted as teaching women about their sexuality and bodies. Potter (2016) references the 1972 film, *Deep Throat* here as another classic example. A male doctor diagnoses his female patient as having her clitoris located in her throat, where she can only experience enjoyment through performing oral sex on a man. Potter (2016) says that even though pornography actress Linda Boreman’s throat is featured in the title, male actor Harry Reems’s penis claims full focus. While Boreman experiences an intense orgasm, her body is

not displayed in the scene at all; rather it is alluded to through the depiction of fireworks and explosions (Potter, 2016), as a way to draw attention from visible female pleasure.

As a complete contrast, Vadala's films consisted of luxurious settings with a heavy focus on women's pleasure, through both foreplay and intercourse. In her film, *Rites of Passage* (1988) both men and women discover enjoyment through Tantric sex, and in the much later 2007 *Femme Chocolat* series, black women take centre stage in a range of stunning settings, including vacation beaches. On top of this, Vadala brought in new regulations to ensure the physical safety of her performers, allowed them to contribute to decision making on set and even helped them to eventually direct their own films. The ability to contribute to decision making is often evident in contemporary feminist pornography. Proceeding one of Erika's shoots, we see her sitting down with crew members and her performers to plan and discuss the format of the shoot together, allowing everyone the opportunity for input. Erika emphasises that women need to be in leadership roles in the production of feminist pornography as producers, directors and scriptwriters, if the industry is to provide a positive alternative to mainstream content.

According to Potter (2016), "Vadala led the way for today's feminist porn entrepreneurs, women and queers who view themselves not just as pornographers, but as educators, writers, activists, artists, and intellectuals" (p. 108). Vadala became so influential in the feminist pornography world that by 2006, an adult store in Canada was inspired to develop the yearly Feminist Porn Awards (FPAs). To be eligible to enter, "a film had to use erotic narratives to challenge stereotypes. In pornography, this includes featuring performers of colour, trans, fat, older, or disabled performers, who are typically stereotyped or relegated to the fetish market in mainstream porn" (Potter, 2016, p. 108). While a filmmaker's overall priority is to please their audience, Erika also says that a feminist filmmaker aims to put the pleasure of their performers first wherever possible, and ensure all acts performed are consensual. While filming a penetrative sex scene with female performer Monica and a male talent, Monica complains that it is causing her pain. Erika asks if she is okay and offers her a glass of water and some fresh air, before deciding to stop the sex and make do with earlier recorded footage. An interview with Erika as discussed by Gilmour (2019, para. 15), further emphasises the ways in which she foregrounds female pleasure. Erika says that she speaks to her performers before shooting to find out what they like and dislike, who they are happy to work with, and even their condom and lubricant preferences.

A Male Dominated Industry

In the first issue of *Playboy* released in 1953, creator Hugh Hefner was quoted as saying, “if you are somebody’s sister, wife, or mother-in-law and picked us up by mistake, please pass us along to the man in your life and get back to the *Ladies Home Companion*” (Johnson, 2003, para. 1). Over the years, many people have claimed that pornography is exclusively for men, however this has started to change in recent years (Sun, Bridges, Wosnitzer, Scharrer & Liberman, 2008). While historically there has been a focus on women in pornography as sex objects, since the early 2000s, many women have been consuming, directing and producing pornographic material (Dominus, 2004). In an interview during the episode, former feminist pornographer (and Holly’s mother), Suze Randall, talks of the sexism she experienced while producing her films. “All the guys were very, ‘my God. What the hell are you doing here? Silly little girl, go home,’ you know? ‘Stop playing with your camera.’” Now, there are many successful female pornographers producing content enjoyed by both males and females. Well-known names include, Madison Young, Ms Naughty, Shine Louise Houston, Courtney Trouble, Tristan Taormino (Sollee, 2015), and of course, Erika Lust and Holly Randall.

Erika argues that female pornographers produce content portraying healthy female sexuality, and do not focus purely on the women as the sexual object or the source of male pleasure. Further into the episode, she says that there is a noticeable difference in the type of content filmed when she has women in her crew. “The one behind the camera, is the one ultimately deciding what images we are gonna see. When I have men behind the camera, I end up with much more footage of her than of him”, which is typically what is seen in mainstream pornography, where women are portrayed as the main sex object. Ciclitira (2004) says that mainstream pornography tends to focus on the female figure and breasts, instead of the erect male penis. Sun, Bridges, Wosnitzer, Scharrer and Liberman (2008) conducted a study where they compared the content produced by both mainstream female and male pornographers and analysed the results. It was predicted that female filmmakers (note *not feminist* female filmmakers) would be likely to present egalitarian focused content devoid of any violence or degradation inflicted upon women. Overall, “women were significantly more likely to direct scenes containing positive behaviours”, including, “kissing, embracing and verbal compliments than were male directors” (p. 318,321), while “male directors were twice as likely to show men perpetrating aggression [towards women]” (Sun, Bridges, Wosnitzer, Scharrer &

Liberman, 2008, p. 319). Additionally, Sun, Bridges, Wosnitzer, Scharrer and Liberman (2008) found that male-directed scenes were more likely to depict a focus on male pleasure, through acts including women performing oral sex on men, which was much less evident in female directed scenes, where there was greater focus on women to women scenes.

During the shooting for one of Erika's videos, emphasis is put on female desire and pleasure. Performer, Monica, sits at a piano with her hair and makeup glamorously styled, wearing elegant earrings and a cocktail dress. She tells the viewer that she has a fantasy of wanting to play the piano nude in front of an audience, and that she dreams of having an orgasm when the music reaches its climax. The camera soon switches to focus on Monica attempting to play, as the male talent performs oral sex on her. What follows is a short penetrative sex scene, ending with Monica's orgasm as the music increases in intensity. The male performer is not given the opportunity to climax at all; in fact, Erika says to him, "we don't need your orgasm, it wasn't part of this". This scene clearly foregrounds Erika's desire as a feminist pornographer to emphasise female sexual enjoyment. It also contrasts from the typical 'money shot' seen in mainstream pornography, where the male visibly ejaculates on or in the female to conclude a scene.

Scholars including Mason (2006), Blue (2005) and Tisdale (1992) have all identified the possibility that some females may not choose to view feminist pornography, as they enjoy being degraded and find the act of sexual domination pleasurable. Joanna Angel, a mainstream pornography filmmaker and actress says that:

You could do a porn where a girl is getting choked and hit and spit on, the guy's calling her a dirty slut and stuff and that's ok, that can still be feminist as long as everybody there is in control of what they're doing (Sun, Bridges, Wosnitzer, Scharrer & Liberman, 2008, p. 315).

Erika and Holly's content works against this viewpoint. Explored throughout the episode is the importance of positive sexual representation; for them, a defining feature of feminist pornography. During an interview, Holly says that even though she has been pushed to shoot more aggressive content, she always draws a line and would never film something degrading to women, with an example being flushing a girl's head in a toilet as she is penetrated from behind. Erika is of the same opinion. She says that a typical mainstream pornography plotline

focuses on the male and his desires, where aggression is often a key theme. Erika says, “when you show sex it should be based on values where you feel that the people in it, that they are connected, that they are respecting each other”. While Erika talks, short clips from some of her videos play. We see both a male and female in the frame, smiling and kissing each other gently, presenting the image of a loving couple enjoying sex together. This scene is included as a way of foregrounding the importance of both partners experiencing pleasure in a sexual situation.

A Strive for Equality

Due to the boom of big budget mainstream pornography which tends to focus on a demand for violent content, one of the biggest challenges faced by both Erika and Holly is creating engaging pornographic content that is diverse and promotes equality. During an interview, Holly sits with her mother and talks of how different the pornography industry now is compared to when Suze was working in her younger days. She says that the development of the internet has meant that more extreme and violent sexual behaviour is now commonly accepted. “...Then it became, like, ‘can you put a baseball bat up there? Would you mind having your head in a toilet?’” she describes. In another scene, Erika says that mainstream pornography is just not good enough for her. While she talks, the camera shows a close-up shot of a scene from *Fetish Fuck Dolls*, depicting a woman being penetrated while aggressively choked by a male. Juxtaposition is then employed. Erika says, “I want something more. I want emotion. I want passion. I want intimacy. I want to feel with them”. At the same time, a scene from *Bang Bros.com* plays on the screen with the title, ‘Harmony gets slayed by Nacho’, depicting the opposite of what Erika describes. A female is told she has to “suck his [the male talent’s] dick” before being brutally orally penetrated until she is choking and struggling to breathe. Erika says that the people creating mainstream pornography are more interested in “punish-fucking” women than showing a good sexual encounter. Erika says that many of her performers are amateurs, which is ideal as this means that during shooting, they are not performing pornography; rather they are just having sex. According to Erika, this is much more powerful. An ideal male-female shoot for her consists of both performers equally experiencing enjoyment, with a focus on both participants.

Lopez (2017) analyses Jensen’s (2007) research where he says that pornography has normalised violent and degrading sex. Using an exploration of personal narratives, text

analysis, interviews and cultural/social theory, Jensen (2007) argues that men are presented in a position of power which is never challenged. They remain the dominant figure, whose job it is to objectify and commodify female sexuality (Lopez, 2017; Jensen, 2007). Jensen (2007) identifies three key themes that characterise mainstream pornography. First is the belief that all women desire sex with a man at any given moment. The second is that women experience pleasure from all sexual acts requested by a man. The third is that women who do not realize this straight away, can be easily made to change their minds with some force. According to Jensen (2007), as cited in Lopez (2017, para. 3), “these themes contain elements of objectification, control, hierarchy, submission and violence that aligns with the idealized notions of manhood” and provide an invitation for men to engage with patriarchal principles.

Jensen (2007) acknowledges that pornography’s sexist messages are reinforced everywhere, not just within pornography itself, where these messages are “almost never questioned and often defended” (cited in Lopez, 2017, para. 5). Feminist pornographer, Tristan Taormino emphasises the type of content filmmakers strive to produce in order to counter such misogynistic themes: “my films differ from a lot of mainstream porn because they are mission-driven and challenge one-dimensional, stereotypical, repetitive depictions of gender, race, class, and sexuality as well as power pleasure and sexual agency” (Voss, 2014, p. 204-205). Taormino works to include ethical production values and a sex-positive ethos into her videos (Voss, 2014). People of colour are included, but are not racialized or fetishized, and she says, “I prioritise representations of diverse modes of giving and receiving pleasure, non-heteronormative sexual practices, and authentic orgasms” (Voss, 2014, p. 205). Through this, Taormino aims to create realistic and inclusive content that can be enjoyed by a wide demographic.

Pornography Influence

Erika implies that one of her motivations for creating feminist pornography is to provide viewers with an insight into how “real” sex should work. In one scene, Pablo (Erika’s husband and business partner) brings up the mainstream pornography website *Pornhub* during a business meeting. The camera zooms in on a close-up of a banner add on the site that says, “ExxxtraSmall.com Teens Get Destroyed”. Depicted is a teenage girl who is made to look much younger than someone over the age of 18. She’s wearing a floral dress, bunny ears and

is grasping a basket of coloured Easter eggs, while above her stands a large male with his hands placed possessively over her shoulders. A low camera angle has been utilised to accentuate the size difference between the two figures, so he appears large and menacing, while she looks small and vulnerable. While this image is displayed, Erika emphatically explains to her colleagues that this is the type of content so common in mainstream pornography. She says, “we can’t ignore that porn today is sex education. Especially for people who never had sexual experiences in their life. How are they gonna know how sex actually works?” Erika emphasises that this type of pornography is only one click away. A statistic is then inserted on the screen to emphasise that many young people look to pornography as ideal sex education. It reads, “About 40% of sexually active 14-18-year olds say they learned more about sex from porn than from school” (Herbenick & Paul, 2017). According to OFLC (2018, p. 11), results of their New Zealand survey showed that many young people (aged 14-17) utilise pornography as a way of learning about sex, with 73% of regular viewers using it as a learning tool. This places emphasis on pornography as a highly influential medium worldwide, rather than just being a depiction of exaggerated fantasy for sexual enjoyment.

Young people are interested in viewing pornography for a variety of reasons (Allen, 2011). These include, “seeking to satisfy curiosity regarding specific sexual practices, displaying sexual knowledge to peers, or conforming to normative gender expectations” (Allen, 2011, p. 176). According to Hesse and Pederson (2017, p. 756), large amounts of mainstream pornography consumption and the content depicted, “[is] habitually associated with performance during intercourse and the development of sexual identity”. Morgan (2011) has found that after watching mainstream pornography, viewers are more inclined to mimic the sexual acts they see, with Hesse and Pederson (2017) confirming that pornography “conditions the sexual behaviour of its viewers” (p. 756). Hesse and Pederson (2017) talk of the “Cultivation Theory” as discussed by Gerbner, Gross, Morgan and Signorielli (1994), which argues that one’s beliefs and attitudes can be influenced by the frequent viewing of images typically depicted by the media. This concept is similar to Gagnon and Simon’s (2005) “Sexual Scripts Theory” (cited in Hesse and Pedersen, 2017, p. 756), which says that an individual’s sexual interactions are “read from deeply ingrained sexual scripts informed by cultural, historical, social and individual experiences”. Both theories disagree with the belief that sex is purely a biological construct driven by urges. Instead, “sexuality is socially constructed and greatly influenced by media, societal norms and pre-existing values and attitudes” (Braithwaite, Coulson, Keddington & Fincham, 2015, p. 112). Common images presented in mainstream

pornography help to ingrain these norms, values and attitudes, as well as harmful stereotypes, so Erika does not include these images in her work. Examples of common images include large penises (around 8-10 inches in length, compared to the global average size of 4.6-6 inches), big breasts and shaved, perfectly proportioned vulvas that do not appear to differ from one another (Lever, Frederick & Peplau, 2006). Violence and aggression, including hair-pulling, spanking, choking, verbal abuse and man handling, as well as degradation in the form of ‘cum shots’, are acts often promoted as the ‘ideal’ sexual experience as we have seen in other episodes such as “Money Shot” and in *Hot Girls Wanted* (2015). After the filming of a scene for one of her films, Erika clearly voices her experiences of working with individuals previously employed in mainstream pornography. She says, “it is definitely a challenge when someone works quite a lot in the mainstream porn industry, because they tend to reproduce what they learned in the industry. You have of course, the hair-pulling, that’s always in there, and he [the male talent] did a few of those things”. Erika emphasises that she needs her actors to understand that she is not interested in them “doing porn”, rather she says she wants to “show sex”, which she sees as much more emotional and intimate. Erika says that if her performers display mainstream pornography acts (such as hair-pulling), then she will remove this content during the editing process.

While Erika describes her content as a display of “real” sex, acknowledgement must be given to the fact that all pornography (no matter the genre) is purely a *construction* of reality, not unlike a documentary. Erika confirms this further along in the episode when she says, “I have enough material [video footage] to choose what I want to show and what I don’t want to show. Because in the end, even if it is real sex, this is a film and it’s an illusion and I create the image that I want you to see as an audience”. We also see this in action during the filming of a scene for Erika’s latest erotic film, where she asks the female talent for an orgasm to end the scene on, reassuring her that she is allowed to fake her climax. Paasonen (2006) says that part of the pornography appeal is its promise of offering viewers with footage of ‘real sex’. According to them, “promising to freeze ‘the action’ as it happens and capturing close-ups of (apparently) orgasmic bodies are mechanisms for laying claim to authenticity” (Paasonen, 2006, as cited in Luyt, Welch & Lobban, 2019, n.p.). However, Vex (2016) says that pornography, like anything on film, is dishonest. The audience is provided only with the camera operator’s view, who “frames, manipulates and corrects” (Vex, 2016, p. 188). In their opinion, “holding a camera forces its operator to edit; to reveal one thing is to inherently hide something else, to pick one focal point and ignore another” (Vex, 2016, p. 188). Being in front of a camera will always

alter the way a person acts, as it becomes performative, whether subconsciously or not, as we automatically change our behaviour to suit an audience (Vex, 2016). I have included this paragraph as it is important to remember no matter how ‘authentic’ pornography or documentary film appears, they are simply carefully crafted ‘representations’ of idealized realities and should be viewed as such. While Erika promotes her work as depicting real sex, she is ultimately creating content for an audience, so has to ensure that it is visually appealing—even if this means cutting content during editing or faking an orgasm.

Time and Money Constraints

One of the biggest struggles faced by Holly in her career is the change in contemporary pornography, resulting from the development of the internet. Due to the sheer amount of mainstream pornography available online (most of which can be viewed for free), Holly has found that she no longer has the time or money needed to continue filming high-end feminist productions. A statistic is displayed on the screen reading, “Out of the tens of millions of people who watch online porn, only 3% visited a pay site last year [2016]” (Herbenick & Paul, 2017). Recent developments in the mainstream pornography industry create constraints for those wanting to produce high-end content (Whisnant, 2016). Feminist pornographer, Tristan Taormino says:

Ten years ago, I had more time and more money to make a movie than I do today. Budgets have decreased, yet the demand for new content remains high, so companies want filmmakers to create a unique product with fewer resources. Because consumers access porn across multiple platforms, including on the web and mobile devices, what we shoot has also changed; there is more of an emphasis on individual scenes rather than full-length movies (Voss, 2014, p. 203).

Throughout *Hot Girls Wanted: Turned On* (2017) episode “Women on Top”, Holly discusses the differences between creating pornography in the early days of her career compared to what it’s like now in the present day. For Holly, the pornography she creates is not just about making sure she promotes equality and positive sexual encounters for women, but also creating something aesthetically interesting. “Another thing I didn’t like about [mainstream] pornography is that it is so badly done. It didn’t feel like they had cared about the cinematic

vision of it”, she says. The episode switches back and forth between making comparisons between what Holly’s pornography used to be like, versus the struggles she now faces with creating quality content. The camera slowly zooms in on a series of photos from Holly’s past pornography shoots depicting sophisticated actresses and lavish sets, looking like they have come straight from a high-end glamour magazine. “The porn that we shot was very much, like, on our own terms. We were shooting the best girls. We had the best makeup artists. We had the best wardrobe. We had so much creative freedom”, Holly says. Each performer in the photos sports carefully styled hair and makeup with an outfit perfectly suited to the plot line, including one wearing an extravagant wedding dress for a wedding night themed scene. As the last photo is displayed, the camera slowly fades to black while Holly’s voice echoes, “but the industry has changed so much since I got in it”, creating a dramatic and nostalgic effect.

The camera then switches to a new scene showing Holly looking stressed as she prepares for her new shoot, *Quest*, a medieval-fantasy themed film. Holly talks about her budget continuing to shrink and says that she has to keep thinking of new ways to bring in the “feminine touch” that she’s known for. Suze adds that when she herself was at the height of her career, she was able to spend three days on a centrefold, while Holly now has to do three centrefolds in a day. Again, a nostalgic feeling is brought back as the camera switches to Holly sitting at her computer looking through old photos of Suze’s early shoots. “Here’s something that you won’t really see anytime soon”, says Holly, as she scrolls through images of prior actresses: “every single one of them is styled. Like that kind of high-end, super glam”. While Holly feels that it is no longer possible to continue shooting like Suze did in her time, it is still important to her to put as much effort and attention to detail into her films as possible. Through the emphasis placed on Holly’s financial struggles, the episode may be suggesting that in the age of mainstream pornography, she is too extravagant with props, settings and costumes. The documentary’s emphasis on her struggles suggest that to survive as a pornographer in the internet age, sacrifices and compromises have to be made, or perhaps in some cases, a change in career.

Holly says that the most important thing she learned from Suze is how to treat her performers, “making sure they look and feel beautiful, all that attention to detail”. The filming of Holly’s shoot for her film, *Quest* clearly accentuates this belief. Beautiful outdoor forestry is chosen for the setting. The performers are wearing carefully put together fantasy wear, consisting of scantily clad pieces of armour. Jada, one of the female performers, sports stunning facial

makeup designed by a professional makeup artist. Instead of just one male camera operator as is common in mainstream pornography, multiple crew members, including women, work together to shoot the scene. Also evident throughout the shooting is a relaxed atmosphere, where both performers and crew laugh and joke together. We see a stark contrast in behaviour on the set of mainstream pornography shoots as seen in *Hot Girls Wanted* (2015). Amateur performer, Ava Taylor sits looking sullen and withdrawn and refuses to speak to the male talent who looks uncomfortable and unsure of what to say as he hovers nearby. Rather than constructively discussing the shooting proceedings with the performers, the crew members bark orders that are expected to be followed without question. While Holly positions Jada for a series of promotional photographs, she continuously praises her and uses encouraging language, such as “perfect”, “that’s great”, and “gorgeous”. Both Holly and Suze say that sexual intercourse, even in pornography, should be really beautiful, “like watching someone doing a great dance”. Mainstream pornography tends to be vastly different, as seen in other episodes of *Hot Girls Wanted: Turned On* (2017), and *Hot Girls Wanted* (2015). Typically filmed with a handheld camera in a studio, these shoots involve verbal degradation, manhandling and a sense of male dominance, where the female is used solely so the male can reach orgasm. This is visible in *Hot Girls Wanted* (2015), where performer Ava Kelly is filmed by the male talent point-of-view style, as he verbally assaults her while brutally forcing his penis down her throat.

May (2011) argues that independent feminist pornography is increasing in popularity, while mainstream pornography is struggling. She references Patrick Kwasniewski, a gender and queer studies researcher with a focus on feminist pornography. According to Kwasniewski, feminist pornography has greater economic benefits with the prominence of the internet. He says consumers can be reached more directly, it is easier for feminist pornographers to self-distribute and allows them “a more focused target [to produce] highly profiled films” (Kwasniewski, as cited in May, 2011, para. 16). Kwasniewski says that the mainstream pornography industry is declining economically, as it is not changing the typical ways it produces or distributes its content, and what’s available on the market is very repetitive-something it can’t afford to be when there is so much available freely online (Kwasniewski, as cited in May, 2011). Feminist pornographer, Petra Joy says that it’s not just Video on Demand that has caused mainstream pornography DVD sales to drop, but also the fact that men are becoming tired of seeing the same stereotypically cast performers filming the same positions and scenarios, where the enjoyment is clearly an over-the-top exaggeration. She says, “people

are hungry for more authenticity, variety and joy” (Joy, as cited in May, 2011, para. 17). This suggests why Erika’s work has found such success with her audiences, as she strives to produce unique plot lines, promote diversity and show realistic sex.

Debunking Sex Myths

Erika disagrees with the idea that criticizing mainstream pornography means that you must be sex-negative. She says, “I’ve been called everything from feminazi to a fake feminist. Many producers feel that I’m pushing too much for the female perspective”. The idea that feminist pornographers like Erika are trying to stifle male sexual fantasies is raised by Eaton (2007, p. 675) who says that “an anti-[mainstream] porn view conjures images of imperious and censorial finger-waggers who mean to police every corner of our erotic imaginations”. Rather, for feminists, “the solution is not to condemn or to abolish pornography, as advocated by anti-pornography feminists, but to have ‘better’ pornography that addresses women’s sexuality” (Sun, Bridges, Wosnitzer, Scharrer & Liberman, 2008, p. 314). As Erika’s work portrays female sexual enjoyment and equality between male and female performers, she should instead be seen as representing a sex-positive mindset. Queen and Comella (2008) as cited in Smith and Attwood (2014, p. 13) say that “sex-positive is the cultural philosophy that understands sexuality as a potentially positive force in one’s life, that celebrates sexual diversity, differing desires and relationship structures, and individual choices based on consent”. At the end of the episode, Erika sits explaining to the viewers that there are consumers in society that want to see this type of content and in her eyes, [she] “really needs to be able to do it”. To her, it is extremely important that the content she produces promotes diversity, including people of different colours and body sizes, as well as a positive approach to sex.

In an interview with May (2011), Erika describes the types of negative interactions she has experienced with male members of the pornography industry, who feel indignant that ‘their’ pornography is being tampered with by women. She says, “pornographers are usually middle-aged straight guys, with a similar cultural background. They don’t like it when I say that I make porn for women. They say their porn is for everybody and I am the ‘tight’ one” (Lust, as cited in May, 2011, para. 18). As society continues to progress and stereotypical gendered roles are abolished, Erika works to reflect this change in her content. She strives to challenge this

thinking and provide another option for consumers, producing pornography that is inclusive to both men and women.

A commonly held belief is that women are not interested in consuming pornography. May (2011) says that there are few definite figures regarding female pornography consumption, but some academic research addresses the concept. Kuckenberg, a researcher on gender, completed a study on women and pornography which included an audience research component. She says that research suggests women do not enjoy consuming pornography to the same extent as men, but that this claim needs to be viewed in a broader context (Kuckenberg as cited in May, 2011). Kuckenberg says that there are particular stereotypes for male and female sexuality, one of which states that women are not visual creatures, like men are (Kuckenberg, as cited in May, 2011). According to Kuckenberg as cited in May (2011, para. 20), “who looks and who gets looked at is a question of power as well. Historically, the gaze is male, while women are objects that are being looked at”. For Kuckenberg, women admitting to finding pleasure through pornography means stereotypes regarding female sexuality are inaccurate. While it can be safely assumed there are many women in society who do not choose to consume pornography, this cannot be said for all. It is likely the female audience for pornography is much larger than has been thought in the past, and may continue to increase as society progresses and gendered stereotypes in general become redundant. Recognition of a female audience further reinforces the importance of feminist pornographers’ work in creating content that women want to view; where female pleasure and equality is foregrounded.

Porn Stigma

One of the challenges of working in pornography is the resulting stigma that arises from such a career, and a fear that some who work in the industry may struggle to find employment in other fields. During an interview, Holly says that even though she is not ashamed of what she does, there are many other people in society “who view what I do for a living in a much different light than I do, and they just don’t want a pornographer, ex-pornographer, whatever you wanna call me, shooting their fashion line”. While pornography has become much more conventional in recent years, a strong stigma still surrounds the industry. According to Voss (2012, p. 392) as cited in Attwood (2006), the greater level of sexualised material we are seeing

in mainstream culture does not necessarily mean there is a greater level of social acceptance, “as only certain types of ‘normative’ pornography and sexual expression are acceptable”. For Hein (2006) as cited in Voss (2012, p. 392), “there is still a line drawn between the porn world and the rest of pop culture”. As a result, judgemental and influential terms are still commonly used to describe the pornography industry, including those such as ‘violent’, ‘humiliating’, and ‘degrading’.

Those working in the pornography industry may end up stigmatized due to the position they hold instead of their personal qualities and must develop ways in which to cope with this (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Voss, 2012). Weitzer (2018) quotes Ervin Goffman’s book on stigma, where he analyses the differing ways in which people manage this labelling. The first is hiding their position from others in society, the second is only revealing their position to a select few and the third is “isolating themselves within a group of similarly stigmatized others” in order to cope with what Goffman coins a “spoiled identity” (1963, p. 718). Weitzer (2018) says that as a result, “individuals are resigned to their devalued status and their agency consists of creatively limiting exposure” (p. 718). We can see that this is true for Holly who clearly voices an awareness of the stigmatized image she holds. It is evident through a comment from Suze that she too, is aware of Holly’s position when she says that Holly should move on from the pornography industry and “be a sex therapist or something”. Her reference to becoming a sex therapist indirectly alludes to a belief that Holly would be unable to find work in an area outside of the pornography industry and should therefore apply her years of experience to a sex-related role. Goffman’s stigma management can also be applied to performers in pornography. Miriam Weeks (aka Belle Knox), was a Duke University freshman who pursued a part-time career in pornography in 2014 to pay for her tuition (Lawrence-Turner, 2014). Knox tried to keep her career private, but when a Duke fraternity member came across one of her videos online, she was outed, and she faced both in-person and online abuse (Lawrence-Turner, 2014). While Knox possessed positive personal qualities—she was a top student at Gonzaga Prep earning “accolades for her public service work and volunteerism and top honours in foreign languages” (Lawrence-Turner, 2014, para. 3)—her position in the pornography industry caused people to view her in a negative and judgemental light. Knox graduated from Duke and later enrolled in law school with an alias (Miller, 2018), as a result of the stigmatization she was unable to shake.

Scholars including Potter (2016) and Voss (2014) and feminist pornographer, Tristan Taormino argue that sex work should be accepted in society. According to Potter (2016, p. 113), “an effort by feminist organizations to destigmatize sex work and pornography would...expand the economic choices of those who spend any part of their working lives in porn”. Taormino as cited in Voss (2014, p. 205) says that “as society voraciously consumes porn, it simultaneously denigrates and devalues the people who make it”. Taormino argues that sex work stigma arises as a direct contrast from puritanical values which are deeply rooted in western society, as well as “our simultaneous curiosity and fear of sex” (Voss, 2014, p. 205). There is still a long way to come before pornography is seen as just another form of media. Taormino’s view is that “by studying porn as a form of labour, as an entertainment industry, and as a mass medium, academics can begin to challenge the stigma, and shift perceptions” (Voss, 2014, p. 205). Sociological work that presents personal testimonies of pornography performers can also help to enlighten and educate people—both those in academia and people in everyday society—on a workplace and industry that is commonly “misrepresented” and “misunderstood” (Taormino as cited in Voss, 2014, p. 205). Taormino talks of her book *The Feminist Porn Book: The Politics of Producing Pleasure*, which includes both academic and non-academic writing regarding the pornography industry. She says:

It [pornography] is consumed so broadly but acknowledged so rarely in public spaces. Bringing porn to the classroom helps take away the shame, destabilizes its designation as a dirty little secret no one discusses and analyses it in broader contexts of media, popular culture, capitalism and politics (Voss, 2014, p. 205).

This concept can be applied to performer, Belle Knox, who after her pornography career was discovered, became a spokesperson for the industry. Knox has appeared in countless media interviews where she praises the industry and speaks of her role as a feminist. During an interview published by CNN, Knox says, “to be in porn and to be able to be naked and to be able to be free and have that sexual autonomy is so incredibly freeing” (CNN, 2016). Knox is striving to break down barriers faced by those in the pornography industry, while also promoting the rights of workers. Potter (2016) says that many pro-pornography feminists first made the claim that there is no difference between sex work and alternate types of work, when the MacKinnon-Dworkin ordinance was developed in 1983. The MacKinnon-Dworkin ordinance, also known as the “Antipornography Civil Rights Ordinance”, was a series of ordinances in the United States with close ties to Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon;

both anti-pornography radical feminists (Potter, 2016). The ordinances claimed that pornography went against female civil rights and encouraged women to seek reimbursement through lawsuits for any damage done to them through pornography (Potter, 2016). The court eventually dismissed the ordinance, who deemed it a violation of the freedom of speech (Potter, 2016). Potter (2016, p. 110) says that the pro-pornography argument is significant because it constitutes that the porn industry, “like any other workplace, should be safe, regulated, and free from discrimination”. Potter (2016) quotes civil rights attorney, Mary Dorman, who says that “the issues for women in erotic films mirrors the issues of women in general” (Dorman as cited in Potter, 2016, p. 110). According to Dorman and performers like Knox, a priority for women is a life without discrimination, no matter their profession.

Conclusion

Both Holly and Erika position feminist pornography as a contrast to mainstream pornography. As a result, they face many challenges during production. These include performers mimicking mainstream styles on set; economic and time restraints; complaints from misogynistic viewers who enjoy seeing violence towards women and dominant shots of penises in holes, and stigma. When Holly is interviewed for the last time at the end of the episode, she feels demoralized and questions her place in the industry. She says that although there are consumers who want to see high-end pornography, because it is such a small niche, she just doesn't have the time and budget required to continue producing her usual content. Holly repeats what a client recently said to her; “I'm not sure that the extra production value that you put into your set matters in the end”, emphasising a belief that low-budget ‘fast-food’ style mainstream pornography is what most people are happy to settle for. The audience is left feeling concerned for Holly's future as she says, “I really would like to stay in this industry. I like what I'm doing. I'm hoping that, you know, things will change, new opportunities will come up. You never know”. At the same time, the episode suggests through Erika that there can be opportunities for feminist pornographers in this new environment.

Erika is the last to be interviewed before the episode concludes and as a contrast, she presents a very powerful and hopeful voice for the industry. The last scene alternates between an interview with Erika and the display of one of her films during a premiere. Erika also finds out that her latest film, *Xconfessions* was very successful on the market. While she talks, intense,

uplifting instrumental music plays in the background. Erika tells the viewers it is up to female filmmakers like her to create change in the pornography industry. She says, “it’s more people getting involved. It’s more people daring with this genre. And as women, we need to use our voice. We need to tell the world how we would like it to be”. She says women need to take a stand and voice the kinds of films and stories that they want to see. In her view, mainstream pornography is not a modern vision at all and it is not a feminist vision. But it is something that can and will be changed by females willing to do so. While the episode ends on a positive note, by foregrounding the issues faced by Holly and Erika throughout, the filmmakers emphasise that creators of feminist pornography encounter many challenges, and it is not a career that all will find success in.

Chapter Six: Young Performers and Sexual Exploitation

Hot Girls Wanted (2015) explores the emotional and physical challenges faced by female (18-25-year-old) amateur performers new to the pornography industry. These include, sexual health and the industry's desire to discourage the use of condoms, the obsession with "pseudo-child pornography" (Dines, 2006), and suggested sexual assault that arises alongside the concept of 'first time' sex. Due to the innocence of the performers, some of the scenarios discussed involve an element of coercion or rely on the anticipated naivety of the girls who are striving to succeed in the industry. It is evident throughout the documentary that at times, the performers fail to understand the consequences of their work, such as Lucy Tyler who is not aware of the negative connotations of her child-like persona, or Brooklyn Daniels who possesses a very blasé attitude towards unprotected sex. Likewise, the documentary emphasises the performers' willingness to participate in acts that are painful or uncomfortable in order to become successful, such as Stella May filming a *Sexual Disgrace* punishment video and Ava Taylor filming a rough forced blowjob scene for *Latina Abuse*. With their exploration of these issues, the filmmakers have ultimately portrayed work in the pornography industry as exploitative and shows that it causes challenges for the health and wellbeing of these young performers.

Sexual Health and Condom Use

Maintaining physical health is important while working in the pornography industry, where there is a reliance on the consistent use of a performers' body. *Hot Girls Wanted* (2015) explores both health issues that occur through work in the industry, as well as the industry's tendency to encourage or downplay unprotected sex. During one scene, Karly (aka Lucy Tyler) stands at the sink preparing a douche (an item used to rinse the vagina following intercourse). While Lucy has previously voiced her love for the work she does, she admits that it "just can't be good for you to have sex that much with that many different people". "Ugh", she exclaims, "it's so weird that that's my job", highlighting perhaps an underlying level of embarrassment at what she does on a regular basis. The documentary then cuts suddenly to grainy handheld camera footage of Tressa (aka Stella May) filming herself lying on a hospital bed. She looks exhausted and unwell and says that she is in extreme pain due to a Bartholin cyst the size of a golf ball on her vagina. The documentary cuts again to show Stella now at home looking

worriedly at her medical bill. She explains to Ava Kelly that her recent hospital trip was a result of having too much sex, proving Lucy's earlier point that it affects the body negatively. Ava voices her concern regarding the physical harm that can result from sex work.

The documentary also briefly touches on the conflicts involved with condom use in the pornography industry. Right at the beginning, text is inserted onto the screen reading, "California recently passed a law requiring the use of condoms in pornography. Because porn featuring unprotected sex is more popular, many companies now film in cities like Miami" (Herbenick & Paul, 2015). The rest of the documentary makes evident that the girls are consistently having unprotected sex. Michelle (aka Brooklyn Daniels) casually tells some of the others that she did two 'creampies' (intercourse followed by a visible view of ejaculation inside the vagina) during a shoot and then just went to Walgreens to purchase the Plan B pill with money provided by the company she was working with. "Why not? The Plan B always works, I guess. I don't know", she says, while giggling nervously and looking unsure. This expression of confusion alludes to the naivety of the girls and suggests that they are not prioritising their health and safety. A desire to succeed in their profession means they can be easily persuaded by adults in the industry, without considering potential health or pregnancy consequences.

The "Los Angeles Safe Sex in the Adult Film Industry Act" (2012), also known as "Measure B", is a law requiring the use of condoms in vaginal and anal sexual relations for pornography produced in Los Angeles County California. These regulations are not explored further throughout the duration of the documentary. By displaying brief information about the condom mandate onscreen and then switching to footage of Brooklyn Daniels describing her unprotected sex scenes, the filmmakers emphasise that the girls are facing serious health risks. The documentary may also be emphasising that the responsibility is on the performers themselves; by choosing to work in an area that does not enforce condom use, the girls are accepting the potential risks that accompany such a decision. Condoms used correctly are an effective option for pornography performers, as during each sexual encounter they are 98% effective at protecting against STI's and HIV (Shachner, 2014). Concerningly, some companies in the pornography industry (including Vivid Entertainment), are contesting the law by arguing that condoms are detrimental to the health of performers and violate producers' first amendment rights to freedom of expression (Shachner, 2014). Sex in the pornography industry is very different to sex everyday individuals experience in the bedroom. The average person is

unlikely to engage in many of the acts commonly portrayed in pornography scenes. Grudzen et al. (2009) conducted a content analysis of fifty random heterosexual pornography films. These were films released between 1 August 2005 and 31 July 2006 and were “randomly selected from the distributor of 85% of the heterosexual adult films released each year in the United States” (Grudzen et al, 2009, p. 152). Results showed that 42% of the films featured anal sex, 94% featured oral-genital or oral-anal play, and 22% featured anal-to-oral penetration (Shachner, 2014). Additionally, the filming of a penetrative pornography scene is difficult on the body. To film even the shortest of scenes, “half an hour of hard thrusting by a well-endowed man” (Shwyzer, 2012) is usually necessary, whereas the time spent on intercourse for an everyday couple averaged 5.4 minutes (Zietsch, 2016). Shachner (2014) says that the average size of a male performer’s penis is eight inches (when erect), while the average size of an everyday male’s penis is less than six inches (when erect). These comparisons highlight a stark contrast between pornography sex and real sex.

The adult film industry argues that the use of condoms makes it more difficult for a male to perform and can cause potential injury for a female. Shachner (2014) draws on the experiences of performers who say that many experience an allergic reaction from condom use and that sex for an extended period of time with a condom can cause discomfort and friction burn, potentially resulting in lesions in the genital area. Additionally, female performers are even more likely to receive injury when condoms are used for anal sex scenes, as friction from the condom material can cause tears and bleeding in the tissue of the rectum, allowing germs to pass through more readily (Shachner, 2014). In a later scene, Stella sits talking to her mother who has just found out that she has been working in the pornography industry. While Stella reassures her mother that the girls are regularly tested for chlamydia, she admits that she does not use condoms during filming. The girls in *Hot Girls Wanted* (2015) do not provide any further comments regarding condom usage. It appears as though the documentary sometimes silences the voices of the subjects, preventing viewers from hearing their thoughts or opinions. Again, this reminds us that documentaries are carefully constructed texts, in which the filmmaker is able to decide which information to convey or withhold, in order to maintain a particular angle or viewpoint.

Enforcing condom use likely impacts pornography companies, as profit is lost if consumers prefer watching no-condom scenes (Strauss, 2008). If this happens, pornography companies “will likely attempt to move abroad to avoid the legislation or go underground” (Strauss, 2008,

p. 24). According to Lupkin (2013), Vivid Entertainment previously enforced their own condom mandate during the mid-2000's, but that they experienced a 30 per cent drop in sales as a result, perhaps explaining why they are now against the current law. In 2013, performers Kayden Kross and Logan Pierce from Vivid Entertainment filed a lawsuit arguing that “porn companies have the right to freedom of expression and speech, which includes the right to film sex acts without a condom” (Almendrala, 2013, para. 2). Performer, James Deen is against condom use as he says that pornography companies aim to “portray a certain fantasy for film” (Lupkin, 2012, para. 21) which cannot be achieved with the use of condoms, as this would prohibit the display of visible male orgasm. Kross and Pierce also argued that condoms are not always effective at preventing the spread of HIV and AIDS and pornography performers are required to undergo STD testing every 14 or 28 days (Lupkin, 2012). If results come back STD positive, then individuals are unable to perform (Lupkin, 2012). However, Dr Jeffrey Klausner, Professor of Infectious Diseases at the University of California Los Angeles, says that the current testing methods used are not satisfactory, as they cannot test for herpes simplex, or chlamydia and gonorrhoea in the throat or anus (Lupkin, 2012), which undermines Stella May's reassurances that all performers are sufficiently tested for sexual disease.

Measure B was passed in December 2012 and required that all adult film companies obtain a permit from the LA County Department of Public Health (Almendrala, 2013). The money raised from permit purchases would be used to ensure the law remains enforced, including “anything from surprise visits from officials to reviews of finished products” (Almendrala, 2013, para. 9). Almendrala (2013) says that because certain places like Pasadena and Long Beach have their own individual health departments, these cities do not have to adhere to Measure B. Like Strauss (2008) suggested, this means there is potential for companies in the industry to relocate for the production of their content. If this occurs, then many performers will be required or encouraged by production companies—such as the girls in *Hot Girls Wanted* (2015)—to engage in unprotected sex, resulting in possible risk of sexual disease.

Pornification of Mainstream Culture

A highly popular category in mainstream pornography is ‘teen’ (Dines, 2010). Teen pornography typically features young women between the ages of 18-20. According to Herbenick and Paul (2015), ‘teen’ is the number one searched term in internet pornography. A

quick Google search for teen pornography yields hundreds of thousands of results, and within that, many sub-genres are available, such as Asian teens, anal teens, squirting teens and blonde teens. In 2006, nearly 14 million internet searches were made for “teen sex”, an increase of 61 per cent in only two years (Dines, 2010, p. 143). Between 2005-2013, teen pornography searches more than tripled, with daily searches in March 2013 reaching 500,000—over one-third of total daily pornography searches (Enough is Enough, 2013). Since 2012, the teen category has remained in *Pornhub*’s top 10 most popular categories (Fight the New Drug, 2019), highlighting the continued popularity of the genre.

The teen image appeal is the first concept discussed in *Hot Girls Wanted* (2015), where it is portrayed as a desirable category in pornography. Riley, CEO of *Hussie Models* agency, sits scrolling through his phone looking at his newest applicants. “I have a chick I’m talking to. She’s 18 but looks like she’s 12, with double-D’s”, he exclaims excitedly. A montage then plays showcasing different images and footage from today’s mainstream media, including social media selfies, news articles, celebrity photos, footage of teen pornography stars, reality shows and music videos, all which aim to show that pop culture is sexualising youth and encouraging promiscuity. Interspersed throughout are clips from news anchors discussing society’s explicit culture. “They’re so desensitized to so much of this that it looks like its normal. Teens and tweens shamelessly stripping down”, one news anchor is heard saying over the intense techno music.

The images begin to change more rapidly as the music speeds up, creating a frantic viewing experience that emphasises the abundance of sexualised content available in today’s culture and works to encourage a ‘moral panic’. Gill (2008) says that young girls are “under pressures to visually display and perform a new ‘compulsory’ ‘disciplinary of sexy’”. Paasonen, Nikunen and Saarenmaa (2007) says that when we consider this concept, the terms “sexualisation of culture” and “pornification” arise. The sexualisation of culture “refers to a fairly wide range of cultural phenomena, while pornification is a more specific term pointing to the increased visibility of hardcore and soft-core pornographies, and the blurring of boundaries between the pornographic and the mainstream” (Paasonen, Nikunen & Saarenmaa 2007, p. 8). This observation of blurred boundaries is clearly evident within the montage in the documentary. For example, we are shown a video clip from Kanye West’s music video *Bound 2*, in which he is shown having sex with Kim Kardashian on a motorbike. In another clip, we see Miley Cyrus performing on stage for her *Bangerz* show. She sits singing atop a car wearing a skimpy leotard,

while stuffing money into her barely-covered-up crotch. It appears there is no longer a clear boundary between the pornographic and the mainstream; near nakedness and the portrayal of sexual behaviour is now commonplace and widely accepted as the norm. Gill (2008) argues that by females presenting themselves as always readily available for male attention with a “performance of confident sexual agency” (p. 53), this has now become a key theme in media and advertising, with society believing that females should be skilled in and willing to undergo a range of sexual acts. For Riley and his *Hussie Models* agency, a sexualised culture is creating an entire generation of teenagers and young adults more than willing to flaunt their bodies for profit.

Pseudo-Child Pornography

Hot Girls Wanted (2015) emphasises a desire among pornography consumers to view pseudo-child pornography. Dines (2010) says that due to a sexualised visual landscape “that has become so ubiquitous ...we hardly glance twice when we see sexualised childified women and sexualised adultified children” (p. 141). During one scene, the focus is on 19-year-old Karly (aka Lucy Tyler). Lucy describes her persona as “a fun little bubble-gum princess teenybopper character”. As she talks, the camera focuses on a range of different photographs depicting this persona. In one image, Lucy poses in nothing but a tiny pink tartan skirt and a bra patterned with pink polka dots. She is pouting in an innocent doll-like way and wears her blonde hair in pigtails. Both the lockers in the background and the skirt pattern create a ‘schoolgirl’ image. While many amateur pornography performers do look younger than their legal age, they do not look like children. This means that pornographers use various techniques to achieve this persona, including careful clothing and prop choices such as “childhood clothes and...stuffed animals, lollipops, pigtails, pastel-coloured ribbons, ankle socks, braces on the teeth and of course, school uniforms” (Dines, 2010, p. 146). Peters, Morrison, McDermott, Bishop and Kiss (2014) conducted a study on the types of settings commonly used in pseudo-child pornography. Unsurprisingly, their findings showed that classroom settings were the most popular, with additional school-themed elements such as schoolgirl clothing also making an appearance (Peters, Morrison, McDermott, Bishop & Kiss, 2014), emphasising ‘schoolgirl’ to be considered the epitome of youthfulness for producers.

Lucy does not voice any implications regarding her constructed image. She happily tells the camera that she tucks in her nose ring, wears her hair in her face and that it's "so much fun" to have a different persona, emphasising a naivety regarding the potential consequences of such a performance. Jensen (2010) argues that while this type of pornography is legal, it can be credited to the hyper-sexualisation of minors evident in today's society. Jensen (2010) says that such childish representation "distorts what is deemed an acceptable representation of consensual sexual activity between adults and what is an inappropriate and illegal act between an adult and a minor" (Jensen, 2010, p. 529, as cited in Peters, Morrison, McDermott, Bishop & Kiss, 2014). Paul and Linz (2008) compiled data which showed that when compared to adult pornography (where both the male and female performers are clearly above legal age), participants who viewed pseudo-child pornography "exhibited increased associations between the concepts of 'youth' and 'sex'" (Paul & Linz, 2008, as cited in Peters, Morrison, McDermott, Bishop & Kiss, 2014). Paul and Linz (2008) argue that frequent viewing of such pornography directly influences what consumers deem to be appropriate and acceptable sexual actions and may even normalise sexual relations between young females and older males. Döring (2009) argues that because there is such a large amount of pornographic content available online and much of it is uploaded by the general consumer, there is a chance these consumers may come across real child pornography accidentally, while assuming that the performers are above legal age.

Gonzo Pornography

At the beginning of *Hot Girls Wanted* (2015), *Hustle Models* CEO Riley says that part of the appeal of teen pornography is that it is commonly filmed in "gonzo" style. Stella (2016, p. 351) defines gonzo as a "style used to represent sex originating from non-professional practices". With the proliferation of technology, much of this content is filmed using devices such as mobile phones, webcams and tablets, "which enable low-definition recordings in a great variety of situations with no need for film sets, props or troupes" (Stella, 2016, p. 351). As Riley talks, the documentary displays a montage of pornography sites emphasising the amateur teen trends. Quotes such as "Real 18-year-old pussy is a click away!", "Real teen Co-eds!", "Next door amateurs" and "Real amateur girls in every video!" feature prominently on websites such as *RealityKings.com*— a website showcasing the gonzo element. A clip then plays from a scene on *RealityKings.com*. Filmed in low quality, shaky handheld camera style, it depicts seemingly

ordinary teen girls partying and behaving sexually in front of the camera for no apparent reason other than to gain attention. As Amis (2001) says, “gonzo porn shows you people fucking without concerning itself with why they’re fucking”. Through a voice over, Riley says, “cheap cameras, no script. Give the male talent the camera point-of-view. Regular girls pretty much getting freaky deaky. That’s what’s selling nowadays. Because people are thinking that they’re real videos that people are just submitting”. *Girls Gone Wild* (GGW) is an example of a website that features this type of content. It is an exhibitionist entertainment franchise featuring videos of everyday women in various states of undress, behaving sexually with one another. It is marketed as presenting the viewer with ‘real’ and ‘authentic’ girls unleashing their sexuality for the first time, rather than pornography performers following scripts and plot lines.

Riley’s mention of a lack of scripts in gonzo pornography is discussed by Maina and Zecca (2016), who say that by not including scripts, the typical order of sexual acts presented in a scene becomes partially deconstructed. The typical structure presented in pornography consists of “excitement, plateau, orgasm and resolution” (Maina & Zecca, 2016). Maddison (2009) says that although gonzo pornography typically includes footage of a visible male ejaculation, this is “preceded not with a linear progression...but with mechanized cycles of penetration from one orifice to another” (p. 49). For example, performers may begin with penetrative sex, then move to oral, then masturbation and back again, resulting in potential health risks. Jensen cited in Fradd (2017, p. 67) says a female performer in gonzo “is either expressing disregard for her own health or accepting the man’s implicit imposition of the idea that her health is of no concern”. A lack of structure also means that performers have less control over what may occur during filming, potentially leading to unwanted acts being performed. Part of the appeal for Riley is the anticipation of what sexual acts or behaviour female performers might engage in (or be coerced to engage in) throughout a scene.

The point-of-view angle is especially significant in gonzo pornography as it enables the viewer to feel as though they are immersed in the scene; it is as if they ‘become’ the man behind the camera. Weasels (n.d.) says that the “camerawork is a representation of the cameraman’s senses, and in which the camera is an acknowledged participant in the scene” (para. 1). This reduces the male to a “disembodied penis” (Biasin & Zecca, 2009, p. 145). Maina and Zecca (2016) draw on Casetti and di Chio’s concept to discuss the term “identification communication” (1990, p. 343). The viewer sees through the eyes of the male, while simultaneously being looked at by the female performer: “this strategy brings the viewers

inside the scene, enhancing their engagement and their (virtual) performative interaction, as if they actually were acknowledged participants in the action” (Casetti & di Chio, 1990, p. 257). Maina and Zecca (2016) reference the Review Guide of Adult Video News’s *Porno vérité*, a trade journal produced by the adult industry. *Porno vérité* says that performers often acknowledge the camera during filming and address the audience through it (Review Guide, 2016). Tibbals (2014) says that the role of the camera plays an essential part in gonzo pornography. She argues that gonzo is “a content production form characterized by the presence of a ‘talking camera’, wherein the person recording a particular sequence or scene is also playing an active, integral role in the on-screen action” (p. 138). In *Hot Girls Wanted* (2015) prior to the filming of the *Sexual Disgrace* scene, the cameraman interviews Stella May, asking her questions and prompting comments from her, and during the *Latina Abuse* scene, the cameraman keeps up a constant dialogue of requests and insults directed towards Ava Kelly. Because the cameraman in gonzo pornography is the one in charge, it gives him the power to engage with the performers in any way he likes, expecting the performer to do as she is told. In *Hot Girls Wanted* (2015), a facial abuse scene featuring pornography performer, Belle Knox is played. Each time Knox tries to pull away or protest against the oral sex act, she is throttled and pushed around by the cameraman, while he verbally assaults her, saying she must comply with his demands.

Gonzo pornography also features a lack of continuity editing. Instead, it uses what Maina and Zecca (2016) call “a continuous filming technique inspired by cinéma vérité or reality television” (p. 342). This is achieved through a handheld camera view and long takes, with little to no post-production editing. Long takes also create an air of authenticity regarding the sex acts being performed. If a scene consists of a long take with no edits, then the viewer is likely to be satisfied that what they are seeing is a true representation, devoid of any interference or editing (Metz, 1977); such as what we might see with a facial ejaculation scene for example. The camera is very fluid and captures the entirety of the action. The viewer witnesses full body shots, extreme close-ups of genitalia and bodily fluids, as well as close-ups of the female face in order to capture facial expressions (Maina & Zecca, 2016). According to Marks (2000), these close-up shots “encourage a more embodied and multi-sensory relationship” (p. 172). Long takes turn gonzo scenes into an “athletic *tour de force*” (Maina & Zecca, 2016, p. 341), an extreme sport where “performers are constantly pushing their boundaries and testing their physical resistance” (p. 341), as they have to perform for longer

amounts of time at once. Until the desired content is captured, a performer is forced to commit to a sexual act.

Part of the appeal of gonzo pornography for producers is it is especially economically viable (Maina & Zecca, 2016). Because there is no story line, gonzo pornography does not require detailed settings, complex screenplays and specific casting choices. Only a small crew and limited equipment/technology is needed. To follow the *cinéma vérité* style, normally only one handheld camera is used, with no retakes. Additionally, Maina and Zecca (2016) say that gonzo films “mostly benefit from an economy of scale, because they are often organised into series that share common content and formal features” (p. 342). For example, the *Sexual Disgrace* and *Latina Abuse* series depicted in *Hot Girls Wanted* (2015) follow the same structure with the same settings, and parts are often filmed using a handheld camera, point-of-view style. This means that the producers do not have to develop new plots lines and props for each episode.

Coercion and the “First Time”

In pornography videos featuring female amateurs and older male talent, it is not uncommon for filmmakers to construct scenarios in which physical and emotional coercion is present, resulting in a representation of sexual assault. Typically, this coercion is directed towards naïve girls who have ‘never’ been sexually active before. In *Hot Girls Wanted* (2015), the viewer witnesses the filming of an episode for *Virgin Manipulations*, in which 18-year-old Ava Taylor plays the part of an innocent virgin moving away to college. Tony, a male actor in his 50s, plays a close family friend who is looking to take advantage of Ava’s purity while her family is out. Before filming even starts, it is evident that Ava is extremely uncomfortable with the planned scenario. She sits looking distracted and unhappy and doesn’t attempt to make conversation with Tony. While Tony films his first line, Ava sits out of the frame shaking her head in apparent disgust as we hear Tony say, “now I feel all predatory and shit”. We then cut to a shot of Ava as she walks up the stairs to begin filming in ‘her’ bedroom. She has her hands clasped nervously behind her, making her appear timid. The documentary then cuts a final time to show Ava positioned on the bed with Tony sitting next to her. The *mise-en-scène* is styled to mirror a messy teenager’s room, with clothing strewn around and bright pink sheets on the bed. Ava keeps her eyes downcast and wears a blank expression as she fidgets with her hands, alternating between clasping them between her legs and studying her fingernails. It looks as if

she is trying to hide her nervousness by attempting to appear casual and indifferent. In the background, the filmmaker instructs Tony and Ava on how they are to perform during filming: "...without even getting a yes, you kind of almost start to like, keep going with it", the filmmaker says to Tony. "You kind of just start taking em' [Ava's pants] off. You never even really got that full yes". He then says to Ava, "and here's the key point. You're never fully engaged into it". Both the dialogue and the body language requested by the filmmaker, means the scene holds distinct connotations of rape. This is developed even further as the camera focuses on Ava who is now naked and being penetrated; again she has her hands clasped protectively over her upper chest as she complains of pain.

Once the scene is over, the camera changes to display the cover poster for the *Virgin Manipulations* series produced by *Forbidden Fruits Films*. Many elements of the poster promote sexual force directed towards inexperienced females. The background of the poster is coloured in various shades of pink, emphasising a girly innocence, while a close-up of a blonde female looks at the camera pulling a terrified expression. The bottom of the poster depicts a photo of Ava lying on the bed with her hands clasped nervously over her mouth while Tony leans over her in a predatory and intimidating position. Next to both images words are displayed reading, "Because Morality is Always Negotiable" and "Her first penetration was the WRONG ONE", alluding to an acceptance of rape. Even the word "manipulations" holds connotations of force and coercion. The company name, *Forbidden Fruits Films* is also significant. Typically, 'forbidden fruit' is the name given to something desired, yet not allowed. This is an extremely fitting name for a company producing content featuring acts that would not be acceptable in everyday society. According to Herbenick and Paul (2015), the law states that girls have to prove they are 18 years of age or older to be involved in pornography. However, there are no other federal regulations that have to be followed and none have been developed in the digital age (Herbenick & Paul, 2015). This means that the pornography industry has the freedom to essentially create any content they like, whether it is morally or ethically acceptable or not.

Ava voices her awareness of the popular fetish among pornography consumers, where viewers enjoy watching a female supposedly lose her virginity. "Everything is always the same shoot. Like its always your first time", she says. According to Seifert (2015), "virgins...are presented as the embodiment of purity. That purity proves to be a powerful aphrodisiac for...male love interests, usually much older men" (p. 3). Seifert (2015) has coined the term "abstinence porn"

to describe this fetishization of virginity. Although she explores the term within young adult literature, it can also be applied to what we see in pornography. She defines abstinence porn as the “romanticising, idealising and objectifying of the bodies of young girls” (Seifert, 2015, p. 3). According to Seifert (2015), this fetishization reduces females to nothing more than their virginity; it becomes their sole identity—something that is arousing to a male and considered taboo. Seifert (2015) suggests that this is problematic. A virgin is considered desirable and valuable due to their purity, but once this is taken away through heterosexual sex, the female can never go back to that glorified status. She becomes nothing but a used, spoilt object. Dines (2010) argues that the reason females are portrayed as unspoilt by sex is not just for the promise of witnessing the significant loss of innocence. Dines (2010) references the term “knowing innocence”, which is defined as “the illusion of innocence giving way to unbridled sexuality” (p. 147). This concept leads the viewer to believe that underneath a sweet and cute exterior is an inner whore just waiting to be coaxed out by a manipulative adult man. Dines (2010) says that “it is this culpability on the part of the girl that simultaneously frees the user of his culpability in masturbating to what would be, in reality, a scenario of adult men manipulating a naïve girl into [performing] for the pleasure of other adult men” (p.148). In other words, this creates a scenario in which a viewer believes that he is watching consensual sex involving a willing female. An observation in many of these types of scenes is that typically the male performer does not use aggressive, physical force to get the female to engage in the sexual act; rather they manipulate, coax and seduce the girl into giving in (Dines, 2010). The *Virgin Manipulations* scene plays out according to this framework. It only takes a few words of encouragement from Tony and some light caresses of Ava’s thigh before she is naked and is penetrated in a range of different positions.

Another sub-genre within the teen category is sadism, which falls under niche pornography. In *Hot Girls Wanted* (2015), Stella May films a brutal bondage scene for the website *Sexual Disgrace.com*. During this scene, Stella is strapped to a bed while being forcefully penetrated orally and vaginally. The camera focuses on a still from the shoot. The setting consists of a dark, grubby-looking wooden room housing a series of posts with hooks attached, positioned around the room. Stella is twisted into an uncomfortable position looking towards the camera, while her legs are chained to a platform and she is forced to masturbate. Through a voice over Stella says that she didn’t vomit during the forced blowjob section, as she skipped breakfast. Academic research on young performers and the sadism pornography trend is scarce. While Dines (2010) is a non-academic source, she presents important analysis on the topic and has

therefore been utilised in this section of the chapter. Sites like *Sexual Disgrace.com* do away with the effort of portraying young females as innocent individuals ready to be gently coaxed into adult sex (Dines, 2010). Instead these females, “while also depicted as new to sex, are portrayed as wanting it as rough and as hard as all the other women in... porn” (Dines, 2010, p. 152). For example, accompanying Stella’s video is a description saying, “All I could do was watch. He kept moving back and forth, taking turns obliterating my throat and pussy. I was turned on. I wanted him to use more” (Sexual Disgrace.com, 2015). According to Dines (2010), comment is often made regarding the innocent appearance of the female, “but this is described as a ruse, as just below the surface is a raging slut for whom nothing is too painful, demeaning, debasing or dehumanizing” (152). Because teens are not yet fully physically and emotionally mature, Dines (2010) says that this intensifies the violence as they can be coerced easily into doing pretty much anything requested, even if it may be a particularly painful or humiliating act. This is evident at a later point in the documentary, where Ava is visibly upset as she describes a recent scene she filmed. She was taken outdoors to a field after having been initially told that she was to perform a standard blowjob. Upon arrival however, it turned out that the scene was to be a violent, forced blowjob and Ava felt she couldn’t object. “I was scared. I was terrified. I didn’t know what to do. I didn’t know if I could tell him no. Or the fact that we had already recorded 10 minutes of it, if I could just fucking leave”, she says. Ava then says to the viewers that the experience made her understand that this is how rape victims must feel: they become unsure of themselves and confused, as they are encouraged or coerced to engage in something they are not comfortable with, or they recognise as morally wrong.

Conclusion

Throughout *Hot Girls Wanted* (2015), the filmmakers focus on a broad range of experiences and challenges faced by young women new to the pornography industry. Between the ages of 18-25, these young women are still developing mentally and physically, and have an aura of innocence and naivety about them as they strive to do what it takes to ‘make it big’. Each of the scenarios discussed in this chapter rely on the girls’ naïve willingness to ‘do as they are told’, sometimes without concern for potential consequences. For example, Ava Taylor films a scene for *Virgin Manipulations* even though she is uncomfortable with the scenario and recognises its sexual assault connotations. Right at the end of the documentary, text is displayed on the screen describing what each girl featured is now doing following the end of filming. The

majority of the girls left the industry after only a few months, instead deciding to pursue more mainstream careers in photography and hospitality. Ending on such a note emphasises that most of the girls found the industry too challenging and could not cope with the physical or emotional demands for an extended period of time. Overall, the documentary suggests that the pornography industry creates challenges and issues for the health and wellbeing of an individual, especially for young women who are particularly vulnerable and inexperienced.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to explore how *Hot Girls Wanted* (2015) and *Hot Girls Wanted: Turned On* (2017) frame contemporary issues affecting workers in the pornography industry (and their implications outside of it) through close scene analysis. *Hot Girls* represents these issues through interviews, behind-the-scenes footage of pornography shoots and footage of the daily home lives of the workers, and I have analysed the themes that emerge in relation to the research literature on pornography and sex work. My thesis has explored how *Hot Girls* represents the ways in which workers face many challenges in the industry, and as a result, their wellbeing and the sustainability of their careers is negatively affected. By the end of *Hot Girls*, many of these workers end up leaving the industry after a short period of time, or begin questioning their place within pornography.

I began my initial discussion in chapter two, with a literature review exploring prior research on the topic. I first give a brief overview of some relevant literature that has been utilised throughout this thesis. I then discuss the *Porn Studies* academic journal article “Porn and sex education, porn as sex education” (Albury, 2014) and “‘I’m just curious and still exploring myself’: Young people and pornography” (Attwood, Smith & Barker, 2018), which both look at the ways pornography shapes the sexual identities and beliefs of young adults. This analysis emphasised the importance of also exploring how workers in the pornography industry are affected. Finally, I move onto exploring non-academic sources, including *The Porn Myth: Exposing the Reality Behind the Fantasy of Pornography* (Fradd, 2017), which analyses violent pornography, exploring the ways it may affect how men view female sexuality; one of the concepts discussed in this thesis. I also look at *Pornland: How Porn Has Hijacked our Sexuality* (Dines, 2010) and provide some justification as to why I have utilised this non-academic source within this thesis. Each source discussed throughout the literature review focused on a specific aspect or issue relevant to the pornography industry; I did not come across any one source that explored a wide range of challenges faced by workers in the industry. Therefore, I analysed many relevant sources and incorporated ideas into my research, to develop a thesis that looks broadly at this topic and provides readers with a comprehensive understanding into the issues and challenges workers face in pornography.

I begin my analysis in chapter three, examining violence and racism in interracial pornography. I focus initially on the stereotype of the black man, whose gender and race mark him as a hypersexualised brute, as seen through a shoot with Jax Slayher and Kylie Quinn. He is encouraged by the filmmaker to physically abuse and demean Kylie, which academic literature such as “The White Man’s Burden: Gonzo Pornography and the Construction of Black Masculinity” and “King Kong and the White Woman: Hustler Magazine and the Demonization of Black Masculinity” suggest is a form of revenge against historical prejudices. *Hot Girls* emphasises the viciousness of these acts through various camera angles, editing techniques and interviews with Jax. This then led into a discussion of *Latina Abuse*, a popular trend whereby women of Latin American descent are recruited for physically and verbally aggressive pornography scenes. *Hot Girls* places emphasis on negative Latina stereotypes which affect both the performers themselves and the wider Latin American society, as well as highlighting the emotional and physical toll of facial abuse, through the filming of a scene with Ava Kelly. The episode highlights the idea that interracial pornography works to reaffirm old stereotypes and prejudices among African American and Latin American individuals, which negatively influences the way society views them.

In chapter four, I examined the camming profession, focusing on two female subjects who although enjoy engaging in erotic performance in front of a live web cam audience, do face personal challenges. While camming is distinct from sex in the pornography industry, there are similarities, as both require a female to perform sexually for male gratification. In *Hot Girls*, the viewer witnesses the many challenges faced by Alice Frost and Bailey Rayne as they follow their daily camming sessions, which are interspersed with interviews where the women discuss their thoughts, feelings and insecurities. Through this close scene analysis and exploration of research literature, I argued that both women present themselves as commodities of the male gaze, resulting in anxieties around their images, and are forced to face conflicts around online personas and health. This resulted in emotional strain and compromised physical health for Alice and Bailey. I concluded that the episode highlights some of the initial appeal and benefits of camming as a profession (in relation to other types of sex work), but it also illustrates the toll that it can take on performers. Therefore, camming—like the other careers in the pornography industry depicted in *Hot Girls*—can be difficult to sustain and to maintain optimal health and wellbeing.

In chapter five, I took a step away from pornography performers and explored the careers of two feminist pornographers represented in *Hot Girls Wanted: Turned On* (2017). Holly Randall and Erika Lust demonstrate the challenging nature of creating desirable content that foregrounds women's equality and pleasure, in a world where violent and demeaning mainstream pornography dominates. Focusing on creators of pornography (as well as performers), emphasises that women face challenges in various areas of the industry. In episode "Women on Top", the viewer accompanies Holly and Erika on their film projects, as we witness the various setbacks they encounter. In Holly's case, she struggles with time and money constraints and a fear of pornography stigma if she was to leave the industry. We see her trying to film her video, *Quest* which involves lavish costumes and makeup amidst a tight budget and deadline. By the end of the episode, Holly sits talking to the viewers in a demoralised state, questioning her place in the industry and thinking of a possible career change. Erika battles with accusations of being anti-sex and with countering misogynistic mainstream content which promotes violence and emotionless sex as ideal sexual practices. We see her filming a scene where focus is on the pleasure of the female performer, and sexual acts seen in mainstream pornography, including hair-pulling and the male orgasm, are disregarded. By foregrounding various struggles, as well as concluding the episode on a negative note for Holly, the episode is suggesting that this career may no longer be viable for some feminist pornographers. Erika, however, offers some hope as her work proves popular among viewers and she becomes a spokesperson for feminist pornography, providing inspiration for a future of pornography that promotes positive female sexuality.

Lastly, chapter six looked at young 'amateur' women new to the pornography industry and the different facets of exploitation they face as naïve and inexperienced performers. I analysed the different ways in which these women are manipulated or coerced during the filming of pornography scenes, resulting in emotional and physical consequences. First, we see Stella May discussing her recent hospital visit as a result of too much sex, and Brooklyn Daniels who engages in unprotected sex, simply relying on the Plan B pill as contraception. This leads into a discussion on the lack of condom use in the Florida pornography industry and the resulting risk of sexual disease that arises when work is prioritised over health. Next, I discuss pseudo-child pornography, where we focus on Lucy Tyler, whose persona resembles a teenage schoolgirl. This pornography trend suggests an emerging normalcy of sexual relations between younger females and older males. Then we move onto gonzo pornography, a popular trend explained by *Hussie Models* CEO Riley, which results in health risks and a lack of performer

control. Finally, I discuss the issue of coercive sex emphasising sexual assault connotations, evident during a *Virgin Manipulations* shoot between Ava Taylor and a much older male, and ‘sadism’, a category of sex designed to painfully punish and humiliate female performers. Stella May films a scene for *Sexual Disgrace* in which she is bound and subjected to abusive sexual acts. *Hot Girls Wanted* (2015) represents young performers as initially willing to subject themselves to painful, demeaning, or morally questionable behaviour in order to become successful pornography actresses. By the end of the documentary however, many of these women decide to leave the industry as they can no longer cope with the demands.

In conclusion, I hope that by critically analysing the issues raised in *Hot Girls*, my research provides some insight into the mechanics of the pornography industry. It is an industry in which viewers may not consider the issues that workers face. To counter this, my thesis has explored these issues and the ways in which *Hot Girls* draws attention to them through representation. It also employs a critical lens by applying research literature to the portrayals of these issues. I hope that this thesis raises awareness so that when thinking about pornography, people gain an understanding into its hidden challenges. Building on my research, next steps would be to explore what could be done to improve the industry for workers, in terms of creating a safer environment, free from manipulation and damaging mental and physical practices. The pornography realm is a multibillion-dollar industry, so it is unlikely that we will see it decrease in popularity. Due to this, it is important that individuals who choose a career in pornography feel comfortable and protected in their work environment.

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