MATERIALITY, PORNOGRAPHY, AND MATERIALISM: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF SEXUAL CULTURE

A dissertation presented by

Corina Medley

to
The Department of Sociology and Anthropology

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in the field of
Sociology

Northeastern University
Boston, Massachusetts
November, 2016
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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

Utilizing in-depth interviews from award-winning pornographers in North America and drawing from myriad types of sexual culture, this study focuses on the interplay of agency and structure in order to critique the production and circulation of pornography from a sociological perspective. The purpose of the research is two-fold. First, to provide an analysis of the production process in order to assess how affect, particularly sexual pleasure, is managed as pornography is produced. Second, to examine the ways that pornography is commodified in contemporary consumer society. Ultimately, the goal is to address the ethical dimensions of producing, and political limits of circulating, pornography as a form of cultural resistance. The findings in the first part of the study revealed that the narratives used in making pornographic films are imperative for understanding how affect is managed during production. Narratives are central to the professional, personal, and social meanings tied to producing pornography, and they are directly linked to the likelihood that sexual pleasure can achieved during the sexual encounter. Overall, the use of narrative frameworks that fostered role-playing, or relied on the use of playing a character, facilitated sexual pleasure. However, for performers, the capacity to enjoy a narrative and become immersed in a character is contingent upon the ethical boundaries encompassing their personal and professional lives. In the second part, the findings revealed that commodification limited the political potential of using pornography as a form of cultural resistance. Evidence of this was found not only in the activities tied to circulation, but also prior to them, through the very norms of producing sexual culture.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

The research reported here is part of a larger project within the field of pornography studies and the more inclusive field of research on the relationship between creating culture and doing so under circumstances that make the act of creating culture (and not merely the product) potentially subversive to but inseparable from political, economic, and sociological facts. This chapter is intended to introduce the conceptual foundations of that larger project in anticipation of an analysis of data gathered over a period of two years on the actual production of pornographic films.

There are, then, two main purposes of this dissertation. First, it is intended to situate the study of the production of pornography in a field defined in part by an emphasis on the intersections of class, race, and gender, and in part by attempts to provide a feminist interpretation of the field as a whole. Second, it is intended to introduce the reader to the actual production process of pornography, where production is defined more broadly than filming and editing, and is taken to include relations with the more inclusive world of commodification and among the factors, including the actors, that make the production possible, which is to say describable as an instance of production as such.

I adopt a definition of pornography, to be qualified in the body of the test, that is broad enough to allow for a discussion of material that is ambiguous and therefore needs to be considered in some respects as instances and specific enough to provide for an account of the processes involved in production rather than merely analyses of the products. I define pornography primarily in regard to pornographic films, as the portrayal of sexual acts, which, for convenience, I will refer to as “sexuality,” in ways that are relatively independent of (1) extra-sexual relations, (2) the properties of the setting in which the activity takes place, and (3) the
narrative in which the sexual encounter or the act appears as part of a series in which it is the focus and is complete within a period of time that belongs exclusively to itself. Each of these instances of independence will be described in the empirical sections of the dissertation.

The Framework and Background

Pornographic culture, while still stigmatized as ‘deviant’ culture, has become more normalized in contemporary Western culture, as popular culture itself has arguably become more sexualized (Attwood 2006; Attwood 2009; Attwood 2011a; Attwood and Smith 2014; Löfgren-Mårtenson and Månsson 2010). Pornography was once hidden away in museums and private archives, accessible and permissible only to elites, and relegated to private events such as stag parties (Hunt 1993; Kendrick 1996; Williams 1999). When it finally went public, it was largely in adult cinemas, spatially isolated or marginalized in communities (Williams 1999). It became consumed increasingly in the home (Juffer 1998). Now, distribution and consumption has become digitized, and, as a consequence, is more abundant and accessible than ever (Attwood 2010; Buzzell 2005; Brown and L’Engle 2009; Coopersmith 2000; Coopersmith 2006; Emmers-Sommer and Allen 1999; Garlick 2010; Grebowicz 2013). Although pornography as such is not new, it is arguably more democratized than it has ever been before (Barron and Kimmel 2000; Hunt 1993; Kendrick 1996; McNair 2002; Williams 1999). It is no longer relegated to the

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1 The word, “pornography,” points to Greek origins. It is a neologism that emerged around the 19th century (Hunt 1993; Kendrick 1986; Williams 1999). Translated literally, it means writing about or by prostitutes. Over the decades, and today, there are countless definitions of pornography, and various ways of evaluating it – each of which depends on the political standpoint of the person or group conceptualizing it. Palac’s (1995) notion of “sexography” is one way of getting around the difficulty of defining pornography in a politically neutral way. She suggests that term to denote a piece of culture that depicts sex: that is, sexography refers to the graphic depiction of sex. That definition is useful, and it is the one used for this project. It captures a broad array of cultural artifacts including art, erotica, educational materials, and pornography. The pornographers and pornographic materials studied here fall under the umbrella term sexography.
cultural fringes, or confined to elites, or treated as deviant. Today, it is part of mainstream culture. Some would even argue that it has seeped into everyday life to the extent to which popular culture itself has become “pornified” (Paul 2006) and mainstream culture has opened its doors to literature and art formerly banned, and to the idea that films can portray sexuality, along the lines of its diversity. In these respects, there has been a “pornification” or “pornographication” of contemporary culture (Anderson 2011; DeKeseredy, Muzzatti, and Donnerneyer 2014; McNair 2002; Paasonen, Nikunen, and Saarenmaa 2007; Smith 2010); no doubt part of the challenge to the traditional distinction between high and low culture.

Evidence of the normalization of pornography or 'the pornographic' in everyday life can be found throughout different types of media and in different forms. Examples include advertisement (Caputi 2004), including ads that merge pornographic imagery, for example, women and animals, in what Adams refers to as “anthropornography” (2003:109). There has been an increase in the chicness of porn, such as the evidence found in youth culture and fashion (Duits and van Zoonen 2006; McNair 2012; McRobbie 2004). The pornographic look and gaze have become so expressively normal that 'the pornographic' has even been adopted to include representations of things that do not include actual sex, or even people. Innumerable variations of eroticizing or fetishizing ordinary artifacts are commonplace, examples are the aesthetic pleasure and excitement of food porn, earth and eco-porn, disaster porn, and war porn (Baudrillard 2005; Hoch 1994; Knighton 1993; McBride 2010; McCosker 2013; Probyn 1999a; Probyn 1999b; Ray 2007; Recuber 2013). Pornographic implications can be found in major motion pictures and documentaries, news, magazines, blogs, television commercials, and even cartoons in The New Yorker (Capino 2007; Cossman 2007).
Activism itself has taken a pornographic turn. Political justice groups often rely on pornography-styled imagery, and occasionally make and sell pornographic images, in order to advance their causes and raise funds. For example, within the environmental movement, Fuck for Forest used such images in methods for their campaign, as have elements of the animal rights movement and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (Adams 2010; Attwood 2011b; Deckha 2008; Lindholdt 2009; Luncefod 2012; Paasonen 2010; Sbicca 2012; Urbanik 2009). It is ironical that the use of pornographic images to oppose injustice and cruelty confronts a history of treating pornography itself as morally unacceptable (Attwood 2010; Attwood and Smith 2014; Smith and Attwood 2014; Williams 2004).

Law makers, scholars, and activists have long been concerned about the possibly deleterious effects that pornography has on society. Typically, these include moral turpitude and moral decay, crime and criminogenic effects, symbolic, physical, and economic harm, disturbances of intimacy, and threats to mental health (Beisel 1997; Bergner and Bridges 2002; Bensimon 2007; Brannigan 1987; Clarkson and Kopaczewski 2013; DeKeseredy 2015; DeKeseredy and Joseph 2006; DeKeseredy and Schwartz 1998; Diamond 1999; Elliott and Beech 2009; Endrass et al. 2009; Ford, Durtschi, and Franklin 2012; Kendrick 1996; Levert 2007; Ley, Prause, and Finn 2014; Mancini et al. 2014; Paul 2006; Philaretou, Mahfouz, and Allen 2005; Reed 1994; Seto, Cantor, and Blanchard 2006; Seto and Eke 2005; Taylor and Quayle 2008; Voros 2009). Taken together, these have led to a classification of pornography as a legitimate public health concern (Dines 2010). However, others take a more pro-social approach by focusing on the weakness of the evidence used to identify harms and on evidence of beneficial effects of pornography. The dispute has become significant in the discourses on the ethics of cultural democracy, individual freedom, the possibly cathartic effect it may have on
crime or a lack of any impact on crime, its contributions to sexual well-being, and as an indicator of gender and sexual tolerance and therefore as contributing to equality (Bridges and Morokoff 2011; Diamond 2009, 2010; Diamond, Jozifkova, and Weiss 2011; Diamond and Uchiyama 1999; Kutchinsky 1973; Kutchinsky 1991; McKee 2007; McNair 2012; Sunstein 1986; Sunstein 1995). Given that many of these topics relate to the politics of gender and sexuality, feminists have been particularly involved in the debates over what pornography means for social life and therefore for society.

There are innumerable definitions of feminism (DeLauritis 1986; Harding 2004; Lorber 2005; Tong 1998). The one used here takes a 'least common denominator' approach that deliberately encompasses a wide range of social phenomena so that myriad social categories, experiences, and realities can be linked to the political consequences of sex, gender, and sexuality in social life. Feminism is defined as the notion that sexism exists, and that sexism is avoidable; therefore, sexism is a socially constructed empirical reality.²

**Political Dissent: Feminism and Pornography**

Between the “feminist sex wars” and the “feminist pornography debates,” feminists have engaged in decades-long battles over what pornography means for feminist praxis, and the role that it plays in exacerbating or ameliorating gender and sexual inequality (Abrams 1995; Attwood 2002; Attwood and Smith 2014; Basiliere 2008; Barton 2002; Boyle 2000; Ciclitira 2004; Chancer 2000; Cornell 2000; Ferguson 1984; Fraiman 1995; Gillespie et al. 1995; Glick 2000; Hemmings 2005; King 1990; McIntyre 1995; Nan and Duggan 2006; On 1992; Penley et al. 2013; Philipson 1984; Ritchie and Barker 2005; Rubin 2011; Smith and Attwood 2014;

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² This definition is adopted from Dr. Shelley Park, Department of Philosophy, University of Central Florida.
Taylor and Rupp 1993; Vance 1984; Vance 1993; Voss 2000; Weitzer 2005). Generally speaking, there are two broad ideological camps: anti-pornography and pro-pornography. Anti-pornography feminists see pornography as a means of subjugating women (Dines 1995; Dines, Jensen, and Russo 1997; Dworkin 1991; Emerson 1984; MacKinnon 1991; MacKinnon 1993; MacKinnon and Dworkin 1997). They view women's involvement in pornography as another example of their subordination and oppression and as essentially patriarchal and misogynistic (Caputi 2011; Dworkin 1989; MacKinnon 1989; Morgan 1980; Russell 1993, 1998). While anti-pornography feminists focus on the different ways pornography harms women and threatens egalitarian social relations, they also point to the ways that it perpetuates other forms of subordination and exclusion, such as racism (Collins 2008; Dines 1998, 2006; hooks 1992) and ableism (Elman 1997).

Pro-pornography feminists do not see pornography as inherently misogynistic, and many believe that women's involvement in pornography can be empowering, or counterhegemonic. In addition to emphasizing pro-social aspects, they also focus on the ways in which pornography can help breakdown other negative '-isms', such as heterosexism and racism (Miller-Young 2007; Shimizu 2006). Pro-pornography feminists can be further divided into two categories, and although these are not necessarily mutually exclusive, there are ideological distinctions between them that are worth noting.

The sex-positive camp promotes a sexual liberation interpretation of pornography. The second approach emphasizes civil liberties, focusing on censorship and the invasion of privacy, with a focus on sexual rights. The former challenges moralistic and conservative attitudes toward sexuality, and more specifically, repressive and oppressive ideals and norms that position women as non-sexual or sexually passive (Delacoste and Alexander 1998; Milne 2005; Nagel
1997; Sabo 2012; Taormino et al. 2013). These feminists have provided important critiques of ideal typifications and the ideological underpinnings of the intersections of gender, sexuality, and sexual culture. The civil liberties approach tends to focus on the legal implications of censoring pornography (McElroy 1995; Strossen 1993; Strossen 2000). One relevant task is to change the structural arrangements that prevent or deter people from making and using sexual culture products or engaging in the types of sexual behavior that they desire. In this regard, they focus on constitutional laws, in particular the 1st Amendment rights of free expression and speech and rights covered by the 14th Amendment concerning privacy.

**Naming and Claiming Cultural Resistance: Feminist Pornography**

Although feminists have worked in the pornography industry since the 1970s, and women friendly pornography has been around since the 1980s (Williams 1999), feminist pornography – pornography that is explicitly labeled as feminist, and marketed as its own genre – is a relatively recent phenomenon. It emerged in the early 2000s, and is credited with the creation of the Feminist Porn Awards in 2006 (Taormino et al. 2013). Since then, it has become a thriving genre of pornography, and the concept itself has become a popular topic in the mainstream media, and especially new media. In other words, it too is becoming normalized and is undergoing a process of mainstreaming.

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3 Sexual culture is a broad term used to encompass the ideal, material, and expressive components of culture relating to sexuality. On a material level, it is a terms used to denote any cultural medium in which sex is discussed, represented, or displayed; in that regard, it includes pornography, but is not limited to it.

4 Feminist pornography is used to denote the brand, market, or niche that is explicitly labeled as feminist by feminist pornographers, retail outlets, and award shows such as the Feminist Porn Awards. I use the term to refer to the criteria used by the Feminist Porn Awards to distinguish feminist from most mainstream pornography.
The explicit marking of certain types of pornography as feminist has implications for who or what is feminist and not-feminist. Feminism, like most political and cultural categories, is multicausalntual (Vološinov 2000). That is, it is a non-relativist polysemic concept. The various meanings associated with the idea of feminist pornography are consequences of political struggles by groups to determine what the very definition of feminism. The feminist label in and of itself is not inherently political. Meaningful social change does not occur because of a category, or at the nominal level alone. The concept itself is not what the conflict is really about. What is at stake is they type of feminist praxis that can be thought of as socially progressive. A closer look at feminist pornography as a form of political praxis not only raises questions about the feminist label and the politics of pornography, it also raises questions about the extent to which feminist culture can be used for opposing gender and sexual inequality. More generally, it raises questions about the uses and limits of creating a political culture suitable for addressing, resisting, and eradicating oppression. We may ask, then, whether such feminist sexual fantasies are merely political fantasies?

We can address these issues by examining the criteria formulated by the Feminist Porn Awards (FPA) for eligibility as feminist. It seems fitting given that the popularity of feminist pornography is attributed to that event. To the extent to which feminism is defined by the standards set forth by the FPA, critical issues around multiaccentuality, political and cultural resistance, and pornography meet. It is at this complex intersection that the polemical aspect of feminist pornography can be found, and the politics of feminist pornography can be addressed.

The FPA uses three measures to define feminist pornography: the first two relate to the production process, and the third involves the final product, the film5.

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5 From the Feminist Porn Awards website: http://www.feministpornawards.com/what-is-feminist-porn/
1. Women and/or traditionally marginalized people were involved in the direction, production and/or conception of the work.

2. The work depicts genuine pleasure, agency and desire for all performers, especially women and traditionally marginalized people.

3. The work expands the boundaries of sexual representation on film, challenges stereotypes and presents a vision that sets the content apart from most mainstream pornography. This may include depicting a diversity of desires, types of people, bodies, sexual practices, and/or an anti-racist or anti-oppression framework throughout the production.

In order to discuss what is at stake in defining feminist culture in this way, and to locate feminist praxis in the production process and the products they make, each of those standards will be explored in the order that they appear above.

Producers and Politics: The Dilemma of Social Categories

Locating 'the feminism' in feminist cultural production within given social categories, marginal or otherwise, is a dubious strategy for approaching feminist identity, or in this case, identifying feminism in theory and in practice. Feminism must imply a praxis, and that praxis must pay attention to social categories but cannot be reduced to them or be determined by them alone.

The distinction between women’s movements and feminist movements (Ferree and McClurg Mueller 2004) is a good example of the problem posed by standard social categories. This is also evident in the struggle to pass the Equal Rights Amendment (Foss 1979; Soloman 1978; Soloman 1979; Soloman 1983). It was a woman, after all, who spearheaded its defeat – Phyllis Schlafly (who is also well-known for speaking out against abortion rights, advocating traditional family values, and discounting the possibility of rape in marriage). Innumerable examples can be given. The purpose here is not to be exhaustive, but to illustrate how categories, or the nominal, are ersatz affinities, and do not translate into a coherent political
ideology or a program for political action. Social categories are always political and their
development always has political consequences. But they are not capable of clarifying the
meaning of feminism or being sufficient to justify any particular political orientation. It should
go without saying that woman and marginal does not translate into feminist, and not-woman and
non-marginal do not equal non-feminist.

Extending this to pornography production, the case of Extreme Associates clarifies this
company produced pornographic films so violent that the Federal Government shut it down, and
the producers were incarcerated for the content of the films (Attwood 2011; Attwood 2014;
Cossman 2007). While the films of Extreme Associates exemplify what is typically considered
deviant pornography, the experience of the producers highlights the fact that standards of what is
acceptable change over time (Cossman 2007). A comment made by one producer of that
company during the filming of PBS’s Frontline documentary, *American Porn* (Janning 2002),
shows how some producers will use gender strategically to serve their own purposes, and not for
an authentic political purpose.

Extreme Associates used gender as a cover for making films that would otherwise be
considered inappropriate by any standard. Take, for example, the following exchange between
the female producer/co-owner and the interviewer, keeping in mind that this conversation took
place before criminal charges were brought against her and the company:

LIZZIE BORDEN: I'm a female director, and it's easy for me to say, "Oh, come
on, do it," you know, and not just a man. If a guy asks, they're, like, "Oh, he's a
pervert." But if a woman asks, they do it.

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6 Transcript for *American Porn*: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/porn/etc/script.html
In other words, marginalizing categories can be used for many purposes other than progressive politics. Gender was used to justify making a profit from pushing cultural boundaries by getting performers to do as an apparent matter of principal what the company wanted them to do for its own benefit. “Woman producer” was used tactically, but it was not employed as part of a strategy to further feminism or produce feminist content.

**Political Performances: Genuine Pleasure, Sexual Agency, and Authentic Desire**

Genuine pleasure, sexual agency, and authentic desire are capable of being incorporated in a feminist political praxis within the more general context of cultural production. That can occur by considering the sexual performance as an instance of sex work in conjunction with the political ideals and actions that give it meaning as work. These issues will be discussed in greater detail in regard to the concept of sexual culture.

Locating feminism in the production of feminist pornography in regard to a concept of real or genuine pleasure in the workplace can be empirically located in the context of political praxis. The organization of genuine pleasure in the workplace depends on the type of work that is being done, and has been linked to the interpersonal structure of the workplace environment through the concept of emotion management (Hochschild 1979, 2003; Turner and Stets 2006; Wharton 2009), as well as to broader structural arrangements in which the work takes place – such as the political and economic institutions of late capitalism – through the concepts of affective labor (Hardt 1999; Hardt and Negri 2000) or “affective management” (Fisher 2009:74). Although most people are hired and stay employed under the premise of fulfilling a job description that is linked to a particular skill set that appears instrumentally valid, most employees are expected to do their work while outwardly expressing pleasure in that work, or
doing work that facilitates pleasure in others. Job performance, in other words, is also a matter of performing or propagating pleasure at the jobsite, and this is especially true when the work entails sexual pleasure and therefore requires the performance of sex work.

A preponderance of the literature on sex work focuses on stripping and prostitution, although scholars in this area have called for more research on pornography (Weitzer 2009, 2013). However, there is some research on sex work that focuses on how emotion is managed in the course of production. This provides a foundation for studying how genuine pleasure is organized and made apparent in pornographic films. This literature emphasizes the personal and interpersonal aspects of the job, and relies exclusively on a paradigm of emotion management for understanding sex work in contrast with the management of expressions of affect, although the former is not used in isolation and is often integrated with other approaches to impression management that rely on a micro level of analysis (see Goffman 1974).

Teela Sanders focused on the role of humor in the sex work of female prostitutes. She found that humor was used as both a coping mechanism for controlling interaction with clients and a way of managing emotion in such interactions (2004). In 2005, Sanders published an article that framed sex work as a form of service work. She approached her data on female prostitutes who work in indoor locations from the perspectives of identity and the management of emotional expression. She found that sex workers, in particular, prostitutes, create a unique identity for their workplace role that is different from the personal identities that they maintain in their non-workplace lives (e.g., in the context of family, or in other intimate relationships such as friendships and interactions with romantic partners). She refers to their work identity as their “manufactured identity” (Sanders 2005:322-323). It is used by them to manage interaction with clients in ways that protect them from work-related stresses and allow them to increase their
profits without undermining the client-professional relationship. Developing a special character for their work environment provides an emotional buffer that tempers any mental anguish they may experience on the job, and it also helps them keep their personal identities out of their work setting. This is also achieved by having “exclusion zones” (Sanders 2005:326) for their bodies, which entail physical and sexual boundaries that cannot be crossed at work. Condoms are used not only for practicing safe sex, but also to reinforce a psychological barrier between workers and clients. Sanders's interviews revealed that most of her subjects did not experience sexual pleasure, and several expressed a preference for domination scenes because that involved less sexual contact with their clients. As a business strategy, a manufactured identity is a form of role play that is “just like acting” (2005:329). This allows them to perform the role of prostitute as a sort of caricature, which makes them more desirable to their clients by capitalizing on social and sexual stereotypes.

More recent research by Abel (2011) also approached sex work through the lens of emotion management and role play as strategies for dealing with the personal and interpersonal dimensions of prostitution. It was found that acting, along with separating their personal roles from their professional role, was beneficial to these women as they went about their work. By relying on “deep acting”, the workers in Abel's sample were able to keep their private sense of self separate from their professional life through an emphatic display of professionalism while at work (2011:1181). As a result, they reported being a “different person” when they were on the job (Abel 2011:1179-1180). This use of a “professional mask” enabled them to depersonalize themselves and their clients (Abel 2011:1181). They also reported restricting their clients from particular forms of touching or types of sexual acts such as kissing. The use of condoms provided a material and symbolic way of separating the sexual interaction at work from the
special intimacies of their private lives. This was reinforced by an explicit emphasis on safe sex on the job, which tended to establish a clinical and pragmatic tone to the work itself.

Focusing on the consumer of sex work is another way of approaching pleasure in the setting in which sex work takes place. Sanders (2008) studied the sexual scripts of regular male clients during their exchanges with sex workers in order to understand how they approached and managed pleasure within the boundaries enabling and limiting intimacy. The findings revealed that these relationships often exhibited similar traits as intimate, non-contractual relationships, and that the dynamic between sex workers and their clients is not merely exploitative, nor is it strictly professional. Instead, the parties to the exchange develop bonds that are sufficiently personal to allow their exchanges to be more than just a business relationship.

The second issue, agency (Emirbayer and Mische 1998; Hartman and Messer-Davidow 1991; McNay 2003), and more specifically, sexual agency (Attwood 2007b), is unquestionably important for understanding the political stakes of culture in general (Thornham 2000, McRobbie 1999; Rakow 2000; Skeggs 1995), sexual culture (Cusak and Waranius 2012), and sex work (Delacsote and Alexander 1998; Milne; Nagel 19997; Sabo 2012; Taormino et al.2013). Regardless of which feminist perspective one uses, and whether or not a person identifies as feminist, a person who enters into sex work involuntarily or on the basis of an extremely limited choice cannot be said to be exercising agency in the sense implied by ‘political stakes’. Force and dire straits in sexual labor, as in involuntary prostitution or human trafficking (Caldwell et al. 1997; Gupta et al. 2009; Hall 1996; Lau 2008; Montgomery 2000; Saunders 2005; Silverman et al. 2006; Willis and Levy 2002), or adolescents who become street prostitutes because, for example, they ran away from an abusive home (Bagley 1999; Bell and Todd 1998; Deisher,

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7 Choice in this sense of the term is not a genuine choice.
Robinson, and Boyer 1982; Greene, Ennett, and Ringwalt 1999; Kramer and Berg 2003; Simons and Whitbeck 1991; Whitbeck et al. 2004) are distinctions that must be made when considering differences among sex workers generally, whether or not they apply to those, such as actors in pornographic films, who create sexual culture in the course of their sex work.

Finally, the notion of authentic desire is difficult to clarify at a theoretical level, though it can more easily be approached empirically, especially when genuine pleasure and sexual agency are taken into account. Entering the pornography industry as an occupational choice is one thing but sex work that involves sexual experiences that the actor might enjoy is also important to consider when thinking about the politics of making sexual culture. In sum, the criteria involved in the second measure used by the FPA to define feminism includes three main points so far as the performers are concerned: experiencing pleasure in and through sex work (the production process), voluntarily taking part in that work, and performing the types of scenes that they prefer.

**Political Representations: Reimagining Sexual Culture**

The final criterion required by the FPA presents many challenges to feminist praxis and to the creation and circulation of political culture in general. It involves reimagining sexual culture in specific regard to expanding boundaries, challenging stereotypes, representing diversity, and using non-oppressive frameworks in contrast with mainstream pornography. Each of these will be discussed briefly here.

Expanding boundaries or transgressing them is not an inherently political act (Gamson 1998a; 1998b; hooks 2002; Warner 2000), and that includes doing so within or by means of products of sexual culture (Glick 2000; Weiss 2011). Challenging stereotypes is less contentious, as it has generally been agreed that stereotypes, even ‘good’ stereotypes distort
reality (Cheryan and Bodenhausen 2000; Suzuki 2002; Taylor and Stern 1997). Moreover, their use is not only empirically unsound, but essentialist in ways that are likely to undermine any politically progressive strategy aimed at countering the social effects of essentialism. Deliberately working against but within or around a stereotype in order to weaken it can be as politically limiting as the stereotype itself since it sustains the frame one is trying to debunk. That is, attempting to challenge a stereotype by qualifying it can further validate it.

The heterogeneity of mainstream pornography makes it difficult to determine where the mainstream ends and subversion begins, and therefore difficult to identify the types of film, or even traits, that can be thought of as feminist. Although the criteria we have been discussing refer to representations, it is first worth noting that many actresses who spoke or wrote in support of pornography during the feminist sex wars, or have advocated a feminist, sex-positive approach to sexuality and sexual culture, worked in the mainstream, and some continue to do so. Prominent among them are Nina Hartley (Hartley 1998; 1997; 2005), Susie Bright (Buszek 2006), and Annie Sprinkle (Sprinkle 1997; 1998; 2006; Williams 1993). However, even actresses who do not identify themselves as feminist may display traits and speak of their experiences in the industry in ways identified as feminist by feminists (Shimizu 2006). The difficulty of drawing a line between mainstream and non-mainstream films is mirrored in the difficulty of distinguishing between feminist and non- or anti-feminist pornography.

An interesting historical caveat comes from personal accounts of their experiences by women employed at Penthouse magazine in the 1970s. Many whose education was aimed at employment in the publishing industry found themselves discriminated against in the job market. Women job applicants quickly discovered that you either worked for Ms. Magazine or Penthouse (Avrich 2013), or you did not work. The ambiguity of Penthouse's emphasis on the erotic no
doubt played a role in how women who were employed by the magazine described their work. *Penthouse* was the first popular magazine to display female pubic hair and labia. Even controlling for prurient interest and preference for obscenity, many people viewed women's vulvas as 'dirty' and in no respect a proper subject of public display. Guccione, the owner and publisher of *Penthouse*, hoped to destigmatize the exposure of female genitalia both by the images used and by editorial comments on the hypocrisy of censorship, albeit by capitalizing on that relative absence of imagery as well. Ironically, at the same time, some feminist publications (e.g., *Our Bodies, Ourselves*) displayed images of female genitalia intended to encourage women to cast away shame of their genitalia. At least some of the irony lies in the fact that such imagery is now often associated with a specifically male gaze (Adams 1996) and an even more general objectification of women.

Nevertheless, analyses of alternative or non-mainstream pornography have revealed that such films are similar to mainstream pornography in many ways. Although they intend to challenge mainstream pornography, they may reproduce the same type of imagery even though typically packaged differently from the mainstream. For example, amateur pornography often shows the same kinds of sex and uses the same iconography as mainstream pornography (Paasonen 2010; VanDoorn 2010), though it may be intended to provide a more direct and intense pornographic effect. 'Alt porn' often relies on 'artsy' imagery and depicts people in alternative subcultures, but it typically caters to a heterosexual male audience; and much of it contains nude images of women or women performing masturbation scenes for the camera (Atwood 2007; Garlick 2011), much like mainstream pornography, but purportedly more tastefully. Similarly, critics of other types of alternative pornography that emphasize ethics rather than merely matters of taste have also noted that these types usually present a single
woman or only women having sex, which raises the issue of how politically progressive pornography is possible when it includes men (Garlick 2011) even when it is being made for a heterosexual audience. Research on pornography made for couples, which is often marketed to heterosexual women, reveals that these productions may be less raunchy, but they still rely on the same structure as mainstream pornography (Williams 1999). All in all, being different from the mainstream does not mean that things will be radically different.

The third criteria, broadening the boundaries, is difficult to frame as inherently political, and for similar reasons raised in our discussion of the first criterion, challenging social categories. Diversity in and of itself does not necessarily constitute resistance to the dominant ideology or support a holistic feminist project (Bulbeck 2000; Collins 2009; hooks 1984, 1989, 1990, 2000; Minh-ha 1989; Mohanty 1988, 2003; Nicholson 1997; Spivak 2006; Tong 1998; Wittig 1992). Diversity is already a staple of mainstream pornography, though in many cases, it is a source of controversy. For example, black men are often portrayed as animalistic (Dines 1998) and violent or less romantic (Cowan and Campbell 1995; Monk-Turner and Purcell 1999). Similar racial and ethnic minorities are rarely shown together, as mixed-raced scenes can allow racist social narratives to be played out in pornography (Dines 1998; Shimizu 2010). As far as under-representation is concerned in pornographic cinema as a whole, it should be mentioned that Asian men rarely appear in both mainstream (heterosexual) porn and gay porn (Fung 2005; Shimizu 2010). Racialization, if not racism, is found in (non-pornographic) popular culture as well. Whereas black men tend to be represented as hypersexual and hypermasculine (Dines 1998, 2006; hooks 2004; Lazur and Majors 1998; Miller-Young 2007; Williams 2010), Asian men are often portrayed as asexual and effeminate (Lazur and Majors 1998; Shimizu 2010;
This leads us to the last question of how sexuality and eroticism are represented in the production of sexual culture.

Non-racist and non-oppressive frameworks form the most general criterion for defining feminist pornography. It is clear why a non-racist framework is required. Racism is one of the more straightforward issues that must be resolved representationally, at least in terms of what it prohibits; and it gives meaning to the other criteria such as the tendency to stereotype “others.” The context of race is where the value of challenging stereotypes is fairly clear cut. It involves a careful construction of the narrative in which the sexual interaction takes place. As stated above, focusing on diversity alone cannot prevent stereotyping. But how diversity is represented, what it means politically, depends on the social framework in which the representations of sexual interactions take place. Outside of an inclusive social context, representations of sex are politically meaningless. In this regard, Cowan and Campbell (1994) state that:

“The context of sexuality, not the sex act itself, determines racism and sexism. The prevalence of various sex acts and the sex act that was performed first did not vary by race or race combinations. An extreme racially degrading image, in Le Me Tell 'Ya 'Bout Black Chicks, was that of a Black woman willingly having sex with two White men masked by Ku Klux Klan (KKK) hoods. The men enter the woman's bedroom where she is masturbating to gospel music and say, 'Lets f__ the s__ out of this darky'. In this scenario, it was the context provided by our knowledge of the KKK and the lie that the oppressed want to engage in sex with her oppressor that is degrading to African-American women (335-336).”

Racist and non-racist rough representations of sex only work as such in the context of narratives that situate and drive the sexual encounter within the context of the larger cultural frameworks that give them meaning, political or otherwise.

Using a non-oppressive framework in contrast with a positive anti-oppressive one is only abstractly useful and useless as a matter of practice for feminist purposes. It seems safe to say that a holistic approach to feminism would take an intersectional approach (Crenshaw 1991;
Davis 2008; McCall 2005; Yuval-Davis 2006) or an assemblages approach (Puar 2005, 2007, 2012) to oppression that is mindful of a “matrix of domination” (Collins 2009:21) in which interlocking systems of social inequality and stratification operate concurrently. This means that feminist theory should not only try to address gender oppression, it must address social categories as various assemblages of power (Puar 2005, 2007, 2012), and this is already a matter of praxis. Similarly, it must take other social categories into account such as sexual preference, body politics, race, class, and national identity. The framework in which sexual culture has a genuinely political dimension entails more than just a critical gender lens; it should employ a multiplicity of critical lenses. Haraway's use of fly eyes supplies a useful heuristic for understanding the complexity of feminist standpoints (Haraway 1991, 1998; Harding 1991; 2004b). Whereas humans have a single optic in which they view the world, the fly’s gaze relies on multiple optics. From this point of view, the task is to represent the world as a multiplicity, through variegated optical networks in regard to which intersectionality/assemblages provide a relatively non-oppressive framework.

What complicates matters for film makers is not only the question of how such a non-oppressive feminist framework can be represented, but how its representations are likely to be interpreted. Both are matters of standpoint, or political perspective. In displaying or representing something, we take control over it. But how our representations are interpreted is beyond our control once they go circulate beyond their production. Meaning may be attached to certain images during the production process, but those meanings cannot be fixed in the movement from production to consumption (Barthes 1972, 2000). Even theoretical work is an interpretation to be interpreted. The outcome of research is similarly contingent on measures and measures these have to do with how one chooses to look at data. The explicit and implicit
meanings tied to theories aimed at making sense of observations further complicate the reception of the research by readers of published reports, including research on pornography (Attwood and Smith 2014; Smith and Attwood 2014). Consider, for example, the concept of objectification. There are myriad ways of measuring it and deciding what it means (Attwood 2004; Bogaert, Turkovich, and Hafter 1993). Some researchers (Cowan and Dunn 1994) illustrate how women are objectified in pornography by measuring objectification in terms of the degree to which their sexual availability is pronounced. Others (McKee 2005) claim that women are not always objectified in pornography, instead, they exhibit sexual agency. What appears to be objectification is not. In that case, the measures of being objectified and not being objectified are virtually the same.

Finally, there is the issue of appropriation. Even if, for one mythical moment, every feminist could agree in advance on a non-oppressive framework for pornographic films, and even if the product appears adequate to the anti-mainstream intended meaning, it is likely, in the course of its distribution, circulation, and reception, to be appropriated by and co-opted to the culture of mainstream pornography. This is why the comprehensive socio-material context in which feminist sexual culture is produced and used matters so much, a theme which is discussed below.

'Alternative' Culture and the Realities of Capitalism

The politics of cinematic feminist sexual culture, including the choice of the images as well as the production process itself do not exist in isolation. The FPA criteria were intended to identify political praxis as a feature of production and to establish ethically and politically appropriate feminist standards for judging content. At the same time, production and content are situated in
a comprehensive socio-material context that gives 'the political' in feminist cultural production part of its meaning, just as it bears on the ways in which images and narratives of sexuality are interpreted. The production, the products, and their appropriation are inseparable from the consumer society (Baudrillard 1998; Jameson 1985) that transpires within a late capitalism (Habermas 1973; Jameson 1991) shaped by the political, social, and economic imperatives of neoliberalism (Harvey 2005; Fisher 2013; Fisher and Gilbert 2013; Gilbert 2013; Shonkwiler and La Berge 2013). This context poses significant challenges to any attempt to establish and implement a culture of political action aimed at contributing to progressive social change. History has shown that politically-oriented alternative cultural formations invariably face obstacles that influence tactics, strategy, and self-definition (including what it means to be alternative). Such obstacles reflect the operations of markets as well as the institutions of the socio-cultural mainstream.

Groups in the margins of society that attempt to create their own alternative culture may see their efforts gain popular recognition, but only at the expense of sacrificing what is subversive about them. They can be co-opted or neutralized by the imperatives of the market, and where they succeed in that regard, they are often conventionalized by imitation. This is illustrated by the fates of the working-class countercultures of punk (Hall and Jefferson 2000; Hebdige 2000), rap and hip-hop (hooks 2002; Forman and Neal 2004), and skateboarding (Lombard 2010; Thorpe and Wheaton 2011). These eventually became mainstream by being “incorporated” (Hall and Jefferson 2000) into the established popular culture and politically neutralized by consumerism and its media.

A feminist example of this is the riot grrrl movement of the 1990s (Gonick 2006; Jacques 2001; Riordan 2001; Schilt 2003; Attwood 2007b). What started as an underground music
scene, and a sort of “double articulation” (Hall 1993) against the androcentrism and heterosexism prevalent within punk scenes as well as the broader society or dominant culture, eventually became incorporated into mainstream pop music, and commercially appropriated as what Jameson (1991) called pastiche. For example, by an enormous market in tchotchkes and clothes sold at malls throughout the U.S. ‘Girl power’ became a style to be exhibited, reduced to slogans, bought, sold, and collected – a commodification devoid of political meaning other than the maintenance of the status quo.

But beyond that, the removal of the feminist label from these items made them more acceptable in ways that appeared cultural in the limiting sense of being neither political nor economic. Although feminism was explicitly identified in the lyrics and zines of the original movement, it was absent in the products commercially appropriated by the agencies of popular culture. The distancing of the ideology from the identity or label was not difficult when grrrl could be used or transformed into some variation of it – perhaps with one less ‘r’ or simply girl. Without needing to reference the pesky f-word, or feminism, the infantilized or juvenile discourse made it safer, and less difficult to co-opt and sell. However, the feminist label is less objectionable these days, and has even become fashionable, which is surprising: less than twenty years ago, feminism was either missing in popular culture or, when it was visible, it was proclaimed dead8. It is important to note that there is a proliferation of feminist pornography in the very context in which feminism has become part of the mainstream – through the practice of branding things as feminist (e.g., in popular music videos, fashion magazines, style blogs, and fashion shows).

8 For example, Time magazine’s June 1998 cover that posed the question “Is Feminism Dead?”
The Polemic: Is Feminist Pornography a Political Fantasy?

The question that remains is whether or not feminist pornography is in fact political. That is, can it be imagined as an instance of resistance to exploitation, subordination, exclusion, and/or oppression? Is it enough to define it by the FPA’s three criteria? Even if those criteria are sufficient to identify certain pornographic films as feminist, does this imply that they are political in the sense of subaltern resistance? What feature of production, performance, and product display resistance and the desires to appropriate to it? Cultural production occurs within a comprehensive socio-material reality. There are two levels of this reality at which politics can be observed and evaluated empirically. The first is production. Feminist pornography is produced as a form of sex work, by means of relations that occur in the fluid context of creating alternative culture by creating subversive artifacts. The second is the greater context in which production takes place and, with it, the circulation and consumption of appropriation of its products. Feminist alternative cultural production transpires through a broad set of relations in which the making of a feminist pornographic film is also a re-making of sexual culture within the institutions of a complex and contradictory political economy.

The value of feminist political performance was addressed by the FPA on the level of production, and therefore in regard to the obligations of producers and performers. Both types of social actor matter to the production process, but the political issue was primarily addressed by the FPA in regard to performers, for the producers, feminist praxis was defined in terms of social categories, which is neither a reliable nor a comprehensive enough way of assessing its political dimension. The idea of producing sexual culture in the context of a production process that is conducive to, and actively supports, genuine pleasure, sexual agency, and authentic desire is crucial for an ethical approach to creating a politicizing sexual culture. This is so regardless of
whether an individual performer identifies as feminist or the production company is marketed as a feminist one. This raises interesting questions and important concerns that warrant empirical sociological investigation. The most basic inquiry, to begin with, is: how are pleasure, agency, and desire enabled and controlled so that it is possible to identify the political dimension of the production process?

Prior research on the management of pleasure in sex work in general is a useful springboard for addressing that question. However, there are some critical differences between the work involved in prostitution and pornographic cinema, and there are discrepancies between sex workers’ accounts of their experiences and the assertions made by the FPA regarding genuine pleasure. These must be addressed before moving forward.

The first issue has to do with the level of interaction in which sex work takes place. Unlike prostitution or stripping, sex work in the production of a film does not directly occur between the worker and the customer directly, but, other than masturbation or solo scenes, between two sex workers on a set and in front of a camera. The exchange between the sex workers and the consumer occurs indirectly and is mediated by the completed product and technology. The exchange between sex workers and the customer is a mental fact that is different for each in when and under what circumstances it occurs. The second issue has to do with the claim by some sex workers that they did not enjoy the sexual interaction and in many cases, they actively avoided it. My research suggests that producers and performers who wish to create the sense of an experience of 'genuine' pleasure cannot rely simply on acting to represent it. The work of portraying pleasure as genuine must be managed unless the emphasis of the film is on displaying pleasure as it actually occurs.
The representation or display of sexual pleasure may include emotion but it does not rely on it alone; it embodies affect (Paasonen 2011), but the affect it may be purely consumatory, without an emotional tone. Pornography is intended to produce an affective response in the consumer, and that also involves more or less than emotions. On the other hand, the consumer is supposed to experience sexual pleasure when he or she views the product; and the likelihood of that occurring requires the management of emotional and physical expression during the production process. But while the idea of the management of emotion help us understand how pleasure is made to appear genuine, a more holistic framework, which is to say, the management of affect, is likely to be more helpful. Note that emotion refers to actual feeling, while affect refers to the behavior, expression, or attitude that might accompany an emotion, and those include materiality, or the corporeal dimensions of embodying them.

Sexual agency is another component of the production process that was recognized by the FPA as important to a feminist ethical approach to making sexual culture. Barad's work on agential realism suggests that agency is not something that individuals have or possess, it is something that occurs between two or more people (2003). Agency is observable on the level of individual performance as enactment within the production process beyond what scripts and standards require. Sexuality in films involves a concrete, narratively valid setting. To the extent to which its enactment requires a degree of improvisation within a managed context, it introduces an element of risk – not only because it depends on the improviser but because improvisation draws on external norms and representations usually derived from a more inclusive socio-material context. The performer never loses at least some connection to society.

The structure of the production process consists of formal arrangements organized as a setting intended to facilitate or limit demonstrable sexual in ways that cannot promote agency
without the exceptions improvisation requires, therefore without external implications. As a result, the political aspect of sexual agency cannot be understood solely in regard to the sexual encounter itself or the formal requirements of sexual agency within the production process. That aspect is revealed by variations in the performance that have to do with the unstable but profound relationship between the local setting and what enters it from outside (Goffman 1961). Indeed, performance appears as a recognizable matter of practice both within and beyond the local setting.

A great deal of research on sex work has focused on the ways that pleasure and agency have been managed within the act as a unit of the series comprising a performance. This choice of a micro-level approach provides information about what individual sex workers in film do in the context of interpersonal relations that occur during the indirect sexual exchange between the worker and the customer, and about workplace interactions that take place among performers, including interactions subject to the management of pleasure and agency. However, this is not sufficient to understanding how pleasure and agency are linked at the macro-level, and this is necessary for identifying the political aspect of the pornographic films. It includes the types of interactions that occur between the performers and their 'interactions' with the camera and producers, and the indirect, and therefore mediated at the macro-level, interaction that takes place between them and the anticipated consumer. It includes the externally mediated organizational practices involved in managing pleasure and agency in the course of creating sexual culture.

The portrayed and possible experience of authentic desire is the third aspect of ethically producing sexual culture. The authenticity of desire as such is difficult to measure, but it is possible to describe and observe the portrayal of authenticity. Many people who work in the
adult entertainment industry have made it abundantly clear that 'porn sex' and 'real sex' – sex that occurs outside of the workplace – are very different from each other (Greenfield-Sanders 2006). Research on the management of pleasure in other forms of sex work, such as prostitution, also supports the idea that sexual desire operates in different ways in their work roles and non-work roles, especially for those who neither desire professional sex nor derive satisfaction from it (Abel 2011; Sanders 2005). Although the idea of authentic desire is tenuous in the context of sexual performance in the production of a film, it may be that at least some performers experience sexual desire from acting in a sexual way even though they do not experience pleasure in the actual physical encounter. In that case, the performers and producers can be said to be creating sexual culture that they find genuinely desirable regardless of how they feel about the enacted sexual encounter. This can account for the facts that performers often can and prefer to choose their partners and the types of sex they are willing to perform.

The pleasure experienced in regard to performing draws on the types of sex scripts that occur in an inclusive sexual culture. But such scripts rely on fantasy, that is, particular story lines that provide a semblance of a social context for the sexual encounters and link them to social narratives that are specific to a given culture and general to those who share that culture (Gagnon 1990; Gagnon and Simon 1973; Simon and Gagnon 1986, 2003). Sex scripts provide a special link between performing in a film and the more general types of desire that have to do with sexuality in its most general, but not simply abstract, sense. That link is desire in regard to a fantasy that is itself a source of pleasure, though the pleasure is different from the pleasure that can arise during a genuine sexual encounter. The fact that improvisation opens the way to fantasy, and from that to a distinct pleasure, provides some latitude for the performer that is
likely to modify what might otherwise be taken for granted. This is one part of a feminist politics on the creating of alternative culture in the form of pornographic film.

However, there remains the question of how politics can be neutralized by countervailing practices that reflect such institutional factors as the market, law, and a culture geared to the reduction of values to its own. A major concern in the study of cultural resistance is incorporation, or the appropriation of 'alternative' culture by 'dominant' or 'mainstream' culture (Hall 1993; 2000; Hall and Jefferson 2000; Hayward and Schuilenburg 2014; Hebdige 2006). The idea of incorporation was prominent during the heyday of cultural studies, and particularly in the work of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies on subcultures and subcultural resistance to domination (Morley and Chen 1996; Turner 2003). Researchers today still focus on certain modes of culture as forms of resistance and continue to give attention to the capacity of ostensibly deviant cultures to resist incorporation and commodification (see Hayward and Schuilenburg 2014).

While some may wonder how long creative resistance can sustain itself against the possibility of incorporation but argue that it can still have positive short term effects, others take a more critical approach to culture and deny that the idea of incorporation is any longer even a viable concept under the conditions of late capitalism. Instead of focusing on the eventuality of incorporation, leaving open the possibility of short run effects, they claim that the idea of “precorporation” (Fisher 2009:9) provides a more accurate account of how 'alternative' cultures are positioned in contemporary life, given that it is difficult to show that alternative cultures exist outside of mainstream culture. Given the hegemony of neoliberalism, it is not feasible to see in cultural resistance a distinct and effective politics. Being co-opted to mainstream culture is not a matter of something likely to happen. It is already there from the beginning in that it is already...
part of what it opposes. This is not a fatalistic conception creative resistance. Fisher maintains that the idea of 'the mainstream' is not altogether useless for spreading alternative ideas (Fisher and Gilbert 2013). The attempt to separate from and reject mainstream culture is, in effect, an abandonment of resistance itself. Both “incorporation” and “precorporation” point to possible limits of resistance to domination in general and, in the case of alternative pornographic films, possible limits to their capacity to promote a cultural alternative in the contexts of feminism and feminist sexual politics.

The research described and discussed in the following chapters provides an account of the production process involved in the pornographic film industry, focusing on producers and performers, on the relationship between agency and management, and on certain aspects of the politics of sex work. The introductory chapter was intended to provide a framework for the more limited analysis of data gathered in the field and interviews with performers and producers.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to provide a sociological analysis of political cultural production, and more specifically, to evaluate the extent to which feminist sexual culture can be understood as an instance of politics and feminist pornography as a politics of creative resistance. Along the way, I will discuss the significance of my findings for the possibility that the production of feminist sexual culture has led to more ethical ways of producing sexual culture than mainstream practices. I will also address the claim that these practices and cultural forms have been able to resist being co-opted by the mainstream pornography industry. The research itself uses ethnographic and other qualitative methods, including intensive interviews, to compare feminist and mainstream pornography. These, in turn, are addressed from a sociological point of view.
using grounded theory and a tripartite approach to culture for gathering data (Becker 2007; Gamson 1998a). The data were gathered from essential but understudied information sources. This explains some of the limitations of the research, and also some of its strengths.

**Chapter Outline**

Chapter two covers the methodology and conceptual frameworks used for this research: an ethnographic approach to qualitative research was taken and theoretical orientations that focus on micro-level and macro-level empirical reality were chosen to evaluate pornography production. Chapters three and four focus on the first location, the production process itself, while chapter five focuses on the second location, the production process in the context of broader material relations.

Chapters three and four both address how affect is managed by producers and performers throughout the production process in the context of the narratives that are used during the sexual encounters. Chapter three looks at the personal boundaries of performers and producers in their professional roles as far as the types of narratives that they will do. What is missing in research on pornography and sex work alike is the role that social narratives play in managing affect throughout the process. The social narratives are an important exclusion in each set of literature because they give the sexual encounter social context, and more importantly, they not only provide the parameters for the interpersonal dimension of the sexual behavior – the sex scripts – they drive the power dynamics that are contained within them (Williams 1999), which are linked to politically meaningful power arrangements in the broader social context in which they occur. Very little of this research has paid attention to the social narratives that contextualize these behaviors, and research that has, either alludes to the narrative or mentions it as a secondary
concern in order to point to the importance of other themes. The exception is research that critiqued race and racism pornography, as mentioned above.

The primary characteristics of hard core pornographic films involve three main things – (1) iconography, or the visual norms used in displaying the images, (2), the sex acts, and (3) the narrative, or the plot in which the sex acts are embedded. The narrative, as indicated before, not only provides the story that includes the sexual behavior, it is imperative for the meaning and political effects of the imagery (Williams 1999). Nonetheless, although the narrative is crucial to hard core pornography as a genre, and for making sense out of the depictions, it is the least researched aspect of pornography in the literature. Instead of focusing on the narrative, researchers have emphasized the numbers, or sex acts in a film and themes relating to politics and power without a narrative context. This makes the omission of narratives a curiosity of academic research on pornography since it is rare for a cultural form to be described without the sort of information necessary to make it intelligible as a form of life.

In terms of research on sex work, introducing more research in this area is useful for not only the study of pornography, it can assist with understanding, by extending the existing literature on emotion and affect management in prostitution as well. Describing the roles that pornography performers perform can provide insight into the extent, if any, that sexual role play within the context of a particular narrative, in performers becoming more engrossed in their sexual exchanges.

What makes narratives important to address in studying feminist pornography, besides filling in these missing areas in the literature, is the bearing of the narrative structure on claims by feminist pornographers about the kind of sexual culture that they produce. In addition to principals of ethics that they attempt to apply in the name of feminist politics, is many of them
claim that their productions represent ‘real sex’, which is often equated with ‘unscripted sex’. While it may be a given that ‘real sex’ and ‘porn sex’ are not synonymous, the ethical and empirical dimensions of unscripted sex, including the ways that narrative-based sexual encounters mediate the likelihood of experiencing ‘real’ pleasure at work, merit further attention. This research shows that narratives – through the combination of a story line and sex scripts – contribute significantly to the likelihood that pleasure will be achieved during the sexual encounter that viewers witness in the final product.

Chapter four builds on these themes and looks more specifically at the ways that narratives play a part in managing affect throughout the production process, and it also considers the ethical dimension of using narratives as well. The unintended consequences of giving primacy to the idea that unscripted, autonomous sexual interaction between the performers is discussed in this chapter. On the one hand, a 'laissez-faire' approach to the sexual encounter poses ethical dilemmas that are antithetical to progressive politics. On the other hand, role-play via a narrative that provides structure for the sexual performance, is often preferred by the performers, perhaps because such a structure is more conducive to achieving 'real' sexual pleasure during the sexual encounter.

Chapter five addresses the relationship between 'real' pleasure and material reality by building on some of the findings concerning the management of affect within the production process, and extending them to the broader material context that in which production is embedded. The primary focus of this chapter is to illuminate the interplay between production, consumption, and consumer culture in order to illustrate the extent and limits of feminist pornography as a form of creative resistance. This chapter examines sexual culture in its material context, with an emphasis on its incorporation in the mainstream pornography industry,
and how feminist sexual culture is already precorporated with it. In addition to presenting evidence of the usefulness of both of these concepts, two others are introduced and discussed in the fifth chapter. The first is the idea of hypercorporation, and the second is paracorporation. The former refers to the tendency to reach out to the external and possibly antipathetical technological practices of the mainstream industry, and the latter refers to the practices by mainstream and feminist pornographers that involve capitalizing on multiple markets with different political meanings.

Next, chapter five addresses some of the ways that stigma shapes the relations of production and the experiences of producers and performers within the production process and outside of it, and closes with a discussion of professional motivations for entering into, or remaining in the pornography industry. This extends the results of the discussion of economic motivations, in particular regard to the problem of managing affect and also to accounts of motivations that foster pleasurable experiences among performers. This takes us to what may be the most general theme of this dissertation; the very narratives that producers and performers seem to want to avoid depend on same social categories that allowed sex workers and their adjuncts to make a place for themselves in the industry, and benefit materially from their work.

Chapter six is the concluding chapter and provides a summary of the results, directions for future research, and policy recommendations.
CHAPTER 2: Methodology, Conceptualization and Data

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the methodology and conceptual approach used for this study. The data, methods, and conceptual framework used for the analysis, the ethical concerns raised while conducting this research, and the biases and limitations of this study are discussed.

Methodology

Qualitative methods were used to conduct this research, and the general methodology informing this study, including the approach taken to conceptualization (theory), depended on suggestions found in Wolcott's (2001) book, *The Art of Fieldwork*. Although this is not traditional fieldwork in the classical sense of the term, this study relied on definitions of 'the field', and strategies for fieldwork, that were offered in Gupta and Ferguson's (1997) text, *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science*. An inductive approach to conceptualization was adopted for this study, which made grounded theory (Charmaz 2003; Glaser and Strauss 1967) most suitable for analysis. As a result, specific hypotheses were not tested, and the research questions, fields of inquiry, and data collected were continually modified and refined throughout the course of the study. Decisions concerning sites chosen for data were influenced by Becker's (2007) book, *Telling About Society*. Consequently, a tripartite approach to culture was adopted for this study. Sexual culture, and its makers and users, were the empirical locations investigated for this research.
Approach to Conceptualization

Conceptualization began after initial data were collected, and the process for conceptualization was ongoing. After data collection ended, a preliminary conceptual model was used to organize the theories informing the analysis, and a final framework was built to analyze the overall findings. The outcome of that procedure is discussed in this section. The impetus for building this model was to bridge micro-level analysis with macro-level analysis in order to better understand the relationship between political resistance, cultural production, and consumer society. Different – and seemingly opposed – perspectives were used in this framework with the goal of moving beyond familiar dichotomies that are often relied on within academic research, such as agency versus structure in sociology, cultural versus critical standpoints in criminology, and in philosophy, ontologies pitting agential and critical realisms against each other. It is my hope that more scholars will work in the spaces in between, and outside of, analytic frameworks that take an either/or approach to sociality so that we can produce more holistic knowledge on the relationship between culture, power, and political resistance. What is at stake is generating critiques of social order and change that can inform praxis for assembling more just social relations.

The strategy for attempting that in the framework used here combines new materialism and materialism. New materialism, by way of agential realism, and namely, arriving at that paradigm through Barad (2003), attends to micro-level political analyses by combining insights on materiality, social agency, and structural change that occurs 'on the ground' through posthuman conceptions of performativity and collective action. Materialism, via capitalist realism, and namely, arriving at that paradigm through Fisher (2009), attends to macro-level political analyses by combining insights on materialism, affect, and the psycho-social, in which
change occurs through a combination of collective, psychic reimagining of material reality that catalyze the structural rearrangements of our political economy.

A conduit between them, used for methodological purposes in order to gather data, and make descriptive observations conducive to micro-level and macro-level political and cultural analyses, was the apolitical, or politically neutral (but not necessarily politically benign) approach to social actors and actions – symbolic interaction – to look at human beings, and their “doings” (Goffman 1974), in the context of producing sexual culture. Finally, the preliminary conceptual model used to situate the general research question in the context of the final theoretical framework used for analysis, drew from Hayward and Schuilenburg (2014), and the concept of creative resistance, which emanated from insights combining cultural and critical criminology.

The Conceptual Foundation: Sexual Culture as Creative Resistance?
The general question asked here, building off of Hayward and Schuilenburg, was the question, “to create = to resist?” (2014) That is, is feminist cultural production creative resistance? More specifically, the question guiding this project is: to what extent, if any, is feminist sexual culture different from mainstream sexual culture? Or, said another way, when they are compared, what is the difference between them? More specifically, how does ‘feminist’ sexual culture resist the ideology, practices, and final products of ‘the’ mainstream? That is, does feminist sexual culture resist mainstream sexual culture ideologically, and in practice? Practice here is measured in terms of the creative process itself, and the outcomes of it (the creations), while ideology was measured in terms of resistance to ‘dominant’ ideology (as conceptualized as culture writ large), or ‘the norm’ (as conceptualized as 'the mainstream' industry)? Furthermore, linking the analysis
to broader social arrangements, how do feminist creators of sexual culture, and their creations, deviate from it? Is it likely, given deviations are found, that feminist sexual culture, by way of feminist sexual culture, will result in any meaningful social change? Beginning with Hayward and Schuilenburg, this was conceptualized with the following model:

\[
\text{To Create } = \text{To Resist?}
\]

- To Create = The process of cultural production.
- Creators = Individuals who produce political culture.
- Creations = The products/outcome of cultural product.
- To Resist = The outcomes, or deviating from the norm (non-normativity).

However, the ‘thing’ that is transcending or bridging them is ‘political ideology’, or the political *modus operandi* of the producers and the product. That is the ‘creature’ in which the creators are working on behalf of, and it is the category/concept that is the catalyst for political cultural production, according to the producers. ‘It’ is what is hypothetically imbued in the ideology of the creators, the actions of the creative process, and in the creations themselves. This equation, as a whole, is conceptualized as political praxis by way of cultural production. Praxis is defined here as a combination of the theory, or the political ideology guiding the creators, and practice is the practice of creating sexual culture. The outcome of those two are the creations, or sexual culture.

**Conceptual Model of Feminist Sexual Culture as Creative Resistance**

The aforementioned conceptual framework was extended to feminist resistance via cultural production. That way, comparisons could be made within and between the ideals, practices, and products associated with ‘feminist’ and ‘mainstream’ sexual culture. Ideology is tied to social structures, or material reality (Althusser 1977; Althusser and Balibar 1999; Hall 1985). Social
structures are located here in both micro-realities (the creative process) and macro-realities (the social context in which the creative process takes place), as well as nano-realities, which are located on the level of the individual itself (the creators). In this model, the process of making feminist culture is defined and assessed in the following way:

The ‘Creature’: The political ideology/theory that serves as the impetus for making political culture is feminism.

The ‘Creators’: The practitioners of the production process are ‘feminist’ pornographers.

The ‘Creative Process’ and ‘Creations’: The ‘feminist’ (cultural) praxis encapsulating the process of creating culture (production process) and the ‘feminist’ creations produced by it (products/sexual culture).

The ‘Outcomes’: The ‘results’ of praxis when ‘feminist’ sexual culture is compared to ‘mainstream’ sexual culture (the extent, if any, of resistance).

This preliminary model was used as a conceptual guide for building the overall framework used for conceptualization, and that approach is discussed next.

**Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework used for approaching and analyzing the data are described in this section. The process for building the conceptual framework involved framing and containing micro-level reality and framing and containing macro-level reality. The theoretical and ontological orientations used for gathering, organizing, and analyzing the data at the micro-level and macro-level are discussed below.
Framing Micro-Level Reality

Barad’s idea of “agential realism” (2003:810-811) was adopted as the foundation for ‘reality’ in the project at the micro-level and used to understand how the production process ‘lives’ as a social structure, and how it more or less fosters agency for living beings (social actors) within it. This social structure provides the framework for social relations, and the structure of the production process, conceived in this way, can be mapped out and visualized so that spaces where agency occurs, and through which actors, can be located within the production process.

Agency is performative, and it occurs at the level of micro-realities, or social structures located 'on the ground', and it is performed by social actors. Another level of reality can be located on the micro-level, which is the reality of the social actor, as a material being. Although social actors are generally framed as individuals within sociology, a more complex conceptualization of social actors is taken here so that corporeality can be approached in a more nuanced way, and matters of affect can be addressed. Drawing from new materialism (Hird 2003), social actors are conceptualized as beings that are made up of matter, and the materiality of that/their reality is not one of a single, living being, or static individual unit, but instead, one that is made up of active physiological processes and multiple beings (Haraway 2003, 2008).

While agency, according to Barad and other new materialists, occurs between two (or more) people, it is not simply an occurrence that happens between people in material reality, it also occurs within people, through the reality of materiality, and real matter (Barad 2003; Haraway 2003, 2008; Hird 2000, 2002, 2003). Agential realism, or agency defined this way, is more than interaction between 'individuals' or social actors, it is realized, or more accurately, materialized, within them as well. Consequentially, Barad maintains that agency is a 'matter' of intra-action, and not just interaction, as action is occurring within people as well as between them.
Intra-action is an important concept for this study because sexual agency, alongside pleasure and desire, are primary concerns. Sexual agency is not something a person just 'has', it is something that is done, it is performed between social actors, and within social structures. Furthermore, sexual pleasure is an affective state that occurs in the context of sexual interaction, and although it happens between people, it is experienced within a person, through real, physiological processes occurring at the level of corporeal materiality. Sexual performance, in other words, is more than sexual interaction between people, it is a form of intra-action that occurs within and between them. 'Real' sexual pleasure, like sexual agency, is an intra-active performance that takes place in the spaces within and between matter, materiality, and material reality. It is an outcome of the relationship between the realities of materiality and material reality. Finally, sexual desire is also an intra-active process, as it is a form of predilection that is based within a person, and experienced between people. Sexual desires are performed during sexual intra-action through the confluence personal and interpersonal desires, yet these desires do not exist solely within a person, or a sexual performance, they are mediated through the larger cultural and ideological milieu where people exist; it is often historically and culturally specific. As a result, desire is not only intra-action between and within people, it is an intra-active predilection and performance that is situated within, and occurs between, the sexual dynamic (or structure) of the group, and the larger social structure encompassing the sexual performers and performances.

In sum, because sexual agency, sexual pleasure, and sexual desire are intra-active forms of agential realism, another form of reality that can be empirically located at the micro-level is the 'nano-level' of the social actor – or the agency that occurs within the 'individual'. The two levels of micro-level reality that are of importance here are the micro-level social structures that
contain social intra-action, 'on the ground', such as the production process in which sexual culture is made, and the group dynamic in which sexual intra-action occurs. Social intra-action occurs within and between social actors, and each social actor, as an intra-active being, is conceptualized as having their own nano-reality.

The production process is framed as its own quasi-being, as something that is constantly moving and changing shape, which interacts with other social structures, and occurs within larger social structures. Social structures are not static and they do not merely contain social intra-action among social actors. They too are intra-active. In order to ascertain the realities of agency, it is important to also look at the spaces within social structures, as well as the spaces between them where social action can occur. Or, conversely, be hindered. While it is important to conceptualize these levels of reality so that they can be described and observed, the purpose of this study is not descriptive, it is analytic, and the goal, within the context of a qualitative analysis, is to understand cultural production, as a political cause, and what causes sexual agency, pleasure, and desire within the context of political cultural production. The objective is not to ascertain cause and effect per se, but the cause(s) of affect.

Barad’s model for cause is neither strictly deterministic nor linear, instead, it is conceived as a series of entanglements in which intra-action occurs (2003). This model can be seen more like a Rube Goldberg machine, rather than going down (or up) a slide, say, for example, if we were to visualize the outcome of a quantitative analysis, like a regression model, that is concerned with nomothetic cause. Nor is it strictly idiographic, as many qualitative analyses are, such as establishing the cause of soccer riot or a prison strike by teleologically analyzing the antecedents, developments and outcomes of those events. Instead, there is room for a sort of pseudo-multi-collinearity grounded in qualitative methods. That is useful for this study because
once these realities are assessed and mapped, it allows for an analysis that points to places in the process where movement occurs among different people, in various places, and at various moments in time in the production process that 'cause' affect. Social actors and actions can be pin-pointed within the production process at various moments and locations so that patterns pertaining to agency and pleasure can be clustered together and analyzed. In addition to mapping agency and pleasure across and within the production process, this model enables the observer to locate where other social structures seep into, and influence, the shape of the production process as well. That is, where the production process, as a structure, intra-acts with other social structures. In short, this conceptual framework was used to ascertain the ‘typical’ process for making sexual culture, for tracking the movement of the product, as well as locating social actions and actors that take place in the process, as well as outside of it, to qualitatively establish cause and effects/affects. ‘The cause’, here, is used in to ask these questions:

1. Who acts, what are their actions, and what are the causes and affects/effects of doing, not doing, or undoing those actions? More specifically, where is agency located, dislocated, or missing in these spaces for action that occur within and between people, and within, across, and outside of the production process? And at what points is the production process influenced by, or influence, external realities or social structures? That is, where is the interplay among structures?

2. At what point does someone become an agent or subject, and in which direction to they act? Where does the interplay among structure, agency and subjectivity? At which moments do they become political or ethical concerns?

3. At what times and spaces is sexuality ‘done’ in the production process, including the antecedents of the sexual intra-action, the sex acts themselves, and the moments that follow? And how, and in what ways, does time and space/place influence the process, and shape the process itself?

4. How is pleasure (and harm) managed from within and outside of the process? That is, what causes those affects/effects and how are they prevented, fostered, or ignored?
5. How is authenticity managed in the production process? What does it mean to be real or make it real? How is made to look real? What is the relationship of authenticity to pleasure? At what moments are they separated or constitutive?

Containing Micro-Realities

To anchor the social action occurring within and outside of the production process, the idea of artistic or creative “conventions” (Becker 1974, 2008) was used, which are the norms of a particular creative process. This was used to document, and then later map out the norms of the production process so that comparisons could be made. The process of making pornography was approached as a set of conventions so that actors and actions from various locations, including structures outside of the production process, could be anchored to the norms of the production process at once. Participants were asked about their experiences as creators of pornography, and the creative process was implicitly noted along the way. Patterns were documented and mapped out, and later used to analyze the data. The process was ultimately visualized in three different ways so that it reflected the production process generally, as well as the production process from the perspective of multiple roles or social actors. The entire process was documented, not just what occurs during the sexual performance. As a result, the norms preceding the shoot, during the shoot, and after the shoot were discussed and then later critiqued:

1. The production process as whole.

2. The production process according to the perspective of the producer or director.

3. The production process according to the perspective of the performers.

The participants' experiences with the production process were anchored around the sexual performance, which was conceptualized as an encounter (Goffman 1961), or a sexual encounter as “the natural unit of social organization (8)” for a “focused interaction (7)”. This concept was
used as an initial framework for gathering interview data, as a methodological heuristic, and not as a theory per se. In other words, it was utilized for guiding the preliminary interviews so that information pertaining to personal and interpersonal experiences, which were approached as performances tied to the conventions of producing sexual culture, could be obtained, organized, and then analyzed.

This concept was chosen for three reasons. First, at the micro-level, it is compatible for understanding how things work in the context of agential realism, as they are both concerned with agency, matters of performance (West and Zimmerman 1987; Zimmerman and West 2009), or “doings” (Goffman 1974). Furthermore, Goffman’s framework for encounters emphasizes both the presence and absence of action, where the absence of action entails things that are actively missing, or specifically not performed, as a performance in and of itself. Things that are not-done are just as important as things that are done in an encounter. In other words, performance is not only a matter of action, inaction is also performed. And both action and inaction can be framed positively or negatively, as both can potentially impact an encounter in various ways. Sexual agency and sexual pleasure are either achieved or not achieved, they are either successfully performed or fail to be performed, and in either case, that involves activities that are done or not-done.

Second, the concept of an encounter was also used in this context because it includes matters of affect; there is a “euphoria function” (Goffman 1961:44) to them, which allow the participants to stay engaged in the activity, which allows the participants in an encounter must become “engrossed” (Goffman 1961:80). In order to achieve that, steps must be taken before the encounter, as well as during it, in order to maintain that. Similarly, sexual pleasure is an affect,
which must managed before the sexual encounter, as well as during it, as it is something that can only occur if the performers can become mentally and physically immersed in it.

Third, an encounter was also chosen to assist with making observations because it is compatible with the concept of sexual intra-action in the context of the production process. The sexual encounter not only occurs within the production process, between a series of actions related to the conventions of making sexual culture, it is performed between performers, and that performance is done within the “membrane” (Goffman 1961:65) of the sexual activities making up the encounter, which occurs between the sexual performers and the producers (production crew). The concept of an encounter can be adapted to situations where multiple levels of interaction are taking place at once, which is important because the sexual encounter, in this context, happens among other social actors and actions that are also taking place at the same time. For this situation, Goffman’s extension of the concept of an encounter, “a multi-focused encounter” (1961:18-19), is useful, as it allows for making observations that bifurcate, yet include, intra-action between performers and the production crew.

In sum, micro-level reality was conceptualized using insights from new materialism, and more specifically, Barad's notion of agential realism, as an ontological framework. Observations were made using Goffman's concept of an encounter, as a methodological heuristic, so that agential reality could be empirically located, contained, and then later analyzed. Taken together, this conceptual and methodological strategy suggests doing away with the idea of sexual interaction, and introduces the concept of sexual intra-action as a replacement. The importance of making that conceptual shift will be illustrated by using that concept in multiple ways for this study. First, it will be applied to observe and analyze the sexual realities in the sexual intra-action that take place during the production process, second, it will be used to observe and
analyze the intra-action between the sexual encounter and the rest of the production process, and finally, it will be used to observe and analyze the production process and its relationship to material reality outside of it.

**Framing Macro-Reality**

In order to frame macro-reality, or the social context that production process takes place in, is shaped by, and intra-acts with, a large-scale ontology was chosen so that social forces 'outside' of the production process could be linked to, and understood within, material reality. A critical ontological is used as a framework for addressing materialism. 'Society' is conceptualized as "consumer society" (Baudrillard 1998; Jameson 1985; 1991), which is shaped by the late capitalist conditions of consumerism and neoliberal ideology (cite), and the realist approach utilized to make sense of material relations is capitalist realism (Fisher 1999; Dean and Fisher 2013; Shonkwiler and La Berge 2014).

Fisher's work is useful for this study, as he locates the harms of capitalism, not through harm directly, but instead, he argues that in order to understand the way that neoliberal hegemony (Fisher and Gilbert 2013) works, is through pleasure (Fisher 1999; Dean and Fisher 2013) and sites within capitalism that people seek out, and experience pleasure (Fisher 1999). Although his approach is grounded in materialism, and he is mindful of the constraints of capitalism, he does not forgo the importance of materiality in material reality, hence the attention he gives to affective dimensions such as pleasure, as well as other psycho-social issues where people experience do directly, and personally, experience the harms of materialism, such as depression (Fisher 2014). Yet, he does not take a fatalistic approach to neoliberalism, in fact, he maintains that an indication of neoliberal hegemony is the belief that it is the only way of life,
that is the idea that there is no other way of imagine material reality. Similarly, nihilism and apathy are states of being that only further naturalize capitalist realism (Fisher 1999; Fisher and Gilbert 2013). The very foundation for the concept of capitalist realism, is the idea that, borrowing from Jameson, “it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism (Fisher 1999:1).” This leads Fisher to wonder if it is still the case that there seems to be no other imaginable alternative to capitalism (1999). Joy and pleasure are also key to imagining a post-capitalist reality, and necessary for resistance and change (Fisher 1999; Fisher and Dean 2013).

Fisher is useful here because he not only attends to the constraints of material reality, and the political stakes of affective dimensions such as pleasure, but also the importance of culture, including mainstream culture, in limiting resistance to capitalist realism, as well as the potential that it can have for transforming social relations (Fisher and Gilbert 2013). Unlike many theorists who frame mainstream media as antithetical to the possibility of social change, to Fisher, it is not inherently bad, nor is constructing alternative, separatist approaches to political and cultural resistance an inherently useful strategy (Fisher 1999; Fisher and Gilbert 2013). In sum, as the concept of capitalist realism draws from psycho-social perspectives positioned within critiques of macro-level, material reality, while also bringing in micro-level reality, and attending to matters of affect and culture, work under this rubric is conducive for analyzing data in this study. It is a good fit for understanding primary themes addressed here, such as sexual pleasure, culture and/as political resistance, and the importance of, yet current restraints to, imagining alternative political realities.
Containing Macro-Realities

To capture social action outside of the production process and within it, the concept of affective management (Fisher 1999), was used for analysis. This concept is used to address the management of pleasure in the production process in order to extend the existing research on emotion management in sex work to include affect. While the research on emotion management is useful, affective management encompasses a wider range of intra-action, as it goes beyond the realm of emotions, to include affective experiences and relations that occur within and between people, and within and between social structures, or the production process and larger material reality. Pleasure, as previously stated, is more than emotions, it is a function of materiality, furthermore, prior research on sex work and emotion management needs to link those exchanges more concretely to the structures that the sexual performances within sex work occurs. Fisher, combined with Barad, assists with conceptualizing that. Furthermore, affective management is tied to occupations that emphasize producing and affective response in others, as a commodity. This also more accurately describes pornography production as a form of sex work, as well as the commodities they produce, as the pleasure and affect that the performers are managing are intended to be imbued in the product, so that the consumer can purchase and experience an affective, or pleasurable response. As far as cultural resistance is concerned in the context of capitalist realism, his idea of precorporation (Fisher 1999), discussed earlier, is used to ascertain the extent to which, if at all, feminist pornographers resist precorporation in the production process.
Data and Methods

The following section provides an overview of the data, methods, and data analysis procedures for this study. The data consisted of interviews and sexual culture, including pornographic materials. The methods for collecting the data, and the final data used for empirical analysis are described in greater detail below.

Interview Data

The interview data was the primary data used for this study. The sample and sampling procedures, recruitment strategy, interview process, final data, and process for analyzing the data is discussed in this section.

Sample, Sampling Procedure, and Final Sample

The target population, sampling frames, recruitment strategies, interview procedures, and the final sample, including the final interview data, are described in this section.

Target Population

The target population for the study was award-winning producers and performers active in the pornography industry at the time of the interviews. It was important for the purposes of this project to get individuals who are at the 'top' of the industry. These people are best suited to speak of the production process in the industry, because ‘the’ industry has spoken for them, and chosen to represent the best in the industry. All insiders are important, nonetheless, a picture of the production process that represents the industry norms was sought, even though they occupy statistically deviant positions in the industry. The following criteria were sought:
1. Creators who work in mainstream pornography and non-mainstream pornography, including ones that worked in both markets. Both producers and performers were sought, as having multiple perspectives in the production process would allow for multiple perspectives to be compared within the process.

2. Creators who were given at least one ‘porn award’, and if possible, by more than one source.

3. Creators who occupy multiple social locations was another goal. A non-homogenous sample of social categories was sought, but primacy was given to gender, sexual orientation, and race/ethnicity.

‘Feminist pornography’ and ‘feminist pornographers’ were defined in two ways:

1. Branded Feminist Pornography: This includes individuals who work in the niche specifically labeled as feminist. These individuals and this market were conceptualized as feminist pornography ‘proper’. Subjects and objects that fit into this category are defined as ‘Feminist Pornography’, as they explicitly name ‘it’ and themselves as feminist. This approach is consistent with Taormino et al. (2013).

2. Generic Feminist Pornography: This includes individuals who work in mainstream or non-mainstream pornography, or both, but they do not outwardly label themselves or their work/products as feminist. Subjects that fit into this category are defined as working in unbranded ‘feminist pornography’. This approach is consistent with Shimizu's (2006) analysis of performers in the mainstream industry that exhibit feminist qualities even though they do not specifically identify as feminist.

Taken as a whole, this population is categorized as a hard-to-reach or hidden population (Abrams 2010; Faugier and Sargeant 1997; Johnston et al. 2010; Muhib et al. 2001; Penrod et al. 2003; Southern et al. 2008), therefore multiple sampling procedures, described next, were used to increase the likelihood of reaching participants and securing interviews from them.

**Sampling Procedures**

The sampling frames, recruitment strategies, and process for obtaining interviews from participants are discussed in this section.
**Sampling Frames** Multiple frames and procedures were used to obtain human subjects.

Purposive, snowball/chain-referral, and convenience sampling procedures were used to locate subjects. Those procedures included the following methods:

1. Unidentified individuals that create sexual culture were recruited through social news/network platforms Reddit and Craigslist.

2. Identified individuals were recruited the Feminist Porn Awards.

3. Unidentified subjects and objects were recruited and found through a ‘feminist friendly’ online distributor.

4. Friends and colleagues were asked via email or in-person if they were acquainted with people who make feminist sexual culture or sex-positive pornography.

5. Interview participants were asked for names at the end of the interview.

**1st Method:** Recruitment via Craigslist and Reddit was used to locate and include individuals who work in the field of sexual culture, but may not be as recognized or as easily accessible as individuals who are visible in popular culture. Individuals ‘outside’ of the target population were sought as a quasi ‘control’ group so that comparisons could be made (although there was a chance a person fitting those criteria might respond via those platforms, it was assumed that it would be unlikely). Their experiences would be important in their own right, but for the purposes here, they would assist with understanding what qualities, if any, are unique to the experiences of celebrity or celebrated pornographers in the sample of people included in this project. The steps for recruiting via Craigslist (CL) and Reddit (R) were:

1. (CL) Communities with high concentrations of pornography producers were chosen: Los Angeles, San Francisco, Brooklyn, and Toronto.

2. (CL) Recruitment letters were posted in the ‘volunteers’ section (the part of the CL community hat location also had other posts by researchers looking for subjects.
3. (R) The recruitment letters were posted in subreddit, ‘Sex Positive’. That subreddit community has approximately 17,000 members, and it was chosen because that concept, political camp, and identity is associated with pro-pornography feminists, as indicated in the Introduction.

2\textsuperscript{nd} \textbf{Method}: A cumulative list of all individuals who were given an award by the Feminist Porn Awards (FPA) was made\textsuperscript{9}. The following steps for this sampling procedure:

1. A list was made of all the awardees for each year so that the total population was included.

2. If the award was given to a specific individual, their name was written down.

3. If an award was given to a movie or scene without direct mention of the individuals involved (e.g., movie of the year, hottest bisexual sex scene, etc.), the names of the producers and performers that took part in its production was researched online. Once the piece of culture was attached to people, the names of the people who took part in it were written down.

4. Individuals who received awards multiple times were only written on the list once.

3\textsuperscript{rd} \textbf{Method}: The online retailer, Good Vibrations (GV), was used for obtaining access to interviewees. The titles represented both mainstream and non-mainstream industries, and individuals or titles that were either implicitly or explicitly feminist.

1. DVD and VOD formats were selected according to top sellers.

2. A comparison was made between GV and the online retail business, Good for Her (GFH), to ensure that the selections were compatible (GFH is responsible for creating and holding the Feminist Porn Awards each year).

3. Additional comparisons were made with the online business, HotMovies For Her, as well as pornography sharing sites (e.g. YouPorn, PornHub, and even write-ups in IMDB).

\textsuperscript{9} The Feminist Porn Awards website contains links with the winners, year by year: http://www.feministpornawards.com/
In other words, these titles are not unique to the online retailer chosen here; they are ‘normal’ examples of feminist and feminist-friendly pornography (save for the pornography sharing sites).

4th Method: Friends and colleagues were asked if they knew anyone who made feminist sexual culture or sex-positive pornography. If a name was given to me, I reached out via email to follow up. And for one individual, I ‘met’ with them first via Skype before proceeding with the interview.

5th Method: At the end of each interview I asked the interviewees if they could recommend anyone. If a name was given to me, I found their contact information and followed-up via email.

Recruitment strategy Five recruitment letters were created with the cooperation of the IRB. A signed and unsigned consent form was made for individuals who explicitly identify as feminist and ones who do not. The unsigned consent form used for initial contact. If an individual wanted to be named, the option was available. The final recruitment letter was made for Craigslist and Reddit participants and it did not contain any of my personal information. An anonymous email address was created for doing recruitment online to protect my privacy (this step was mandatory per the IRB). A handle for Reddit was made exclusively for the project also to ensure my privacy. All other recruitment letters were sent via email, from my NU account.

Recruitment letters were then sent out in stages. In the first step, the letters were posted in the designated areas in Craigslist and Reddit. The second and third stages consisted of the following steps:

1. Contact information was found online via the search engine, Google. The
search engine usually led to a website or social media page such as Twitter or Instagram.

2. Recruitment letters were sent directly to the individual, to their agent/manager, or through their website or the production company they are tied to.

3. A single follow-up email was sent two to three weeks after the first letter was sent out.

4. Email interaction was organized by folders to keep track of communication. Those folders were: Waiting for reply, declines, interested but follow-up later, absolute interest, and interviews that were conducted.

**Interview Procedure**

Participants were given the option of conducting the interview in-person, via Skype or FaceTime, or over the telephone. After agreeing on the method and date/time over email, I contacted the interviewees and conducted the interview. Interviews were recorded using a Sony IC Recorder (ICD-UX70) and transcribed by hand into a Word document.

**Final sample and Data**

The final sample included 11 individuals and 13 interviews obtained through the following methods:

1. **Method**: Craigslist and Reddit: Zero participants were recruited.

2. **Methods**: Eight participants were recruited.

3. **Method**: One participant was recruited.

4. **Method**: Two participants were recruited.

The length of interviews ranged from 29 minutes and 32 seconds to 4 hours and 2 seconds. The total amount of time spent interviewing was 21 hours. The average interview time was 1.6 hours.
and the average amount of time spent with each participant was 1.9 hours. The tail-ends of the range provided are outliers.

Although it is typical to give a brief description of each interviewee, that information will not be provided here. The individuals that participated in this research are all key members of the industry, and highly visible in popular culture. As a result, for ethical reasons, descriptive information pertaining to the participants is deliberately withheld.

Data Analysis

The approach to data analysis was informed by Lofland (1971). The analysis began at the onset of interviewing, continued throughout the interview process, and continued after the data had been collected. The interview data were analyzed in several steps:

1. Files were designated for organizing and initially analyzing the data. A file was kept for each participant, and another file, containing the 'face sheet', or file that contained the demographic and other descriptive characteristics of the sample were documented and kept.

2. A file containing patterns, or reoccurring themes based on the experiences of the participants was kept, along with a file containing the norms of the convention process, so that they could be later assessed, mapped, and then analyzed.

3. Notes were take during and immediately after the interviews took place.

4. Additional notes were taken during the transcription process.

5. After the interviewing ended, the interview data, as a whole, was analyzed.

Sexual Culture

Sexual culture was also collected and used for data, which were selected for purposive and theoretical reasons. The sexual culture analyzed for this study include the following: various
types of sexually explicit culture (pornographic materials), online news articles and social media
pages, documentaries, books, and podcasts. Each of those types of sexual culture, and the
methods for collecting and analyzing them, are addressed in more detail below.

Sexually Explicit Culture: Pornographic Materials

A variety of materials were collected for analysis. These included: feminist pornography proper
(FPA awardees), feminist pornography generally (deemed feminist by online retailers and
distributors that market themselves as being 'female friendly', 'woman friendly', or 'feminist
friendly'), mainstream pornography, and pornography from tube sites.

A range of feminist pornography ‘proper’ was viewed, and the FPA sampling frame was
used as the basis for selecting feminist sexual culture. The process for collecting that data
follows:

1. Scenes by Erika Lust were sought out, as she was a top winner in the FPA and
she also receives a lot of media attention. The scenes were located on the
LustCinema channel on Porn Hub and viewed. Notes and screen shots were
taken for reference.

2. Feminist pornography websites, films, and scenes were viewed from the FPA
sampling frame. Screen shots were taken of the sites, box covers, and images
viewed. The description of the materials and images were kept as soft copies
in a folder, and notes were taken while collecting and viewing the date, which
were kept in the field notes notebook.

Feminist pornography more generally was selected from materials in the third sampling frame
used for locating producers and performers that was described above in the interview data
section. Mainstream pornography was selected from tube sites, as well as the Adult Video News
awards. The list of award categories and winners for each year that the FPA was active was
reviewed, and patterns within and across the years were documented in the field notes notebook used for this study.

**Online Media**

Articles on Feminist Pornography, feminists in pornography, and pornography in general were read and noted. Articles with viewer comments were given primacy so that reactions to the articles could be assessed. In some cases an entire thread was important, and in others, only a few of the comments stuck out. Those comments were cut and pasted into a Word document for reference and analysis, others were noted in the notebook containing the field notes used for this project. A few articles were also cross-checked via Facebook in order to capture more comments made by users. These articles were sought out deliberately via the Google search engine, as well as found through mundane practices, such as everyday use of social media platforms and news aggregating applications on my Apple devices (e.g., iPod and iPad).

**Documentaries**

Several documentaries were viewed on Netflix and they were found through a keyword search for ‘pornography’. The titles were selected based on the type of industry they were in, their location in it, and their experiences within and outside of the pornography industry. Consistent with Lofland (1971), a few documentaries were considered data sources, as they portrayed the lives of people intimately. The films followed an individual for a long period of time, a certain individual over their life course or career, or provided a comprehensive look at people in the pornography industry, were given primacy. A few of them were viewed multiple times and
transcribed, while others were viewed multiple times and notes were taken and written in the notebook containing field notes, and later used as data.

**Books**

Two books were used for data and they were selected because they represent ‘opposite’ ends of the spectrum, yet they collude. Both were obtained through Amazon.com. Each book was read and notes were taken and placed within the notebook containing field notes or typed out and saved in the EndNote Library software program.

1. Erika Lust’s book was chosen because she is a prominent figure in the Feminist Pornography industry. *Good Porn* is advice for women about porn. Her perspective as a producer in the industry, and the advice she has for women, was chosen for theoretical purposes and treated as data. On the other end of the spectrum is a female performer who worked in mainstream porn.

2. Orianna Small’s *Girlvert* was selected because she is known for being rough and raunchy, and she had a tenuous time in the mainstream industry. Additionally, it was chosen because she ‘left’ the mainstream world to go into alternative markets, including Feminist/Queer porn.

**Podcasts**

Several podcasts relating to sexual culture were listened to, and notes were made in the notebook containing field notes for this study. The podcasts were kept on my iPod or iPad for future reference.

**Ethical Concerns, Biases, and Limitations of the Study**

The ethical concerns raised by working with human subjects, the biases of the study and researcher bias, and the limitation of this study are discussed in this final section.
Ethical Concerns

Before recruitment began, permission to work with human subjects was obtained from Northeastern University’s Institutional Review Board. The following ethical concerns were addressed: informed consent, confidentiality, and coercion.

Informed Consent

The purpose of the project was stated clearly in the recruitment letters and reiterated before conducting the interview. The types of questions that would be covered were also addressed beforehand. Respondents were asked if they had any questions about the interview before it started and it was made clear that they could ask questions, or raise concerns, at any time if they were unsure about anything I was asking them, or the purpose for asking.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality was ensured to all participants who were recruited except for individuals who requested, on their own volition, that they would prefer to reveal their identity. The names of specific individuals, businesses, and organizations that participants identified during the interview were concealed. As mentioned earlier, my confidentiality, as well as others at the University, was also a concern for online recruitment. The recruitment letters only contained the email address I created for making contact with people via Craigslist or Reddit. In several of the interviews the respondents requested that certain information be kept ‘off the record’ and that was request was granted by excluding that information from the interview data used for analysis.
**Coercion**

Participants were informed that they did not have to answer anything that made them feel uncomfortable, and that we could stop at any time. The amount of time the participant allotted for the interview was confirmed before starting to ensure that they did not feel coerced into staying in the interview longer than they wanted to. The interviews often went over the time limit suggested in the recruitment letter (1.5 hours) and in those cases I reconfirmed if that was okay with them. Coercive gestures, tones, and probes were not used during the interview process.

If a potential participant responded to the recruitment letter in an ambivalent manner, I addressed any questions or concerns they had in a neutral, pragmatic tone and did not use coercive language in order to skew them toward participating. Follow-ups to non-responses were done only once, approximately 2-3 weeks after the initial invitation was sent. If a potential participant expressed interest in participating but did not reply to the follow-up email attempting to set up an interview, they were contacted once more, approximately 2 weeks later, to follow-up on their interest in participating.

**Bias**

Two main areas of bias will be discussed below. The first area covers bias related to the research project itself, which was either built into the research design, or occurred for other reasons. The second area covers researcher bias, and discusses the extent to which my perspective, professionally and personally either directly or indirectly could have impacted the outcomes of the study.
Bias of the Research

This study has bias deliberately built into it, and is also biased in ways that were unintentional. In either case, the sample itself is extremely biased, and although it can be argued that the participants are ideal for speaking about the norms of the industry, they, as a group are in no way normative. As a result, there are several biases that need to be addressed.

First, participants had to directly or indirectly espouse feminism, or were contacted through avenues that were associated with productions that were either explicitly or implicitly defined as feminist. Second, only participants that enjoyed their work, and on the level of performers, experienced pleasure through it in some form or another, and on the level of producers, fostered a work environment or production process that was conducive for performers experiencing pleasure. Furthermore, the recruitment strategy deliberately filtered out participants that systematically experienced harm within the industry, or were working in the industry due to coercion, force, or desperation. Additionally, only participants currently working in the industry were included in the study, therefore, perspectives of people who left the industry for any number of reasons, were not reflected in this study.

Third, on a related note, although participants were recruited through direct contact or their manager, it was unlikely that participants that agreed to participate were hostile to research or suspicious of the purpose of the study, as far as revealing information about them or the industry that they felt needed to be hidden, or perhaps ashamed of, or afraid to disclose. It should be noted that I approached the industry from an etic perspective and location, therefore that increased the probability, given that I had no personal accountability or relationships within the industry, that individuals who erred on the side of being suspicious of my role as a researcher, would not respond to the invitation or agree to participate. Several of the participants
did provide information that was 'off the record', but for the most part, they were trustworthy of
the idea of being interviewed, and they were not in locations personally or professionally that
they felt should, all in all, not be discussed or given attention. Additionally, most of the
participants went to college, and were comfortable talking with someone who was approaching
them from an academic setting, as it was a location that they were familiar with.

Fourth, as far as other characteristics relating to the sample are concerned besides
educational attainment, all of the participants were located in North America, and an
overwhelming majority of them lived in California. Only one participant was a teenager, the rest
were 'older' by industry standards (in their mid-twenties to 50 years old), and all had been in the
industry for at least two years or more. One had even been given a lifetime achievement award
from the AVN awards, which means that they had been in the industry at least 10 years, and they
specifically represent a small portion of the industry, particularly as a recipient of that award.
Many of the female performers, as indicated by the participants, usually remain in the industry
for 1.5 to 2 years, therefore, the sample over represented individuals that had been working in the
industry longer than the average career span. In other words, they were embedded in the
industry, and did not represent the 'typical' career span of someone who worked in the industry,
or were part of the pool of ephemeral workers. Additionally, award-winning pornographers were
deliberately chosen, and therefore they represent an even smaller population within the industry,
therefore the findings are based on a clearly a biased sample statistically, as well as superlatively.
That being said, it is biased toward professionals, therefore amateur performers, and the
perspectives of newcomers, are not included in the findings.
**Researcher Bias**

Researcher bias is an unavoidable part of any study (Haraway 1988, 1991; Harding 1991, 2004), however, I attempted to advance this project from a neutral, but evaluative outlook that is ambivalent about the relationship between pornography and social relations. I approached the research from a porn studies paradigm (Attwood 2002; Attwood and Smith 2014; Smith and Attwood 2014; Williams 1999, 2004, 2014), and do not subscribe to either a pro-pornography or anti-pornography feminist perspective within the context of the previously discussed feminist porn wars or sex wars. In other words, the research was conducted using a critical perspective in porn studies, versus an anti-pornography or pro-pornography stance (Smith and Attwood 2014). Although I critiqued feminist pornography as a form of political resistance, I support feminist praxis, contingent upon how that is defined, as well as civil liberties that allow ethical forms of pornography to be produced and consumed. I do not condone pornographic practices that are exploitative, nor agree with the stigmatization and criminalization of sex work; I support pornography as a form of sex work as long as involvement in that work is done on one's own volition, and based in personal predilection for that form of work. Finally, although I personally enjoyed the exchanges I had with all of the participants, I did my best to not let that influence the analysis in any way.

**Limitations of the Study**

This study did not capture the experiences of biologically male performers. The experiences of the participants are limited to performers and producers that are biological males and females, trans men, and trans women. Furthermore, all participants were able-bodied. Matters of ability
were not addressed, although other social categories relating to intersectionality/assemblages and narratives were addressed.
Chapter 3: Narrative of Pleasure: Sexual Narratives and Affective Management

Introduction
Navigating personal boundaries within the production process is not only part of the professional aspect of doing cultural and sex work that is tied to creating pornography, it is imperative for managing affect within the sexual encounter. This chapter looks at how that is done through the professional roles of the producers and the performers, in the context of the production process, in relation to the narratives that are used for the sexual encounter. Professional roles do not exist in isolation, they are mediated by personal concerns, and that link will be evident throughout this chapter.

Producers and performers must face two broad issues that pertain to narratives, which are storylines that pertain to corporeality, or body issues, and ones that concern power, or how role playing is performed through scenarios that are explicitly or implicitly tied to power dynamics occurring within the sexual scripts performed by the performers.

Although personal boundaries within professional roles are inexorably linked to the conventions of the production process, producing pornography does not occur in a vacuum. The intertwining personal and professional roles that producers and performers must attend to within the production process also need to navigate interpersonal and structural dimensions that exist outside of the production process. Two main areas that unavoidably influence the decisions that producers and performers make about the narratives that they will use and avoid are economic and legal constraints.
Navigating Personal Boundaries within the Production Process

The purpose of this section is to illustrate the types of personal boundaries that performers and producers have as far as producing sexual culture with particular themes found in the narratives of the sexual encounters are concerned. Personal boundaries relating to the narratives that a performer does not enjoy, or will not partake in, are closely tied to their bodies, which are attached to the broader social meanings connected to them. The following corporeal themes emerged, and each will be discussed below: size, race, age, and sex and gender. Narratives pertaining to power were also present in tacit and straightforward ways. Some of the issue brought forward in the interviews related to sexual scripts tied to power and domination, such as roles that cast the performer as a sexual ‘top’ or ‘bottom’, while others are linked to broader social narratives that entail symbolic violence (Tuchman 1978) or tactile violence, or a combination of both. The main areas discussed within those arenas were narratives that rely on degradation and mistreatment to drive the sexual arrangements, including the use of labels linked to stigmatized, deviant identities (Goffman 1986; Schur 1984), as well as narratives that applied subject matter connected to coercion and submission.

Although there was not a consensus among the participants regarding the use of sexual narratives involving topics such as degradation and mistreatment, one thing was for sure – situations that could be characterized as such within the production process, outside of the fictitious narratives, were not condoned in ‘real life’. 10 Both producers and performers managed their professional lives in a way that would ensure, or at least diminish the likelihood, that they would not be working with people, or in an environment, that they felt was degrading or

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10 ‘Real life’ is being used here to denote their non-work or ‘non-porn’ lives or interaction that occurs within the realm of their professional lives, but outside of the sexual fantasies or fictitious narratives used for the sexual encounter within a particular production.
mistreated them in a particular way, and this includes individuals who found it pleasurable to engage in sexual encounters that utilized those sorts of narratives. In other words, for producers and performers that supported the use of more politically contentious types of narratives involving disparity or disparagement, it was understood that those kinds of themes were relegated strictly to fantasy or play, and they must not resonate beyond the narrative within the sexual encounter and into other parts of the production process.

Since affective management outside of the sexual encounter – in other steps of the production process leading up to and following it – was such a prominent theme in the sample of interviewees I spoke with, those findings are also touched upon in this chapter. That will include information about managing behaviors that directly and indirectly impact whether or not pleasure would or could be achieved during the sexual encounter, which is why a caveat demonstrating their importance throughout the production process will be discussed alongside the aforementioned themes covered in this section, and they will also be alluded to in subsequent portions of this chapter.

Navigating personal boundaries around acceptable narratives for the sexual encounter includes those narratives, but is not limited to them, or the moment of the sexual encounter alone. That is why narratives must also be linked to, and contextualized within, other personal and professional boundaries that producers and performers have, as well as other patterns of behavior linked to structures within and outside of the production process. While the narratives used in the sexual encounter are the common theme of this chapter, as far as affective management is concerned, their importance cannot be understood solely within the context of the production process. Just as they are connected to broader social narratives outside of the production process that give them meaning, sexual narratives occurring within the sexual
encounter are also linked to the professional narratives of the performers and producers throughout the production process, which are also connected to actors and actions that occur outside of the production process, such as the broader norms of the industry, and the ideal and material location that in which they occur.

**Body Issues**

Corporeality is central to pornography, as it is a form of sexual culture that features human bodies, and it is usually consumed by people for corporeal consumption – most people use it to incorporate into their sex lives in some form or another. Narratives within pornography drive the sexual scripts within the production, and social and cultural narratives, combined with personal predilections, are what make pornography intelligible and sexually desirable. Pornographic ‘intelligence’ is linked to the body, which concerns materiality. Yet, the meanings of materiality occur within a material context. Below, these two issues will be explored, as affective management is a combination of both the individual, by way of the body, and society, via social structures – which are a combination of the ideal and the material. Social categories are imbued on the body, but they also occur within and through the body (Balsamo 1996; Chapkis 1986; Halberstam 1998; Hesse-Biber 2007; Lorber and Moore 2007; Martin 1992). Yet, social categories only take on meaning through (sexual) interaction. The dominant themes as far as negotiating narratives personally and professionally, as they pertain to the performer’s body, and broader body politics, will be discussed next. Negotiations around corporeality shape how affect is managed in the sexual encounter, including the decision to even take on work in the first place, through the participants’ personal and professional boundaries.
Matters of Size

Size matters in pornography (Kipnis 1999) and sex work (Campbell 1997) – and it is mattering more and more within pornography, as people of size, such as BBW content, are one of the growing niches within pornography (Tibbals 2014). But size matters as far as how their bodies will be narrated, not if the size of their bodies is prominently featured as part of the narrative. This was an issue brought up by performers that have bodies that are more voluminous, or voluptuous, that is, larger than the average mainstream performer (read: not thin). Knowing the tone of the narrative was important for deciding whether or not the performers would take a job or not, as that dictates how comfortable they will feel playing a particular role within a sexual encounter. For example, one performer brought up the matter of size while we were discussing narratives that she would not do:

I won’t do anything that I wouldn’t feel good about doing, that I, I won’t do anything that I feel like would not be a positive um, thing for, for a woman or specifically ah, a woman of size. I don’t do anything that really focuses on my weight in a bad way.

Later in our discussion, she provided an example of a role that she turned down because she felt it would portray her weight negatively:

[A] long time ago there, there was this show, like um, I don’t know, they would like take a fat person and have them lose weight, it was some reality show, I don’t know and they, they did a porn parody of that and I was supposed to be the before person and I was like, no. I’m not going to be in this movie.

However, it is important to note that she entered the industry through a cultural production that explicitly focused on her size. The difference, for her, is that it articulated her size in a way that was ‘edgy’, and through a project that was ‘artsy’. Her weight, in that context, was emphasized in a manner that was done more tastefully, and it was framed as something that should be embraced, instead of a feature, as in the example above, that was the topic of a parody, and

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furthermore, a quality that should corrected or changed. Here, she discusses her first main project making sexual culture, after I asked her how she became a performer in pornographic films:

Um, in 2000, like, at first, the, the, the pictures were like bikini sexy, then it moved to nude, then I moved to like explicit things because that was the area he had been working in back then when magazines existed. Um, he was working for adult magazines so, um, and so, and uh, then um, as our relationship proceeded we thought, ‘Hey, let, let’s put out the goal to have a book published of you know, our work together’ and um, I decided on the title, [name of the book’s title], because I thought it would be a very cool title, like grab people’s attention.

Another performer, who is also known for her size, realizes that it is an important part of her career. Yet, she is mindful of how she chooses to portray herself within productions. Although she knows that her weight will almost inevitably be spotlighted a producer or a consumer, the way that the narrative focuses on her body as something to be desired is integral to her own convictions about what she finds pleasurable, personally and socially, about her size and roles based on size.

The next performer is also a plus-sized performer, however, she approaches her professional identity differently. While the former performer embraces words like ‘fat’ in her work, the following performer does not feel comfortable using those types of words to describe her or her work, as she associates them with negative treatment that she experienced when she was young.

Some girls like the word fat and some girls are like you know, in my case that was a word that was used to describe me when I was being bullied in school so I don’t associate good feelings with that.

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11 The word ‘fat’ is part of the title.
She has also turned down work that she saw as degrading or damaging. In the following passage, she describes her personal and professional boundaries related to size, and the reasons why she approaches her work as a plus-sized model the way she does.

P: In my case as a plus size performer, ah, there are a lot of companies that ah, present plus size performers in an extremely positive and sexy light. You know, shoot us just as they would a mainstream performer, we just happen to be larger. And then are more kind of niche, fetishizing sites that take that, that take the plus size performer and fetishize her.

CM: Okay

P: So you’ll have sites dedicated to feederism and gaining, uh, you know, so there’s no real sex involved. It’s just watching her eat. Um, there are sites dedicated to not necessarily having vaginal sex or anal sex but, but ah having sex with the folds of her fat. Um, you know, like sites there are sites that are actually called like ‘fuckmyflab.com’. I don’t know if that site is even up anymore, but it was around when I first got into the business. Um, and unfortunately, I don’t have a lot of rolls, so they’d basically like have sex with the back of my knee.

[we both laugh]

CM: Oh, okay. Got it.

P: Um, but, um, you know there are sites, ah, that concentrate on, ah, the feeding aspect but also with sex. So you have sites like ‘feed her, fuck her’, which, um, are sites dedicated to girls not, not having like whipped cream and strawberries but eating like buckets of chicken and macaroni and cheese while having sex and she can’t, ah, decide between ‘do I want to eat or do I want to have sex?’, so I’m going to do both at the same time’. So, those are sites that I have turned down work for because that isn’t, that’s not on brand for me. I’ve always, and there are a lot of plus size performers that, to them fat acceptance is their platform. So, the bigger, the better, big is beautiful, um, I’m fat and I’m proud, those are like their taglines. Um, for me, I just happen to be a chubby performer. Um, I would still want to do the same kinds of scenes regardless of what size I was. So I don’t do the scenes that, um, that portray me as big because I eat. I’m just big because I happen to be.

CM: I see. Or if it’s shameful, like if it’s ah, a fat shaming site versus –

P: Ah, there’s not a lot of fat shaming sites
CM: Okay

P: Um, most of, you know, ah the plus size websites out there that do fetishize do understand that, um, the fan base likes their women big.

CM: Okay.

P: Right. So it’s not a joke site. It’s specifically for fans that like their women on the larger side. So, um, but, some of those sites kind of go a little too far with the fetishizing, you know, of food and, and sex and fat.

CM: It’s never like, like, you know, tofu or salads? This is just kind of a side note, just, you know, curious.

P: No. I would totally do it if it was like cover me in salad and salad dressing.

CM: And quinoa

P: I’d, I’d probably be okay with that. Yeah, ‘cause I actually do eat fairly healthy [laughs]. My dad’s side of the family are big Irish people from [names a city]. I’m just genetically a bigger person. I’m also taller than most girls in the industry. ‘Cause most of them are 5’2, 5’4, I’m 5’8. You know, so, but there are a lot of plus size women in the business who are performers know that that’s where they can make more money and, so they will engage in what I consider unhealthy behavior and will sit there and eat. ‘Oh you know today I’m going to do web cam shows that are gaining based, you know, so today I’m going to eat this chocolate cake all by myself and a bucket of chicken from KFC’.

CM: Okay

P: Right. ‘And then I’m gonna get on a scale and I’ll tell you that I’ve gained 3 pounds today’. And, and so their, their porn doesn’t even involve them masturbating, doesn’t involve sex, its fetishizing the, the body, as a whole.

CM: Okay

P: Um, and, yeah, so I personally, I’ve turned those scenes down.

The difference, for her, is the distinction between sexual desires based on relatively benign forms of sexual predilection based on size, versus narratives that further stigmatize people that are plus sized. Ultimately, she prefers that she be cast like any other mainstream performer. Another distinction is the boundary between predilection and perversion – the former connotes an
aesthetic preference or appreciation, while the latter entails the fetishization or depersonalization of a particular body type, or types of people. While it is impossible for her to control how people will ultimately look at her when viewing productions that she is a part of, she can at least choose not to partake in roles that either explicitly or implicitly trivialize her and her size, specifically, or more generally, ‘people of size’. What these performers find pleasurable are narratives that normalize, rather than further stigmatize, depersonalize, and dehumanize size in sexual culture, even though they both take a different approach to how their size is articulated. These very issues continue on in the next theme anchored to corporeality – narratives involving race.

**Making Race Racy: Race Play and Racial Narratives**

Narratives involving race, through race play or roles based on the performer’s race, were linked to the personal boundaries of participants, as it was a concern that was brought forward by individuals across variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds. As previously illustrated, narratives around race are profoundly political: they are how racist sentiments are conveyed through sexual culture. One white participant, who was both a performer and a producer, discussed the lines she was and was not willing to cross as far as incorporating race play into her productions, or engage in as a performer. For her, racial role play was something that she did not find pleasure in personally, and it was something that she felt was politically dubious engaging with professionally. Although she absolutely would not produce pornography with those narratives, and she would not present them in her intimate sexual relationships on her own volition, she stated that she would participate in them, if that was something that one of her sexual partners desired in a private sexual encounter. In the following passage, she acknowledges the various sexual boundaries connected to her personal and professional spheres, and in which of those
contexts she would find racial narratives pleasurable, despite not finding them professionally or personally desirable:

P: Um, I’m not gonna do hardcore race play stuff.

CM: Okay.

P: ‘Take your nigger bitch’ [said in a gruff, masculine manner with a Southern-like accent], like, it’s just, if a girl was into that off camera, I don’t care, man. Whatever floats your fucking boat, I’ll pretty much do. But on camera, that’s taking that on set, being like this thing that these two people are doing. Like, the interface in the graaaaaand unfairness of the world, and separating it in two, like from externality. Where like, I, I don’t know what that says about me now. You know, so I’m not comfortable with that, like being provided, outside that, the audience of one. If some girl’s into that, I’ll do it. I’ll pretty much do whatever. But I’m not into that. And I’m not into people thinking that about me.

Trepidation over racial narratives can take on other forms as well, and these vary not only by the race of the performer, but the time-order of ambivalence about, or reluctance toward, participating in ones that feature culturally loaded dimensions of power.

One example of this comes from a bi-racial performer with dark skin who stated that she will not engage in racial narratives. For her, however, race and sexual role play is something that she does not find pleasurable or desirable because she had an experience performing in a production that relied on such a narrative. It was not an issue, like in the case above, that was absolutely something to be avoided professionally, as work in those areas had not been presented to her until later in her career. When she agreed to the role she did not anticipate having a problem with performing it, however, while working on the production she found it to be awkward, and bit upsetting. Although she finished the project, it was while undertaking it that she knew that she would never work within a narrative like that again.
Her experience is similar to the women above who often had to negotiate not if their size would be central to the narrative, but how that characteristic would be articulated through sexual narratives. Many of the productions she has been involved in have explicitly noted her skin color, but that was done so by her, or the producer, in ways that did not inflect broader social narratives tied to oppression and race, and more particularly, ones where racial and gender inequality intertwine, and collude through Black women’s bodies.

‘Acting’ Your Age and Life ‘Stages’

Negotiating narrative boundaries around age is not simply about numbers. These types of narratives are not only tied to a performer’s body, they are tied to cultural meanings attached to the life course. As a result, narratives that emphasize a performer’s age typically position them in broader social roles and settings that are associated with a given life stage, and more particularly, as that particular stage is normatively associated with a particular gendered institution (Acker 1992; Connell 1987, 2002; Lorber 1994). Although ‘teen’ is one of the most popular search terms in the U.S. (Tibbals 2014), which makes age, on a categorical level, something that can be isolated while looking for pornography, once it is located, that number comes to life through narratives that situate a teenager socially, through the sexual encounter.

One of the more sought after scenarios, for both younger and older performers, are narratives based in the family. Familial roles feature storylines that borderline on the taboo, or cross that line altogether. The use of family-based sexual concepts used to reside on the fringes of the industry, but over the years they increasingly became more desirable. They are now so common that they went from being produced sporadically, to becoming a formally recognized, full fledged genre and niche market. Given this trend, it makes sense that one of themes that
emerged concerning narratives, either directly or indirectly during the interviews, was age, and furthermore, those age-based scripts were associated with the institution of family.

Since these two categories are so often intertwined, and familial storylines are culturally sensitive topics, it is not surprising that these sorts of narratives were something that producers and performers had experiences negotiating. While the prior boundaries had varying degrees of taken-for-grantedness, both age and family have a certain ubiquity to them that virtually everyone must address, or can relate to, in one form or another. For example, for participants that were slender, narratives around body size were not brought up, but everyone has an age, whether or not they look their age or ‘act their age’.

As a social category, age is something that everyone in pornography, and outside out if, must grapple with. Similarly, as far as family status is concerned, most people grew up in a family setting. Because most performers cannot detach themselves from the institution of family (unlike size, which may not even something a slender person even takes into consideration) it is easier to imagine in ‘reality’, or their personal lives. That familiarity can also make it more difficult to perform in fantasy, or their professional lives. In short, depending on a performer’s family status in their personal life, and their attachment to it, sometimes these narratives are too real, or can have real life consequences for them. As a result, that can influence their ability to experience pleasure from these types of narratives, even though they are staged.

Take, for example, an experience a producer had with a performer he worked with. He produces titles involving familial roles, among others. One role, for older women, is that of the MILF, or Mom I would Like To Fuck. These narratives involve older women, playing the role of a mom, that are cast with younger men. Since she was an actual mother, and one who had a son around the same age as the men that she would be performing a MILF narrative with, she
found it difficult to separate her personal role from the professional role. She could not surface act or deep act in order to manage the part, as she simply could not fathom putting her mind into it at all.

P: We do a lot of MILFS, we do have some 40 year olds. Ah, there was one, um lady that ah, had, I think, she had a 19 year old, it was a couple years ago, he is probably 21 now. But she wouldn’t, do any scenes with younger guys because she said it was just too, it messed up her mind, she just kept thinking of her, her son or something.

CM: Hit too close to home?

P: Right, right.

This producer in particular, who will be discussed in more detail further in the chapter, does not even do age/family-based narratives that involve incest, at least in terms of a consanguineal family, instead, these narratives involve step-mothers that the son did not live with at any time, or they involved the fictive son’s friends. Even so, despite those differences, these narratives still ‘hit too close to home’ for her.

The next performer, at the time of the interview, was really a teen who was 19 years old. She does perform in these roles, although she never anticipated that she would be able to, as she realizes that they are stigmatized, and they are something that she would never do in real life. As a consequence, performing in them added to an already existing strained relationship with her father, due to the familial story line. And although they were fictive scenarios, her father ended up distancing himself from her. It was him, ultimately, that could not manage his emotions and affect in order to ultimately separate her professional life from her personal life.

CM: [N]ow in terms of like narratives, um, are there any that you prefer, and are there any that you won’t do? Or scenarios or plot lines? I don’t know exactly how you would call them, but like what, what’s ‘your deal’ and what are the things that you’re like, ‘mmmm, no deal’?
P: See, I thought of that at the beginning. Like, with ah, I’ve done a couple, um, like, ah, [pauses, clears throat], daughter-father kind of scenarios. And um, like right now, my father hasn’t really been in my life the last year because of what I’m doing. He wasn’t really into the sex life that I’ve had, since I was, you know, 15 years old, he knew I was sexually active. He was never okay with it, but, I, just, I don’t know, I never thought I’d be okay with having scenarios with like, you know, my daddy trying to touch me and my daddy this and my daddy that, you know, but. I don’t know, I just, I was able to. And it’s hard for other people. (...) Um, but otherwise that’s like the only thing I really, put myself in like, that I don’t want to do.

Additionally, as far as age is concerned outside of her professional life, this theme was indirectly brought up while we were discussing how she identifies herself professionally, and the ways that she goes about impression management when she is interacting with people outside of the industry. She actively distances herself from sexual advances with older men, as it is something that she does not find that desirable.

CM: [H]ow do you identify, you know, what it is that you do? You know, actor, performer, model?

P: I basically, I go about, who I should tell that to, you know. If it’s, if its, uh, an older, let’s say it’s a senior, ah, male, who’s 70 years old, you know, and he’s, he’s sitting on the train, or something, which is something I like to do when I travel, I’ll sit on the train and, and some people will strike up a conversation. And um, a guy will be like, what do you, what do you do [giggles]? And, and I’m just. This is an older man, I don’t know if I really want him over here creeping at me, pervin’, or is he going to be really, really offended with what I do? So, I ended up just telling him um, I was a model.

In these cases, unlike other narratives or sex acts that they may do in their personal lives versus their professional ones, it is almost a given that these are sexual performances that performers would strictly do in their professional life in order to find them pleasurable. This is the opposite situation, for example, that the white performer was willing to do as far as race play was concerned. The taboo could only be hidden, not visible, whereas roles involving, say, incest, are only things that could occur in the public sphere and not the private one.
Sex, Gender ‘Play’, and Gay-for-Pay

Sex, gender, and sexual identity are undoubtedly the social categories that are central to pornography (Attwood 2009; Barron and Kimmel 2000; Cornell 2000; Cossman 2003, 2007; Cusak and Waranius 2012; Dines 1998, 2006; Escoffier 2003; Garlick 2010; McNair 2010, 2012; Shimizu 2006, 2010, Taormino et al. 2013). Boundaries around these three issues are unavoidable for producers and performers to consider, as they are inexorably linked to sexual culture, as well as the broader ideal and material structures of social life that sexual culture is made. They also impact how much a performer gets paid, so they are unavoidable on a pragmatic level as well. How the performers do gender (West and Zimmerman 1987; Zimmerman and West 2009) implicitly shapes the roles that they will be hired for, the ways that they approach their own sexual and gender identities personally and professionally, and, in turn, that impacts how they will negotiate the gender and sexual identities of other performers. The degree to which these things matter in their personal and professional lives impacts how well they can perform in narratives that more or less sync up between those two spheres. This theme alone could warrant an entire chapter, however, a few examples of the ways that sex, gender, and sexual identity shape affective management directly or indirectly through the narrative will be offered in order to illustrate the ways that they play out in the production process for the performers and producers.

The first example shows how a performer’s body, through gender display and gender marking behaviors (Goffman 1979), as performances of gender (Butler 2011; Garber 1997; Goffman 1977; West and Zimmerman 1987), lend themselves to the types of roles that producers will contact her to perform in. Without them, her body fits within mainstream norms of a ‘girl’ performer, but she prefers to work with women, so she will not take on boy/girl narratives as the
girl. These relate not only to the implicitly gendered sexual roles that she plays, but also the way that playing a ‘boy’ in the girl/girl sexual arrangements are often linked to sexual narratives that put her in broader social roles, such as the workplace, that are associated with men and masculinity in order for the sexual narrative to be socially legible. This point was brought up while we were discussing how she got work in the industry as a performer.

CM: Okay, so people just contact you directly.

P: I’m not the girl that like, you’re gonna put my pictures up next to like, the other models. It would be like, ‘oh, this one!’, like, I am not that. I’m the girl that you call when I need a mechanic for this movie.

[We both laugh]

CM: Okay, so –

P: Imitated, but never equaled [said very boisterously and theatrically]! Porn Valley’s gold star lesbian and plays all the boy roles in girl/girl porn! And not that much, it’s just part of it. Like, I’m not, in real life, super butch. I have like, big tits and a big ol’ ass, and like, so they never see me without guy underwear. But that’s why I can do it. ‘Cause I’m a safe butch for like, mainstream consumption. [Laughs]

Another performer explains that she will not do girl/girl roles at work because she does not have sex with women in her personal life. Although it is the industry norm, at least within the mainstream to start out in girl/girl roles and work your way up to boy/girl roles, she explains why she chose to skip that step, or work outside the teleological norm of the industry. She is not prejudiced against women who choose to work in girl/girl scenes, whether they are doing that as a personal or professional choice, but since she deviated from the typical process by starting with boy/girl, it is something that she felt the need to bring up, as well as justify. She would not be able to find scenes with women pleasurable, despite standard procedures, therefore she chose to only work within the gender arrangements that she engages in outside of work.
Another performer, who is bisexual in her personal life, and enjoys having sex with both women, finds that working with some women who only do girl/girl roles because they feel they have to not as fun as those who actually like having sex with women outside of work. Because some of these women are not into it, they are not as engaged as performers that do enjoy having sex with women, therefore the scenes can be, or at least start out, awkwardly. This shows how strictly playing a part, or doing it superficially, can dampen the mood for other performers, thereby impacting the ability of others to find pleasure in the narrative or scenario.

Like okay, with girls it’s (…) awkward because sometimes they’re really not actually into girls and they’re just sitting there ‘cause, you know, they have to be there or something. I don’t know, whatever their, their deal is. Some girls are just gay for pay. That’s what I mean they have to be there, they’re just gay for pay [laughs].

A final example will illustrate some of the tensions that arise from matters concerning gender identity and sexual identity, and how they factor into not only affective management through the bifurcation between personal and professional roles, but also how larger political matters around identity politics have been woven into the industry, and partly as a result of feminist pornography burgeoning and making these concerns more visible in the industry. While this is a lengthy passage, it is important to show the nuances between the personal and the political, the professional and the political, as well as the relationship between personal and professional role play. For this performer and producer, sexual identity does not matter, as long as you do a good job while doing a scene with her, yet the sex of the performer does matter.

Nonetheless, she maintains strict continuity between her own personal and professional predilections as far as sex and gender are concerned. She would not able to perform in, or get pleasure from, sexual encounters that involve males, as in chromosomal/biological sex, or women that identified as men, as in their gender identity and how they perform gender,
regardless of their sex. The exception to this, for her, is role play based on heteronormative gendered sex scripts. That is, if one of her partners, a biological female who was a normatively gendered woman, wanted to play the role of a man, she would find pleasure in that, but not if her female partner really identified as a man, or performed gender in ‘real life’ as a man. In other words, that sort of gender performance, beyond role play in an intimate sexual scenario, would be unacceptable to her otherwise, whether that entailed a personal or professional encounter. For her, it is such a taboo notion to be with a man, it is an idea that is completely perverted, and because of that, it would be something pleasurable to her, in fantasy, and on occasion. Overall, biological sex trumped sexual identity, and gendered performance was integral to both of them in both her personal and professional life, save for the occasional role-playing scenario that was previously mentioned.

CM: You know, like where do you get your talent or how do you hire talent or you know just, do they have to identify as lesbian, you know, all these things

P: Ok, so, I absolutely detest the word identify [said in a somewhat agitated manner].

CM: Ok.

P: Um, I don’t care [said in a ‘put off’ way].

CM: O.k.

P: There are, see, I don’t, I don’t want to fuck people who say that they’re men because, like, look, if you want to be a man I can’t, I can’t give you that experience. Like, if you’re a woman, and you want to be the man in bed with me, like, I can do that, I’m kinda into it because it’s so dirty. Like, it’s gross, and I wouldn’t want to do that and it’s sooo dirty. Um, but like if you say you are a man then you are just ruining it. Just ruin it. What am I supposed to do with that? You fucked it up. Like, so in that sense, like, certainly there are a number of ways a person can see themselves that are a part of you, but I despise identity politics. With a, a passion that rivals few things in my life because I think it is soooo incredibly incorrect in the way we understand the world. (…) It took me a long time to figure out, like, how to be real with people and how to be a person.
And like, how to exist in the world. And one of the things that I had to learn, you know, in order to be a good person is, it’s not about you. [Says her name]. It’s not about you, nobody cares. And identity politics are like, just like, profound narcissism, because it isn’t about you. No one cares about your goddamned fucking identity string, girl, you’re a cog in the goddamned machine. And you’re not, you’re not even separated from the world, whether you think you are, because we’re all just molecules and you are choosing to draw the borders, like harder, around a bunch of crap and live your life that way. And I hate it. So, I don’t give a fuck what people identify as, I care if they’re a female performer. Or they do a good scene on my set. And that they like the work and that they can do a good scene. I don’t care if you go home to men, women, or anything in between. I care if you do a good job.

CM: Got it. Okay. Fair enough.

P: Um. Yeah. [Said calmly, in contrast to the animated delivery above. Pauses, then laughs]

Her experiences also reveal that even though essentialism is a task that many feminists set out to dismantle on a political level, in intimate spheres, not all feminists can, or want to, adopt a social constructionist approach to gender. To some, there are affective components to biological sex that cannot be simply circumvented through approaches to gender that give primacy to the social construction – and fluidity – of gender. How another person feels, as far as intimate encounters are concerned, is not something that can be managed. While gender may be something that is accomplished on an interactive level through material culture and bodily gestures, pleasurable sexual experiences for some individuals can only be accomplished intra-actively on a physiological level, that is, affect for her is something that cannot be managed on the surface of the body, it is something that goes within the body, and can only be experienced between two people based on the biological composition within them in terms of their sex, even if gender play is periodically introduced into her personal sex life as a perverse form of role play.
Power Plays

Narratives are important because they give the sexual encounter social meaning, and in turn, they direct the bodies, according to the social categories above, through the sexual scripts that are performed in the sexual encounter. Cultural meaning is not merely inscribed on the body, or performed through the body on the level of materiality, it is made through the interpersonal dynamics that link that interaction to the material reality outside of the sexual encounter. What makes the narrative essential to pornography is that it bridges materiality and the material through affect via sexual interaction, and what makes that both personal and political is power.

According to Williams (1999), paying attention to the narratives within pornography is imperative because narratives are how power is organized within the sexual performance. Narratives are what drive the center of power, and it is that power that gives sexual scripts, and sexual culture more generally, meaning. Without them, the behavior that occurs in the sexual encounter is meaningless, or at least has no political meaning. In this section, themes relating to power dynamics within the narrative will be addressed, as they provide the context that gives power to the narrative itself empirically. Narratives are not something that should just be understood symbolically, but really, that is, in terms of materiality, in concrete reality, for managing affect for or by the performers.

Tops vs. Bottoms

Regardless of gender and sexual identity, many sexual narratives are not egalitarian, that is, they often rely on one person playing the role of the dominant partner and the other playing the role of the submissive one, or sexual tops or bottoms, respectively. As far as affective management is concerned, this is not something that a performer always negotiates in terms of their own sexual,
social, and political boundaries, but the limits of corporeality. Several participants discussed narratives along the lines of tops and bottoms as ones that they more or less enjoy not because they could not get their minds into the sexual role play *prima facie*, but simply because they could not get their bodies into it. The physical exertion distracted them from becoming engrossed in the sexual encounter, as being a top can be exhausting. Many of the performers stated that they tried those roles, and would not do them in the future, because they were too physically taxing. Consequently, they had difficulty deriving sexual pleasure during those performances because of that.

The performers that are primarily hired as tops are aware of the physical component to them, in addition to the gendered meanings associated with those roles during the sexual encounter. This theme shows how performers must take the power card into consideration when offered, or seeking out work, as a matter of physical management, as sexuality is not simply a matter of mental and social narratives.

P: I don’t know if you’ve seen my work but like, those strap-on scenes are their own kind of a workout.

CM: Yeah. Oh, yeah, I bet. [We both start laughing] I bet. Just even the quads alone, uh, yeah.

P: Oh, and, like, and I could just do this shit, drop this girl’s leg, [mimics various sex moves] it’s, it’s so funny, it’s like I’m basically like, I’m basically like a male porn star.

CM: Alright, yeah. So the onus is on you to, uh, perform?

P: Yeah, it’s my job. I joke about it. Somebody said this to me, like, to be mean to me, I was on, like, some, girly, girly, girl-girl set, uh, for [names a prominent mainstream production company] ah, and the second camera guy saw me there and he said to the other guy, I can hear him but they were talking about me and not to me. He’s like, ‘Why is she here, she’s male talent!’ [mimicking a male/masculine voice with a jovial tone]. And this, this was a girl-girl scene. [Pause] And I loved it. I was like, ‘yeah!’ [Puffs up her chest/body].
The types of sexual activities that the performers will and will not do in their professional and personal lives can simply a matter of personal choices related to corporeality that have nothing to do with personal convictions or private versus more public sexual roles or behavior. Decisions are sometimes made around something as simple as food choices, and not wanting to change their habits. For example, when discussing the types of sexual activities that she would and would not perform on the set, one performer said that she would not do scenes requiring anal sex because she liked coffee too much. She had nothing against anal sex; she was just unwilling to give up coffee in the morning in order to perform those behaviors for work.

The preparation of the body for sexual encounters will be discussed in more detail later, as that is a major way that affect is managed for themselves, and on behalf of the other performers, in addition to adhering to cultural norms as far as acceptability. Preparatory work also points to the importance of managing information properly in the hiring process, as knowing the types of sex that a performer is getting into well before they engage in the sexual encounter, is imperative for the both performers and the production.

**Degradation and Mistreatment**

What goes on during the sexual encounter as far as taking on roles that involve degradation and mistreatment, must be contrasted with the ways in which these narratives are different from real life interactions, including the other interactions that occur on the set or in other professional contexts. Knowing their narrative boundaries during the sexual interaction, versus how they are
treated by companies on the set or while not doing the actual shoot, is imperative for the performers. This contrasts with their interactions with people outside of the industry, such as people back home or individuals they interact with in everyday life.

The next participant illustrates all of these themes, and her experiences will be used as a springboard to delve into those themes here, as well as to point to important issues relating to degradation and mistreatment that will be discussed in greater detail beyond this section. Even though she enjoys the use of stigmatized labels, such as ‘whore’ and ‘slut’ (Schur 1984) during the sexual encounter, she finds them hurtful and offensive when they are directed at her outside of the sexual encounter. Additionally, while she derives pleasure from ‘mistreatment’ during the sexual encounter, as part of the sexual scripts and narratives that she performs with other performers, she disdains, and actively avoids, being mistreated by people within the industry outside of that context.

For her, and other performers that like narratives that involve degradation or mistreatment, affective management not only entails a bifurcation between personal and professional life, it also includes bifurcating the professional as well. In other words, for a performer to be happy with those things, or genuinely enjoy them during the sexual encounter, interactions that might be categorized similarly in other parts of the professional role must be avoided. Knowing that the production company, and those that work within it, recognize that those types of behaviors occur strictly within sexual role play, and not beyond that, is important. In short, although some of these themes might be represented on the screen in the final product, granted that is a narrative a performer enjoys, their enjoyment of them is a result of them being limited to the sexual encounter alone.
Like, when it comes to bondage and being tied up and, and kind of like, I don’t know, mistreated, I don’t have a problem with that. You know, if, if, there’s guys in there calling me ah, it, its, different from when a classmates calling you a whore or whatever. But, for me, being tied up and, and, being sexually aroused, being, oh you dirty little whore, it’s totally different. I don’t know, for me, you know. So I, I can handle that. But anything beyond that, like actually degrading me and like, basically, you know, treating me as if I was, like being raped and abused, that kind of thing, I don’t like that. That’s the kind of thing I would say no to.

Here, she discusses the difference between being called stigmatized names in the context of a sexual encounter versus having them hurled at her in everyday life. It was that kind of treatment that led her to make the decision to drop out of high school and move to California in order to pursue pornography full time.

I, I knew what it was, I knew what I was putting myself into, (...) and I did my first scene and I loved it. So I was here for about two weeks and then I went home, and then I was like mom, [she pauses, and we both laugh] I ah, I want to stay in porn, I’m gonna drop out of school. Um, because after about two weeks of me being home a lot of classmates made a really big deal about it because they, they figured out what I had done. So, first they, you know, being a more conservative state, they um, kinda made a big deal about the nudity and the fact that I was making money for it so they called me whore and slut and, basically just names I just didn’t want to involve myself around for the next year. So instead of being, basically, you know, put off a negative way about it, I would go and join the industry and be around people who were positive about it and obviously embraced it.

Although that kind of mistreatment, in the context of narrative and sexual play is something that she enjoys, that is not something she had to deal with outside of the sexual encounters within the industry. In fact, contrasting her experiences at home with the way that she was treated on the set, and by people in the industry, was also another factor that contributed to her feeling ‘at home’ in the industry. She asserted that she had always been a sexual person, and interested in sex. For her, because it was something that was not stigmatized, and obviously accepted in the pornography industry, that was another reason why she felt better about who she was when she
was working in the production of pornography versus how she felt about herself in the town
where she grew up.

I, I guess, I, went through high school feeling like I was, I guess not really like
ugly per se, but like, I had some weight on me, I just wasn’t feeling like all that
about myself. But, when I get into the industry, aww man, so did that change! I
felt like, like a goddess. Like people treat me with so much love and respect, its,
awww, it’s just amazing. They, I go up on set and I’m always positive, like,
always a happy person, like, just always. So they see that when I walk through
the door and like always radiant to them.

This passage also demonstrates the importance between emotion work that occurs in the sexual
encounter and emotion labor that occurs behind the scenes. What goes on during the sexual
encounter, as part of paid labor matters, but also, the way that their interactions beyond the
sexual encounter factors into how well they manage their emotions, including physical arousal,
during that time. This is a prominent theme that emerged while talking with the participants.
The way that producers and performer acted was just as important, if not more so, than the ways
they acted while the sexual encounter was taking place. Another theme that is important are the
geo-social implications of doing this work, not just for properly managing their own affect, as in
the situation above as far as stigma was concerned in her home state versus the state of
California where sexual culture and sex work is normalized.

Location is also a geographical matter that is tied to ethics, as several performers
explicitly mentioned or indirectly indicated that the likelihood that a company would engage in
more or less ethical behaviors that are tied to ‘industry standards’, which were companies that
are located near the nexus of the industry, which is in Los Angeles and its surrounding areas (at
least for performers located in the U.S.). This theme occurred often, and while we were
discussing various matters concerning the boundaries that producers and performers had within
the industry and outside of it. Part of this, while not exclusively tied to location, is the
occurrence of other forms of sex work that occur outside of pornographic sex work, and this will be discussed in more detail at another time. It is important to note for now that the concept of ‘privates’ that she brings up below is tied to other sex work economies, and that is another matter that is tied to boundary work relating to affect management.

CM: [A]re there any kinds of people or studios you won’t work with?

P: I’ve recently been through a lot with, um, like, kinda an ex-boyfriend of mine, so I would say, I wouldn’t work for, ‘cause he was, [pause] in the business. (...) And he’s just really, his company has been iffy, like, he pays his girls under the amount that he should. He makes them drive all the way out there to Orange County, um, and then, you know, kinda treats them, with, you know, disrespect, and makes them sit around for an hour or two and, uh, just privates and stuff. It’s just, the comp-, some companies are, [pause] they start from like a basement because some old, pervy man that wants to have sex with girls or something, you know.

CM: Okay.

P: So, he was just like that. You know, he, every girl that comes up in there, I’ve heard nothing but no good stories.

Even other producers do not like to work with these performers, which will be discussed later as well. Finally, this one last passage by this performer will be used to highlight how mistreatment and degradation, while something that may be done in fantasy, is something that many performers avoid as sex workers in the industry overall. One of those strategies is something that is common in all sorts of work, which is discussing by word of mouth, which companies are more or less likely to degrade or mistreat a performer if they work for them. At another point she discusses that company again, in the context of companies that she does like to work for.

Every company in the, like that has every shot me, like any big company like [says the name of a major company, says the name of another major company] all those companies have been amazing to me. They’re great. But this one company, is not really big, but I don’t know, you know, it’s just, that’s the one studio I will never work for again. Any girl that comes up to me, asks, me, ‘oh, is this studio good?’ I will say no [laughs]! That’s my point [laughs].
But many performers will not engage in narratives that involve degradation or mistreatment, while they acknowledge, and do not disrespect performers that do that. For many, what they take to task is when that occurs interpersonally or systemically, outside of sexual role play. For example, the next performer approves of other women being involved in narratives involving disparity or disparagement, however, she personally does not find them pleasurable.

Narrative, I won’t do anything that is um, you know, um, that doesn’t show women in the most positive light. Like I won’t be, I mean I respect a women’s you know, autonomy to be like chained and, and, and, um, you know, collared and chained and all fours and have and be on the cover of movies saying, dog, slut, whatever, you know that’s, if she feels empowered by that, great.

This is the case for many participants and being mistreated or degraded is avoided in two ways. The first, is not working with certain individuals or companies that exhibit those behaviors, regardless of whether or not those themes occur in the sexual narratives or not. The second is to work within their primary relationships, that is, through friends and people they associate with in everyday life, or not in the context of pornography or the professional sphere. That way, they are working with people that they know respect them and will treat them well, regardless of whether or not they partake in these sorts of narratives. It is useful to illustrate the importance of being treated well outside of the sexual encounter for managing affect during it, and how those two strategies are used by performers as a form of affective management that occurs on their own volition, that is, outside of the bureaucratized, more formalized set of interactions that occur within the production process, through actions that they choose to take. Those matters will be briefly touched upon in the upcoming section.

It should be noted, before delving into those themes, that virtually all primary and intimate relationships also have their own set of problems, which can resonate into the
professional sphere, or the sexual encounter. It would be erroneous to romanticize the personal-professional relationships, and frame conflict as potentially only occurring within the professional realm or through relationships that strictly occur at work and do not go beyond that. Furthermore, one participant brought up an excellent point about the management of affect during the sexual encounter – non-work sex can sometimes be awkward. The difference is that people are not there to see those moments and they are not being recorded. Regardless of how careful one is in their personal and professional lives, bad sex happens. For pornography performers, that experience is not only on display for others to see, it can be immortalized, if left unedited, for others to see beyond the set in the final product. In other words, sometimes performers simply have a bad day, and seeing someone have a bad scene is limited to that, and goes no deeper than that, although that cannot be determined by the viewer.

**Disparity and Disparagement Beyond Sexual Narratives**

All of the participants in one form or another have had bad experiences at work, and this is something that practically every person that has worked has had to deal with, whether that is in the context of sex work or making sexual culture, or any other field. As far as avoiding poor workplace conditions is concerned in the pornography industry, several patterns emerged. Having bad experiences with particular people or production companies, and either leaving, or never working with them again, is the first one that will be illustrated here.

So, I have never, like, called a shoot, as a performer. But there have been like, ‘oh, I can’t keep doing this’ (accent) uh, with the exception that I showed up to a [names a large, well known production company] set, they booked me for a girl/girl scene and not told me that my girl/girl scene was part of a wider orgy. With, there were boys. And not only were there boys, they were untested male talent and I was like, you guys are gonna kill fee me and I’m gonna leave.
In this case, lack of information regarding the narrative was an important omission, as that was a type of narrative that this particular performer was unwilling to work with. They offered her the job telling her the details of the sexual partner she would be working with, but they did not tell her the context in which that would be occurring. Furthermore, that company was engaging in unethical practices, and not abiding by industry standards of testing the performers before putting them on set. Since this performer had been in the industry for a while, she knew that was an unacceptable practice and furthermore, she knew her rights as a performer to get a ‘kill fee’, which is the practice of giving a performer some money in the event that the a production is canceled, or is canceled by the performer in the event that they were offered the job under pretenses that are wrong or unfair. That fee, while it does compensate performers for showing up and not getting work, it is a negligible amount of money compared to what they would have earned had the scene worked out.

Another type of situation is when there is a bad feeling on the set, which impacts how well the performer can do their job, and many cannot engage in a pleasurable sexual encounter when the set feels negative, that is, there is a chilly climate that they may have to work with in some form or another, so it is something they avoid when considering future work with those people or a particular production company.

CM: And when you say like, there’s a bad vibe, do you mean negativity? Smarmy people?

P: Oh, yeah, like, if there’s a bad vibe on set, there’s a bad vibe on set. You know, and I’ve had a lot of scenes where there’s a bad vibe and I’ve just gotten through it but I’m not gonna hit those people up for work again.

CM: I see. And you just kinda separate yourself, do that physical action?

P: I just do my fucking job.
CM: Alright, got it. And then you’re out of there.

P: I’m out.

CM: Got it.

In some cases a performer knows that they might not be working within the industry proper, and therefore the industry standards may or may not be formally or informally recognized. Even so, performers expect to be treated fairly, and with decency.

One performer provides an example of having a bad experience making sexual culture in one of these contexts. This passage not only shows how performers manage harm avoidance within this first pattern, but it also illustrates the types of other work that performers do when there is not enough work in the formal industry to go around. Because of broader structural shifts in the economy, and the industry itself, some performers need to compensate their income within the formal industry with other type of work that exists alongside or outside of it. These are not inherently bad situations to work in, but they can have a larger margin of error due to this type work occurring in the informal economy versus the formal one, where a performer is working with non-professionals and professionals, respectively. Again, the geo-social theme of location is also at work here.

P: I had a situation with this sketchy, sketchy guy who like wanted me and my friend, he like had us drive all the way up to Riverside supposedly for us to do a scene and then he wanted us to audition, like, before the cameras were there and we were like, no. So we left. But that, that wasn’t a real like, that doesn’t count as porn. That’s like the side bullshit that we all do because there’s not enough real porn to go around so we’ll shoot for like, random guys, in their hotel rooms or whatever.

CM: Like a creep factor more than –

P: Yeah, there’s a creep sometimes. What we call ‘guys with cameras’, they’re like amateurs pornographers or whatever and this is like their personal spank bank. Some of the best days I’ve ever had have been for just guys who were just
like paying me way too much money to do shit ‘cause they want to watch it for themselves, like, that’s fine. I have nothing against guys with cameras but sometimes that can be where the creep factor can come in, because they’re not professionals. They aren’t making a product for anyone but themselves so it changes the dynamic.

Of course, avoiding them in the first place is another strategy, as indicated in the prior section. Performers who might be new to the industry, or are unfamiliar with the reputation of a particular performer or production company might ask other performers about their experiences with them. But producers who also care about the quality of the interaction on set also do this, as it behooves them to work with individuals who will not only get along with the other performers, but also do good work in the sexual encounter proper.

This is partly a mechanism of affective management, as mistreatment of the performers by other performers, whether that is in the form of apathy or direct hostility, impacts how well other performers can do their job. This is also an economic matter, as working with difficult people can either delay or prolong the shoot, or threaten it altogether, which is costly not only for the producer, but other performers, say if the shoot is canceled or is likely to infringe on other shoots they may have scheduled for the day. Furthermore, for those that are concerned about what the final product looks like, that is, whether or not it appears as if the performers are enjoying themselves during the sexual encounter, mismanagement of affect at the level of hiring is likely to resonate into the sexual encounter and result in a bad product. Those with bad attitudes are cooled out of the profession (Goffman 1961) and not hired back. If enough people do this, and talk about it, they will be ostracized by the industry overall. One producer provides an example of the types of behaviors he avoids in performers, as they threaten the shoot in one or more ways.
CM: Um, what kinds of things can go wrong, if you will?

P: Um, performers disappearing, not showing up on the set. Um, that’s, it doesn’t happen that much because I will, if someone just doesn’t show up I probably will never use them again. Um, usually the, usually if it’s something that comes up, like they’re sick, I usually get advance notice and I find a replacement. We have found replacements like first thing in the morning because someone was sick or something or other. (…) I tend, I tend not to cast people who have big egos. And so, and uh, and people who don’t have a good attitude or, or obviously just there for the money and want to leave as fast as they can. If I hire ‘em then I don’t usually hire them back. So, it’s usually what I avoid.

Working with friends, or in primary relationships, is the second pattern of behaviors that performers or producers do in order to avoid being mistreated on the job. While this is a lengthy passage, it highlights this pattern well, as it not only shows one method of maintaining a good work environment within the industry, it reveals them in relation to industry norms as far as hiring is concerned, and the importance of embeddedness in the professional community in the context of the structural norms of the production process.

The other implicit issue this passage highlights is the importance of obtaining as much information about the shoot if you are working with someone you have not worked with before, as misinformation, or lack of information is where performers are put in situations that they do not want to be in, whether that means going along with the shoot despite that, or leaving and getting a kill fee, as in the case above. Doing things you are not comfortable with doing is a primary reason why performances do not go well, or performers are unable to become engrossed in the sexual encounter. That is, find it pleasurable versus downright uncomfortable.

So, usually I’ll just get an email or a text, if it’s a text it’s from a director I’ve worked with before. But they’ll contact me in some way and say, ‘hey, are you, are you available to shoot in a week with, ah’, you know, it’ll be like a boy/girl, girl/girl, whatever, solo, whatever. (…) [T]hey’ll contact me and I’ll say, ‘yes’ and then they’ll tell me the rate. This is if I know the director. Um, they’ll tell me the rate and the date and they’ll say we’ll get back to you in a few days with the location and the call time and um, then I will clear my schedule. So, but if it’s a
director I have not worked with, then I’m a little more careful. Um, they just, because, I, I’ve always been very selective on what project I work on and who I work with, and a lot of times I say no because, um, I’ve just very. I was very privileged to have worked with my husband for so long and um, have so much control over you know, just trust. I mean I didn’t like have control over everything. I had like this sideline control because he was directing so he was the one ultimately in, in charge but you know, being the spouse you have a lot of influence. And um, so I, I recognized my privilege in that aspect, and I work mostly with friends. If it’s a new director I usually say no. Um, but unless the, the price is right, or unless I know, you know, like, okay, whose it gonna be, and what are we gonna do, you know. I’m really selective. Maybe I have this reputation, I’m, I’m not sure, of being like a diva or whatever, but I don’t care because, um, it’s my body, it’s my legacy, and I want to have as much control over the work that out there that I can. Um because you know, I’m, I’m putting myself in a pretty vulnerable state. (…) I’ve been very lucky to be part of um, be in, on set, that we’re either directed by friends. Or where I, like haven’t been in the position that I know some people have where they feel pressured to do stuff. Um, but again, it’s because I’ve been really selective and I, I entered the industry with my husband as my partner, and really like a guide. He already had a name in the industry. I think I, I entered at this certain level, of like, ok, not at the very bottom. And I, I, know, I know that that’s rare and I recognize that you know, I’m privileged to have entered that way.

Social proximity typically means that the workplace environment is more likely to be conducive to better treatment, and projects that a performer can feel good about, sometimes close friendships off the set do not always lead to pleasurable sexual encounters.

One performer provided an example of a scene that she ended up doing with a performer that she was good friends with, and who was known for specializing in sexual narratives that involve mistreatment and degradation, such as rough sex that includes choking, spanking, name calling, and so on. She said she was looking forward to doing the scene with him, as she sometimes enjoyed those having that kind of sex. However, the scene ended up being lackluster, as he was not as involved and animated as he would usually be during those shoots. She told me that afterward she asked him what the problem was, and he admitted that since they were such good friends, he had a hard time treating her in that way.
P: Um, at the same time, there were a lot of things actually that [says his name] is known for in his performance that he wasn’t able to do ‘cause he saw me as his friend.

CM: Ah.

P: Um, he’s known for being extremely aggressive, and he’s known for choking girls during scenes. It’s part of his thing. He wasn’t able to do that with me which is actually funny because I like that in my personal life.

[We both laugh]

P: So when it ended I was like, ‘[says his name] what were you doing?! I was waiting for THAT. It was one of the reasons why I wanted you in my movie’. And he was like, ‘I couldn’t, man, you’re like my bro’.

[We both laugh]

Ultimately, he was unable to separate their non-sexual relationship off the set, and incorporate that kind of narrative into sexual interactions on the set.

Nonetheless, a bad interaction off camera does not necessarily make for a bad scene, although they commonly do. One producer provided an interesting scenario as far as this is concerned:

I, I, in fact I shot one scene and it won an award for like the best three-way scene. And one, one, it was two guys and a girl. One guy and the girl were actually in a fight and they would, they, every five minutes they would start screaming at each other and leave the set and threaten to leave for the day so we spent about 4 hours talking them down and shooting little bits and pieces. But there was so much emotion and they were just, ah, so mad at each other that it all, it actually all showed up in the um, on, on, in the footage.

Even if the interaction among the performers is a strictly professional, there are implicit and explicit structural components that also factor into the way that affect is managed among performers in mainstream and niche markets alike. One of these is the pool of the performers that people tend to work with, and the other is the method in which the performers are hired.
CM: Well, how do they know then that you’re gonna like, work well a particular person? Does, does that matter to some studios or not?

P: They, well. For girls, its, it’s easier because, you know, okay, there’s like basically a thousand girls next to 10 main guys. You know see all the same faces in the industry so we know basically who we’re gonna work with. Like one out of 10 main guys, you know. Um, so, that’s basically, they’ll see, the company will see a scene that you worked with that certain male talent so they’ll book you with that talent. They’ll see you had chemistry, whatever or if you saw on set, that, you know, we weren’t having, you know, the time of our life, then there not gonna book us with that person and they’re gonna, you know, kind of, I guess as they get to know the girls and the guys in the business, like, they just kinda know who to pair you with. Otherwise, it’s really up to the girl, because, I mean, I like to be, kinda, of course I have my main guys, um, since I’ve been in the industry for two years I have, you know, my main guys that I’ve worked with, you know. Um, [name of male performer], [name of male performer]?. Um, [name of male performer], I’ve worked with [name of male performer], just the main guys, basically.

Having a normal pool of people that you work with is typical in both mainstream and some smaller, community-based niche markets, such as feminist pornography. For mainstream female performers that do girl/boy scenes in larger companies, there are significantly fewer male performers than female performers, and smaller companies tend to use a lot of the same performers as well. This norm, granted that the performers get along, or meld well sexually, means that it is easier to develop personal bonds off the set, as well as during the sexual encounter. That makes it easier to know what it is that the other performer likes, and vice versa, and that also means that you can work with people that you know are going to treat you with respect, or approach the job respectfully. One performer explains how having a good rapport with fellow workers, even if it is not an intimate connection, can be an effective technique for managing affect:

Once you’ve been in the business that long, there is a lot of camaraderie that happens between male and female performers that aren’t romantic but we’re able to translate that into a sexual energy on camera.
Similar to other research on sex work that examined the non-contractual relationships that form outside of the sexual interaction proper, in which intimate familiarity is fostered and maintained through sex work beyond sex, yet including it (Sanders 2008), in the pornography industry, due to the composition of male to female talent in mainstream, and small pool of performers in non-mainstream productions.

But not all performers get along, or have what many performers call chemistry. In those situations, it is up to the person doing the hiring to ensure that the people being placed together will work together well. For those that use agents or managers, this sometimes involves a ‘no list’, but for performers that obtain work without using an agent or manager, the onus is on them to find out who they will be working with. This practice has also been used by sex workers who engage in prostitution, as they will create a blacklist of clients that they no longer want to work with (Weitzer 2009). Much of the hiring in mainstream pornography is done through agents or managers, while smaller companies and independent performers tend to rely on direct contact. The following examples demonstrate how agents try to ensure that they will be placing a performer in a scene that is conducive to pleasure for the performer, as well as the unspoken norms of what happens when a performer finds out if they are working with someone they do not like.

[I]f I didn’t like some talent I would put them on what we would call a ‘no list’. That’s what everyone does. If they don’t like working with someone, even if it’s a girl, you know, doing girl/girls and stuff, you know, you can say you don’t want to work with that person and then our agent will know and then our agent will tell the company and so the company will know not to book us with that person. Or, we could do the opposite, and say, oh, I really want to work with this person, they’re really great on set, oh, they’re my best friend or oh, something like that and they can do the same thing. They’ll put us together with that person.
This has consequences for the production, and other performers as well. One performer stated that there is an unstated norm of getting out of working with a performer they do not like, which is to call in sick. As previously mentioned above, it behooves everyone involved to discuss these matters, as this type of behavior can jeopardize a shoot, the income of the performer who calls in sick, and the income of the production company and other performers, as well as the agent.

CM: [D]o people know that you’re on the ‘no’ list or do you just like, not talk about it and you just kinda let agent do their magic?

P: That’s funny. It’s something that no one talks about, but it’s funny because sometimes it does get out. You know, it’s either, the reason why, you know, cause, okay. Imagine you have work. And then it gets canceled for some reason. Well, why would it canceled? For, you either got sick or you know, you, someone doesn’t show up for a regular job, say for, you walked into, you know, a regular business office and someone is not there because they’re sick or something. Well, same kind of thing for the porn industry except there’s two kinds of reason why we wouldn’t want to go to work. We don’t like the person or we have an infection or, like something to allow us not to work. [Laughs] So, either basically someone is going around the industry saying you’re a dirty person or they don’t like me because I’m on their no list. [Laughs]

CM: [We both laugh]. Uh oh.

P: Those are the two main reasons why people are going around, you know, if, if the scene is canceled or, or, companies don’t really ask us, it’s our agents that ask us. It’s not really companies that ask us, ‘do you want to work with this person?’, ‘do you want to do this with this person?’ Now if our agent tells us last minute who we’re working with and we’re like, ‘no, no, no, I don’t wanna work with that person’, then we got a quickly play the card of ‘oh, I’m sick, or, oh, whatever’.

**Coercion and Submission**

Similar to narratives involving degradation and mistreatment, sexual encounters involving themes that are socially and politically charged like rape fantasies, sexual coercion, and submission are also things that performers and producers also negotiate. For those that find these types of narratives enjoyable to produce or perform in, maintaining the line between narratives
that play into areas that teeter between outright rape and rape fantasies are the distinction that makes them pleasurable or not.

P: I hate like, I don’t like, um, too much of sex constructed as punishment. Like, I try to keep, even if it’s a forced sex scene, like the implication that this is really forced. You, there’s a, a, another level you know, but they like it. I just have a moment where like, the girl who’s being coerced like, has a moment with herself and decides like this is the bargain that she is willing to make. As opposed to like, oh yeah, this girl is forced into doing this.

CM: Got it.

P: Um, ‘cause, ‘cause I think its hotter to choose to go through with the experience that you don’t necessarily want to have than it is to just have to be forced.

CM: I see.

P: Um, ‘cause like, dubious consent is like definitely part of a lot of people’s fantasies. For a lot of different reasons, like, sex is complicated. But like, I just don’t want to make porn where like people are “I’m hot for you”, “I’m hot for you too.” “Let’s have soft, safe, consensual sex.” Like it’s, sometimes it’s hot when the cop’s for you to like, get fucked, to get out of your drug charge. Um, I just try to keep it like obvious that this is a play and not some fucking super serious shit. I don’t want people to like, cry about it [says with sarcasm, and then laughs].

Similarly, there is a difference between rough sex, and degradation at the level of personal desire, that is, what a performer wants, and the narrative in which those activities take place. A producer discusses the use of these narratives as well, and the way that they must be carefully crafted between forced sex and forceful sex.

CM: Are there any sex acts that you can’t or won’t show?

P: Well, we’ve done, we’ve done some like, like on the, like, um, master-slave type things but, there again it can’t be that violent and the, the women have to be like, um, a willing subject in it. They can’t be forced.

CM: I see. So as long as those boundaries were clear in the beginning of the narrative, as long as it’s not submission per se, I guess.
P: Right. Or willing submission.

CM: You know, it’s always interesting ‘cause, it’s always, it’s tough because you don’t ever want to say what all women want, because some women like violence, so how do you negotiate the markets and distribution? Who these women are, you know, who these men are? I guess obviously where it ends up is, uh, pretty important.

P: Well, I asked my ex-wife once, um, if she had, if she ever had rape fantasies and she said yes. But, from a guy that I would want to like, rape me. So, but, not from someone she wasn’t attracted to.

CM: Not Quasimodo.

P: Yeah, so that was like, you know.

CM: Ambiguous territory, we’ll say?

P: Right.

The distinction between what women want in fantasy or in real life is a taboo subject, and one that is a concern for not only producers, but distributors as well. This takes us to the next section, which outlines how professional boundaries around acceptable and pleasurable narratives must also take into account external factors, such as economic and legal considerations that shape the degree of agency and autonomy a producer or performer has in creating and participating various narratives.

Negotiating Professional Boundaries outside of the Production Process

Professional boundaries within the production process are linked to external factors associated with the political economy. Structural constraints and considerations, namely, the economy and the law, also influence how producers and performers navigate their professional decisions regarding narratives. This section illustrates some of the ways that the broader social structure is handled by producers and performers, and how that impacts the management of affect.
Economic Constraints and Considerations

Returning to the issue of narratives that straddle themes around culturally and politically sensitive subject matter reveals the importance of distribution in shaping what the producer may create. This segment from a conversation with a producer of mainstream pornography demonstrates the way that economic considerations must be taken into account when creating a script for a film. He is bound by the interests of the distributors in terms of the content that he creates. What is also important for him, and the distributors, by proxy, is how well a performer is able to affectively manage those parts, particularly for more taboo subject matter.

If a performer is not convincing, say, in roles that feature submission, or other ‘forbidden’ forms of attraction, that makes the product harder to sell, as the subtle line between fantasy and role play, and real life taboos gets lost in the final product. As a result, he must consider how to come up with a script that defines the roles so that they are quasi-taboo, as in the incest scenario he describes below, furthermore, yet again, this points to the importance of hiring talent that can pull off certain narratives so that they are believable not just for the consumer, but for those who intend to package and sell the product in various markets.

CM: Are there certain scenarios, scripts, narratives, however, whichever discourse you use, that you absolutely will not do? Has there been a time where somebody’s like courted you and you’re like, ‘eh, I don’t do that’ or do they just usually know what your niche is?

P: Um, sometimes we try to push the envelope but, uh, distributors have certain things, have certain rules that we can and can’t do. If you’re dealing with graphic sex, anything that has incest in it, ah, distributors have problems releasing that. So, ah, they ask us to stay away from that part to deal with it very carefully. A step-mother instead of an actual mother.

CM: Yes, got it.

P: Um, and uh, and another big one that they ask us to stay away from is violence against women. Um, it, ah, the, the shows shouldn’t be about men’s hatred
against women. Ah, um, my niche has always been with the characters and more
the romance movies so it’s more of a, attraction, whether is um, ah, it’s not so
much attraction in like um, a love story, it’s an attraction of forbidden sex so it’s
like, the estranged son meets the dads wife and there’s an attraction between the
two and they’re not supposed to have a sexual relationship because it’s kinda
forbidden, but they end up anyway. So the story get us, in, into that, um,
situation.

CM: So there’s like, almost like a drop of taboo, you know, not a whole bucket of
it.

P: Exactly. Like, like, soap operas where the girl or the guy is doing something
wrong and they know it but they can’t overcome the, the sexual attraction
between the two. And some, and we’re getting better actresses and actors in the
businesses and um, sometimes you can kind of pull it off and sometimes they
really can’t, you know?

CM: In what way do you mean? In terms of acting or sex?

P: The acting.

Other things besides politically sensitive topics must also be taken into consideration as he
develops a script. For example, he was describing a scene where a woman fainted when she saw
blood on the set, as she was unable to disassociate from the fake blood that they were using on
set. Over time, the use of blood ended up getting axed by the distributors, even if it had nothing
to do with violence, and was strictly part of a role involving characters that do not occur in real
life, such as monsters.

CM: Why don’t people use blood anymore?

P: Cause the distributors don’t [laugh] like it.

CM: Okay [I’m laughing]. It’s a tough sell.

P: Um, I did a vampire movie, we had a lot of blood because the girls were biting
the neck, you know, blood should be running down when you bite someone’s
neck. But they um, the European versions did very well. Domestically they said
there was too much blood. And it was really, and that wasn’t even violence
against women because these four vampires were all women.
Even for non-mainstream producers this can be an issue. For some, balancing what a performer would like to do, and the distributor’s needs can be difficult to straddle. A queer producer describes the dilemma she faced when she wanted to respect a particular performer’s request to keep blood in, as the performer wanted the scene to remain ‘authentic’, and the producer did not want to damage the performer’s sense of pleasure while performing in the scene. But by doing so, she knew that the types of places she could sell the product in would diminish. Balancing the affective management of the performer, that is, not having the performer lose the ability to stay engaged in the sexual encounter, with keeping the scene ‘too real’ is an adjustment that had to be made either way, as both have economic consequences.

There was a scene where I was shooting for someone else and the person started to have ah, started to have blood come out, so, it was like menstrual, but they, but they were like no, keep, keep f-n me, you know, keep fucking me and they kept, the shoot kept going. Uh, but now, where the content could be viewed is different, so it couldn’t be for its primary source, where it was going, we had to cut that scene, now it’ll have to go to another content producer who would allow for that. So, those are the things that you still keep going.

Issues with distribution are bigger concerns for mainstream and non-mainstream producers that make films that will be distributed on DVDs or introduced in other markets, such as television. Multiple markets will be discussed in greater detail later, but it is important to note that for mainstream and feminist/queer pornographers alike, the technological format that they will be packaging the final product into makes a significant difference between that format and smaller production companies that distribute solely via the internet through VOD, or video on demand. Some production companies, including ones in the feminist/queer niche rely solely on the internet for distribution, which changes the shape of the narratives and content that they can show, as they are distributing it themselves. This not only circumvents some of the economic
concerns tied to distribution, but also some of the legal ones that may present themselves if these materials are shipped via mail, or sold in brick and mortar stores in hard copy formats.

**Legal Constraints and Considerations**

Legal constraints are more or less a matter that all producers have to deal with. However, for producers that distribute their work in multiple markets, that is, within the U.S. and Canada, or outside of those borders, they have to keep the legal parameters of multiple countries in mind while creating particular narratives. The external constraints of the law, coupled with considerations of distribution, shape the way that the narratives are constructed, and some producers had to balance their own personal boundaries with the types of narratives they wanted to create with multiple external factors involving business and the law.

The topic of the legal and cultural parameters of various nations was something that many producers were mindful of, and will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. For now, it is important to illustrate that content is not only relative, but they must abide by different procedures for negotiating the type of material, based on the cross-section of sexual interaction and the narrative that takes place in.

Canada has a, has a film board that you submit the title to and they’ll approve it even though its hard core sex. Um, and they’ll reject it for certain things like incest (…) and violence.

For some producers, it is not just the narrative that they must consider, but also the political climate that shapes attitudes toward gender and sexuality. Producers who are, and work with, sexual minorities, are especially mindful of how their marginal status entails being watched with more scrutiny than those who work within normative gender performances and sexual scripts. Take, for example, a trans producer who produces content featuring trans men.
CM: And so, because of the format, you know, you don’t, you don’t necessarily create the template for the narrative or what they’re gonna say, or what they’re gonna do, but are there any things that you suggest to them that you’d prefer they shy away from, things that you wouldn’t feel comfortable –

P: Yeah, I would say, oh, oh, well, I mean it might not be obvious, but I do not do bestiality, I do not do, you know, ah ah, those kind, I actually don’t even do fisting. I don’t do fisting and peeing. Urinate. Only because within the United States those laws are very sketchy now and um, I’ve just, you know? I don’t need to be put in jail and be arrested. I’m, I’m on the radar, don’t think I’m not. I’m on that radar. [Emphatically says his ‘catch phrase’ associated with his identity] They’re watching me! [Laughs] So, um, you know, I, it would be, it would a bummer if my stuff got ripped down. So, my stuff is so strong, I feel, that I don’t need to push it to that boundary. Not that it’s a bad thing, I’m pro all of those things. But I, I, I, I, I just don’t, I just won’t do it because it will just bring too much of a red light onto my productions and there’s so much amazing, great shit, eh, stuff in my work, that I don’t need to push it to that, those limits. But pretty much, I always ask them, what are their boundaries, what will you do and what won’t you do?

CM: And that’s sex acts also, whatever, whatever particular interaction that they would have?

P: Exactly.

Conclusion

The findings in this chapter reveal consistencies with previous findings on sex work and pornography, depart from some of the findings in literature, and they also show tensions between claims made by feminists about the pornography industry. Each of those areas will be discussed in this section.

Consistencies with Existing Research

Consistent with previous research on emotion management in sex work, it was found that pornographers, like prostitutes, maintain corporeal and sexual boundaries in their work
(Abel 2011; Sanders 2005; Weitzer 2009, 2013) and utilize blacklists of performers that they do not want to work with (Weitzer 2009) as forms of affective management. Furthermore, as far as working with people that would increase pleasure and decrease harm, the professional norms of the industry, personal norms, or both, impacted the how likely it was that they would have a positive experience at work. Consistent with Sanders’s (2008) research on the interaction between regular clients and prostitutes, pornographers formed personal and intimate relationships at work that are not merely contractual. Just as bonds are formed between prostitutes and regular clientele that foster familiarity between them that are more like friendship or courtship than business exchanges, pornographers also relied on the personal dimensions of their professional relationships to manage affect.

**Departures and Extensions**

The findings in this study departed from some of the findings in existing literature on sex work or extended them in ways that offer new insights on how sex work relations are approached and managed in the context of pornography production. Unlike research on prostitutes (Abel 2011; Sanders 2005), the participants in this study did not relegate sexual pleasure strictly to their personal roles and separate it from their professional roles. It was found that professionalism entailed an attempt to seek, and not remove, sexual pleasure at work. Furthermore, the participants stigmatized those that did not find the work pleasurable or did not attempt to make the sexual exchanges pleasurable, and they avoided or disdained working with them for reasons tied to managing affect as well as making a good product.
As far as the findings on the corporeal and sexual boundaries pornographers maintained at work are concerned, it was found that there was not such a stark bifurcation between the personal and professional sexual exchanges of prostitutes (Abels 2011; Sanders 2005; Weitzer 2009, 2013). However, this was an ambiguous set of findings. While many of the performers engaged in some of the same types of sexual activity in their professional roles as their personal roles, including the preferred gender of their sexual partners, in many cases the sexual boundaries they maintained between their work and non-work lives were a consequence of the narratives used for the sexual encounters they had at work. For example, the participant who performed in productions that relied on incest narratives would never engage in actual incest, and another participant who was both a performer and a producer, would never feature race play in her work, but was not opposed to such fantasies in the context of private sexual activities. Nonetheless, unlike prostitutes, the participants in this study, as a whole, were more likely to engage in a greater variety of sexual activities at work than the sexual exchanges they had outside of work. In this regard, there was less, not more, sexual boundaries maintained for pornographers than prostitutes between their personal and professional lives.

Tensions between Feminism and Mainstream Pornography

The findings revealed tensions between some of the claims made by feminists about mainstream pornography. Pro-pornography feminist pornographers often state that what sets them apart is that they, unlike mainstream pornographers, care about authentic pleasure. In this sample it was found that pleasure is just as important for mainstream producers and performers as it was for feminist/queer producers and performers. In fact,
the more mainstream the production was, the more it had to depict pleasure. Mainstream producers also repackage and distribute their products in mainstream media outlets within and outside of the U.S. and due to economic and legal restraints, distributors require that they only produce content that shows women enjoying themselves. Consequently, they cannot sell sexual encounters showing hesitation or ambivalence on the part of female performers; their performance must be just as convincing in the pornography they sell as it is in other non-pornographic films or series. Nonetheless, whether or not the pleasure is fake or real still mattered to mainstream producers in this sample. They avoided women who ‘faked it’ because they said it often came through in the product. Furthermore, as previously indicated, working with performers who did not seek or find pleasure in their work were often more difficult to work with.

The findings also revealed tensions between claims made by anti-pornography feminists about the conventions of the pornography industry as far as degradation, humiliation, and exploitation is concerned. It was found that the participants in this study did not condone, participate in, or endorse those behaviors in their work. And many made a distinction between ‘real pornography’ and the types of people and production companies that do not abide by industry standards and are not ‘true’ professionals. Furthermore, some researchers focus heavily on the presence of degrading or derogatory themes (e.g., Cowan and Dunn 1994) in pornographic films. The findings revealed that professionals, in practice, are also concerned about those themes. Although some participants did not engage in productions that may depict such themes, and some did, virtually all of the participants made a distinction between the types of things that producers and performers make and do in the context of the sexual encounters, or in the
fantasies they create, they separated those interactions from their behaviors outside of that context. In other words, while many anti-pornography feminists and scholars may point to the ways that the sexual fantasies portrayed in pornography ‘prove’ that the industry itself is inherently problematic because of that imagery, for those performers that do engage in that kind of work, it was only acceptable (and enjoyable) in the context of the sexual encounter and not in any other aspect of the production process or the industry writ large. Furthermore, by emphasizing that those types of sexual encounters are indicators of a lack of agency for women in the industry, that undermines the predilections of certain performers as well as their agency. Some willingly, and pleasurably, engage in that work, and they manage their professional lives in such a way that themes of inequality, such as degradation or mistreatment, are strictly relegated to fantasy and not ‘real life’.
Chapter 4: The Unintended Consequences of Laissez-Faire Lust

Introduction

Feminist pornographers, and articles written about feminist pornography, tend to emphasize that their productions show ‘real sex’ and ‘unscripted sex’. Take, for example, the description of the film, *Girl Pile*, which is billed as “An Unscripted Lesbian Orgy!”

Courtney Trouble shows us that there’s nothing more exciting than (sic) a pile of girls having fun! ‘Girl Pile’ does what most porn films only pretend to do: it is produced unscripted, unedited, unrehearsed, and untouched, which makes it stand out among lesbian porn films. You will see every second of the sex on set. Courtney Trouble’s style shows that lesbian porn can be feminine, flirty, hardcore, and authentic too. The chemistry between these women is unbelievably sexy and they are really enjoying themselves.

Fetishizing ‘real sex’ by touting and privileging unscripted sex through notions of spontaneity and autonomy as a form of sexual agency can have unintended consequences. Three areas of concern relating to this matter will be discussed below. First, unscripted sex in pornography is never really, or entirely unscripted, or at least ethically speaking, it should not be. Furthermore, using narratives to provide the parameters for scripted sex, or at least the boundaries of sex scripts, provides an additional layer of consent, and they allow the performer to adequately prepare for the performance, which lends itself to the next theme. Second, knowing a narrative or the sex scripts involved in a production provides a space for the performer to engage in mental and physical prep work that enables them to manage affect in ways that make the sexual encounter more pleasurable for them and the other performers. The third theme that will be

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12 ‘Real sex’ in this context refers to sex that is genuinely pleasurable. Some feminists use that concept to denote ‘authenticity’ in their work in order to contrast it with mainstream productions (which is associated with ‘fakeness’).
13 Information about the film obtained from the Feminist Porn Awards website: www.feministpornawards.com/girl-pile/
discussed are the implications of emphasizing autonomy, that is, having a sexual experience on
set that equates more pleasurable, more real sex as something that involves the performers alone.
That idea can have unintended consequences that not only hinder pleasure, but also be ethically
suspect. In many cases, the involvement of the producer can facilitate pleasure, and they can
also prevent harm by intervening if something is amiss or goes awry.

All in all, by making the claim that laissez-faire sex is the most authentic, most feminist
way of going about a sexual encounter, important variables tied not only to affective
management, but also ethics, are overlooked or dismissed. By emphasizing the front stage
elements of these sexual dramaturgies, necessary back stage elements are rendered secondary
concerns, if they are acknowledged at all.

Knowing What is Coming: Unscripted Sex and Informed Consent

Sexual encounters in pornography are never entirely unscripted, or at least they should not be.
Even if a formal script is not used, the narrative of unscripted sex is misleading. The absence of
a script still entails the presence of ethical, professional norms that take place before the shoot,
which involve, among other things, discussions surrounding, at the very least, what should be
absent in the subsequent sexual encounter. While unscripted sex may be marketed as such in the
final product, and look that way to the user, dramaturgically speaking, there are many things at
play in the creative process that script unscripted sex behind the scenes. The most of important
one is informed consent.

Informed consent occurs on two levels: de jure and de facto. The former entails steps
that are required by law, and the latter involves complying with standards set forth by the
industry. Although industry standards are not mandated by law, it is a given that any company
that is ethical will abide by them. Those that do not are not complying with the professional community’s code of conduct set in place by the Free Speech Coalition (FSC)\textsuperscript{14} and the Adult Performer Advocacy Committee (APAC)\textsuperscript{15}. It is required by law that performers must be consenting adults, and provide identification that shows that they are at least 18 years old. In order to ensure this, performers must sign a model release form before performing in a production that gives the production company consent to use their image.

The industry also requires that the performers consent to, and follow through with, medical testing that shows that they are free of any STDs/STIs. The norm is that the test must be taken no longer than two weeks prior to the performance, and some production companies prefer one week. The onus is on the performer to pay for these tests and provide the paperwork when they arrive, and it is on the production company to make sure that proper procedures have been followed before allowing a performer to participate in a sexual encounter with another performer. In some cases an exception is made for performers that are in an intimate sexual relationship outside of the production – they are a ‘couple’ – as long as the sexual encounter only involves them. In addition, there are informal norms that are implemented casually or formally during production that pertain to sexual consent and the types of sexual activities that will take place during the sexual encounter.

Before the scene begins, performers typically – or should – discuss the sexual parameters that they are comfortable doing for the scene. Even if a performer has done certain acts in the past, that does not mean that they will want to do them again, or at least at that time. Consent, even if a set of activities have been explicitly discussed as acceptable or desirable, should be

\textsuperscript{14} Free Speech Coalition’s website: \url{https://www.freespeechcoalition.com/}
\textsuperscript{15} Adult Performer Advocacy Committee’s website \url{http://www.apac-usa.com/}
ongoing. Before the sexual encounter begins, a safe word might be chosen, or a kinesic signal, in the event that words cannot be easily conveyed or face gestures cannot be seen. Although a discussion among the performers and between the performers and producers is an informal procedure, sometimes these discussions take place in a more formal, documented procedure, in the form of an interview. In those cases, that interview is edited along with the footage taken during the sexual encounter and incorporated into the final product so that the consumer can view it.

While feminist pornographers like to use interviews to emphasize that negotiations took place, and to personalize the experience, this has been a standard in more extreme productions, like BDSM and kink films, as those sexual subcultures emphasize sexual consent among practitioners in their communities. Interviews are also done in those types of films so that the consumer knows that the performer willingly took part in scenes involving bondage or violence, and that it was something that the performer personally desired. This also assists with navigating external factors, such as the aforementioned legal constraints that producers and performers must handle.

In addition to the legal paperwork, whether they use a script/narrative or not, some producers also do interviews afterward for a redundant system that verifies consent. One queer producer explained that this is a norm within the niche, as many viewers like to hear what the performers have to say about the experience. Nonetheless, she admits that she likes to do them for her own good. For her, post-encounter interviews add another layer of consent, and it makes her less liable if a performer was to claim that the consent was questionable.

P: [T]hat’s why we do like post-interviews because you’re energy was great, you have a great post interview and you were talking about your partner, what worked for you, what didn’t work for you. I think that’s why I do a lot of the interviews
because the questions you have, people want to see, they want to hear, I think coming from that person also gives another level of consent. And also, and also, makes me not uh, so much as liable for their happiness. That they get to say what they want to say, but I also get to record, where it’s like, I didn’t make you do anything. Honestly.

CM: Agency, you know, you had your agency. You did what you did on your own volition.

P: Yeah. Yeah. Exactly. Yeah

Furthermore, the next set of norms could illicit an entire chapter in and of itself, however, they will be mentioned very briefly in this context in order to illustrate that ‘scripted’ and ‘unscripted’ sex both take place in the context of a work setting, and undergo cultural manipulation after the shoot is over. The real sex that consumers witness is hardly ever what really happened and, at the very least, it did not occur in isolation from the conventions of the production process.

A sexual encounter is rarely a situation that is recorded in real time and packaged as it really occurred. That is, as it actually happened, as a continuous event from beginning to end. The performers take breaks. Or, at least, it is arguably ethical to provide the time for them to be able to stop the production so that they can take a break. Emphasizing continuity in the sexual encounter for the production, for purposes of marketing real sex that occurs in real time, deprives performers of that norm. If the narrative or storyline of real sex in real time is the goal for the producers and the performers, that can be potentially coercive, as the performer may not speak up if they need a break so that they do not compromise the production.

The idea of real sex in real time also rarely occurs for other reasons. Performers are usually performing not just for the camera capturing the moving images, they are also stopping for, or at least cognizant of, photos or stills that are being taken in order to promote or package the sexual encounter that they are selling. These are placed on the box cover, if it is a hard copy
that is being sold, or placed on a website if it is a video on demand (VOD) product. Regardless of questions around authenticity and ethics surrounding scripted or unscripted sex, the sex is never just about the encounter that is taking place between the performers, it is also occurring between the performers and the viewers via the camera. Professional and amateur performers must take the camera into consideration and keep the visual appeal of what it is that they are doing in mind while they are having sex (Lehman 2007; Paasonen 2010; VanDoorn 2010). Real sex, in other words, also takes other realities into mind, which is the imagined gaze of the viewer.

Beyond debunking the assertion that real sex or autonomously occurring sex is completely unscripted, there are implicit ethical benefits to narratives: they provide an additional layer of consent. However tenuous it is to equate authentic pleasure with authentic sex – measured in terms of unscripted sex – narratives provide an ethical buffer for the performers: they directly and explicitly inform the performer about the production before they get involved. Narratives provide the context for what the performers will be expected to do for the film and that information is crucial for informed consent. This, of course, is taking for granted that information concerning the narrative is provided. No narrative, and not knowing the narrative if there is one, can be equally as disruptive or harmful. Having a narrative in place, whether that is a formal one like playing a particular role or character in a scripted social setting, or an informal one, such as taking part in an orgy, needs to be disclosed. If a performer is hired based on the sex/gender of the other performer(s), and the sex acts they will be doing, without disclosing the social context in which they will be occurring, the potential benefits of having a narrative in place can be undermined by that lack of that knowledge.
These are not only ethical concerns, and ones that tie into affective management, but they can also be economically violent to the performer and costly to the producer/production. The previously discussed situation regarding the performer who was not told she was expected to perform in an orgy illustrates this, as she had the production company give her a kill fee, and left. She consented to that sexual act, but it was the larger social context that she did not want to participate in, besides their unethical behavior (not complying with the industry standard of testing all of the performers).

Other examples associated with the ethical benefits of knowing the narrative beforehand also emerged in the discussions with the producers and the performers. Another example of this emerged in a discussion with a producer. The next passage shows that unlike the prior situation, sometimes performers will stay and perform in scenes they would not have consented to if they knew about the narrative in advance. This case also reveals some of the consequences of working with haphazard agents. Some performers have agents that are cautious about managing their clients and that increases the likelihood that they will find the sexual encounter pleasurable. Some agents operate less carefully, and that puts performers and producers in uncomfortable situations when performers show up for work and they are unprepared, unwilling, or unenthusiastic about the production that they were hired for. The following example reveals why some of the performers and producers in this study were reluctant to work with an agent or did not work with them altogether. It also illustrates how narratives provide an additional layer of consent during the hiring process.

CM: So, do you, is it people, word of mouth, do you use agencies? Do you have, like –

P: So, most girls in porn got an agent. Um, I think agencies are a bunch of useless fuckers and I hate dealing with them if I don’t have to. [Name of agent] being the
one exception but, uh, its, I, I, just don’t care that this douche bag has your pictures on a website and pay him a $100 so that I can email him instead you. And then he’s not gonna send you, send me the directions. I’ve had so much bullshit from the agents. Like, I had a girl show up to a movie called [Says name of movie, it explicitly mentions the act of ‘eating ass’] and she’s like, ‘I don’t eat ass’. I didn’t know what to say to her. So I was like, ‘listen, honey, I feel a little bad for you right now, but you have two choices. You can eat some ass today or you can go home. It’s you, your choice’.

CM: And what’d she –

P: She ate some ass.

CM: Did she?

P: She ate the ass.

CM: Okay, alright.

P: Of course, man, that’s what everybody does. Its, welcome to porn, you know [laughs, then we are both laughing].

CM: Got it, okay.

P: But I don’t like agents, because if I talk to a girl, I’m like, this is your character, this is what this is about, all this and, like, here’s what I need from you and we can talk about this. So, with an agent, I’m like, here’s the script. And they send it to her, like, maybe. You know, I don’t like the porn agent. I don’t have one. I’ve had one like a couple of times and every time they’ve never gotten me work while I’ve proceeded to work all the time by myself.

CM: Okay, so people just contact you directly.

While she could have left, there are structural considerations to consider, as in all situations involving matters of choice and acting freely. If a performer is relying on that money, or fears that they will be ostracized if they do not go ahead with the scene anyway, they might end up doing something that they would otherwise not do. Had she known about the narrative, by way of the title and the sexual acts that went along with it, perhaps she would have declined that role and taken another job. By taking on that role even though she did not want to, that means
another performer had to work with someone who was not wholeheartedly doing something they enjoyed. Those sorts of practices can potentially disrupt the ability of another performer to experience pleasure, or possibly make them work harder so that they can achieve it during the sexual encounter.

Narratives and Corporeal Preparations

Affective management in pornography as a form of sex work is somewhat unique. Performers need to manage their emotions and other bodily affects not just for their own sake and for the sake of the business, or the producer and the production, but also the viewer. The customer in typical sex work, and other forms of work in which there is direct interaction between the employer and the customer, such as prostitution and stripping, does not apply to pornography performers, but the consumer still matters. In pornography, the interaction does not take place in real life, or in the same time and space as the point of consumption. Instead, it occurs by proxy through the finished product which is mediated by culture and technology. Consumption, and affective interaction between the pornography and the consumer/user, occurs remotely and indirectly.

Affective management is important for the performer’s own enjoyment, the intended consumer/audience, and it is also imperative for other performers, unless the scene is a solo, which is an autoerotic sexual scene. The direct interaction that is at stake, much like sexual interaction that occurs outside of the context of pornography, is managing one’s own affect and emotions, as well as the needs or wants of the sexual partner or partners that one is engaging with. It is one thing to be convincing for the camera, it is another issue altogether to be convincing for the person a performer is sexually interacting with on set. Improperly managing
one’s self can have a negative impact on others, which can compromise a scene, or outright threaten it. For example, one performer stated why it is important especially in girl/boy scenes. If the ‘boy’ talent is having a difficult time climaxing, and the ‘girl’ performer is getting agitated or acting put off by the sex, it makes it hard for the male performer to climax. Since the ‘money shot’ is so important to the iconography of pornography (Williams 1999) this becomes a problem as far as the finished product is concerned. Additional time will be needed to create an ersatz climax, which means more time is needed in post hoc editing\(^\text{16}\).

One of the most important things that a performer can do to ensure that they properly manage affect, or pleasure, for everyone involved – their own, their partner(s), and the consumer – is adequate corporeal prep work. The type of preparations that a performer will do before the shoot is contingent upon the narratives framing the sexual activities and sexual scripts that they will perform. That entails having their bodies, minds, and necessary material objects in order before they arrive on set. While the second two are important, as those themes emerged across all of the interviews in various ways, the first of these, preparing their bodies, will be the main emphasis in this section.

Like most professional environments, the performers are expected to arrive in a properly hygienic and clean state. But unlike most jobs outside of sex work, this matters to a greater extent, as the task at hand requires that the performers work together intimately. The body parts that are usually covered or hidden in non-sex work are exposed, such as genitals. In fact, these must remain covered – it would be taboo to reveal them in most professions. While this might seem important just for the other performers, these practices can also assist the performer with

\(^\text{16}\) For example, one performer stated that if male performers cannot climax, they must make it look like they did anyway for the camera/production. In such cases pina colada mix may be used to emulate ejaculate.
mentally preparing for the shoot. For some performers, getting physically prepared, and gathering the necessary material things such as clothing and accessories needed for the shoot, serves a ritual-like function:

Um, so the day of the shoot, you know, I wake up earlier and then I, I like, it’s like kind of a ritual, you know. I go and I shave everything and I get, you, I get all like lotioned up and smelly, and my hair, and my hair and make-up. Usually hair and make-up is not provided so I do it here. If it is, then that’s even better, I just have to like, you know, shave and get ready and leave. I pack my bag the night before, you know, pack it full of lingerie and heels and all this stuff. Um, then I arrive to set. It’s, it’s pretty, that pretty mundane also, and shit, but it it’s like a ritual for me. I do this stuff and then I go and I have fun.

Preparing the body does not only impact the performance among performers, but failing to take care of those matters can create a visual impact that is detrimental to the scene, and ultimately, the sexual fantasy that they are trying to create for the audience. In other words, hygiene does not just affect the sexual excitement of the other performer, but also the spectator. Things that would otherwise go unnoticed in most professions go noticed in this one. These issues are not strictly relegated to the visual component, as foul smells are not something that can be picked up and conveyed by the camera, but they can be problem in real life or on the set. Yeast infections were one example given by a performer. In another profession an infection like that can be hidden, where they remain to be a problem in personal or intimate encounters, not at work per se. The visual component, aromatic qualities, and epidemiological risks are detriments in this field, which makes it difficult to become engrossed in the encounter.

In short, hygiene is a form of affective management done by performers in order to increase the likelihood of that other performers and the consumer will experience pleasure. Proper hygiene increases pleasure and decrease repulsion for those involved at that moment. Later, it does the same for those that view the product. Furthermore, the personal rituals
associated with preparing for the shoot, as shown above, assist the performer with not only physically preparing for it, but also mentally preparing for it.

Performers also need to physically prepare their bodies for specific sexual activities that they will be participating in. For example, if they are expecting to do an anal scene it is normal to prepare that orifice by stretching it beforehand with a butt plug. Doing an anal sex scene also means a change of diet or a special diet for the performers. This includes activities such as refraining from eating (or inactivities, rather), while others mentioned abstaining from heavy foods. Here, one performer explains how she is going to prepare for her first DP, or double penetration scene\(^{17}\):

P: I’m doing my first DP, which, you know, I’ll be penetrated in both holes my first time. And that’s something I’ve never, I’ve never done. So, ah, I don’t know, for sex there’s n, nothing I’ve really done like extreme wise up until, like, doing stuff in my butt. [Laughs]

CM: Okay. Got it. So, are you, do you have to prepare for that then? This is a big day, or a big moment for you?


CM: What, what has to happen today or in the morning? Or, are you just, like, do you not eat? There’s, there’s a pattern of a lot of women saying they don’t eat, you know, the night before.

P: Mmm hmm

CM: Some, you know, what is your, uh, or what is, how do you anticipate how you are going to make this happen?

P: Well, um, I got used to you know, um, since like I’ve been doing anal for, actually, probably the last like 6 months, to a year. Um, I’ve gotten used to how my body reacts to like certain scenarios ‘cause if I don’t eat for two days and then I do anal, compared to if I ate the night before, [laughs], um, its just different on what you eat as well. You know, you can’t eat like a burrito before you have

\(^{17}\) DP involves having sex with at least two men at the same time, and two of them are penetrating the female performer in her vagina and anus concurrently.
anal. You know, you can’t have heavy food, you know, you have to eat light. If anything, you know, chicken and rice. That’s what I do the night before if I’m really hungry and I don’t think I’ll be able to handle the next day. Because it comes down to how you feel, like, um, you, ah, need protein, you need nutrients in your body so you don’t like pass out, you don’t get nauseated, you know, of course when, you’re on the anal diet, is what I call it, you want to drink a lot of water, and um, on set you basically eat a lot of gummy bears to fill up your, to make it feel like your full without having needing to digest. So, the night before, or actually, the day before, the morning of, I’ll eat like a big breakfast and then I won’t eat anything for the rest of the night, up until the next day and then I’ll do my anal scene and then immediately after I’m done I’ll go to in and out burger or somewhere good to get a good steak or, you know, bur-, like meat and scarf it down and get all my protein back and whatnot. Some people have to like starve themselves for like three days before they do anal, but, that’s not me. I don’t, I don’t have to do that.

CM: Okay, gotcha.

P: But, we do have to clean ourselves out before, um, like with an enema the night before, um, and then, the day of, um, you have to like right before your scene, as you’re preparing for it, um, we have to douche as well to keep our vagina clean but it’s the same conduct for the butt. We have to flush it all out and make sure it’s clean or else you know, on, on camera, it’s just gonna look like a big mess [laughs].

A producer also discusses the norms that are expected of performers before they engage in a sexual encounter. His description also directs us to two other things that are part of the production process that can help or hinder sexual pleasure.

The first is the norm of production companies providing some of the materials that are necessary for the shoot. Production companies usually provide things for the performer to get ready beforehand, as well as items they may need during the sexual encounter, such as paper towels, lube, and food and beverages. Depending on the scale and budget of the company, the kind and amount of these things will vary. Most of these things are not directly related to the sex acts, such as lube, but they are provided so that the work environment is conducive to the performers being comfortable when they arrive, take breaks during the shoot, and after the sexual
encounter. However, these things are still part of the way that affect is managed corporeally, cognitively, and materially, as they help the performer stay engaged and more able to become engrossed in the encounter.

The second is how the narrative implicitly intertwines with sex acts that are expected, or not expected, to be associated with a particular story line. Although sexual activities do not have an inherent meaning, the scenario in which the sexual behaviors are done, or in this case, not done, contribute to the cultural meanings of the settings in which the narratives occur, albeit tautologically, as the sexual scripts tend to follow the social connotations implied in the sexual fantasies that the producers are trying create and sell. An excerpt from a conversation with a producer demonstrates this:

CM: What do you about, ah, like body stuff? Somebody starts their period, poop, I don’t know if you do anal scenes um, the poop factor, like what do you do in, um, in those bloop situations?

P: There’s been, there’s been a couple of accidents. Ah, people not taking care of themselves. Usually if a girl’s doing an anal scene they actually stop eating like the night before so it’s not an issue. And then we have you know fleets or enemas on set so that they clean themselves up. But I don’t really shoot a lot of anal, because that don’t really fit in our, in our romance.

In situations where the performer is on her period, she is expected to take steps to prevent blood from flowing so that it is not apparent on set. In cases when that starts during the production, producers tend to have materials on hand (e.g., sponges) so that the shoot may proceed.

The next participant is a producer and a performer, and she describes how menstruating bodies are handled on the set. This passage illustrates that and it highlights the differences between professional performers and performers that are interlopers or new to the industry. In addition to the economic concerns associated with blood and distributors described above, how a performer chooses to take care of their body is also tied to economic considerations. The choices
she makes impacts her own economic well-being, as well as the economic well-being of the other performers, producers, and the production.

CM: Um, I know we got into this a little bit, but are there any things that happen that either you as a performer or as a director that happen and you just kinda move on or are there things that you gotta work around, like say, periods getting started, like, what, what –

P: If their period gets started, you sponge ‘em.

CM: You sponge the, okay.

P: Yeah, I’ve had girls flake on me because of their period but I’ve never flaked on anybody for any reason. Like, if I have a problem I deal with it myself and I go to set.

CM: Okay

P: But a lot of these girls are 18, you know. I was an idiot when I was 18 too.

CM: Yeah, got it.

P: But there’s nothing else really – [pauses]. But like, if you get your period, either you sponge it and you show up to work anyway. I’ve shot dozens, probably hundreds of scenes on my period, um. Or you call in sick and I replace you. But, it’s not a super common thing. A professional talent will not call a shoot over that, but like some girls who are in the business shorter, or like not as part of it, they’ll call. ‘Cause if you’re a real working talent, what, are you going to take a week off a month? Right?

In cases where a performer works while on her period she is primarily taking steps to manage affect for other performers, as well as the viewer. The practice of using materials to manage the body in this context is similar to Weseley’s (2003) research on strippers and their use of what she calls “body technologies” (654). Strippers, for example, will insert a tampon and cut the string so that they can still work while menstruating.

A final example will be given in terms of material preparation. For some performers it is imperative that they bring their own materials on set. Contrary to the situations above, if a
producer provided certain materials and required a performer to use them, that would compromise the ability for the performer to have a pleasurable sexual encounter, and might even be reason enough for the performer to decline the work altogether. For performers that do strap-on scenes, such as the one below, using their own strap-on is absolutely necessary. Although it is a material object, it is not merely an inanimate object, it is something that is part of who she is as a performer, and it is inseparable from her identity as a performer, how she manages her body, and engages in the sexual scripts that are part of the scene. In the exchange below, she is adamant about that, and was even a little shocked by the question:

CM: [D]o you bring that stuff, on a side note? Do they bring their own?

P: MY strap on [said very emphatically]?! That is mine.

CM: Yeah, it’s yours.

P: You don’t hook up with someone else’s dick.

[We both laugh]

P: I’m the only guy! Uh, people try and I’ve been like, ‘ew’.

CM: Oh, they have, they’ve been like, ‘hey, why don’t you use this one?’

P: This is what I do for a living. It’s like asking a contractor to work with like a crappy tool box that you have in your apartment.

[We both laugh]

P: ‘Cause most strap-ons are bullshit. Like, like sex store bullshit, no. I need that. That’s the tool of my trade.

CM: So it’s like a chef and their particular knife? And that’s your knife?

P: Shit. Shit yeah. I’d fuck with a vibrator if I really had to but these days I just say no.
All in all, the material resource that the producers provide, or the performers feel that they must provide themselves are part of what Goffman calls “realized resources” (1961: 27-28). They are necessary for the performer to become engrossed in the sexual encounter. In some cases, this is a matter of a certain taken-for-grantedness that performers need in order to avoid distraction. If some of these materials were not there, that is, if bringing them on the set was not done, their absence would potentially distract them from the scene. Realized resources are an integral part of achieving real pleasure in the sexual encounter, however, in the context of materiality, and achieving sexual pleasure, they become *materialized resources*.

**The Trouble with Autonomy**

The idea that the most authentic route to pleasure during the sexual encounter is achieved through real sex that occurs solely within the confines of the performers engaged in the sexual performance is a limited argument. First, it fails to connect the moment of the sexual encounter to other parts of the production process that are integral to making sure that it goes smoothly, and by doing so, it separates that moment from critical steps that allow that moment of ‘real’, ‘unscripted’ sex to take place. Secondly, it overemphasizes the importance of sexual autonomy in the pursuit of sexual pleasure by separating it from other social actors that are on the set, and more specifically, the involvement of the producer. This type of narrative not only positions the producer as antithetical to achieving pleasure, it also undermines the ethical necessity of the producer of getting involved in the event that things are not be going well. In other words, as previously indicated, as far as the performers and the producers are concerned, the sexual encounter is what Goffman would call a multi-situated encounter. In terms of the viewer, the production can framed as a form of dramaturgy, as it has both front stage and back stage social
dynamics. The performer’s interaction with other individuals who are making that encounter happen are an inevitable part of their performance, and they are negotiating those interactions simultaneously, whether or not the camera, and subsequent editing after the sexual encounter, reveals that.

At once, there is a denial of these other interactions that are taking place, and furthermore, it discounts that some intervention or involvement by those individuals is sometimes not only conducive to achieving pleasure, in some cases if the producer does not interject, it would arguably be unethical and inadvertently violent. If a producer did strictly ‘stay out of their business’, and conform to the idea that they should not be involved, that could facilitate harm. Several producers and performers provided examples of situations in which they felt intervention in the sexual encounter was necessary in order to make sure that it was pleasurable for those involved, or to downright prevent harm from occurring or reoccurring. Autonomy is not only not a reality on the set, abiding by that idea and taking it too seriously is actually contrary to achieving real pleasure, whether a script is involved or not.

Safe words and signals between the performers is one way of making sure that they can regulate their own behavior, but they do not guarantee that a sexual encounter will be a safe or pleasurable one. One producer provides an example of this, and the limits of being able to always see or know if the performers are communicating properly.

P: [T]hey talk amongst themselves so I can’t hear what they’re saying. If you’re laying next to that person and you’re saying something in their ear, ah, it’s not feeling good, I can’t really seek for that, so that’s where it’s good for the perfor-, the participants to make sure that they interact and have that dialogue so I don’t, I can’t see everything. So, but, when I’m seeing stress or distress, it’s like, you, you, you’re not, you’re not saying your safe word but you don’t look, um, convincing, if you will.

CM: I see, so is that a grimace on the face or kinda like (I make a face)?
Depending on the situation, a producer may intervene and talk to the performer to see what the problem is. In some cases, a performer might be sent home and replaced, and in others, it is simply a matter of helping them adjust to the situation.

In cases when there seems to be reluctance, issues pertaining to willingness, or a lack of agency, the producer feels the need to assess the situation, as that is not only an issue in terms of ethics, it makes for a bad product. Many mainstream producers, as indicated above, can only produce content in which the performer seems willing, regardless of the kind of narrative that is being used. While some may not be into the sexual performance because they cannot get their minds into it, others become too involved, and overly immersed in the sexual encounter. In those cases the producer may stop the shoot to help them step back a bit and relax.

CM: Um, if somebody is not um, like seeming like they’re not having a good time, whether that’s sexual or not, how do you deal with that? Do you like say cut let’s figure out what going on and like, how do you know?

P: Well it’s obvious if they’re not having a fun time. Um, usually we will stop and I’ll talk to them. Ask them, you know, what’s going on. If ah, if it’s kind of serious then, I haven’t done it that often, sometimes we’ve just stopped shooting and try and redo it with someone else.

CM: When you say serious, I was going to ask you about flooding out? Do they just like freak out? Quit acting?

P: Someone’s obviously not having a good time or is not enjoying it or is not, looks like they’re into it or willing. Them I’m like, ‘you don’t have to do this if you don’t want to do this. If you want to leave, you can leave’.

CM: So they’re just like bored?

P: Yeah. But like I said, it doesn’t happen that often and usually if it’s that kind of a, that serious of a, something, I probably would never use them again, so. So they usually, we usually figure out what the problem is and everything and then,
then start again, let them have a little break. Sometimes it’s ah, girls will hyperventilate. And uh, cause they’re forcing it to much.

Drinking alcohol or taking drugs on the set, or arriving to the shoot while under the influence of drugs or alcohol is forbidden. If a producer finds themselves in a situation where a performer seems to be intoxicated, they will intervene, whether or not that shows on camera.

We sent one girl home, I don’t know if she was taking too much medication or anything, ah, she looked, she was behaving kind of loopy [laughs, we both laugh] as some would say. Her concentration was real short. So we just um, I just talk to her and sent her home ‘cause its ah, I didn’t know what the problem is but it’s like you don’t look like you’re in the right state of mind to, for performing.

In some cases the producer will intervene before the sexual encounter even takes place, and will have a direct conversation with the performer, and the other performers regarding their decision to come to set after they have had a drink. In the example below, it was not enough for the producer to use her discretion regarding whether or not the performer should proceed with the performance, she wanted to make sure that the other performer consented to working with them.

No, no drugs. Uh, no alcohol. I had one performer who smelled like alcohol, we had a discussion about that and I asked the other performer were they okay with it? Um, I feel as though, um, it’s like, you ever been to a sex club? I just wanted to make sure that everyone had the opportunity to hear each other. You don’t want any alcohol, no drugs. I’m not doing, there’s no alcohol in me, there’s no drugs in me, there’s no drugs and alcohol in that. So, I just wanna make sure that things are, safe, as, as, well as, they can be heard. Things can be heard. Not safe. They can be heard. Yeah. Yeah.

Not all interventions are necessarily done because something drastic seems to be occurring, in some cases a producer make take it upon themselves to call for a break if the performer needs a moment of rest to recuperate from physical exertion and to rehydrate. In some situations it is a matter of fostering good work conditions given the physically taxing nature of the job.

I’ve never seen anybody get freaked out from like, like if it’s too hard, this is how it goes, ‘um, man, it’s too hard, let’s take a break, I need more lube’. I haven’t ever, ever seen someone break down from that but I don’t shoot really aggressive
BDSM. Like, I shoot strap-on sex, sometimes like some choking and spanking, but I don’t do kink.com shit. I’m not, I don’t have people all tied upside down. Like, I don’t have the kind of situation where someone’s gonna lose it from that. I’ve had girls be like, ‘you’re fucking me too hard, I need some water’, but whatever, that’s just shop talk.

However, not all performers have the same tolerance levels. It is good for the producer to approach performers equitably, and not equally per se. For example, one producer discusses the importance of recognizing that there is an exchange going on among the performers, yet reciprocity, and comfort, entails more than a simple give and take. Some performers are dealing with corporeal concerns that are individual to them, at least in that moment in time and space. Here, she explains that she was working with a trans performer who was having a little trouble with the scene so she intervened. The performer needed time to adjust the material objects being used in the encounter so that they could be more comfortable.

CM: I guess, not to put the onus on you, but since you’re the director, producer, how do you know when they are enjoying it or having it a good time? Is there any time you’ve had to stop and say, ‘phew, lets cool out for a sec’, or –

P: Mm hmm

CM: What are those signals?

P: Um, you know, you always talk, you have them negotiate, it’s like, ok, I’m gonna watch you guys basically, I’m watching you guys have sex. I’m going to capture your hot sex on camera. Um, but there, but there, you know, and even though there’s money involved, it’s like look, you know, you know, this exchange, this quid quo pro. Right?

CM: Yeah.

P: Like you do this, I’ll give you this, right? Even though we’re not talking about the money anymore, but I think there was one scene in this film that I had where I’m actually working on this one scene, its ah, ah first time person. And, there, trans, uh, identified, shaping, but no surgeries, and, um, it was very uncomfortable for them for the position that they were in or the tools that were being used so, for example, it was glass, whatever it was, so I just gave ‘em a moment and kinda
found out what was going on and then we concluded from there, we continued on from there, so.

CM: Okay. And just kept the continuity in the editing process kind of a thing, or –

P: Yeah, yeah. Definitely cut that, yeah.

Sexual Narratives: Role Play as Affective Management

Scripted sex, that is, sexual encounters that rely on a narrative, is not antithetical to achieving pleasure during the sexual interaction between the performers. Conversely, it was found that the use of a narrative, and an emphasis on sexual role play – above and beyond the sexual role play that occurs in the production process more generally – was enjoyed by many of the performers. Several performers enjoyed acting, or playing the role of a character, because it made pleasure easier, and allowed them to cognitively become more immersed in the sexual encounter. All in all, sexual narratives were positively influential on the management of affect in the sexual encounter, for both the producers and the performers. The following section provides a few examples that show how producers and performers approach sexual narratives, and how they assist with producing sexual culture that contains real pleasure.

Producing Pleasurable Sex with Narratives

One way of developing a narrative that is conducive to enjoyment, including sexual pleasure, is to construct a script with particular performer in mind. This next example shows how a producer came up with an idea to work with a performer’s personality by creating a script centered around it.

[H]e has a big personality. It, it leads and it’s like big. Um, so I wrote one part around him where he plays like this, ah, actor, uh, lead actor in these really low
budget [names genre] movies that you’ve never heard of and he kind of just assumes everyone knows who he is. So ah some, this girl comes in and he’s just like amazed that she hadn’t heard of his movies. And it’s just, you know, it was just a big personality thing because it was written for him because he can pull it off. It was pretty hilarious.

Producers can create narratives that are more believable to the audience by developing a script that is conducive to the performers. In the case above, the producer did not simply create a role or a script for the performer, merely as a worker, or an agent, but as a subject, a unique individual. Catering to their subjectivity goes beyond the concern of sexual agency by including personal qualities that a particular performer has and working within or around them.

Another useful technique is to create a narrative or a script that is conducive to sexual chemistry. By doing that, a producer not only creates a storyline that is socially legible and desirable for the consumer, it fosters an environment that makes it more likely that the performers can become engrossed in the characters that they are playing. That, in turn, allows them to become more mentally and physically immersed in the sexual encounter. As a result, they are more likely to experience pleasure.

As a form of affective management, creating a scenario that sets a romantic tone or a sexually titillating mood for the performers increases the likelihood that the performers will enjoy themselves, but it also makes a good product more probable. Furthermore, when the performers are fully engaged in the narrative, their roles, and the sexual encounter, it decreases the chances that flooding out or muffings (Goffman 1961) will occur. Taking steps to actively prevent them is beneficial for establishing and maintaining pleasure, as they can threaten the mood, or prevent a good mood from occurring in the first place. Flooding out and muffings disrupt engrossment in the sexual encounter in ways that can compromise the scene, the shoot, and the final product. If they occur drastically or repeatedly, they can be costly for the
production by taking up extra time during the shoot and creating more work after the shoot for the post-production editing process. Below, a producer illustrates this by explaining how narratives can be useful for managing affect and why they are beneficial to the overall production.

CM: I guess, like what do you do with people that flood out, not in terms of freaking out. Like, what do you do with laughter or giggling do you just like, ‘people, calm down’ or ‘cut it’?

P: Well usually we don’t have that problem because, um, doing the kind of the romantic theme of it. Um, usually they’re just set up and a lot of dialogue leads into sex so usually they’re minds get kind of into it. Um, so it’s like a seduction, like the younger girl seducing her college professor stuff, we do, we do a lot of those. And ah, and then he’s saying ‘no, no, no, it’s not right, we can’t do it’ and he just can’t resist it. And ah, a few other variations of that. But we just did one, however, it was a patient and her therapist. She kept seeing you know, these faces and shadows, um, and that one for some, we just shot that last week, and for some reason as it got more intimate, they both just start laughing. It completely destroyed the feeling ‘cause it’s supposed to be all sensual. Um, and that one was, I don’t know, the editor is going to have a tough time cutting it because it’s gonna be in little pieces. They kept breaking up. But usually that doesn’t happen that often.

CM: Okay. ‘Cause the narrative just is so conducive to like some kind of, attraction?

P: Right

Another producer discusses the importance of getting their minds into the scene so that the performers are able to invest themselves mentally as well as corporeally. That way, they are more likely to become immersed in the sexual encounter and therefore experience pleasure. This producer relies on scripts and narratives to contain the sex scripts, but that does not mean scripted sex per se as far as dictating each and every sex act, or the sequence of sexual activities.

For her, scripted sex is important because of the psychological involvement it fosters within the sexual performance for the performers so that they can engage in the types of sex that
they find pleasurable within the parameters of the story line that a particular product relies on. If
the script is done correctly, she has found that it is conducive to sexual pleasure, and does not
distract from the sexual component of the production.

Um, there's like positions I don't like. I'll talk to them and I'll be like here, here's
why your character is fucking this person. Here’s what you wanna get out this.
Like, I’ll try to get them invested in the psychology of the sex scene. ‘Cause what
I’m trying to do is tell stories with sex. So, I’ll talk to them about like, the flow of
the encounter. I’m not gonna map out every position because I don’t care. Some
directors, who are more invested in the visual and less invested in the content,
they will map out every position. Okay like, here's where you 69, here's where
your leg goes and like, I don’t care. If I hate the position I’ll tell you to stop and
we’ll, we’ll, you know, change angles and cut around it and deal with it. But like,
I’ll talk to you about the emotional flow of the scenes. That’s what matters to me.
And sometimes that does involve positioning, especially with strap-on scenes.
Like, this is gonna here, and then this, and we’ll map it out a little bit in the stills.
But mostly want I want is that like, the, story’s told right, so I’ll talk to them
about that.

In some cases a producer may use the script in order to initially set the tone for the sexual
encounter so that the performers can cognitively and corporeally become engaged in the sexual
experience. While some producers may use a narrative throughout the duration of the production
and stick to it, others incorporate story lines as a springboard, or starting point for the sexual
encounter.

I think the narrative is kind of first pitch. But as you go along, it’s, that’s kinda
out the window, unless you want to do something really fancy and, like I’m
thinking about this, what do you think about this as a last minute, you know,
interjection. But, uh, for the most part, the story line kinda goes out of the way
‘cause at that point it’s just environment, but the main factors are the people, and
making sure that they’re comfortable and that they can perform, if you will,
‘cause they’re not really performing, they’re just having an act of sex that’s in
front of the camera. So I think it’s just more of voyeurism. Yeah. Then, and then
I’d say, like porn is sort of scripted. I think it’s scripted to a degree, I think it’s,
ah, queer porn, it’s more voyeurism and you’re watching them having great, hot
sex versus more scripted. Yeah.
Overall, producers maintained that narratives, to various degrees, are useful for the performers and the production. Instead of providing a constraint to sexual pleasure, they provide a space for the performers to mentally and physically become more involved in the sexual encounter. Next, the ways that narratives facilitate pleasure for the performers is illustrated and discussed.

Performing Pleasurable Sex through Narratives

Performers in mainstream and non-mainstream productions indicated that they enjoy productions that used narratives. Story lines were explicitly discussed as an element of their job that brought them joy and made the sexual encounter more fun. Implicitly, narratives were found to be an element of the sexual encounter that helped them manage affect. Role playing within their professional role was something that provided an additional layer of engrossment. Acting, or playing a character, allowed them to become more emotionally and physically invested in the sexual experience, therefore it increased the likelihood that they would experience sexual pleasure.

For some performers, narratives are something that they enjoy because they are challenging and they emphasize the more artistic side of producing sexual culture. One performer explains that she likes performing in a variety of professional settings, but she tends to prefer productions that involve acting and playing a particular character:

I, I, I, like when um, you know, when they’re. Well, I, I like all of it. I like when it’s just like a take on a bed and you just go have sex, you know. That’s cool. I like if there’s kind of like, um, costumes involved or a cool, like a cool story. Like one time when I, I was like, we had lines, we were fed the lines, she would say like, okay, say ‘hello how are you doing?’ I would say, ‘hello, how are you doing?’ And like stuff like that. Just stuff that um, pushes you a little bit more. I like very artistic things, um, moody things, you know, anything that pushes me as a performer and as a person to grow. I think that’s the main thing I’m always
seeking, which is to grow. So if a scene allows that, in addition to have sex and making some money, um then that’s cool. Yeah.

Taking on a character, as an artistic endeavor, allows some of the performers to tap into acting, and through acting they are able to not only perform sexually, but theatrically. The entertainment component is exciting to these performers because the sexual encounter is not merely sexual, it brings in comedic or dramatic elements beyond sex. When asked about type of work that she prefers, one performer described one of her favorite productions. Her experience provides an example of why some performers enjoy sexual encounters in these sorts of contexts:

Like, I remember being on set and people were doing something for Easter last year. It was so funny, like, um, someone had, you know, bunny ears on, and, and, and they had body paint face, er, on their face painted like, um a bunny. Um, someone’s pussy was like painted on like, it was like cabbage. And the bunny was going toward the cabbage. Like, I just like little scenarios like that, you know, there’s a theme or something going on or, or even [name of a company], how they always do the movies and, and parodies and stuff like that. I want to really get into the acting more and, and getting more into that. Doing artsy stuff with, you know, with your body and that kind of stuff.

Another performer describes one of her favorite experiences while working in the industry, and it also entailed a non-pornographic, movie-like setting in which she got to play a character. To her, productions like these allow her to become absorbed in the work, which is something that she enjoys.

When my husband directed back then we were always super artistic, and all this costume, and the story line behind it. So, for example, one called [names film] we shot at the same location, like the same ranch as [names film]. And, and this, his film was his reimagination of that film, so it was, it was very magical in that sense. It was a huge crews. Just like that whole, it felt like very big, because we all stayed out there overnight. It was a two day shoot and it was very big. Um, I did my scene at the bed of a truck that was parked at the middle of the desert and um, that was very like beautiful to be just in this desert and have the sun on you and just having sex. That, that’s crazy. So stuff like that where I can get completely immersed into like, becoming another like, having another reality.
The previous passages illustrated how performers enjoy role playing within their professional role as a pornographer. The next exchange also demonstrates this theme, and extends it by pointing to a performer who also enjoyed role play in her personal sex life. For her, pornography provided a more legitimate space for that predilection than her personal life. Additionally, her experiences working in pornography also show how a performer might not only bifurcate between their personal and professional roles, or in some cases, as we have seen, duplicate them, but also how performers enjoy working within different roles within their professional roles. In other words, for some performers, affective management sometimes entails separating their personal and professional selves. In other cases, a degree of continuity must be maintained between their personal and professional sex lives. For others, there is a third way of managing affect beyond the personal/professional split. These performers find and manage pleasure through boundaries they maintain between different roles and identities within their professional role as a performer.

In order to accomplish that, a distinction is made between their general “nom de porn” (Escoffier 2003:540), or who they identify as a performer in terms of their general professional personae, and other characters they perform for various productions, particular companies, or different film series. That entails forming – and performing – distinct boundaries around roles that are specific to certain narratives, and the sexual scripts that accompany them. Those characters provide a framework for separate identities that they can become immersed in, thereby facilitating engrossment – and pleasure – in the different kinds of sexual encounters associated with different professional roles and settings.

The next performer illustrates this theme. Although her general nom de porn is identified on the promotional materials for a particular character she plays, it is merely a baseline for
professional recognition, as the characters have their own names and sexual personas (e.g., ‘so and so’ as ‘x’). Furthermore, she is both a producer and performer, and that creates another level of separation for the different professional roles that she adopts. As a result, she provides an example of a fourth dimension of boundaries as far as separation of roles and identities are concerned. She not only has different characters across her role as a performer that she plays, in addition to her general personae, she maintains a distinction between the roles she plays as a professional who is hired by other producers, and the ones that she occupies when she is performing in her own productions. Even though she gets hired by others to play her general nom de porn, and she may perform as any number of other characters, the character she is known most for playing is something that she created. And that particular character is not for hire. She performs that particular role/identity in the films that she produces herself.

The following exchange demonstrates how role playing is more complicated than the simple distinction between personal and professional roles and identities found in the literature on prostitutes and role playing as a form of emotion management (Abel 2011; Sanders 2005). In pornographic sex work multiple roles and identities are at work: between personal and professional roles, across roles in their professional role as a performer, and across roles that occur between their professional role as a performer and their professional role as producer.

P: So, I was into something called, I used to call, I don’t know, role play, which I would make up a person that I was that night and go to the bar and pick people up, and just keep it. So like, I hate role play like, oh, let’s pretend. And get dressed up in costumes. Like, it has to be like a special moment for that to be workable. But in porn, like, I get to dress up in a costume and do this shit and like, ‘cause the camera’s there, it’s like, ‘now, I’m an actress, not just a dork [says sarcastically, in a pretentious accent] [we both laugh]. You know, I may have sex in a costume all the time.

CM: And then, you just, whatev, like whatever character you develop.
P: It’s fucking great. It’s the best job that anybody could’ve ever come up with for me. [Laughs]

CM: And then you get to do it yourself. So then, do you, when you create the narrative, or story or just, the, the structure, if you will, to put it most generically, do you put, put in mind, what character you would like to be, then? Or do you just wait until you get there?

P: I will like, just, when I write.

CM: When you get there you know what’s gonna happen?

P: Of course, like, have you seen my work at all, it’s scripted like a movie [Laughs]!

CM: Yeah, yeah. I have, but I just --

P: We’re taking, you know, taping multiple takes of it, so yeah, of course. I know the script well in advance and like, prepare for them well in advance. Um, I have like, sort of, I have [names her character], which is a character that I play a lot that’s in [names a movie] and like this other movie. Um, which is my dirty [names the profession]. And that’s like something that I kind of put on. Like, I can role play that character many times, I could do that improv if I needed to. I understand [names the character], she’s not a [says first name], but we understand each other. [We both laugh] Um, and then in general, like, the basic character that I play in almost every scene that I’m hired for is [says her professional name], is one thing, but wants another thing. Really, it’s all just a cover to get laid.

CM: I got it.

P: So like, oh yeah, like, ‘I totally want to you sell my house and be my real estate agent' and stuff. But like I, I’m really just trying to get laid. That’s, that’s almost every scene that I’ve done. I have an ulterior motive.

[We both laugh]

The next two examples also make parallels between personal and professional roles, and their relationship to managing affect through performing within narratives. First, we return to the performer who engages in narratives that put her in sexual scenarios that she would not do in real life, as she performs in the culturally and politically contentious genre of incest storylines.
At once, it is something that she separates herself from affectively in order to find pleasure in them, but she also uses their very taboo nature to become involved in them. Even for individual performers, the degree to which they ‘put their mind into’ a range of narratives, or even a particular narrative that they may find personally uncomfortable, there is not a monolithic strategy. Deep acting, as a mechanism for managing pleasure, can entail completely separating herself from the encounter, or total immersion. Either way, the character or role is used as an anchor that she detaches herself from emotionally, or attaches herself to emotionally in order to manage affect. Here, she explains how she uses separation and attachment to these sorts of narratives as a way of getting through those scenes, or getting into those scenes, depending on the particular shoot.

P: But for a lot of things I can really black out in my mind. Or like, just kind of turn it a different way, not make it, make it a weird, gross thing or, or, you know, actually looking at it like my daddy is actually touching me, you know? CM: Yeah. P: Um, I, I’m able to think of other things then, and get passed it. But then I turn it into, but, that’s just me, I turn it into like, oh, this is so pervy, this is so, oh, you know, I’m being a naughty little girl and that kind of stuff. I just turn it into what it’s supposed to be. Pervy, naughty. You know. You just gotta put your mind in, in whatever your character is, just, or, just the same thing as an actor. When, when an actor is on set and you know, they’re rolling and, and it’s a crying scene and, and, and all of a sudden they gotta produce some tears. You know, it’s like, whoa. [Laughs. We both laugh]. Yeah, you put yourself into a character. So it’s the same thing.

Finally, another performer shows how the enjoyment of a particular story line is not a static thing. As life events change, so do feelings toward the types of narratives that one is able to become immersed in. She stated that she enjoys acting, and role-playing within her professional role as a performer, however, due to a death in her family, she states that she is a now different person emotionally. Before she spent her everyday life grieving the loss of her loved one, she
identified as a happy and relatively carefree person. Now, she explained that she is a “sad person”.

Prior to that death, she really enjoyed playing the role of a sad person because it was something that was completely foreign to her. Playing a type of affective role was just like playing a character, such as a lawyer or a doctor. But now that she sees the world through that lens – that is her current reality – that is not a role that she would enjoy doing, or be able to become engrossed in anymore.

Yeah, well, well, a while ago, a long time, well, a long time ago actually, I ah, did a move with [says name of a performer] who, who’s my, my good friend and now collaborator. Um, I forgot the name of the movie but I was, I was like, was supposed to be very like, a sad person, and look in the mirror and then, then go in the bath tub and then kill myself. I don’t even know what the lead up to that was, but just like that dramatic, looking in the mirror, being sad and going to the tub. Like I thought that was cool because I was very, um, opposite to who I was back then. Um, ‘cause normally, excluding the last year and 5 months, I’m, I’m a very positive and happy person. Now I’m a sad person, so you know, it, it’s that sadness is not that foreign to me but, um, back then I was just like, oh yeah, let me look sad and feel sad and this. So that was, that was exciting back then.

This performer reveals that there are not static feelings toward the job, and that attitudes toward particular narratives can change over time. Because he was part of the industry, and also a way that she managed affect, it made it doubly difficult to lose him.

Consequently, how she manages affect during the sexual encounter has changed.

### Conclusion

The findings of this research are consistent with previous research on the management of emotion in sex work, yet these findings extend them in ways that differ in the context of pornography production. These findings also reveal tensions between claims made by feminist pornographers about what makes their products distinct and the ways that affect
is managed during the production process. Both of these topics will be discussed in
greater detail next.

**Existing Literature and the Findings of this Study**

Previous research on prostitution found that role-playing was important for
managing emotion during the exchanges that they had with their clients (Abel 2011;
Sanders 2004, 2005; Weitzer 2009; 2013). Consistent with that work, it was found that
role-playing was integral to managing affect and pleasure during the production process.
Producers and performers relied on role-playing, via the characters and narratives
developed for the sexual encounters, at different points in the production process in order
to accomplish sexual pleasure during the sexual exchange between performers. For
producers, that entailed constructing narratives and characters that were enjoyable, and
conducive to a pleasurable sexual exchange. For performers, role-playing was a useful
strategy for managing affect, as they facilitated engrossment in the sexual encounter.
Furthermore, having knowledge of the narrative framework and the sex scripts they
encompassed before they arrived on set allowed the performers to adequately prepare
themselves mentally and physically for the sexual encounter. These preparations are
crucial for affective management, and they are necessary not only for the performers to
become immersed in the sexual experience, they are imperative for making a good
product. It was found that techniques by other sex workers, such as the body
technologies used by strippers (Weseley 2003), were also used by pornographers and
they were an important component of managing affect.
Although the findings are consistent with previous research on the interplay between role-playing, sex-work, and the management of emotion, they also depart from them in some ways. While research on role-playing and prostitution has shown prostitutes tend to bifurcate between their personal roles and their professional roles, it was found that pornography performers approach roles and role-playing in a more heterogeneous manner in order to manage affect. Multiple roles within and across their professional roles were adopted for accomplishing pleasure, including taking on the role of the very consumer that they are making the product for. Consistent with research on heterosexual men that perform in gay pornography (Escoffier 2003), one technique used by performers was to rely on their nom de porn. However, instead of using one, or their general nom de porn, in order to become immersed in their role as a professional and the sexual encounters, some relied on different identities within their professional role so that they could approach, and become engrossed, in different types of productions.

Tensions between Feminist Pornography and the Findings
The findings of this study revealed a tension between the claims made by feminist pornographers and the experiences of the participants in the sample. Unscripted sex was not found to be the preferred way of approaching the sexual encounter for both mainstream and non-mainstream performers. Instead, the route to authentic pleasure was taken through role-playing. Many of the performers enjoyed role-playing not only because it was a useful way of managing affect and achieving pleasure, they also found it enjoyable because it highlighted the more artistic part of the job, and one of the reasons why they liked being part of a creative industry. Additionally, an emphasis on unscripted
and autonomous sexual encounters not only presents challenges for the management of affect, it presents ethical dilemmas. Having and knowing the general script that will be used for a production is another layer of consent and it also provides performers with the chance to be adequately prepared for the sexual encounter prior to the shoot. Furthermore, it was found that interaction between the performers and other individuals can assist pleasure as well as reduce potential harms.
Chapter 5: 'Real' Pleasure and Material Reality

Introduction
The purpose of this chapter is to provide findings on the production process in the context of broader material relations. First, the extent to which feminist pornography resists the mainstream industry as far as incorporation and precorporation are concerned is covered. Additionally, two other emergent themes – hypercorporation and paracorporation will be discussed. Second, the ways that the producers and performers must work with stigma is covered in relation to the following themes: affective management, the boundaries between different types of sex work within the pornography industry, concerns associated with social epidemiology, and opportunity costs associated with being involved in the industry. Finally, the reasons why producers and performers made the decision to enter into, and remain in the industry are discussed.

Corporeality and Corporate Matters
This section covers the limits of cultural resistance in the context of the material conditions of late capitalism. The extent to which feminist pornography is able – and willing – to resist the mainstream pornography industry as pornography is produced and circulated is discussed through four themes: incorporation, precorporation, hypercorporation, and paracorporation.

Incorporation
The incorporation of feminist pornography into the mainstream market is, after all, a matter of time. Over the course of this study the incorporation of feminist pornography into mainstream
pornography, as well as into non-pornographic mainstream media, was increasingly evident. Similar to other subcultural cultural productions that attempt to resist the mainstream, feminist pornography was inevitably also subjected to this. This section provides evidence of a few of the sites in which that occurred: trade/industry media, pornographic tube sites, and mainstream pornography's award and trade shows.

**Trade/Industry Media**

The mainstream industry has certainly taken notice of feminist pornography as a potentially lucrative market. Dozens of articles on feminist pornography, across a range of publications, began popping up more and more frequently over the course of the study. Although the topic of feminist pornography (and pornography for women or women friendly pornography) was not completely absent before the research began, the frequency of the articles that featured feminist pornography and the potential it has for generating income burgeoned over time. That includes articles that appeared within publications intended for the pornography industry.

A preponderance of research on pornography consumption focuses on men, nonetheless, there is a growing body of literature concerned with sexual culture produced for and by women and feminists, women users and viewers, and gender differences in consumption or reception; research has shown that women consume less pornography than men, however, women that do watch pornography are more likely to view it in more traditional mediums, such as hard copies of DVDs, than watch it online (Beggan and Scott 2009; Ciclitira 2004; Crutcher 2012; Lawrence and Herold 1988; Leit 2001; Lewallen 1989; Mosher and MacIan 1994; Owens 2014; Parvez 2006; Snitow 1979; Senn 1993; Sonnet 1999; Sun et al. 2008; Williams 1999; Wright, Bae, and Funk 2013). Retailers can not only benefit from women’s increasing interest in pornography
(and increasing women’s interest in it), they can generate more income by selling these types of products, as they command higher prices than online streaming or video on demand. This also means that women are actually buying the products and not as likely to consume content online that is free. Another reason why feminist pornography and pornography for women are important markets for producers, including the mainstream industry, is that they are not as saturated as other, more established markets that have been around for longer. When these economic factors are taken into consideration, it is evident that there is profit that can still be made from an otherwise flailing industry by tapping into this demographic of consumers. Additionally, by emphasizing the political aspect, it not only taps into a market that has yet to reach its full potential in terms of saturation, it also means that these viewers are a sort of captive audience. Consumers that purchase pornography for political reasons are limited to a particular brand, which reduces the number of choices they have. Taken as a whole, it is easy to see why these products and potential customer base have been getting more attention in recent years.

Take, for example, the article published in 2013 on XBIZ.com, “The Power of Feminist Porn, What Retailers Need to Know.” XBIZ is a trade magazine and website for the pornography industry that focuses on digital media or web-based pornography. They tout themselves as “The Industry Source” and the “Industry News Network.” While dozens of articles on feminist pornography as a market have been published, that pieces provides a good example of how feminist pornography is viewed as less of a political project, and more of a business opportunity for retailers.

18 Article from XBIZ.com: http://www.xbiz.com/articles/166263

19 XBIZ.com website: http://www.xbiz.com/
Since the relationship between feminism and pornography has predominantly been framed in the context of a social problem (Attwood 2010; Attwood and Smith 2014; Smith and Attwood 2014; Williams 2004), and more specifically, one that has given primacy to the perspectives of anti-pornography feminists, many of these articles approach feminist pornography or pro-pornography feminism as a conundrum or a paradox. Most begin with the issue of how to define it.

It’s hard to simply define “feminist porn.” Some experts say it’s ethically produced movies. Others say it centers on gender equality, while others maintain that it’s adult material produced by women for women who know what women really want.

Retailers want to know what consumers want.

Regardless of its definition, the genre is hot. And that’s good news for the adult retail sector that has a whole new category to explore and market to consumers clamoring for adult products that don’t cater to the typical industry products. Even so, beyond the matter of conceptualization, those within the industry realize that no matter how it is defined, it has made its way into the public eye. Consequently, sexual culture that is labeled or branded that way is a new, untapped market for mainstream producers. And even within the feminist pornography community it is discussed in the context of consumption, and the increasing demand for that category of products.

For retailers, feminist pornography can be sold as a new commodity and it also allows them to re-brand or rearrange their current inventory to include products that would otherwise go without the label. In other words, making new types of pornography within this genre is one way of capitalizing on it, but it also provides an opportunity to increase sales within their existing stock or older inventory. This makes feminist pornography an economic interest on multiple levels, as indicated in the passage below,
as it creates a space for profiting off of content that has already been produced, is being currently produced, and will be produced.

The expert adds that the number one question she gets asked by people at her lectures is where they can buy feminist porn? “For brick-and-mortar shops and websites, creating and designating a feminist porn section is a good idea, knowing that a film can fit into multiple genres. A shelf talker or website page that has a brief definition (or link to a definition) could help educate consumers about what feminist porn is,” she advises.

The demand for feminist pornography has been framed as a sort of folk culture that contrasts with mass culture. Mainstream producers can appropriate that tack by capitalizing on the idea that these products are ‘for the people, by the people.’ This provides the space for them to use political discourse as a tool for selling products. As a result, the supposed demands 'from below' are turned into market demands, and feminist pornography is being placed in the hands of marketing and production that occurs 'from above’. The next set of passages, taken from two different points in the article, illustrates that potential:

Unlike most of adult commerce where products were put on the shelves and the consumers made their choice, the interest in fem porn is coming from the bottom up with consumers creating the demand. Retailers now have to adjust their marketing quickly in order to reap the rewards.

Despite recognizing the newfound opportunity and stocking the right products, retailers considering feminist porn can’t simply rest and wait for consumers to knock down their doors. It takes new strategies and inventive approaches to attract fans.

Selling newer and older products within this niche is one thing that makes it appealing to producers and distributors, but the issue of format or medium, coupled with the price point, is another issue that draws attention to feminist pornography. When demand is
coupled with a unique and non-saturated consumer base, there is also an awareness of the potential that these products have for being sold at a higher price than other products.

Of course the lifeblood of retail is sales. And with a burgeoning market, the question is always price point. Will the new fem porn products support higher mark-up because of the demand? Does the niche have rabid fans that will pay whatever’s necessary to get their hands on these types of products?

Taormino says it depends on the format. She says the web-based content she’s seen can be very affordable and competitive. As far as full-length films and DVDs, the price point is higher.

In addition to discussing how feminist pornography, as a branded product, can yield profit for pornographers in the industry, Taormino provides justification for those products at a higher price by paralleling it to other 'ethical' commodities that command a higher price. Those types of products emphasize the process in which it is made, and not just the final product that is being consumed. By likening feminist pornography to an already established discourse around good consumption and ethical consumerism, it not only makes the consumer feel more justified in making the purchase, it also justifies a mark up in the price by the producer, distributors, and retailers. In the following passage taken from that article she explains:

“This is where I consider feminist porn ‘organic, fair trade porn,’ she says, “because it has many parallels with the organic and fair trade movement in the United States. There has been a cultural shift among consumers who are willing to pay more for higher quality products produced under fair work and trade conditions. People are also willing to put their money where their politics are to support local, artisanal, and independent small businesses. If they care where their coffee came from, how it was made, and how it got to market, they buy local, organic, and fair trade. Well, the same thing needs to happen for porn buyers: some of them care about where their porn comes from, the conditions under which it was created, and who profits from it consumption. If that matters to you, you need to pay a little more in order to support sustainable small feminist porn businesses.
Know that spending more on a feminist porn movie also means that performers and crew were well paid and you’re not getting an assembly line, generic product.”

She is not alone in making this comparison and many articles have been written in mainstream media about the idea of feminist pornography being synonymous with fair trade and ethical commodity chains when covering it. What makes it problematic is the lack of attention given to criticisms of ethical consumption in recent years. Labels such as fair trade have been appropriated and exploited by companies in order to put profits, or the market, before people and just social arrangements. Given the ethical and political unreliability of such labels, it is interesting that the analogy is used to classify feminist pornography.

In addition, she makes the distinction between generic porn and feminist pornography as a brand by likening the mainstream process to Fordist manufacturing. That is a valid critique of the bureaucratization of pleasure and affect in neoliberal contexts (Fisher 2009). Nonetheless, consistency also matters for managing affect. Consider the previous example of the performer who indicated that she liked working with particular companies because they are consistent, and she knows what to expect when she works for them. Regardless of scale, there are still conventions, and as argued in the previous chapters, predictability or standardization in the production process is not necessarily bad, and in some cases, it can be more ethical, as the performer knows ahead

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20 For example, Pandora Blake’s Dreams of Spanking website uses fair trade to describe her work (http://dreamsofspanking.com/pages/main/recent?affiliate=2330150). Olivia Tarplin makes the same comparisons in her Tedx talk on feminist pornography (https://tedxinnovations.ted.com/2015/07/29/spotlight-tedx-talk-can-feminist-porn-help-us-have-better-and-safer-sex/), and feminist pornography distributors, such as PINKLABEL (https://crashpaddseries.com/queer-porn/pinklabel-vod/) or PinkLabel.tv and the production companies they distribute have been described in this manner (http://www.pinklabel.tv/on-demand/). Numerous articles written on feminist porn also make these connections.
of time what they are getting into before arrive to the set. Furthermore, as demonstrated in the previous chapters, conventional practices should not automatically be equated with prohibiting pleasure – they can potentially assist the performer with becoming mentally and physically engrossed in the sexual encounter.

Additionally, claims that smaller, more artisanal production companies pay more is not always the case. At the very least, such a statement cannot be claimed as an inherent feature of feminist pornography, or a reason why those products merit higher prices. Production companies with smaller scales may have difficulty matching the budgets of larger, more mainstream companies, including how much they are able to pay the performers. This is especially the case when larger companies that are given funding prior to production are taken into consideration (e.g., when a distributor pays a producer to make a specific product that is guaranteed to be sold to large cable networks as well as the adult entertainment market; that arrangement will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter). The experience of one performer illustrates this. As she was discussing how she started working in the industry, she mentioned the pay difference between working in queer and mainstream productions. Her first scene was within the queer pornography scene, but she eventually wound up in more mainstream productions. She states that she:

did a scene with a girl called [names a performer], like for her website, she gave me $200 or something. At the time I had no idea it was like, not an appropriate scene rate. Uh, I guess for the queers it is. But like, [giggles], um, that doesn’t seem right.

Furthermore, it will be shown later, that because of their small scale and limited budgets, that puts some companies in a position where they need to work with mainstream
companies, or larger companies that generate more income. Although that is not inherently unethical, it does have the potential to be exploitative, as sometimes smaller companies can be pressured to hire performers from producers that also work outside of the formal economy of the mainstream industry that engage in privates, or, as previously mentioned, forms of prostitution that take place within the industry (examples of this will be discussed in more detail later).

The article also goes on to paraphrase a queer producer that is aware of the confluence between the product with the price, and how that may change once it is distributed. When the product makes its way to a shelf in a brick and mortar store or online retail outlet, pricing becomes discretionary:

[M]any fem porn titles are slowly shifting into quadrants based on quality as well as price. Yet, products start out with the same similar price point and quickly shift to what the market or store believes the unit should retail.

The piece concludes with a nod to the 'power' of the consumer, yet not without mentioning the power feminism can have for making profits. It is clear that acknowledging the feminist label can be lucrative for retailers, especially if they keep feminist products separate from mainstream ones. Incorporation, in other words, must be done out in the open if one is to succeed in making money from the feminist brand. However, the act of subsuming feminist pornography into the mainstream must, at once, separate itself from it, while doing so from within the industry. That bifurcation is what they are selling, and anticipate that prospective customers will buy.

It appears as though fem porn is following in the footsteps of gay porn that for the most part demands quality from its discerning fans—and that can mean bigger profits for retailers who don’t lump the niche in with traditional porn, but listen to what the ladies have to say.
Just as equality and inclusion became a marketing tool to tap into the gay and lesbian consumer base by framing consumption as an indicator of political parity and democracy (Binnie 2014; Gudelunas 2011; Khamis and Lambert 2015; Mitchell 2011; Sender 2004; Silverston 2012; Weiss 2008), feminism is also gaining more attention in this way. In this regard, feminist pornography is more about capital gains than political gains.

**Pornographic Tube Sites**

Several pornographic tube sites were visited over the course of the study. While looking through those sites one final time, a new category was serendipitously found on the front page of the YouPorn.com site: the YouPorn Female Directors Series. I did not notice that category throughout the entire duration of the study, and wanted to make sure that I had not been missing it all along. I did some research online to look further into the category, hoping to get more information about when and why it had been added.

It turns out that YouPorn added the category approximately 3 weeks earlier, and they followed the model offered by the experts in the aforementioned article published 3 years earlier. They created a separate 'safe for work' video on the website Vimeo, which 'educated' the viewer about their decision. They also framed the niche as political, inclusion was done in the spirit of feminism. The description for the 'documentary', which was a little over two and a half minutes long, came with a single line, “In celebration of International Women's Day, YouPorn proudly presents The Female Director Series”. The two tags for the video had no sexual connotations to them, it was marked under the “Culture & Tech” and “Documentary” sections within the Vimeo.

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21 YouPorn’s ‘Female Director Series’ documentary on Vimeo: [https://vimeo.com/157503165](https://vimeo.com/157503165)
website. They took the advice given by the 'feminist experts' and used education and political altruism to create a separate and different niche for women or feminists. After returning to YouPorn in order to assess this category, I noticed this documentary was included along with the other pornographic videos. They also emulated another technique discussed above – the content contained in that category was also cross-listed in other categories without the women/feminist demarcation.

Another site, PornHub, has also followed suit by adding a 'Female Friendly' category to their website in an attempt to get more people to visit their website. They also rely on a separation between ‘the industry’ and female or women viewers in order to justify a distinct category for them. For example, here is a description of the female friendly category under one of their links: “If the sex industry has left a bad taste in your mouth, Pornhub.com has great FEMALE FRIENDLY action. Hundreds of sexy free clips are yours!” They also have another link describing the content as erotica instead of pornography, under the category “Erotica for Women”. They play up the same distinction between pornography and erotica made by many anti-pornography feminists, and are careful about changing the tone of the invitation to reflect that difference. In contrast with the previous one, this category is described in the following way: “Pornhub.com is filled with seductive couples, steamy love-making and the best female friendly erotica online. Catch all the videos for free.”

In sum, the formal economy of the mainstream industry is not the only location where feminist pornography has been incorporated into mainstream pornography, sites that rely on the “gift economy” of pornography (Paasonen 2010), or provide free online streaming of pornographic videos that have been pirated, have also used this niche to distribute pornography and gain more traffic from females, women, and people that identify as feminist. And they have
not only used women and feminism for branding or simply labeling, they have also relied on the same techniques used by feminist pornographers, including the same discourse originally used by women and feminist pornographers so that these audiences can relate to, or identify with, these emergent categories.

Mainstream Pornography's Award Shows and Trade Shows

Award shows have been a staple of the mainstream pornography for decades, which are organized so that the work and products of the adult entertainment industry deemed exemplary by those within the industry could be applauded and promoted. While the FPA was organized to set feminist pornographic content apart from the mainstream pornography industry, mainstream pornographers have more recently organized these events to include them. Similarly, they use the same strategy of recognizing those products within the mainstream structure while also framing the content as separate from it.

The most popular awards show for the mainstream pornography industry is organized by Adult Video News (AVN), which is a magazine made for people who work in the industry, known as the AVN Awards. This show likens itself to the mainstream (non-pornographic) film industry by billing the event as “The Oscars of Porn”. Although this used to be considered more of a fringe event, in more recent years the AVN Awards can be viewed on television cable networks like Showtime or viewed on YouTube. Mainstream news media, particularly via Web 2.0, also cover this event. In 2003, XBIZ, the adult entertainment industry news source mentioned above, also began hosting an awards show.

Website for the AVN Awards: http://avnawards.avn.com/
Myriad trade shows, exhibitions, and conventions are also a part of the pornography industry, just as most industries and professions have them. The AVN hosts a yearly convention – the Adult Entertainment Expo (AEE) – so that producers, performers, and products within the adult entertainment industry can share information as well as promote their products. Similarly, XBIZ also hosts their own trade shows and conventions. In short, AVN and XBIZ are two key figures in the adult entertainment industry, which makes being incorporated into them meaningful. During the course of this study, both AVN and XBIZ began incorporating feminist pornography into their events (notwithstanding their coverage of it in their news publications), including “Feminist Porn Release of the Year.”

Within the past few years, these large mainstream organizations have formally included feminist pornography in their award and trade shows, and that induction means it has been officially been recognized by the mainstream as a viable market, and one that people in the industry should take seriously as an economic opportunity. And the inclusion of 'feminist pornography' into those mainstream arenas did not go unrecognized outside of the industry, as mainstream (non-pornographic) news media also took note of mainstream pornography's efforts to include feminist pornography into the fold. For example, in June 2014, Vegas Seven, a local news outlet for the Las Vegas area, featured an article on the mainstreaming of feminist pornography, “Feminist Porn Enters the Mainstream”, noting that trend.

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23 Website for the AVN AEE: [http://trade.adultentertainmentexpo.com/](http://trade.adultentertainmentexpo.com/)

24 A list of the XBIZ Award winners is available online: [http://xbizawards.xbiz.com/winners.php](http://xbizawards.xbiz.com/winners.php)

Like many of the pieces, including the one highlighted above, it starts by tackling the problem of defining feminist pornography, followed by content that interlaces testimonies from key figures and experts in the field in order to describe what it is about, the forms it takes, as well as providing historical context for its evolution. The other emphasis placed on feminist pornography, also like the article used to illustrate the industry's interests, are concerns related to commerce, and more specifically, what it means for, and its marketability within, the mainstream pornography industry. The difference here is that this article is written a little over a year after the previous one, and it is written from outside of the industry. The process of incorporation was underway, and that serves as the basis for the article. Feminist pornography is not understood on its own accord per se, nor could it accurately be approached that way, as it was evident that it reached a certain tipping point in growth and popularity, which clearly garnered attention from the mainstream pornography industry. For example, here are a few passages from that article:

While sales figures as a percentage of the adult market are difficult to measure, in January the AVN Adult Entertainment Expo and XBiz 360, the industry’s two biggest trade shows, both featured panels devoted to feminist pornography. XBiz also added a new category to its awards show, “Feminist Porn Release of the Year.”

[A]s feminist directors work to redefine porn, and grapple with perhaps the biggest challenge of all: how to attract new viewers and make money in an industry where stereotypical, airbrushed fantasies are still the norm.

Feminist pornography had clearly been incorporated into the larger market, and was in the process of being contained – or embraced – by the very industry it claimed to position itself against. In other words, a writer or journalist would have to go out of their way to omit that development, whereas just a few years prior, it would take more intimate knowledge of the industry in order to find evidence of the mainstream permeating the boundaries between it and feminist pornography.
The idea of the incorporation of marginal or deviant cultural forms into mainstream cultural forms rests on the idea of a teleological framework. That is, non-mainstream culture that is created as a form of resistance is independent from mainstream forms and values from the start, and over time it eventually becomes subsumed into mainstream culture and turned into political pastiche. In other words, it begins, or is created, separately from mainstream culture as its own unique form. Another approach to the notion of cultural resistance, or the production of culture as a form of resistance, is precorporation. This is a more skeptical version of cultural subversion in late-capitalist reality. This concept emphasizes the limits of ideological and material resistance in consumer culture, and it does not rely on a teleological approach to resistance. In this formulation, culture that is created as a form of resistance already has the ideal and material structures 'built in' to it from the beginning. Accordingly, there is no pure starting point that can be said to exist outside of cultural production within consumer society – the beliefs and practices of late capitalism are already, to some extent or another, part of the purportedly new cultural creations that are said to deviate from the norm.

In this study, evidence of the notion of incorporation was found, however, the concept of precorporation was also strongly supported through the observations made while gathering and analyzing the data. The limits of the usefulness of the concept of incorporation is tied not just to concerns over whether or not it is inevitable, or even possible due to matters of ideological precorporation, but also because it can only be ascertained in the realm of the visible, that is, in the public eye, once it is circulated, and in the context of consumption. In other words, as a product. The emphasis is on material culture and not the culture of materialism. Consumption is without a doubt an important place to observe consumer societies, but production remains
relevant. Precorporation is an important way of understanding how dominant culture is imbued in creative resistance not only on the level of the creations, but also in invisible or less invisible locations, such as the creative process, or on the level of production.

This section provides an overview of some of the ways that the production process was imbued with material reality from the onset, which lends support to the idea that resistance – through the act of creating culture – has limitations before it even hits the market and has a chance of being absorbed into it. In other words, marketplace and consumer values are constitutive with the very act of creating pornography, and this was evident through the discussions with individuals who are involved in the creative process itself.

Furthermore, although precorporation does not necessarily inhibit or facilitate the performer’s ability to experience pleasure during the sexual performance, it is undoubtedly tied to the management of affect and the bureaucratization of pleasure during the production process. In this section examples of precorporation will be provided in the context of the production process and its relationship to two broad areas: profit, or distribution and promotional concerns that precede the sexual encounter in the production process, and the pleasures of the spectacle, or matters of consumption and the consumer's gaze during the sexual encounter.

Although this section focuses primarily on the production process, another important field is the outcome of that process, which is the location of the sexual culture that is produced, or the creations that the pornographers make as a form of political resistance. Precorporation is also evident in the narratives used during the sexual encounter that are represented in the final product. The social narratives used within the production process are inexorably linked to the broader social narratives outside of it, that is, the material arrangements in which the production process happens, which are the socio-structural arrangements that the producers and consumers
inhabit. In order for the narrative to be socially legible, whether they are trying to be resistant or not, there must be continuity between the narratives within pornography and outside of it, or else it would not be socially legible, politically or otherwise. In other words, the narratives are not blank slates, they cannot exist *tabula rasa*. The narratives do not come from nowhere, and even if they are trying to be resistant or subversive, they are still reacting to, through, and with the larger, real life narratives of material reality.

*Production Values*

The economic and legal external constraints mentioned in the previous chapters are one form of precorporation. Resistance is already bound by the law, and limited to the possibilities of de jure concerns. Similarly, economic matters of distribution and consumption are precorporated from the onset, as the individuals involved in making the product must take these things into consideration if they are to make circulate their products, nonetheless make a profit.

Precorporation matters for affect, as producers must not only must think of the end product, and what happens to it once the production is over, decisions tied to precorporation seep into several aspects of creative process, and therefore resonates throughout the production process. These include decisions that impact the likelihood of pleasure, or engrossment, will be achieved during the sexual encounter. To return to this aforementioned issue in this context, take, for example, the creative process for one producer. He not only must consider external constraints associated with legal and economic concerns, but they infiltrate the idea itself, as well as decisions concerning hiring. Both of these aspects are integral to the way that affect and pleasure are managed by the performers and others who are involved in the creative process.
Usually I don’t generate an idea, a company approaches me with an idea. And ah, so they kind of have a general idea, if it’s like older woman with younger guys, like thing. So then I’ll generate the script. I’ll, I’ll either write it or I’ll have one of several people that I have write for me, um, and then we will cast it. Um, I will give them some ideas of who I’d like in it and then they’ll say no and then they’ll give me some ideas. So there’s a process between the company and, and myself agreeing on who should play what part. Um, and then, ah, so, we, we have a script or an outline and then we put it together and I submit them a budget and then they’ll give me the money or part of the money, depending on the company.

Although this producer was one of the participants who received a FPA, among others, including AVN awards, he is more embedded in, and associated with, mainstream pornography. It makes sense that he would be more concerned with mainstream market dynamics, and work for larger companies that mold his creative and economic choices.

However, examples of precorporation are also tied to producers that are predominantly associated with the feminist and queer niches of pornography as well. The next example shows how precorporation is woven into the decisions of non-mainstream producers, and in ways that parallel the process for the mainstream producer above. The markets concerns associated with the end product are also linked to decisions made before the product even begins to materialize, and that includes decisions made about who will be hired. Since non-mainstream producers are less likely to take matters of promotion for granted, they must consider these factors more explicitly, and take them into consideration at the onset of production if they are to make a product that will receive attention and gain momentum in the market. While discussing what a typical production process entails with the next producer, she brought up the distinction of 'good content' and 'bad content'. When we discussed what that meant for her, elements of precorporation in this context emerged. Below, she states the importance of hiring performers that will be good for business, albeit it in a symbiotic way, and the necessity
of selecting individuals on a basis beyond how well they will do in the sexual performance, which is how well they perform in the market.

I’ve dealt with somebody who had a bad reputation, but I didn’t know it at that time and was building at that time, but, ah, where the bad content would be for me is to have someone who isn’t as active in the content, pushing as I am, for example, would I shoot someone, who, had only, 100 Facebook users or a couple thousand? Who’s active on Facebook and who’s not, so now they can help. I wanted someone to help and another thing I also do is make sure that the people that I bring into my films, each one of them, can actually go and substitute for me in an interview. I put people in magazines, so it’s not just me, it’s about them as well because I don’t think that you get paid enough, so I want to make sure that if I’m dealing with you on a business level that I feel confident in you, one, representing my company and how we’ve done business, right? So at that point we’re cut as far as how we’ve done business but now I’m sending you to magazines. Like, hey, why don’t you interview this person? Or, or articles, mentioning them so that they can get this or say, hey, I have this person who interviewed me, they want to interview you, can I give them your information so that they have an opportunity to also make more money on different angles. So, the people that I’m dealing aren’t just, sex activists, but these are people who are going on to live normal lives, like one is uh, uh, up and coming, you know, queer barber, you know, so now it’s like, oh, hey, I see you, I see you’ve done that and now you’re doing this and it just helps build the brand. Now, and I want someone to help with mine so I think making sure that someone has something going on or whatever that means and that it, it, it, is advertising as well.

Precorporation is part of the stages in the creative process that lead up to the sexual encounter, but it is also evident in the sexual encounter itself. The consumer is also precorporated into the creative process during the sexual performance, and some of the ways that is done is discussed next. While this might seem obvious, the way in which the user is integrated into the process is more nuanced than considering their role as someone who makes a purchase based on sexual tastes after the product is made.
Consumer Affairs

The next participant is both a producer and a performer and she incorporates the gaze of the user into her method of approaching the creative process. She explains that there are three main things that she considers when going about the productions that she creates, and one of them is the viewer. Although she makes lesbian pornography, and pornography recognized by the FPA, the understood 'you', or the taken for granted assumption of who is purchasing her products is still men. In the following exchange she explains that although she takes the presumably male user into account when producing and performing, she states that she really is not there for them when she performs in the sexual encounter.

P: Okay. So the three things are best performer, like, her feeling good, her having a great experience is good. A two is, that camera. And then three is like, the boys at home. Um, so like making sure this is something that that like I can sell.

CM: Okay.

P: That the product holds together, that like, um, you know. I'm, what I'm doing befits the movie that I'm working on. You know that this, this is styled correctly, that this is all, the product is coming together.

CM: Okay. When you say boys at home is that literally boys or are we saying figuratively like, is is –

P: I like, use that phrase as a catchall.

CM: Okay, Okay. Just making sure

P: Yeah, just the boy at home. The user.

CM: Okay. Nice, well –

P: I was like fucking [says a performer's name] the other day and like, like were on set and the director like, goes to shut off the camera, and I’m all just like, ‘you know I’m not really here for him, I’m not really here for the boys at home, [says a performer's name], I’m here for you’. ‘Cause like, if I’m there, you can leave if you want, but like, we’re gonna stay here and fuck, it’s not my fault that you know, I know it’s going on.
CM: Okay.

P: Okay. Another way to phrase that thing about the three things is that it’s the, it’s the, performer, like my scene partners, that crew, the director, like the people that are making the movie and then the end user.

CM: Okay.

P: Those are the things to keep in mind.

Even though she stated that she only kept the user in mind as far as the product was concerned, 'the boys at home' came up again at a different part of our interview. While we were discussing the ways that she approached pleasure, and the techniques that she used if she happened to not be particularly attracted to a performer, or completely immersed in the sexual encounter with a certain performer, she mentioned that she relied on the user as a form of affective management.

In situations where she needed assistance with become engrossed, or had to rely on deep acting in order to become sexually aroused so the she and the performer could experience pleasure, she did not reach within herself per se in order to do that, she reached outside of the sexual encounter and production process and relied on the hypothetical gaze of the consumer in order to achieve that. Role playing in this sense was more than separating her personal and professional roles as other sex workers have done (Abel 2011; Sanders 2005), she role-played in a way that fused her professional sexual predilections with the assumed desire of the viewer. She simulated what she thought the user might find personally appealing about the performer, and what they might like to do in the sexual encounter. In other words, she was not performing for them, she was performing through them. Their sexual subjectivity became part of her own desires as a sexual agent in the encounter, and she used that as a way of managing her own pleasure so that she could become engrossed. Yet, her own reputation as a professional, and her
role as a performer was still maintained, as she was concerned about the consequences of working in a production that could compromise her own name within the industry.

In short, depending on the situation, she either separated herself from the other performer and took on the role of the viewer, or she separated herself from the viewer and relied on her own sexual desires in order to achieve a sexually satisfying experience. The following passage illustrates how the viewer is not solely an element that is precorporated as a business decision, 'he' is psychically and physically embodied in the creative process, as a form of role play. The consumer is literally materialized in the very sexual experience that she was producing for 'him' through the materiality of her own mind and body while creating the material culture that would 'he' would later use, and also consume not just in material reality à la capitalism, and through the material culture of pornography as a commodity, but also through the materiality of 'his' own body while having an affective, or pleasurable, sexual experience while viewing the pornography.

CM: In the odd events that you’re not into it, like, do you just have to reach back into your mind and, and, what makes you into it?

P: There’s something about my partner that I want.

CM: Okay

P: If I haven’t fucked her before, I want to get her off. ‘Cause even if I don’t like her, I like that. If I haven’t fucked her before and I did just meet her which sometimes happens, I just deal with it man, you know? It’s my fucking reputation.

CM: Yeah.

P: [Says her name] likes everybody. [Laughs]

[We both laugh]

P: Because the boys at home like this girl so I have to like this girl for them, even if I don’t.
CM: I see, I see, so like a proxy?

P: Yeah, I am. I’m their avatar, so like if I’m hired for the scene I’m not hired to like show up and be like, ‘well, I’m not really into this girl so I’m not gonna have with her, not her’. ‘Cause someone is into that girl. So I think about that. Like, what is the person that’s into this girl into about her? Her ass, yeah! Even though I’m thinking, ‘oh god, this ass, it’s just eh.’ It doesn’t matter if that’s what I’m into. I think about what is this girl’s appeal and I play to that.


P: Find something that’s hot about her, even if it’s not hot to me. It’s just, I like women’s sexual energy so I’ll be fine as long as she’s being cool with me I don’t even care.

CM: Okay

P: If she likes me and she gets good and hot, and she’s having a good time, then that’s good.

This is consistent with Van Doorn's (2010) research, but these findings do not duplicate the findings of that study; instead, they extend them. Van Doorn focused on the hyperreal quality of amateur pornographic productions and the ways in which they tended to emulate the types of visual conventions of professional pornography, including the kinds of sex acts contained within them. In this case, the relationship between the simulation and reality works between the real performer and the consumer as a simulation, and the continuous loop between the two is realized as the sexual encounter is materialized through sexual pleasure in the production process, that is, through the act of production, and not consumption via materiality/corporeality. It is the producer that is emulating the 'image' of the consumer, not the consumer that is emulating the images they see in the final product. The act of producing porn sex becomes more real to performer while she imagines a simulated consumer in order to become a proxy for the simulated sex that the user will have with those images when they later engage with the product in real life.
There are other ways that the viewer is precorporated into the sexual encounter that also factor into techniques used for managing affect by the performer. However, instead of relying on the bifurcation between real sex and porn sex as a measure of authentic pleasure during the sexual encounter, the pleasure is achieved by acknowledging that the sex acts that occur during are in fact not real life sex, and that it is 'porn sex'. The actuality that sex in pornography is different from the kind of sex that the viewer would have at home is what facilitates pleasure in this case. The next performer provides an example of this, as her own definition of the situation (Goffman 1959) and identity as a performer, entails an emphasis on the inconsistencies between sexual performances in the real world and porn worlds.

The spectator is conjured again, but so are other forms of popular culture, so that she can frame, and then later realize genuine pleasure in these artificial situations. To her, pornographic sex is like spectator sports, and pornography performers are similar to athletes. She identifies as a “sexual athlete” and likens the 'realness' of sexual performances in pornography to wrestling. Although wrestling may be scripted, and the narratives that encompass the bodily movements are fictive, the wrestlers are still engaging in physical interaction and performing real wrestling moves. She discusses this also in the context of affective management, as she recognizes that while many people like to engage in sports, not everyone is an athlete. Part of the appeal of being a fan is liking the game, but it also entails a certain respect for athletes themselves, and their ability to play the game skillfully through their physical performances during the game. Much like the distinction between play and sports (Frey and Eitzen 1991), the sexual encounter involves an act that many people do, but not everyone can do professionally. The interplay between spectatorship, 'sporstmenship', and the commodification of bodies is just as relevant to pornography as it is to other 'games'. Sexual play, like the distinction between play and games
(Goffman 1961), becomes a game when it is performed for an audience as a professional endeavor, and a commodified cultural experience that some people do and others watch.

She enjoys that the type of sex that she has on set especially because it does not reflect the kind of sex that typically occurs off set. This distinction is one way that she derives pleasure from performing in pornography, and because of that, it is one element of affective management for her. In a way, this is similar to the function that role-play has for some of the performers, as the fantasies or 'made up' narratives facilitate pleasure because they enable the performers to become engrossed in the encounter. In this context 'porn sex' becomes its own narrative, independent of the narratives that are specifically performed within the sexual encounter.

The porn sex narrative involves a set of performances that are associated with roles within an alternate material reality that is fictive, but real, as they really occur in the structure of the conventions tied to the creative process which also occurs in the material reality of the adult entertainment industry. Although this world is not real, that does not make it fake. The sex acts may deliberately depart from real life, and are only realized in and through fantasy, but that reality is nonetheless real. This other not-real-life reality is something that the performer can attach to the sexual encounter, which then anchors them to the material reality of fantasy. The real fantasy of the porn sex narrative ultimately fosters the performer's ability to mentally and physically derive pleasure in a concrete location, albeit an abstraction of place that exists apart from real life, so that she can find real pleasure that can only be located in the 'non-real' reality of pornography.

CM: [T]he stuff you do, is it acting based or do you really try to like, strive for, you know pleasure on the scene, like how do you separate that or integrate that?

P: Okay, let me tell you. I’m very unique as a performer because I am so good at what I do.
CM: Okay.

P: Um, it’s both.

CM: Okay.

P: So, I love that it’s both because porn is a lot like pro wrestling to me. So if you watch a wrestling match, like, those guys are not really mad at each other. They don’t really have drama about like who’s gonna get fired from this job that they’re not really getting fired for and whatever. Um, but they really are touching each other, they really are interacting. Like, when they’re hitting the mat, they’re hitting the mat. They’re doing it in a way, like, try not to hurt each other. But like, this stuff that they’re doing is an athletic performance with another person in close contact, the sex that we have is kinda like that too. In that, yeah, I want the other woman to enjoy it because her reaction is part of the fucking scene, even if it wasn’t what, like, what I liked, you know, for my own self. That’s the scene. Like the product is not just people putting things in holes, which is most porn. The, the product that I make is people having a sexual experience. But it’s positioned like, in a way that you wouldn’t have sex at home, necessarily. It’s like to turned up to 11, and it’s like, really high energy. But I love that and it's part of what’s fun for me is that I don’t want to fuck like you fuck in your bedroom. I wanna fuck like a superstar, sex athlete that we are, you know. So yeah, no, I don’t think that people at home fuck in a yoga arch all the time. And no, maybe that doesn’t like feel as good as laying on your back and like lying around while someone else takes care of you and you focus entirely on pleasure, but like, sex isn’t just about that. Whether you’re alone and, or with a camera. For me, sex is about the experience, so I love porn sex because it is so turned up to 11, is what I do anyway.

The concept of hyperreality (Baudrillard 1994) is ultimately the key to precorporation in the context of affective management and taking on, or embodying, the consumer's gaze.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that her own definition of sex also incorporates popular culture into how she defines it. The producer/performer mentioned twice that the kind of sex that she has is “turned up to 11,” which is a reference to Chris Guest's mockumentary, *Spinal Tap*. Even that reference has an ironic hyperreal twist to it, as the mockumentary genre is a fake documentary that look like real documentaries, but they are still parodies of real life.
The idea of hyper-ness, or bringing something into a cultural fold that is part of a continuous feedback loop between mainstream and non-mainstream, and real and simulated or mediated life, takes us to the next theme. While evidence for both incorporation and precorporation were both supported in this study, another theme will be introduced: hypercorporation.

**Hypercorporation**

'Alternative' subcultures or political groups often appropriate the symbolic aspects of dominant culture, or the cultures that they are resisting (Hall 1993, 2000; Hall and Jefferson 2000; Hebdige 2006). The purpose of this is to reinscribe new meanings attached to images and languages that are associated with them. Another example of this – bricolage – includes a repurposing of material objects so that they also take on new meanings and functions (Hebdige 2006).

However, as theorists and researchers have shown, meaning is never fixed, whether that is associated with non-material culture or material culture, regardless of whether or not it is dominant culture 'taking from' alternative cultures, or alternative cultures taking from dominant ones. In cases where the ideas, symbols, and artifacts are appropriated, or reappropriated by dominant culture in order to commodify them, these things arguably become politically vacant, and their message is neutralized or altogether absent once it becomes part of the marketplace. In cultural studies, this process is known as pastiche, which is a referent that signals irony or subversion, but the ironic or subversive elements are no longer active or there (Jameson 1991).

While a number of examples of this back and forth motion can be found in pornography, political performances of a different kind also emerged in this study, and they could not simply be reduced to actions associated with incorporation of non-mainstream pornography into
mainstream pornography, or the appropriation of aspects of mainstream pornography by those who produce non-mainstream pornography. Instead, an additional theme was found, and labeled here as hypercorporation, which occurs when an alternative culture explicitly disavows mainstream or dominant culture but at the same time deliberately includes them in their own creative process. This could be considered a reversal of pastiche, as there is no subversion or inversion, only gestures that posit it that way.

However, it is more complicated than a bivariate matter of going back and forth over the meaning of political culture, as the claims of separation or radical removal and difference by the resistant group from the mainstream are not real, or true, as the alternative culture concurrently blends the two, on their own volition, into their own products or cultural practices. This goes beyond conversations about the meanings attached to the final product, or the piece of material culture that is disseminated in social life. Although the mainstream and non-mainstream are framed as being different as oil and water, this is more than mixing oil and water into the same container and being able to detect a separation between the alternative and the mainstream, as they are blended together in ways that emulsify them, thereby combing the two in ways that makes it difficult to see them as separate, as they are not evident in the piece of culture itself.

In other words, although alternative culture may assert that there are two different compounds at play, and ones that are incompatible, they are combined in a way that marries the two so that they are ultimately inseparable in practice. While colloquially this is often known as 'selling out', selling in would be more accurate. To return to the sports metaphor used above, this is not a matter of playing two different games as it has been suggested, or selling out and joining the other team, selling in entails not only playing the same game, but inviting the other team to join yours while wearing different uniforms.
A final point will be made before reviewing a few of the examples of hypercorporation found in this research. This concept was an emergent theme that occurred over the course of the study. Since the research flowed back and forth between writing on and by feminist pornographers and feminist sexual culture, assertions that were made by people and organizations associated with the market of feminist pornography were noted so that themes and patterns could be assessed along the way, as well as at the end of the project. If explicit statements were not made by these individuals and groups that claimed particular differences from the mainstream, I would have not even paused when contradictions were found while gathering and analyzing the data. In other words, if certain things went unspoken, I would not have thought to mark, and eventually cluster examples together that would ultimately be placed into the theme of hypercorporation. Since there were cases where individuals and groups went out of their way to publicly and directly exclaim that they were taking a radical approach to the creative process, that is, they repudiated mainstream pornography to one extent or another, when observations that contradicted these claims were discovered, it made them plain to see.

In short, if particular claims had not been made, like the ones below, these examples would have gone undetected. The absence of those gestures, as political performances, would not have made these examples present. Because certain claims were presented, when contradictions arose, or congruence between their theory and practice was absent, it made the incongruities visible, thereby relegating these findings as serendipitous ones. The importance of Žižek's elucidation of Lacan's notion of the “empty gesture” (2006: 12-13) is fitting on the level of praxis, or political resistance in practice as a form of political performativity. Hypercorporation points to the cultural practices or cultural performances of political resistance in the context of making political culture via the process or structure of the conventions of
producing culture in consumer society. In this regard, creative resistance can be framed as an empty gesture.

While several instances of hypercorporation and political performativity as an empty gesture were found, an example from two different sites, with differing relationships to praxis and sexual culture, will be used to illustrate this concept. These two sites are provided here to parallel the locations provided in the previous section on incorporation. The first is the FPA and the second is the sexual culture produced by feminist pornographers, with tube sites being a means of distribution and consumption. However, as suggested in the prior section on incorporation, another important site exists for illustrating this theme, which is not discussed here, and that is on the level of the sexual culture itself. Similarly, that unit of observation can be further approached on two different levels as analysis as far as praxis is concerned. The first is the integration of actors and themes found in mainstream pornography into feminist productions. The second is the use of social and political narratives associated with dominant culture, especially political narratives that are arguably antithetical to feminist praxis, as narratives chosen to contextualize the product and the sexual encounter.

The first example of hypercorporation takes us to the very location where feminist pornography, as a market or a branded niche, began – the Feminist Porn Awards. A categorical analysis of the FPA was done in order to see how the FPA evolved over the years, and one salient addition was made in recent years which illustrates how the FPA has started to become more marketable and profitable. Consequently, they have used that trend to add a category that is explicitly sponsored by a company, and a type of company that is strongly associated with tube sites and websites that distribute mainstream pornography, which are casual sex sites and
sites for escorts. In 2014, their 'movie of the year' category became 'Slixa Movie of the Year'; Slixa is an escort service company.26

Although dating sites and escort sites on pornographic websites are not inherently for men, they are marketed to men, and advertised in a way that is meant to generate income from male consumers. The sites assume that the understood viewer is male, and not a single example was found that framed the services for women. For example, the idea of finding an 'adult friend' or a person in the region that can be contacted for sex or a date, is always a female, with text that implies that it is a heterosexual man looking for a female that he can contact. In short, the FPA has changed over time, as would be expected. However, while they still go through lengths to market feminist pornography and the FPA as different from the mainstream industry, they have begun to explicitly bring those types of companies into the awards show, not just indirectly, as in awardees, but into the structure of the award show itself through corporate-sponsored award categories.

What makes this ironic, as it will be shown later, is not just that this is an empty gesture as far as political performativity and economic relations are concerned, but within the industry, performers that engage in other forms of sex work, and more specifically, prostitution, is stigmatized, and not just for economic reasons, but for reasons that concern affect and ethics. In other words, the two primary things that are arguably feminist about a particular production is that they facilitate real sexual pleasure, and that they are safe working environments as far as social epidemiology is concerned. While performers who may also be prostitutes might be good at their job and like performing in pornography, as well as engage in sexual exchanges as

26 Website for FPA’s ‘Slixa Movie of the Year’: http://www.feministpornawards.com/awardtype/slixa-movie-of-the-year/
prostitutes in the safest possible ways, many of the participants stated that they do not condone pornography performers that engage in prostitution outside of the industry. More of this will be discussed later, however, it is important to note the additional paradox associated with that particular type of corporate sponsorship in an awards show that is specifically marketing itself as feminist.

The second example of hypercorporation takes us to other products that are produced by feminist pornographers (as well as people that work in the mainstream), which are non-pornographic products that are meant to educate consumers about what feminist pornography is, and how it differs from the mainstream in various ways. This in and of itself has become a market, which warrants further discussion. However, for sake of brevity, that location and phenomena, will not be fleshed out here but it is important to note that the following example of hypercorporation came from a larger trend of feminist pornographers making products, and profiting from, the education of desire that define feminism through claims made to consumers, particularly women, about what is and is not properly feminist ways of representing sexuality, as well as looking at sexual imagery. One such example is Lust's (2010) book, *Good Porn: A Woman's Guide*. Lust is a self-identified feminist pornographer who explicitly markets her products as feminist pornography. She is a prominent figure in the feminist pornography market, and not only has received many awards from the FPA, she is featured in countless articles that discuss her work and feminist pornography. As previously indicated, distribution is no minor concern for pornographers, as that dictates not only the content that they produce, and where and how it will be consumed, but also the profit margins that they can expect to generate from a particular production based on the mode of distribution.
One of the starkest examples of hypercorporation comes from her book in relation to matters of 'proper' feminist outlets for distributing and consuming pornography, and it is a clear example of political performativity as an empty gesture. In “Chapter 8: Sexy Shopping,” Lust provides an overview of the different places that pornography can be consumed, and which of those is most likely to have feminist content and content that is 'for men'. The chapter essentially directs the reader to places that they can, and should buy pornography. Tube sites are one area that she covers in this chapter, and this is what she has to say about them:

“One of men's specialties – and men have a years-long head start on us – is watching and bootlegging Internet porn. Just as you can download movies through peer-to-peer (P2P) file-sharing software like BitTorrent and eMule, you can got to sites like www.xvideos.com, www.redtube.com, www.pornhub.com, www.xtube.com, and www.megaerotic.com to watch porn online without downloading it onto your computer. But most of the offering are miniclips or scenes from gonzo porn, and the production values usually leave quite a bit to be desired. You won't be breaking any laws if you visit these sites, but you won't find entire movies, either, and there won't be much for you to choose from, or at least not much of anything you might actually want to see. What you'll find is a potpourri of rough, hardcore sex (Lust 2010: 166-167).”

What makes this interesting is that Lust goes out of her way to discuss this method of finding and consuming pornography, yet she tells the reader that there is no point in bothering with them: there is not 'good', feminist pornography on those sites, as those sites are really just for men. However, while researching the different types of pornography that the FPA awarded, the AVN awarded, and how these productions compare not only to each other, but what is available on tube sites, one of the sites that she did not mention was YouPorn, which is affiliated with several of the sites she did mention above (e.g. PornHub and RedTube). Not only did I find some of
Lust's films on there, she had her own channel on that site that featured her production company, Lust Cinema, and included on that site as the LustCinema channel on YouPorn.\(^{27}\)

Production companies will often create channels on tube sites to stream their work for promotional purposes, but also so that they can generate some profit from consumers who watch porn for free on these sites, as they get income from them being clicked on and watched via advertisers who post advertisements alongside that material. In other words, while Lust goes through the effort to disassociate feminist pornography and 'good porn' for women from these sites, she failed to mention a very important one – YouPorn – and that she deliberately offers her content on these types of sites even though she associates them with poor content, and content just for men. While she may generate some profit from doing that, she does not receive the same amount of income as she would from selling her films as DVDs, or if a consumer downloaded the entire film from her own website. It is clear from the information that she provides in that chapter that she wants women to purchase this content, in the appropriate format, and from the places that she maintains are feminist approved outlets for distributing pornography.

**Cooperative Efforts**

The examples of hypercorporation provided above were ones that occur in everyday life – they are instances that are located in the realm of popular culture for everyone to take note of. Any consumer that also read her book or took note of the aforementioned political claims, and also happened to survey a number of sites across a range of markets, would have the opportunity to

\(^{27}\) As of Fall 2016, the Lust Cinema channel is no longer available on YouPorn; it is now located on RedTube.com ([http://www.redtube.com/lustcinema](http://www.redtube.com/lustcinema)), which is one of the websites she explicitly mentions in that chapter as antithetical to feminist pornography/pornography for women. URLs were active at the time of data collection and analysis (2014 and 2015) and captured in the screen shots gathered and archived for this study.
recognize the internal contradictions found in their praxis. But not all forms of hypercorporation are visible to the consumer, regardless of whether or not they are casual or serious observers of feminist and mainstream sexual culture. Some forms of hypercorporation are invisible, that is, they occur behind the scenes, and take place within the industry during the production process, and not in the realm of public consumption. Unless you speak with producers and performers firsthand, or have intimate knowledge of the industry, the examples of hypercorporation provided below would go unnoticed, and the practices associated with them would go unknown.

These cooperative efforts are not instances of co-opting mainstream culture, as they have less to do with the creations and their symbolic aspects, and more to do with the creative process and the symbiotic efforts that take place between mainstream and non-mainstream creators in order to produce sexual culture within the industry. The mainstream and non-mainstream markets do not operate separately from each other, they are not purely distinct. In many cases, they overlap with each other in a Venn-like way, as producers and performers from each arena also tend to work with each other. Although this does not occur for everyone, a preponderance of individuals worked across a variety of markets within the mainstream as well as across non-mainstream niches; these markets, as 'wholes', or micro-structures, also worked with each other cooperatively.

Returning to the mainstream porn awards and FPA discussed above reveals hints of the types of cooperative efforts that might be occurring across markets, although it is difficult to know how, or in what situations, that may be taking place without engaging with creators themselves and understanding the conventions of the creative process across a range of niches. Even if one takes an initial glance at the individuals and productions companies that were given awards within each award show over the years, and across the different types of award shows,
that reveals considerable overlap between the XBIZ, AVN, and FPA superlative events. It makes sense that the two mainstream award shows would recognize many of the same creators, production companies, and creations, but the degree, and even the time-order of those that were recognized by the mainstream organizations and the FPA is somewhat more surprising if one is to surmise that the mainstream and non-mainstream are altogether qualitatively different. Many of the individuals who were given awards through the FPA were also given awards at the AVN and XBIZ shows, and in several cases, the mainstream awards shows recognized these individuals before the FPA did.

That observation is not provided here to discount the efforts of the FPA or infer that they are in no way 'genuinely' feminist because they share so much in common with the mainstream. Instead, it raises questions about the extent to which, or in what locations or situations that mainstream pornography is antithetical to feminist praxis – which is one of the issues that was assessed in this project, and will be addressed toward the end of the project, in the context of the findings as a whole. For now, the issue of overlap across the mainstream and non-mainstream award shows is provided to illustrate that these shows point to creators and creations that clearly can be recognized by consumers in the realm of popular culture. However, how they cooperate, when they cooperate, and for what reasons, cannot be ascertained by simply comparing those lists, and more importantly, the political meanings of those cooperative efforts, including what is at stake for managing and achieving pleasure when mainstream and non-mainstream creators work cooperatively. That cannot be known without empirically addressing situations where that occurs.

The following examples show how some non-mainstream and mainstream markets work in tandem, behind the scenes, within the industry, conceived as a whole. These cooperative
efforts are the unadvertised ways that cultural producers that advertise themselves as resistant end up bringing the cultural modes that they are resisting against into their own creative process. Since they do deviate from the norm in some way, in some cases, that is lucrative business to the mainstream not because they can incorporate the symbolic aspects associated with their work into the mainstream by appropriating them and selling them as a pastiche products, but because they can use that marginal location to further their own business interests behind the scenes, in practice, during the production process. These decisions are made, in part, because of the conventions of the mainstream industry. Since the professional development of a performer typically follows the teleological model of doing solos, then performing in girl/girl scenes, followed by boy/girl scenes, that provides a space for mainstream production companies to work with production companies that specialize in 'all girl' or lesbian pornography, especially if those pornographers specialize in strap-on scenes. Although this teleological arrangement is arguably beneficial for affective management, as it prepares performers for working their way 'up' to rougher or more physically taxing scenes, it is also a way of capitalizing on newness. Gender alone does not dictate whether or not girl/girl or boy/girl scenes will be relatively gentle or rough, however, it is assumed that the latter will often entail that. In cases where female performers take on the role of a boy, or more or less a top via strap-on scenes, that performer simulates the types of sex that the 'girl' performer will be engaging in when they do their first boy/girl scene.

This fetishization of newness, coupled with how the industry is structured based assumption that boy/girl sex is physically more strenuous, creates an economic niche for cooperative efforts where neither the mainstream or non-mainstream co-opts each other's work symbolically, instead, they create a space for mainstream and non-mainstream producers and
performers to work together symbiotically. The following participant is both a producer and a performer, and as a performer she typically is a top that does strap-on scenes. She provides an example of this sort of cooperation while we were discussing the types of people that she prefers to work with:

P: I get hired to break in newbies, I’ve seen a lot of girls who shouldn’t be in porn.

CM: I see. So what do you mean, break in newbies?

P: Yeah, ’cause you know, I’ll do some first girl/girl stuff. You know, because they know I can make the scene happen.

Although she takes on this sort of work, not every girl that she performs with is really into the job, and they are only doing it for the money. For her, and the other producers and performers I spoke with, these are difficult people to work with because they do not enjoy the sex, which makes it difficult for those that do. Furthermore, this apathy dampens the experience beyond the sexual encounter, as she, like many others, take on this work because they like it. To return to the sports analogy, they are part of the industry 'for the love of the game'. And on the business end, these types of situations are not conducive to making a good product, as they can potentially lead to a bad scene. The following exchange from a different point in our conversation illustrates this, and it sheds some light on how she goes about “making the scene happen”, and in what contexts she is put in the position to make it happen. Even though she does work cooperatively with mainstream producers, she does not tolerate performers who do not put effort into the work.

P: So, you don’t really want to do your job, you’re not really into this, okay, well, I’m gonna fuck you so fucking hard that you don’t have a choice but to wake up and engage with me and that’s what I do.

CM: Okay
P: I will fuck it out of you. ‘Cause listen, baby, you’re taking the check, you’re showing up to work and you’re gonna work today. You don’t get to like bull shit your way through this like you bullshitted your way through the rest of your girl/girl scenes. Because if you will not have lesbian sex with me, you will take my dick and you will take it well.

CM: Mmkay, fair enough. Got it.

P: Um, and like, I can pinpoint scenes to you that that’s what’s going on, just girls who are like, not really into it, not really engaged and whatever. If she’s like melting down on set I’m gonna call the shoot. But, what you have is, ‘I don’t really like sex. I don’t really like this job. I just kinda want money. And, whatever, I’m here. I would prefer not to work with these girls but if I have to it’s my reputation. I’m not gonna do a bad scene just because you feel better about yourself or whatever. So you can half-assed your way through life. ‘Cause I’m not. I hate those girls, I hate working with those girls. I feel bad for them because they shouldn’t be in porn, but I hate being in the saddle with them.

Some of the producers that do work cooperatively with those that produce mainstream content use their own discretion as far as the boundaries they are willing to push on behalf of the performers. Although generating income is important for both the producer and the performer, the type of scene, and when those scenes are presented to them, do matter. Politically informed professional boundaries are not completely abandoned in these exchanges, and some will choose to turn away offers that they do not feel are fair to their performers. The next participant provides one such example.

P: They’re there to give energy to the product. Not to give their energy to the fucking crew. And that’s something that I feel very strong about. I had an investor approach me, um, and he was like, um, what to you think about like after the scene like, we could get a blow job. A couple of blow job clips, you know and I can do that. You know a cum shot compilation is like absolutely not. ‘Cause when I have a girl on set, like I want that girl to be treated like an actress. And this is like, some sketchy ass B.S. that we don’t really need, and is gonna ask her, instead of her giving her full time and energy for the scene that she’s doing for the movie that we care about, like, so, it, it, feels exploitative and I won’t do that. You know, I’ll get some tickle clips to pay my location. Like, I’ll tack on stuff, but, that just takes it too far. That like, predatory male energy like that. Because nobody really wants to give a blow job and get their face cummed on. That’s not, its whatever. Like, by this crew guy. Like, eh. Nobody’s showing up
for that. This is what I really want to do! People do really want to do my movies because it’s like you’re gonna fuck some hot chicks, you’re gonna be a [says type of character/role that is strongly affiliated with her productions]. I’m gonna make you look good.

CM: What do you mean by tickle clip? What is that?

P: Um, Well, one of my locations, uh, they also shoot girls getting tickled. So, after the shoot, and if I have the girls and the time, I’ll also shoot that while I’m there because it’s not a big deal. But like asking some, a girl to like give a blow job after she’s just gotten done with a really intense lesbian scene is just asking her to do something that she’s not going to enjoy at that point. Like, that’s annoying. And it’s not like I don’t like men, it’s not about that at all. It’s because this is a sex act that has nothing to do with you. It’s like not about your enjoyment in any way.

CM: It’s just gratuitous at that point.

P: Yes. It’s entirely gratuitous.

The decisions made around precorporation not only impact the profit for the producer, they resonate into the ways that performers must also manage affect, as it increases the likelihood that they will be working with an individual who is merely there to make money, and is not performing because they like sex per se, or care about the cultural form. Even though money is the main reason for making these business arrangements, it is not the only thing that matters. Concerns centered on creating material culture are linked to concerns linked to materiality as well as materialism. Making a good product must balance possible compromises between pleasure, the former situation, and the latter one, profit, through the cooperative efforts linking materiality and materialism, as both materialize in the spaces in between them through interpersonal interaction.

The individual, interpersonal, and structural all matter, and they come to matter as political performances in the spaces within and between them, and incorporation and precorporation links these spaces through time. Hypercorporation, as a form of political
performativity, locates the spaces where they matter, and here, that is in both the product and the process. The creations, creators, and creative process, are political gestures that materialize in both the public eye, or realm of circulation and consumption, as well as behind the scenes, even though these practices may not be seen with the naked eye, as they occur in the realm of production. Even though the validity of some political gestures cannot be visualized in some spaces, they are still realized in them, so they still have real political meaning, as well as consequences for the relations of affective management and real pleasure, whether they are empty gestures or not. Whether the gesture is empty or full is a matter of perception, that is, whether it is considered non-resistant or resistant, real or superficial. Even so, if a glass is half-empty or full, there is same amount of liquid in the container either way. The difference between these two forms of hypercorporation, is that in the realm of consumption the container is clear, and the liquid is visible, but in the realm of production empty or full cannot be ascertained, as the liquid is invisible because the container is opaque.

The issue of visibility and the relationship between corporeality and corporate concerns tied to creative resistance brings us to the next theme, paracorporation, which is also tied to matters of time and space, and the political meaning of the cultural product in the realms of both production and consumption.

Paracorporation

Ideas centered around mainstream and non-mainstream culture are typically positioned within a particular site of resistance that is located within the borders of a given culture. Although many of the things that alternative cultures are resisting against are not particular to one culture, many have historically started out by resisting to the politics of the mainstream or dominant culture.
that they inhabit. Over time, these political creations spread through cultural diffusion, and of course due to technological changes, such as Web 2.0, political subcultures are no longer bound to a physical location, or a single material reality that is contained within the borders of a particular nation-state or community. Although consumer culture has spread to many parts of the world, external constraints, such as legal concerns, still shape what is possible as far as what kinds of culture people are allowed to create or consume in a particular space.

Pornography is one such example, and the explicitly sexual nature of the content heightens these issues and makes them all the more visible. Whether or not a certain type of visual culture is something that is allowed, and if it is, where it can be consumed, and the types of images that are permissible, or even desirable, depends on the legal constraints of the makers and users within a particular political and cultural context. This is true within the borders of a particular nation, as well as across borders. This provides both an economic constraint, as well as economic opportunities for those that make pornography, whether that is mainstream or non-mainstream, and regardless of whether or not it intends to conform to or resist dominant culture. Those legal and economic opportunities are tied to both the product and the process, and the ways that corporeality is linked to capital and affect through normative and deviant ideals of pleasure. Whether or not that is done deliberately, the political intentions of the creators matters – deviance is always situational and contextual. However, regardless of the intentions of those that produce sexual culture, the meaning of that intent changes once it goes beyond the particular boundaries. Even for those who create sexual culture with no political intentions in one context, it can become political in another.

Selling pornography beyond one's own political borders, or across multiple spaces with different political boundaries due to differing media outlets, was another emergent theme in this
study, as virtually every participant, in one context or another, discussed the ways that the production process is shaped by a particular political location, as well as the different shapes that the final product will or must take once it is created and it travels across different political borders. No matter what we were discussing, this theme undoubtedly shaped their relationship to creative process, and the decisions that they made within it. Here, that theme is called paracorporation, and it denotes the way that producers and performers negotiate the intersections of politics, capital, and pleasure throughout the production process. This concept reveals how materiality and the materialism have different relationships to each other, which impacts how affect is managed in different ways so that profit can be made from pleasure in different political, cultural, and material contexts.

**Dual Productions**

The sexual encounter that occurs in the production process is often made into several different products. Even though one encounter takes place within it, it is recorded in several different ways, even if it is made into one product. For example, several of the participants stated that even though filming is taking place during the sexual performance, there is usually also someone that takes photographs as well. These photos are sometimes used for promotional material, such as images that will go on the DVD cover, or used as thumbnails in websites to give potential consumers a sense of what will take place in the sexual encounter before they purchase it to download or stream. They explained that the images that you see from the sexual encounter are not stills, which would be segments taken straight from the moving footage from the video camera. Instead, they are taken with a regular camera, which means most of the time the sexual encounter is fragmented so those shots can be taken. In other words, the sexual encounter rarely
happens as one continuous interaction from beginning to end, it is divided up so that they can pose for the photographer so that these images can be captured. However, in many cases these photographs are not used to just promote the video that is being made, they are often packaged and sold on their own as other forms of sexual culture, such as magazines.

Although multiple products may be made from the one production to be sold as different mediums with the same market, broadly defined within the context of a single cultural and political context, such as within the U.S., or strictly soft core versus hard core forms (Williams 1999), the emphasis here will be placed on how the same sexual encounter is captured in various ways visually, and then edited in the post-production process so that it can be sold in different politically acceptable forms, either within the boundaries of the U.S, or beyond U.S. borders and sold internationally.

These different socio-political locations require different sets of visual arrangements, as well as different types of sexual activities, therefore turning a single production into different products based on the types of footage that is captured, and how it is assembled in the editing process, allows the producers to sell across multiple locations and increase their profits. The distinctions made are consistent with the characteristics that Williams (1999) provides in her book, *Hard Core*. These are the types of iconography used, which are visual tropes used, such as the use of meat shots and money shots, as well as the numbers (sexual activities) contained in the product, and the narrative (the storyline that provides the social context for the sexual scripts that the performers do). Two locations, broadly speaking, of paracorporation will be illustrated here. The first is intra-distribution, or separate locations within the U.S., and the second is inter-distribution, which are products made to be sold within U.S. borders as well as in other countries.
Within the U.S., mainstream pornographers often make products for mainstream media outlets in addition to the adult entertainment market. The following producer discusses how he must take at least two different versions into account when he is filming the sexual encounter, as he must consider the post-production editing and packaging process while doing that. This is the same producer previously discussed who must be careful about the types of affect that is shown in his films. He cannot show violence against women in any way, and it is imperative that the women in the sexual encounter show no reluctance or seem scared. It is important that he hires performers that genuinely like their jobs and are able to get engrossed in the encounter. One of the reasons for that is because he makes these two versions, one that is hard core, for the pornographic market, and one that is soft core, which is distributed on cable networks.

Now a lot of people want, ah, a soft version so they can sell the broadcast. It’s not, not explicit so we have to shoot that kind of simultaneous. Um, we’re actually selling, ah, the cable versions to places like ah, [names a major premium cable channel/network] and [names a major premium cable channel/network]. I have, I have a lot of shows on those channels. I just wish I could still keep a percentage of them though. Me, I usually did, it’s all, all right.

What makes this important as far as the notion of 'real pleasure' is concerned, and the idea that mainstream producers do not care about whether or not the women are 'genuinely' enjoying it, is that it turns out that the more mainstream you are, the more likely that matters. Although that is not framed as something political, as it is in feminist pornography, women that are experiencing real pleasure are not an option for this producer because of the external constraints he has by working with distributors at the onset of the production process. There are obviously different gradations of what being 'mainstream' means, but it was found here that producers that are so mainstream that they even work with mainstream media, that is, they make and sell sexual culture beyond the
boundaries of the market of pornography proper, care a lot about the notion of real pleasure. Consequently, properly managing affect is crucial. Although this is not political per se or a lesson in altruism, as it is a matter of profit, it is still part of the reality of making pornography for the ultra mainstream pornographers.

The next example shows how pleasure and profit are intertwined when the boundaries of the nation state are crossed. This complicates typical boundaries between mainstream pornography and non-mainstream pornography, as well as what is considered normal in mainstream media and pornographic media in different geographic and political locations. Nonetheless, for mainstream producers that make pornography for mainstream consumption within the U.S., and mainstream consumption beyond its borders, the dual productions may be different, but they still must contain images in which the women are genuinely exhibiting pleasure, or are at least extremely convincing at it. Similarly, this impacts the types of narratives that they will produce, as they may be able to film and edit out particular sex acts or camera angles, it is difficult to change the narrative once the production is over. The following producer discusses the types of boundaries that must be negotiated when you make multiple products from one sexual encounter that are produced in the U.S. but circulated beyond its borders.

CM: [T]he Europeans, are they typically more open minded with blood and guts, and things like that?

P: Yeah, they, um, yeah they had, ah, they liked that version, we had to trim it down a bit domestically but they wanted the uncut version.

CM: Are there any other cross cultural differences I should know about, like one group’s more open about blood or poop, or I don’t know.

P: Um, Europe used to be really open. But now ah, Europe has less restrictions on what can you show sexuality and nudity on just mainstream television. So now
actually the porn industry in Europe had actually, is toned down a little bit, because they’re getting air time late at night, of hardcore graphic sex. But they have, they have some very strict rules like it’s got to be husband and wife, boyfriend/girlfriend, it’s got to be very loving. Um, just like some of the, the German clients that we have, um, but then again their, but their non-broadcast stuff tends to be, ah, more graphic and more of alternative type, deviant behavior, or you know. But I’ve never lived in Germany so I’m not really familiar. I just, they have, they have less restrictions. (...) Yeah, but like I said, the Germans have two versions of what we need to deliver to them. One is broadcast, which is still graphic sex but really toned down and then the non-broadcast ah, can go further.

In this situation, because pornography has gone more mainstream in many European markets (shown on regular television, or mainstream media as it is understood in general) mainstream pornographers over here have responded to that. Not only have they had to ‘tone it down’ in order to do that, that means they must also take affect and pleasure in mind, just as they would if it was being distributed in U.S. mainstream media, albeit for pay on premium channels. Because pornography is more accessible on television, and is often part of the mainstream, what is sold as pornography, as in non-mainstream media, is more likely to fall into non-mainstream pornographic markets over here. What is considered actual pornography is much more 'deviant' than what is considered mainstream pornography over here. As a result, anything they produced as pornography in other locations would likely fall into smaller niche markets in the U.S. and not be sold as mainstream pornography.

Since mainstream producers get more money by selling to larger markets, such as the mainstream media in the U.S., versus just the pornography market, it behooves them to keep mainstream interests in Europe in mind as well. If producers over here make a product for mainstream media abroad, it will get far more distribution than if they make something that would be considered pornography proper over there, or what would be considered non-mainstream media. Additionally, it would limit distribution in the U.S. too because those
productions would not fall into mainstream pornography, and therefore be less likely to generate a lot of income, as it would only be catering to niche tastes.

This matters for affective management and the primacy given to real pleasure, as the distributors are showing these products on regular television in both cases. Whether we are discussing mainstream media and its relationship to mainstream pornography in the U.S. or beyond, the more mainstream the product is, the more likely it relies on real pleasure, or at least performers who are able to manage affect appropriately, as the pornographic productions shown on television must be just as convincing as the other shows that people watch. Similar to the U.S. context, those that distribute sexual culture through mainstream outlets abroad are also less likely to show violence against women in those products.

**Making the Most of It: The Business of Muffings and Flooding Out**

The conventions of the creative process are based on the norms of making sexual culture and the types of activities that take place in the sexual encounter are, to varying degrees, based on the interplay between the cultural and sexual norms of a given culture, whether that is based on de facto or de jure standards, or formally and informally sanctioned activities. So what happens when things deviate from those norms? That is, when things go wrong? When the conventions are broken that does not necessarily mean that the producer cannot still profit from the deviations. Instead, they turn it into a different product and attempt to distribute it in a location beyond the one they originally intended. In the prior section the producers intentionally made multiple products from one production that would be distributed in different political climates. In cases where someone or something deviates from what the producer had in mind, and could no longer be sold in the political and cultural arena that it was supposed to be, they must look
beyond that location and find another area to sell it. This section describes how they make the most out of the situation.

This theme was previously alluded to in prior sections, as it overlaps with many of the other aspects of the production process and topics integral to this project, such as authenticity, real pleasure and desire, and corporeal and mental preparations that are tied to the narrative, and subsequent sexual scripts, of a given production. Recall, for example, the producer who wanted to respect the decision of the performer to keep going with the scene even though she started her period. The producer allowed that to happen, however, it put her in a bad place as far as business was concerned, as that meant that she could no longer sell the product, and meet the distributor's needs, as she originally intended. Instead, she had to make sure the footage was reconfigured in such a way to meet the original purpose, and then repackage the main footage, thereby putting her in a position where she inadvertently had to make multiple products in order to make a product. 'Real' desire had to be tempered with real business concerns, or material reality.

The realities of materiality and the material must be handled when the conventions are broken, which are organized into two main categories – muffings and flooding out – and both relate to how affect is managed within the sexual encounter and outside of it. Both of these can either 'kill the mood', which will be illustrated shortly, which can compromise the scene or the shoot altogether. They also create a situation where legal, cultural, and economic constraints can potentially disrupt the propensity for making profit. Profits, however, can still be made by using one of the two strategies discussed above, which is intra-distribution or inter-distribution. That is, selling it in different locations within the boundaries of the U.S., or different niches, or selling it in markets in the U.S. as well as beyond its borders.
The following exchange with a performer illustrates the ways that affect, muffings, and different niches in the U.S. can create economic disadvantages as well as opportunities for producers.

CM: And then uh, has that ever happened to you or anybody you know? Have you been on a set where they’re ‘aaaaagh’! things went awry, if you will.

P: I’ve [laughs], I’ve heard, you know, a couple of crazy stories. I, however, have never really had anything extreme happen. You know, you get the little, you know, air, of course, gets pushed up in there and you get the occasional fart, you have queef kind of sounds and it, it gets embarrassing for you sometimes but it comes out and you just say, ‘uh ooops!’ [we both laugh] you know, and then like, as you’re on the dick sometimes, you know, of course, um, like when you put, your, when you clean it out your, you know, shoving water up there, you know, and, um, sometimes you’re on the dick and it just kinda comes out and you think it’s like, shit, but it’s not, its honestly just water. [Laughs] But otherwise, nothings happened. But I’ve heard, a friend of mine actually told me that a guy was on set and a girl just let go, I mean, shit went everywhere, like all over his ass and everything. [Laughs] It was, I don’t know, it does not sound like it was a pretty picture.

CM: Wow, and do you know, do you keep going or does that kinda kill the mood, if you will?

P: It kills 'em! Come on! It would kill the mood! [Says very emphatically, yet, jovially; raises her voice, squealing at me]

CM: Oh, okay [we both laugh]!

P: Um, for me, I would just, well, to be that girl if if that happened, like came out of my butt, I would just be so embarrassed, I would just be like, I’m sorry, can we cut? Can we stop? Can we go home? [Laughs] Can I go cry in my little hole now? [Laughs] No, there's, you know, there's plenty of embarrassing things that happen like that. You know, anything, you know, girls who deep throat insane and they throw up all over the dick. I mean there's crazy stuff that happens. But you know what? Because it's porn, and because we are perverted, we make it look like it, it was fun and intended. You know? [Laughs]

CM: I see. And so, in some cases you are saying it would get edited out or it won't so that you keep it?

P: It depends on what company it is. I mean if its, ah, a more, um, you know, classy, like trying to keep the, the sexiness [laughs], kind of, then they’re gonna
edit it out. But [names a company] or [names a company], hell no, they’re gonna be like, ‘oh yeah, that’s the best stuff we’ve seen all year!’ [Laughs], to be honest.

The important thing to consider here is that affect is not only managed before the sexual encounter, and during it, but also afterward. Post-production editing plays a significant part in the way that affect is handled and presented in the final product, even if nothing goes wrong. This point was also previously mentioned in the context of how narratives function for affective management. One producer mentioned how giggling is rare, as the narratives he creates or uses are usually very conducive to engrossment. Nonetheless, in some cases that does happen, and that becomes an issue for those who are in charge of doing the editing and making sure that the scene is believable, or looks real, regardless of what really happened. In addition to muffings, flooding out is also a concern for the performers and producers. Again, this is a matter of engrossment, but it also matters for making a product that is profitable.

According to Goffman (1961), flooding out is an indication that engrossed has not been achieved in an encounter. These are emotional or affective events that break engrossment, and show that an actor was not able to become fully immersed in the encounter. If they occur by another actor, they can disrupt how engrossed others actors can become in the encounter. However, the findings here show that flooding out can mean just the opposite – that a performer became fully engrossed in the sexual encounter, or in some cases too engrossed in it. Take, for example, the prior example where a producer had to intervene when a performer got too invested in the narrative and began hyperventilating. She was overly invested in the encounter and needed time to readjust so that she could find a better balance between being not engrossed and too engrossed. Several participants brought up other emotional outpours, such as crying. Crying was hardly ever an issue of a participant being upset or an indication they that could not become
immersed in the sexual encounter, instead, it meant that they were overcome by it physically and as a result, were unable to manage their emotions because the pleasure subsumed them. In those cases, depending on the type of niche or production, that sort of emotional display may be left in, or it might be edited out. It all depends on how 'authentic' the producer would like to keep the sexual encounter in the final product. In some cases the sex or pleasure can be too real, and the level of authenticity that is left in the product is a matter of taste, or a matter of distribution and markets. Although real pleasure is a goal of many of the producers in both mainstream and non-mainstream products alike, it is not always desirable for the performer, which is a point that will be illustrated next.

As previously indicated, there are different approaches to working in the adult entertainment industry, and when people with differing approaches work together, it can cause problems during the sexual performance. Many of the performers stated that they found it difficult to work with people who did not like their job, and were clearly only making pornography for money. Just doing it for money is stigmatized in the industry, as those individuals make it harder, or at least pose an extra barrier, to successfully achieving pleasure during the sexual encounter. Here, actually achieving pleasure will be discussed as a sort of muffing, as well as a matter of affect connected to flooding out. Although many would like to experience pleasure, or represent it in the final product, for those that do not, this is an example of something that goes wrong, not right, and it must be addressed during the production, as well as in the post-production editing process. If an individual inadvertently becomes physically engrossed, when they are not mentally invested in being there, that is just as difficult to manage as those who are trying to achieve pleasure and cannot.
CM: And then, so going back, to uh, uh, the melting down. And this could be like, it doesn’t have to be a, a, framed negatively, it can be framed positively, but flooding out, whether that’s giggling, whether that’s crying, whether that's, 'whaaaa!' [I make a dramatic face], 'cause you said, I was gonna ask you, are there any times that you have to cut a scene, end a scene, just whatever, um, or you know, do editing, um, so, either one.

P: I edit stuff out, there's times that people have asked to take a break, uh, I had a girl, this girl, quit porn after working with me. Um, she, her name’s [says the performer's name], she’s a model from [names the city]. She’d done like five or six scenes before she ended up shooting on my couch. And, she was under the impression that like, she didn’t have to fuck people. That she could use her body and have sexual acts done to her but that she didn’t have to be there, and, I don’t let that happen. So, I tore her orgasm out of her. And, made her cum on set and she like kinda freaked out after it happened and she’s like ‘hold on, cut, like, I need a moment’. And we like, you know, finished up the scene, had her do something to me, made the scene have an ending and whatever, but like, I could tell she wasn’t mad at me, it wasn’t like 'I hate this girl because she got me off'. It was like, 'oh', shit got real for her. And she realized, like, oh this isn’t just --, you’re gonna have to let go a little bit with people, like, e, e, you do have to be open emotionally, be able to connect with other people during this thing and put it away. And like, this is not necessarily easy, to do this. And do it well. And she could, after that.

CM: Okay

P: Sometimes that happens, you know, I’ve had girls call cut after orgasms before because they weren’t used to cumming on set because they’re just not used to having to have it be real. I just don’t let people fake it with me.

CM: This is interesting. It’s more like the, the pleasure that freaks people out and not the lack thereof.

P: Yeah, absolutely.

Working with Stigma

Sex work is one of the most stigmatized forms of professions, and individuals who work within the pornography industry must also work with stigma within the industry and outside of it.

Stigma is more than just a matter of impression management, it is a very real concern as far as affective management is concerned, and it something that producers and performers must handle
within the industry, and throughout the production process – not just outside of it when they are not at work. Some of the ways that materiality and materialism are connected to each other through the concept of stigma are discussed in this section.

**Stigma, Harm, and the Boundaries of Sex Work**

Stigma is something that is attached to the identities of those that work within the pornography industry, but it also shapes boundaries within the industry based upon different types of sex work that occur in the formal industry, as well as informal economies of sex work that operate alongside the legitimate industry. The harms of stigma in the industry and the production process range from how affect is managed in the sexual encounter, as well as the very real concerns of social epidemiology that are associated with individuals who may do other forms of sex work within the industry as well as outside of it. Furthermore, when the idea of stigma is considered within the industry, it complicates simple notions of sex work as stigmatized, as the boundaries within sex work are also important, as well as the boundaries between sex workers and non-sex workers. This section provides an overview of the findings showing the intersections between stigma, harm, and sex work boundaries within and outside of the adult entertainment industry, and how they impact the process, the product, as well as the performers and producers themselves.

**Sex Work Boundaries and Affective Management**

One of the ways that the boundaries between sex work impacts the management of affect is that individuals who are only working in the industry because they are doing sex work within it as a form of prostitution means that they are typically taking on that kind of work because they are
doing it for money. As indicated in previous sections, this puts a strain on performers who end up working with them in the sexual encounter because it adds another hurdle as far as affective management is concerned. When people do not like their job, regardless of what type of work it is that they are doing, it typically puts a damper on the environment and creates hurdles for the other individuals they work with. When part of the job description or goal is to genuinely become immersed in the sexual encounter, this means that becoming mentally and physically engrossed is more difficult. Additionally, as it was also noted above, this takes opportunities away from other performers who do want to be there and cannot obtain work because there is not 'enough real porn to go around' as one performer said.

One way that these performers even get work in the first place is because some producers do engage in these informal practices that foster an informal economy within and outside of the formal economy of the industry and the more legitimate practices that take place within the adult entertainment industry. Doing sex work on the side, in the form of prostitution, is known as privates. Although not all privates are necessarily stigmatized, or some are more stigmatized than others, individuals who primarily do privates, or make their way into the industry through privates see pornography as an additional form of income and not something that they are genuinely interested in, are types of performers that many producers and performers do not like. However, due to the changing nature of the industry, and its economic restructuring due to larger structural shifts that makes it significantly less lucrative to be in, some producers are pressured to work with these performers. The next producer provides an example of this below.

P: [T]he only reason that there's gonna be a girl who's not into it on set is because my bosses have forced me to put her in the movie.

CM: Ah, because she’s popular or for some favor?
P: Because, no, they, she sucks his dick. Because she sucks his dick.

As far as economic constraints are concerned, matters of choice, on a structural level, as well as a personal one as far as professional decisions are concerned, is tenuous. While these could be considered a form of cooperative efforts that were described above, the willingness to work with these individuals is less a matter of real choices they make, and more of an outcome of internal and external economic constraints facing the industry. They can arguably refrain from making these symbiotic business deals, but being cooled out does invariably structure their choices, and limits future opportunities for work. This is not so much an issue of coercion on an individual level, but on a broader level as far as their own production company is concerned.

The bigger, more mainstream companies do not have as much pressure to make these decisions, as they have guaranteed funding from distributors, and, as mentioned above, they must negotiate back and forth with those distributors with who gets hired. The distributors are going to push for more established performers with well-known records of good performances and therefore, that creates a situation where there is a two-fold buffer between being in a position to have to compromise or even consider such business arrangements. Instead, those that work outside of the mainstream choose, or in some cases, feel pressured to work with these companies. 'Indie' or smaller, independent productions that are not as mainstream do not have the same financial backing, therefore it is not the external constraints of distribution or the law at work here, but the internal constraints and opportunity structures of the industry. These are the parameters for those who choose, or feel they must, work outside of their smaller niche markets, and these shape some of their professional decisions via the structure of their production company, and the other companies they may or may not work with.
In short, some of the choices the producers make are part of economic constraints that complicate matters of choice, and these are not part of the formal industry per se, but they make their way into some of the more formal practices. This is another reason why other forms of stigma associated with sex work matter, as they play into some of the hierarchies, as well as lateral economic choices, of the overall industry. The following producer discusses how she has witnessed such arrangements and how she feels uncomfortable with them, yet they are nonetheless part of the economic realities that many are faced with inside the industry who choose to do non-mainstream productions.

P: Um, so, I hate this but this is unfortunately part of the reality that I deal with. (…) This is a thing that happens. [They are] absolutely like, sometimes forced to use talent based on this, and [they] have, [they] have said no before, and, and, like, gotten in trouble for saying no about girls that [they] don’t want in [their] movies because they, they’re getting in through this like, privates issue, and so like, [they] know what’s gonna happen with these girls in [their] movies. (…) And, um, unfortunately what you do, is you get the girl through the fucking scene anyway.

The idea of working with other types of sex workers is important to many of the producers and performers as far as economic reasons and affective management are concerned, however, there are also very real consequences to these practices. For those that abide by the industry standards, working with those who do not respect the industry is more than a hurdle to pleasure, or potentially takes away economic opportunities for those that like their work, it is a matter of epidemiological risk, which is discussed next.

**Social Epidemiology and Stigma**

Although privates do occur within mainstream and non-mainstream markets, there are understood norms as far as what is and is not considered acceptable forms of prostitution.
Privates that occur within the industry, that is, they take place between producers and performers, or between performers and others who only purchase sex within the industry is not as stigmatized as performers that do privates outside of the industry. This is the case as long as these arrangements are made with people who only hire individuals who care about the industry and abide by industry standards. Individuals who engage in privates within the industry, but from companies that do not take the same standard of STI/STD testing seriously is not acceptable or considered ethical. Those behaviors pose just as many risks to other performers as the performers who engage in prostitution outside of the industry do. The primary reason for this is the stigma that pornography performers attach to people that do not work within the industry, which they call 'the wall'.

Although the general public may stigmatize pornography performers, and perhaps consider them dirty, statistically speaking, those outside of the wall – the people outside of the industry – are more likely to have a sexually transmitted disease or infection those people within the wall. Having sex with someone outside of the wall, expect with committed, 'monogamous' partners, increases the likelihood that a performer will contract a disease. This is not only a problem as far as personal health is concerned, it also threatens the industry. Companies that abide by the ethical standards of the industry completely shut down productions if asked to do so by the Free Speech Coalition (they make those requests when they are informed by a production company or testing service that a performer has been found to have a disease). In that situation, all producers must stop work until the magnitude of the problem has been assessed, and any performers that potentially contracted the disease have been contacted and retested. Once the situation has been addressed and contained, they will lift the production ban so that everyone can get back to work.
Sexual Agency and Sex Trafficking

Although the informal economy of privates was discussed by many of the performers, sex trafficking was something that was only brought up by one participant, who was a producer. This point is included here because it points to the other informal economies that can sometimes collude with the pornography industry, but not through the formal economy of legitimate industry. This producer does non-mainstream productions and relies on informal hiring practices. She does not hire performers through agents and has hired through Craigslist or has even asked people that she came across in everyday situations if they would be interested in performing in one of her films.

Although she is very ethically minded, and takes lengths to make sure that the people she is hiring are performing in her productions on their own volition, she recognizes that she must be extra careful about who she hires by taking the approach that she does, especially since she lives in a large city in California, but not in the Los Angeles region, which is the main hub of the formal or legitimate pornography industry. Because of that, she states that she must be careful, not just because she does not want to hire individuals who may be in positions where they are being exploited, and therefore the decision to participate in sex work is not really a choice, but also because she is fearful for the repercussions that may come from accidentally hiring someone who is part of these networks. Not engaging in harmful practices is not limited to worrying about the harms of these practices for performers, but also the sorts of harms that could occur to producers as well.

I’m coming from an urban area where, you know, sex trafficking is very big around here and not just, sex trafficking of young children or sex trafficking of, you know, minors, or maybe even sometimes adults. But, its also a sex work capital, I think, you know, for, for a lot of people and, you know, you know I was like, look, [says her first name], you’re out here, you’re doing this on your own,
like, I’ve got family but I’m doing this on my own and, um, it was that you don’t want to talk to the wrong person. You know, like, it could be scary, you know, talking to the wrong person, like okay, are you getting money from this person, I need you to pay me. I don’t want to deal with that. And so I was very conscious of where the person was, which community they were coming from, so that I was making certain that I was also safe as well. So, you know, people, they like ‘lights, camera, shoot’, no, I mean, for myself and how I shoot it was just totally different. And, um, yeah.

Even in situations where an individual chooses to work in the adult entertainment industry on their own volition, and arguably without any coercion whatsoever, there are still costs to this type of work that are related to the stigma associated with it, and it is a stigma that often remains with them for the rest of their life. As a result, there are opportunity costs to taking on this kind of work, and some of the ways that producers and performers approach that stigma will be discussed next.

**Opportunity Costs**

Many of the participants brought up that the types of performers that they did not like working with were performers that were only working in the industry for money. As mentioned several times before, these types of individuals are difficult to work with for many reasons, but a primary one was the challenges that they posed for becoming engrossed in the encounter and being able to experience sexual pleasure. All in all, performers that became involved in the industry solely for money were stigmatized. Several of the performers felt antipathy toward these individuals because, in their experiences, the ones that did enter into the industry for economic reasons did so based on choice, and not economic hardship. A theme that came up in many of the discussions with the participants was that the individuals who were money driven were not in desperate situations, they just wanted quick and easy money, and they did not want to put forth
effort into the performance or show any interest in the industry as a professional community. As a result, besides the difficulties they posed in the workplace, they were stigmatized by performers who do enjoy the work because many felt that it was a foolish choice to make because of the stigma attached to the profession.

All of the participants acknowledged the stigma that was associated with the profession, and the opportunity costs that resulted from being a part of it, whether that was on a personal level, a professional one, or both. In short, although everyone was obviously doing the work to generate income, there was a certain expectation that monetary interests had to be balanced with an interest with the job, which included a degree of cognizance about the sacrifices that went with being part of the profession. The following participant, who is both a producer and performer, provides an example of what many of the interviewees discussed during the interviews.

P: Um, I feel bad for those girls, sometimes I ask them like, so, why are you in porn, you know? What made you want to do this? And, a lot of times it’s just like they don’t know what else to do. It’s not that they’re desperate, it’s not that they’re like, well it was this or like suck a dick for crack on the street. It’s not like that, it’s just, they’re sort of just like 18 and dumb. And like some people them that they could make a bunch of money doing this and they’re like, oh, okay, I guess I’ll do that. You know, there's no connection to it to them. They get into this because they want to. Just kinda, whatever.

CM: A job.

P: Yeah, it’s a stupid job to have if that’s how you feel about it ‘cause it’s so hard. Like, the cost of this job, you know, people are going like to hate you for it, and make sure you can’t get lots of other jobs done and lots of, you’re gonna pay the cost, like, make it worth it. I love this job. There's lots of girls who do and the girls that I choose to hire, like on my features, are girls who love this job. ‘Cause if its right for you, it’s absolutely great.

Another producer also discusses how he will not hire performers that try to enter the industry for reasons based on money alone. He admits that he began working in the industry because he felt
that he would make a lot of money, and he is candid with potential performers about that. He even uses his own experiences to explain to performers during the hiring process that doing this kind of work is unlikely to lead to a lucrative profession in the industry. He feels that it would be unethical to hire people that have such expectations and therefore it is a matter of his own conscience to be clear about how likely it is that they will generate a lot of income from doing this work. Besides that, he thinks it is important that they understand that it will more than likely cost them opportunities in the future if they choose to proceed with it. Below, he explains his experiences dealing with stigma because he chose to work in the industry and how he goes about selecting performers for his productions.

I tell them, no I ask them, why do you want to do this? I want to know why you do this because the one thing that really always turns me off is that they come to it with a desperation to make money. That bothers me in a sense that even though I did it, I did that, I, I always own up to it, I did that and be, 'I’m gonna make a million dollars’. But I was young and I didn’t understand the business. I’m always truthful to them. You will not make a million dollars, you might only shoot with me one time. Nobody might ever hire you again. You’re not on contract with me so you’re more um, hopefully this will get you other jobs if you want to but that might never happen. That said, this could ruin your life. This could ruin your life. I’m always up front. Especially, not especially but, a lot of times I feel a little more like, mmmmm, a little more like daaad [laughs], when they’re really young kids. Um, meaning young, I’m 52, I’m mean like 20 years old or whatever. I just feel like, 'rarr', you know? Is this the, not that I’m against pornography, it’s not that. But what I do know is from my experience as a porn star, it has shut many doors for me. Thank god I have an understanding of that and I could make my business into other things, right? Not everybody has that understanding or be able to that. That said, when I, question them about it, those are the question I ask. Why do you want to do this? Do you think you’re gonna be a millionaire? You’re not going to be a millionaire. And, um, this could hurt you in the future if you’re planning on being a doctor, a lawyer, or working in the corporate world or, you know, whatever, this is gonna be out there forever and I mean forever. So, when they come back to me that, no, they want to do it, most, most, most of them come back if that they want to do it because they really love my series and they feel that it can empower, be empowering for them. And they want to help to change, you know, the way that people that look at trans men. Right answer, love it, great, perfect. And I don’t feel, honestly, I would feel crappy if I didn’t tell them that. I wouldn’t feel comfortable with myself. I’m a
very honest straightforward man. And I wouldn’t feel comfortable if I didn’t say, these are the things that could happen to you. I put it out there now if you’re cool with it, I, my conscience is totally clean, and I feel, you know what I mean?

Although most people associate the stigma of the work with the performers, people that work behind the scenes also deal with stigma even though they are not engaging in sexual activities or performing in the sexual encounters. These findings are consistent with Tibbals’s (2013) research on women who work behind the scenes in pornography. Even though they perform clerical duties that are indirectly linked to sex work, they too are faced with stigma. In this study, producers who had never been performers also faced stigma when trying to secure work in other cultural industries or in situations unrelated to their work that they were involved with in the community.

The following producer discusses how she feels like a sex worker even though she has never directly engaged in sex work in the context of a sexual encounter. She provides an example of a time that she went to give a talk about business in the community and how the talk was moved because it was later discovered that she owned a business that sold adult films and toys and she produced pornographic movies.

P: I feel like, even though I don’t have sex, I feel like a sex worker because there's a lot of stigma that goes along with what I do. Yeah. Yeah, I, I’ve had situations where, you know, all of a sudden, where I’ve actually been asked to speak somewhere and one of the, the speaking engagement was actually moved because of who I was.

CM: Oh.

P: So, yeah. It was a big company, they still wanted to sponsor, but it was like, okay, but you can’t have it here because we have 'bring your child to work day'. I mean like, how many, how many levels of office space do you have in this building? I mean, you’re only gonna, like, how many parents? You know what I mean? Like, what do you think I’m going to talk about? [We both laugh]
The next producer makes pornographic films but he also works in the non-pornographic entertainment industry. He provides an example of a time that he was recommended by a friend to work on a production and that he was not given the job because of erroneous stereotypes that some people have of people that work in the pornography industry.

I’m still technical, um, I, I’ve learned a lot about film making and I’ve, and I’ve come in on a couple pilots, you know reality pilots, and people usually like my work and I’ve, and I’ve cut commercials, um, for people and, no, not, ah, call it mainstream, but to me it’s all part of the same thing. The biggest gripe is that just because you work in porn, people inside the industry technically just assume you’re not up to speed with a lot of these other people. And yet, I usually find it the opposite. I usually find it, ah, some of the non adult people I work with are much more, less knowledgeable technically and ah, and I, I, just find that kind of bothersome ’cause I was trying to get a job at this, about 2008, I was try to get a job as an editor at this post production house. And just the owner, I had a mutual friend with the owner, um, and he recommended me and the, his first reaction was that oh, you know, people from porn are all drug addicts and I tend not to hire them [laughs]. I was like, that’s not me, you know, he just –.

These findings show why entering the industry has led to opportunity costs for performers and producers alike. Although entering the industry solely for money is a stigmatized quality, profit is still important. Producing pornography is still a form of work, which means that generating income must factor into their decision to enter into, and remain, in the industry. However, the degree to which that influences them, along with how much they care about the work itself, is crucial, as are the reasons they specifically do the type of work that they do. Some of those reasons are illustrated in the following section.

**Diverse Profits**

One reason why participants decided to become makers of pornography was to correct the absence of a particular kind of sexual subject found or not found there; the purpose of making pornography was to include and represent those missing subjects. This theme was present for
both performers and producers alike, as individuals in both roles stated that their entry into the field was spurred by a lack of certain images in pornography. Some individuals set out to correct what they saw as a visual void from the start, while others eventually remained, and embedded themselves further in the industry, in order to accomplish that task. What was missing, according to these participants, were representations of sexual subjects that reflected them, and by proxy, the many others like them that were also rendered absent in mainstream, and even non-mainstream, pornography. Representing deviant bodies engaging in sexual behavior is the impetus here. And more specifically, bodies that were as marked as non-normative in terms of race, gender, and size. This theme is inexorably linked to politics, the economy, and the industry, and need to be understood in both personal and structural contexts. Many participants isolated what they did and did not see in pornography as a reason for entering the field, or again, staying in it. Although pointing to the medium itself as a catalyst for participation was a similar theme across several individuals, the rationale for their actions was not static; for some, the motivation behind filling some sort of visual gap in pornography changed over the course of their career.

In some cases, working to fill a representational gap in pornography was a constant throughout their career, but the motivation behind that might have changed. That is, the initial motive for doing so changed over time, while the goal remained the same. One example of this is a participant who set out to make pornography in order to make money. He noticed that there were no representations of trans men who had not undergone bottom surgery. He was a trans man who had a double mastectomy, underwent hormone treatment, and embodied archetypal masculinity in our culture, but eventually he decided against phalloplasty. He noticed that in mainstream pornography that the ‘opposite’ of that were represented – trans women who
augment their breasts, elect not to have a penectomy, and embody archetypal femininity in our
culture – but men like him had not been included. Furthermore, this was not only an issue within
pornography, but in the trans community more generally. Which, he states, he got, and continues
to get, a lot of flak from. Furthermore, he explained that representations of trans men in
pornography, as well as members of the trans community who have historically been given the
most legitimacy, were trans men who had undergone phalloplasty, used a strap-on, or in some
way concealed their vulvas.

P: We had a booming, booming business selling VHS. And then the internet
came! So, between that time, like I was teaching myself how to make movies, I
just taught myself with the camera, that and eh, eh, and then ah, more fetishy
kinds of films and then the internet came and we started to build a. an internet
website that had to deal with fetish, domination, which was one of the first
websites of its kind. And then as that progressed and my skills of learning how to
build a website, I started to work with a transsexual woman. Uh, because in the
adult entertainment business, that’s pretty much what you saw in the trans world,
which was just transsexual women and so with that, being a transsexual man, I
noticed that there were no, this was 12 or 13 years ago. None. Zero trans men we
men in the adult entertainment business. And my brain was like, what?! How was
that possible that there were no, what they called at the time, you know, chicks
with dicks, which were transsexual women and you know, they use that rough
language but you know, it’s all a marketing ploy. At the time I didn’t really think
of it as disrespectful, I just knew, being in the adult entertainment business that
you needed to sort of catch peoples eyes with certain phrases and certain things
and I watched how the transgender women’s porn world was all about these kinds
of, you could say, derogatory statements. Tranny, she-male. So, I was just like,
wow! There are no transsexual men. None. I mean really, think about that. In a
world that is sooo of full of every kind of turn on, fetish, well, you know,
whatever you want to call it, kinds of pornography. And so the idea just popped
in my head. It was one of those thoughts, you know, that you get. Like, wow!
(…) I had the idea and then I told my friend, like, oh my gosh, I have this idea. I
have this idea [says his name, says his 'catch phrase' or a phrase that is associated
with him] [laughs]!

CM: [Laughs]

P: ‘Cause I saw, chicks with dicks, and then I just immediately went, ‘[says his
'catch phrase’], right?! That’s how I got that idea. I just sort of went off the backs
of that. But there was nobody and I just, and my friend to me at the time, he said,
you know what, wow, that’s a brilliant idea and it’s going to change the world. And I was like, dude, I just wanna make porn, I’m not [laughs], I’m not asking to ch-, I don’t even care about changing the world, I just wanna make something cool and new and make a million dollars in porn, you know, that was really my incentive.

Eventually, his motives for making pornography featuring trans men with vaginas turned into a quest that was positioned as something more political and educational. That shift, however, was still tempered by economic shifts and the realization that the pornography industry was not as lucrative as he thought. As he put it, he went through a process of re-branding. Nonetheless, later in his career, the incentive for representing trans men like him in pornography was framed as something less about making money and more about creating a space for social awareness and social change in the trans community, as well as sexual communities beyond that.

A second example relates to race and the inclusion of sexual subjects in pornography. At the time the idea was generated by the following producer, there was an absence of films that represented ‘brown people’, and in particular, queer brown women. It was suggested to her that she make a sexographic film that included them, and she knew that it was one that she could even sell herself. In fact, since stores do not typically sell a lot, if any, of those features, she knew that it would be necessary to use her store as a way of selling her film. Furthermore, although she feels it is important to represent these bodies, she is careful about how much she chooses to make pornography featuring them. For her, exclusively or predominantly focusing on them would be trite, and not have as much as an impact. As a result, her motivation for filling a gap for the representations of sexual subjects, at least in terms of exclusively brown productions, is a select proportion of her other work, and not her sole focus. We were discussing the intersections of the market, profit margins, distribution, race, and gender/sexuality when this came up.
[B]ut, now my second film, someone was like, why don’t you make an all brown cast? Well, okay, I’ll make an all brown cast. I made it but now there are no brown stores to sell it in but my own. So, for, for two different perspectives, yeah, I’m shooting queer content over here, it’s great, they’re brown, they’re beautiful, incredible. We won again at feminist porn awards and it went to Berlin film festival so we had sold out screenings each show. Um, but, now as a business owner, me as a director selling it to my own business, I can sell it because, I can attract, brown people here versus getting it into a store that say, let’s say, Albuquerque, New Mexico or –, it ain’t gonna sell, they might take one or two from me, but it’s not gonna sell. So as a collection it’s not, there’s not very much out there, I’m probably doing the most. You know, including brown people, but brown people you don’t see in everyday, in all of those films, that’s why it’s very important. I think again, if I did use more brown people it would, for me, feel like, uh, uh, a Hollywood stereotype.

Returning to the first chapter, these findings are interesting because the same things that many individuals were not willing to do around work or narratives relating to the body are the same things that allowed them to make a name for themselves in the industry. Social categories, at once, have the potential to limit economic opportunities for these individuals as well as create them. Similarly, social categories around narratives have the potential be framed as something that perpetuates inequality as well as be reconfigured in ways that could reimage political and cultural arrangements in ways that disrupt dominant narratives. It is not gender or race or body size on its own that matters, it is how they are articulated through the narratives, and these new articulations provided the space for producers and performers to capitalize on them through the interplay of corporeal and social rearrangements, that is, they do not challenge the relationship between materiality and the material, they linked them together in new ways.
Conclusion

The findings of this study show consistencies and discrepancies with existing research on cultural resistance, sex work, and pornography. In terms of the limits of cultural resistance, it was found that feminist pornographers were also presented with the same limitations faced by others who create culture as a means of resistance (Hall and Jefferson 2000). Evidence of the incorporation of feminist pornography into the mainstream industry was found in several locations: pornographic tube sites, mainstream award shows, and mainstream trade shows. These findings also provide empirical evidence for the concept of precorporation (Fisher 2009). Support for this concept was found on multiple levels, namely, the market and the law. Economic and legal constraints were shown to be precorporated into the production process, thereby limiting the potential for subversion at the onset of production, and before circulation even takes place.

Two other concepts were introduced in order to address emergent themes in the data: hypercorporation and precorporation. For the former theme, findings revealed that, in certain respects, feminist pornography is an empty gesture, as there are discrepancies between assertions made by feminist pornographers and their practices. Furthermore, cooperative efforts between feminist pornographers and mainstream companies were evident behind the scenes during production. For the former theme, both mainstream and non-mainstream producers make multiple products from a single production and the political meanings and implications of them change once they are circulated.

In terms of previous work on pornography and sex work, the findings were consistent with Tibbals’s (2013) research on the stigma attached to individuals who work behind the scenes in pornography. The producers in the sample faced stigma, just as the performers do.
Furthermore, this research also shows how stigma shapes the relations within the industry, including how affect is managed during the production process. Although attention has been given to the stigma faced by sex workers, the findings of this study illustrate how, and for what reasons, pornographers stigmatized non-sex workers and other sex workers. Those findings extend previous research on pornography performers and point to the importance of supplementing qualitative research with methods such as questionnaires. Research on the motivations of male performers for joining the industry showed that money was a primary reason for becoming involved in the work (Griffith et al. 2012). Although the participants in this sample do the work that they do for money, the findings revealed that being solely or primarily economic driven is stigmatized in the industry.

Finally, this research also found similarities and discrepancies with existing literature as far as affective management is concerned. Consist with VanDoorn’s (2010) research on the imagery of professional and amateur pornography, hyperreality was a component of the production process. One form of role-playing technique used for becoming engrossed in the sexual encounter involved taking on the role of the consumer during the sexual encounter. In cases when a performer was not personally attracted to another performer, they approached the sexual exchange by taking on the imagined gaze of the intended viewer. As far as engrossment in the sexual encountered is concerned, some of the findings supported Goffman’s work, while others departed from it. It was found in this chapter and the previous chapter that realized resources were important for becoming engrossed in the encounter. Muffings could also potential prevent or disrupt engrossment. However, in cases that muffings did occur, producers made sure that those occurrences were edited out of the final product or they would leave them in and make multiple products. In some cases, muffings could be costly to a production, in
others, producers were able to monetize them in order to increase their profits. Finally, flooding out, contra to Goffman, did not necessarily mean that a performer did not become engrossed in the sexual encounter. In some cases flooding out occurred because a performer had become too immersed in the narrative or physically overcome by pleasure. In either situation, depending on the production, that still had the potential of disrupting engrossment for the viewer and would be editing out of the final product.
CHAPTER 6: Conclusion

This chapter provides a brief summary of the findings of this research, offers suggestions for future work, and concludes with policy recommendations concerning the relationship between pornography and harm based on the findings.

Summary of Findings

One purpose of this study was to explore how pleasure is achieved in the production of pornography, as a form of sex work and a creative endeavor. In order to accomplish that, insights from new materialism (agential realism) and symbolic interactionism were used to assess the conventions of pornography production, including the sexual encounter, by utilizing interview data with award-winning pornography producers and performers in North America. The findings revealed that pleasure, and more generally, affect, must be properly managed by producers and performers throughout the entire production process: pleasure is not accomplished solely by the performers, or only within the context of the sexual exchange that the performers have during the sexual encounter. Extending Barad’s concept of intra-action to these findings, I argue that sexuality is not an interaction, it is an intra-action.

An emergent set of findings was the importance of narratives and subsequently, role-playing, for managing affect during the sexual encounter and throughout the production process. Those findings contradicted the claims made by feminist pornographers that unscripted, autonomous sex is the most authentic and ethical way of achieving authentic pleasure during the sexual encounter and, furthermore, that their emphasis on real pleasure is what makes feminist pornography unique.
The second purpose of this study was to explore the limits of producing political pornography as a form of creative resistance in consumer society. Insights from cultural studies and critical realisms (capitalist realism) were used to analyze the interview data and myriad forms of sexual culture. The findings revealed that the political limits of producing pornography as a form of resistance occurs not only during circulation via incorporation, but also during the production process, through precorporation. In those regards, it is unlikely that feminist pornography, as a form of creative resistance, will lead to meaningful social change: it is a political fantasy.

Suggestions for Future Research

The findings of this study also provides a foundation for future work. Given the importance of narratives to the production process, and the lack of attention they have received in the literature on pornography, future work on the tensions between feminist and mainstream pornography needs to address the extent to which feminist narratives not only resist the social frameworks used in mainstream pornography, but also broader society.

The participants in this study did not produce or perform in the more politically controversial narratives, such as racist narratives (besides the participant who performed incest narratives). A critique of pornography that is shared by anti-pornography and pro-pornography feminists, among others, is that pornography is used to perpetuate racism via racist narratives. Future work is needed on pornographers that create that type of pornography in order to better understand how they approach it personally,
professionally, and politically. And more specifically, more research is needed on how performers well manage affect in those types of productions and sexual encounters.

One of the shortcomings of this research is that it did not include male performers. Given the importance of the money shot for pornography, and the physical necessity of generating and maintaining an erection for the shoot, how male performers manage affect during the production process and the sexual encounter would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how pleasure is accomplished in pornography.

I argue that more work needs to be done in sociology to bridge the theoretical tensions and gaps between micro-level and macro-level analyses. While addressing the interplay between agency and structure in order to address the ethical and political stakes of producing and circulating pornography, an emergent finding was the importance of the subject, and the role of subjectivity, in the management of affect.

**Policy Implications**

The findings of this study will be used to make policy recommendations in two, politically contentious areas. The first is the idea that pornography is inherently harmful and therefore it should be banned. The second involves Prop 60, a law that could be potentially passed in California.

**Banning Pornography**

Based on the findings of this study, and in opposition to suggestions made by other scholars, such as Dworkin, Dines, and DeKeseredy, I do not recommend that pornography should be criminalized. First, it was found that the production of
pornography is not inherently oppressive to women, or people in general. Individuals who are part of the legitimate, professionalized industry have agency and they approach their job in a responsible and ethical manner. Second, criminalizing pornography would also be problematic because it would criminalize the behaviors of people that are working in ethically sound ways, and doing that work on their own volition. Attention and resources pertaining to harm, sex, and labor should not be directed at the pornography industry as a whole. Criminalizing pornography would take attention and resources away from where it is needed more, which are forms of sexual labor that involves individuals that are forced into that labor, or types of pornography that are harmful, such as child pornography and revenge porn. Recommending policies that criminalize pornography would be significantly more harmful than beneficial to society.

**Social Epidemiology and California’s Prop 60**

It is my recommendation that voters do not pass Prop 60 in the state of California. The legitimate, professionalized pornography industry engage in practices that are significantly safer than what is proposed by Prop 60. The prevention of STDs and STIs in the industry should involve the current norms of testing for disease and infection through blood work, and not through the use of condoms or by condoms alone. Condoms are not a suitable form of protection for the types of sexual activities that pornography performers do at work. Prop 60 would be more harmful than beneficial, as companies that do not abide by industry standards could fall back on the use of condoms to claim that they are ethical production companies, as evidenced by the law.
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Appendix A: Interview Guide

I. Introduction

A. Introduce myself to the participant: Areas of interest and purpose of the study.

B. Indicate why they were chosen for the study, how their information will be used, and thank them for their time.

C. Review consent form.

D. Obtain permission – or not – to record.

E. Confirm how much time they have.

II. Participant’s arrival to, and location(s) in the industry; Definition of their work and field.

{First, I am going to ask you a few questions about how you got into your field, and how you define your work}

A. Can you tell me about how you got into the industry and became a _____________________?

How long have you been in the industry?

B. How do you define what it is that you do? Who is your audience (personally)?

C. How do you identify your role, or others with similar roles? (e.g., Actor? Performer? Talent? Model?)

D. Do you have other jobs inside or outside of the industry besides _____________________?

E. Have you ever considered leaving or do you have plans to leave?

III. Conventions of their work and the industry; Normative and deviant behaviors and occurrences. Boundary-work within the industry and sexual encounters.

{Now I am going to ask you questions about the process of doing a shoot so that I can understand what leads up to a shoot, what happens during a shoot, and what occurs after a shoot}

{First, let’s cover what happens before the actual shoot}
A. What typically happens before a shoot? Or before actual filming begins?

1. As a performer, how do you get hired, or seek out what? What qualities do you have that they are looking for?

2. As a producer, how do you hire individuals for a shoot? What qualities are you looking for?

3. How do they/you know an individual will be right for a shoot? How well the performers will work together?

4. Are there any types of people or studios you won’t work with? Which types do you prefer?

5. What types of things need to be in place for a shoot to happen? To ensure that everything is a go, what materials are needed both on-set and off-set?

   What are the performers expected to bring with them? What should/does the studio provide?

6. How do you personally prepare for a shoot? Any rituals?

7. Have you, or anyone else, ever walked off of a set before the shoot even begins?

   {Now let’s cover the actual shoot and the sexual encounter itself}

B. What typically happens at a shoot?

1. Are there any narratives/storylines/plots/scenarios you won’t do or have turned down? Which do you prefer?

2. Are there any sex acts you will not do (or have the performers do)? Are there ones that you prefer?

3. How do you approach the sexual encounter? That is, do you typically seek out genuine pleasure, act (‘fake it’), or does it depend?

   If you try and make it pleasurable, what mindset do you establish, and what steps do you take in order to ensure it or make it more likely?

   If you act or ‘fake it’, how do you make it convincing? How do you achieve an authentic look?

   If it depends, in which situations do you choose one strategy over the other?

4. Do you prefer to work with people who act or those who try and make it a ‘genuinely pleasurable’ experience?
5. How do you balance the sexual encounter with the shooting process? That is, in what situations does the sexual encounter take precedence over the production process and in what situations does the production process dictate, or take precedence over, the sexual encounter?

6. What types of things can go wrong during a shoot? A sexual encounter?
   - The kinds of things that other performers or individuals on- or off-set ignore?
   - The kinds of things that must be addressed; the scene is stopped but the shoot continues?
   - The kind that end a sexual encounter or shoot altogether?
   - Can you give me an example of a time when a shoot was stopped, cancelled, or rescheduled?
   - What types of things get edited out?

7. Have you experienced a time where you or another performer ‘flooded out’? That is, burst into laughter or giggled? What about crying?
   - Do you know of any examples of this happening to others?

8. Have you ever witnessed or experienced any ‘bloopers’ on the set? Or know of examples from others?

9. If you are not into a particular shoot, now do you get through?
   - Do you try and think of something to change your mind/mood so that you can proceed?
   - Do you ever just maintain that mindset/mood and just make sure your expressions are not giving that away?

   {Now let’s address what happens after the filming}

C. What happens after the shoot?

   Do you watch the final product (or other porn)?

IV. Participant’s personal relationships in, and experiences with, the ‘outside world’.

   {The purpose of this section is to get an understanding of your personal experiences outside of your work within the industry.}
A. Are you romantically involved with someone?

1. Do you typically get involved with individuals inside or outside of the industry?

2. Is it usually encouraged or discouraged in the industry – or at particular studios – for performers to date each other or get romantically involved?

3. Are there any challenges you face getting or staying romantically involved?

4. In what ways, if at all, is sex on set different from sex in your personal or non-work encounters?

B. In what situations has your involvement in the industry negatively impacted your life, or created more problems for you than say someone who does not work in your field (e.g., Banking? Neighborhood? Etc.)?

   In what ways do you feel that it has benefited you?

C. Do people typically recognize you in public? If so, do you like to engage with fans and others while you are ‘off the clock’ or while going about your daily activities?

D. When meeting new people, how do you like to be introduced?

E. Are you friends mostly others who also work in your field?

V. Concluding questions.

A. Final comments about their job and the industry.

1. What are the biggest complaints about your job? And what do you find most satisfying?

2. What do you think are the biggest challenges facing the industry today?

B. Possible lacunae.

Is there anything that you think I missed or left out? Or is there anything else that you think I should know about your or the industry?

C. Face Sheet/Demographics.

{Before we end, if you do not mind, I would like to ask you a few demographic questions.}

1. When and where were you born?
2. What are your gender and sexual identities?

3. What about race and ethnicity?

4. What political affiliations, if any, do you support? Do you identify as feminist?

5. Did you attend college? If so, what degree(s) did you obtain?

6. What is your yearly income?

7. Relationship status?

8. Living situation?

VI. Conclusion to the interview.

A. Future contacts/Possible snowballs.

Would you be willing to provide me with names and emails of individuals who might be interested in participating in this study? Or, would you be willing to forward a recruitment email along to any of your colleagues that might want to participate?

B. Conclude with gratitude.

Thank them again for their time and remind them not to hesitate to contact me if they have any questions, comments, or concerns that might come up after the interview is over.