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Pornography: Ensuring that Women are Never on Top

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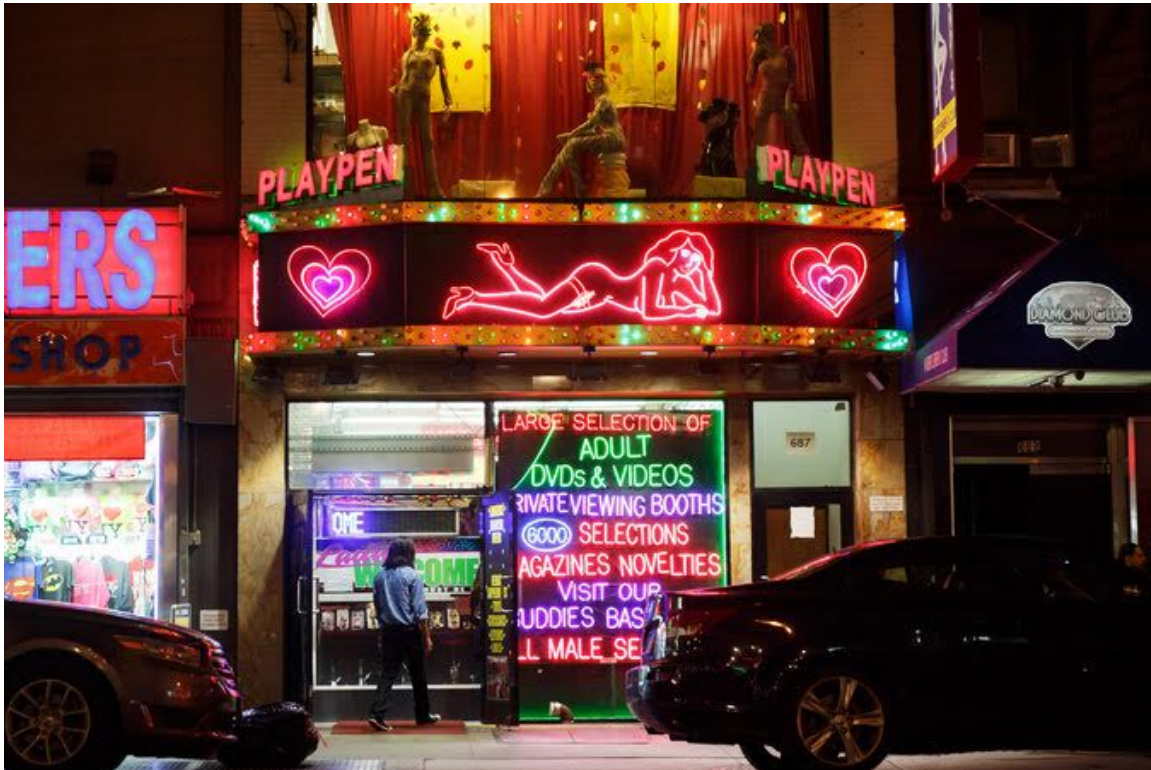
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Pornography: Ensuring that Women are Never on Top



Makenna Baker
Senior Capstone
Division of Humanities and Communication
Spring 2016

Pornography: Ensuring that Women are Never on Top



Remnick, Noah. "Court Rejects New York City's Efforts to Restrict Sex Shops." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 22 July 2015. Web. 05 Mar. 2016.

Playpen, an adult movie store that sells pornographic material and accessories for adult pleasure and sexual arousal.

Makenna Baker

Senior Capstone

Concentration: Practical and Professional Ethics

Research paper

Dr. Lee Ritscher

Division of Humanities and Communication

Spring 2016

For all of the brave survivors of sexual abuse.
You are not to blame, you are still whole, beautiful, worthy and strong, and
you are not alone in your battle for justice.

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SENIOR PROJECT PROPOSAL

Concentration: Makenna Baker, my major is Human Communications with a concentration in Practical and Professional Ethics

Focus: My capstone project will be a research essay discussing pornography and the ways in which it is dehumanizing to women. I will begin with the history of pornography and the ways in which it has become what it is today. My paper will focus on the ways in which women are objectified and the way pornography has manifested itself into popular culture. I will discuss the way pornography has made its way into advertising, and the negative impacts it has on both men and women. I will also explore any correlations between pornography and violence against women.

Problem: Pornography and the way it objectifies women and the ways it can lead to violence against women.

Question: How has pornography changed throughout history? How does pornography objectify women? Can pornography be partially responsible for violence against women? How does pornography contribute to and perpetuate archaic ideals of sexuality and gender? Does pornography negatively impact youth? Does pornography warp our ideas of sex?

Alignment with Common Theme: By exploring the ways in which pornography dehumanizes and effects women, my project aligns with the "Social Justice and Feminist Theory" theme of this course. I want to also see if there are any correlations between pornography and violence.

Purpose: The primary purpose of my paper will be to illuminate one of the several injustices that women still face every day. I hope to enlighten and inform about the potential harms of pornography for primarily women, but I will also discuss the adverse effects it can have on males.

Capstone Title: Pornography: How to Ensure that Women are Never on Top

Working Summary: It is no secret that sex sells, beginning in the Victorian era, pornography became a way for individuals to enjoy sex without actually partaking; however, pornography has changed a lot since the Victorian era. It has become one of the most lucrative markets, with an estimated \$3,075 being spent on porn every second. This may be why it has transcended into pop culture. This has become increasingly dangerous in the way that it exploits and commodifies women's bodies. By turning women into objects, pornography increases the likelihood of women being treated like things, not people. I believe there could be a correlation between porn and violence against women.

Sources: I will access our schools' databases for statistics and other information that I need, as well as gain information from various texts, such as *Pornland*. I also intend on conducting anonymous interviews with women to gather information about sexual objectification.

Next Step: I will begin by researching issues around pornography and the ways it transcended into what it is today. I will strengthen my research with real life accounts.

Timeline:

February 18th: Begin research for project. Find at least five reliable sources.

February 20th: Free write all that I feel needs to be said about pornography.

February 21st: Start organizing thought processes, quotes and research. Begin first rough draft, write at least 5 pages.

February 25th-27th: Review previous work. Continue with first rough draft, write at least five pages.

March 4th- 6th: Finish first rough draft of paper. Review, and revise.

March 6th: Work on annotated bibliography.

March 7th: Finish annotated bibliography.

March 11th: Revise first draft of paper.

March 12th: Look for additional sources to strengthen arguments.

March 28th: Turn in first draft.

March 30th: Receive constructive criticisms and advice from class.

April 1st-8th: Revise paper based on constructive comments.

April 9th: Revise final annotated bibliography.

April 13th: Turn in second draft of paper with alterations/ improvements.

April 18th: Receive back second draft with second wave of feedback.

April 22nd-23rd: Revise final paper.

April 29th: read through and check for any errors. Purchase poster board.

May 6th: Begin synthesis essay about capstone experience.

May 8th: Finish Synthesis essay. Organize capstone portfolio.

May 9th: Put together poster for Senior Capstone Festival.

May 11th: Turn in final paper and synthesis essay. Write out notes for oral presentation.

Introduction

Long gone are the days of pornography being hidden behind neon-lit storefronts and mysterious black plastic bags; today pornography is an integrated part of our society. With the assistance of new technology, accessing porn is quick, easy, and anonymous; however, it is now endorsed as more than just for sexual pleasure. Due to its lucrative nature, pornographic images have contributed to advertising and pop culture. Images that used to shock have become so commonplace that westernized culture is largely desensitized to vulgar ideals about the female body. Even more worrisome, is as porn has become more absorbed in pop culture, the porn industry must adapt to become ever more shocking, which normalizes hard-core and violent sex. These ideas contribute to the objectification of women. This paper will explore the history of pornography, and how it came to be what it is today; it will illuminate the ways that pornography has normalized and popularized sexual aggression in advertising and pop culture, its adverse affect on youth, and it will elucidate the ways in which females are harmed by the dehumanizing nature of pornography and how objectification leads to violence against women.

This paper will primarily focus on gonzo porn, the genre that depicts hard-core, body-punishing sex. With desensitization, this genre of pornography has become ever more popular. Female sex actresses are always the recipients of the acts, which include being orally, vaginally, and anally penetrated sometimes by multiple partners or objects. In gonzo porn, female sex actors are regularly insulted by their male counterpart(s), and are forced to perform sexual activities until they get sick or physically injured.

History of Pornography

While images or objects portraying sex have been prevalent throughout all of human history, pornography as we think of it today, wasn't prevalent until the eighteenth century. The modern history of western pornography originates during the age of enlightenment. During that period, pornography was considered an inappropriate way for individuals to express private pleasures.

With the creation of the printing press, mass media became far more accessible. While initially the majority of printed works were religious, it wasn't long before pieces created just for entertainment were printed. This is when pornographic material became increasingly popular due to its greater accessibility. John Philip Jenkins, Professor of history at Pennsylvania State University, writes in his article "Pornography," that with the assistance of the printing press, pornography created a whole new market.

The modern history of Western pornography begins with the Enlightenment (18th century), when printing technology had advanced enough to permit the production of written and visual materials to appeal to audiences of all socioeconomic levels and sexual tastes. A small underground traffic in such works became the basis of a separate publishing and bookselling business in England, (Jenkins, paragraph 6).

This new form of expression became widely popular resulting in a new form of adult entertainment, in the form of explicit art. This art was termed pornography. Ivana Kronja, author of *Politics as porn: The pornographic representation of women in Serbian tabloids and*

its role in politics, believes that porn was a way for individuals to enjoy themselves free of societal expectation.

The term pornography itself is of modern origin and goes back to the mid-nineteenth century, when it was coined in Victorian England from the Greek words *porne* and *graphos* to denote 'graphic depiction of the lowest whores.' In its narrative, porn is ... an expression of the unrealizable aspiration to liberate oneself from the constrictions of culture and civilization and attain absolute pleasure, (Kronja 191).

While the material was considered lewd for the time, being that there was no film or photographs, the visual and written materials of early eras were far tamer than what we consider pornography today. Similarly to present times, pornography was condemned by both church and state, creating strong divides, both politically and socially; however, this did not dampen enthusiasm. Pornography was still widely created and distributed throughout both the Britain and the United States despite the taboos on sexual liberation that were characteristic of the era.

By the time that Queen Victoria came to the throne in Great Britain in 1837, there were more than 50 pornographic shops on Holywell Street ...in London.

Pornography continued to flourish during the Victorian Age in Britain and in the United States, (Jenkins, paragraph 8).

With the invention of photography and motion pictures in the 19th century, pornography quickly became a lucrative market; however, it wasn't easily obtainable until the 20th century.

Pornographic films were widely available no later than the 1920s, and in the 1960s their popularity enjoyed a massive upsurge. The development of videocassettes in the 1980s and ...DVDs in the 1990s enabled the wide distribution of pornographic films and further encouraged their use because they could be viewed in private, (Jenkins, paragraph 9).

With the arrival of the Internet in the 1990s, pornography became even easier to obtain. Individuals no longer had to leave their homes in order to procure new material. They could watch unlimited amounts of pornography from their homes. This allowed pornography to become the profitable enterprise that it is today. Online pornography caters to diverse tastes and interests; over the years, it has become increasingly extreme in order to continue serving popular interest. The impact of this is that with pornography being easily accessible, more and more extreme pornography must be created in order to maintain novelty and interest. This allows individuals who regularly view pornography, to become desensitized by extreme and sometime violent sexual acts.

Pornography, Advertising and Pop Culture

Today, the majority of the pornography available is considered gonzo porn, pornography that depicts hard-core, body-punishing sex in which women are demeaned and objectified. Due to the way pornography has normalized sexual acts, and its lucrative nature, its values have carried over into advertising and pop culture.

In advertising, women are portrayed as nothing more than sexual objects. Advertisements often depict broken-up images of the female body without including the model's face. This

emphasizes the importance of sexuality and reinforces the idea that women don't need an identity. Without an identity the model becomes an object to sell. Similarly, many advertisements will depict explicit scenes of sexual aggression such as many men pinning down a single female model, as was the case in the Dolce and Gabbana ad from 2007 that depicted a woman being held down by a shirtless man, while three other men look down at the woman callously. Ads depicting women in submissive positions glorify rape culture and sexual violence towards women. Rather than portraying sexual violence as dangerous and wrong, popular brands like Dolce and Gabbana market it as romantic and ideal. Many argue that advertising is harmless; however, according to Jean Kilbourne, lecturer on women's rights, the average American is exposed to over 3000 ads a day. Advertising is an integrated part of westernized society and they contribute to ideas surrounding cultural norms, even if most individuals feel they are unaffected by it.

Depictions of sex have even carried over into the food industry. In 2009, Burger King released an ad comparing the consumption of a sandwich to oral sex. The piece depicts a young woman looking frightened with her mouth agape in front of a large sandwich; the text reads, "It'll blow your mind away." Advertisements like the aforementioned are incredibly prevalent and glorify the same ideals as pornography. In addition to highly sexualized, these images, unlike pornography, are considered acceptable for the general public. This only serves to further desensitize the public to pornographic images and sexual violence against women.

When advertisements depict women being victimized or sexualized, it generates an attitude that body punishment and sexual violence against women is acceptable. While advertising has always reinforced archaic gender roles, recently there has been an increase in violent sexual imagery. Research from the University of Georgia claims that the amount of advertisements portraying sexualized images has increased significantly over the years. "Using sex to sell everything from alcohol to banking services has increased over the years: 15 percent of ads used sex to sell in 1983; that percentage grew to 27 percent in 2003" (Sorrow). The images in advertising have also become increasingly graphic, mirroring the trends in pornography. According to the brilliant book *Pornland*, by Gail Dines, pornography is a \$96 billion-dollar industry globally, amassing \$13 billion in the United States alone, and this only accounts for what is purchased. Marketers seek to portray what they think will be most successful, and being that pornography is so lucrative, it is no surprise that there is a correlation between pornography and marketing.

As well as working its way into advertising, pornography has also made its way into pop culture. Famous individuals from Howard Stern to Oprah have endorsed pornography as sex-positive and chic, encouraging individuals to utilize pornography as a sexual aid. Mainstream media today, is beginning to appropriate the ideals of soft-core pornography. Shows such *Girls Gone Wild*, The \$40 million franchise, owned by Joe Francis, is marketed as something that isn't a porn product, but rather as something sexy, fun and liberating that pushes the boundaries of mainstream pop culture. Most believe that *Girls Gone Wild* is simply a show that features inebriated women being coaxed to undress and flash the camera in public (troubling already); however, on its website, it provides explicit

pornographic footage. While *Girls Gone Wild* is no longer aired on TV, it normalized female exploitation and helped contribute to the desensitization the public feels in regards to pornographic materials.

Pornography has also been the focus of many movies such as *The Girl Next Door*, and *Zack and Miri make a Porno*. Most of these films portray the main characters as porn actors. While the movies all focus on comedic or dramatic themes in regards to pornography, they help to create idealized misconceptions about the porn industry.

In *The Girl Next Door*, a beautiful 19-year-old woman is the victim of an abusive porn producer. While this film does an excellent job of portraying the dangers of pornography, the actress's friends, Ferrari and April, who also play pornstars' in the film, glorify the trade, which could be seen as enticing to viewers. Similarly, in *Zack and Miri make a Porno*; pornography is idealized as a quick way to make an easy profit. While the movie is meant to be satirical, this nonchalant attitude contributes to a lackadaisical mindset about the porn industry

Pornography is not just portrayed in movies and TV; it even permeates music and music videos. Many songs have been produced about pornography and the allure of the porn industry. Songs such as "Dirty Movies," by Van Halen, glorify pornography as a way for young women to become rich and famous.

Hey, you remember when that girl was prom queen? Oh wow! Take it off! Take it all off! Pictures on the silver screen, greatest thing you've ever seen, now her name is

up in lights, everything turns out all right (Van Halen).

Lyrics such as these create misconceptions about the porn industry. In music videos, women are rarely clothed, and portrayed in very demeaning positions. Most of the songs are not about naked women, therefore, the women themselves are used as sexy props. Images of naked women are considered normal and help to desensitize ideals about pornography.

In *Pornland*, Gail Dines discusses the issue of the portrayal of young women in pop culture.

...images are perceived by users as a documentation of reality rather than a representation of it... By using 'real' women, ... (main media outlets can suggest that,) everyday women are sexually available. There are women the user can imagine hooking up with for the very reason that they are not professional porn performers. This brings the story of 'all women are sluts' right into the center of pop culture and subsequently the lives of men." (Dines, page 29).

Pornography is an integrated part of our society. Portrayals of pornography and sexual objectification against women in advertising and pop culture are commonplace. This is an issue because these mediums help us to establish cultural norms. While many individuals may feel that they are unaffected by portrayals of pornography, due to its integration within pop culture, it only serves to further desensitize the public to ideals and issues within the porn industry. The consequences of pornographic images being portrayed nonchalantly in advertising and pop culture are a diminished shock to objectifying and sexualized images of women by the public. As pop culture begins to imitate pornography more and more, the actual porn industry has to become even more hard-core to distinguish

itself from advertising and pop culture. This in turn, leads to pornography creating ever more shocking work, and consumers becoming even more desensitized to violent sexual acts perpetrated against women. While adults are better at interpreting messages of sexualization, the widespread images of extreme sexuality in both advertising and pop culture widely affect youth who interpret these messages as the cultural norm. These messages contribute to a misunderstanding in sexuality and may impact youth negatively when they begin to explore their own sexualities.

Pornography and Children

For many individuals, their first sexual experience is gained through pornography. Currently, the average age of a male child when he first views pornography is just 12 years old; this can contribute to a misunderstanding of sexuality. While most male children do not first seek out hard-core pornography, even the most tame pornographic image or film depicts women in a submissive role. While young males are more likely to seek out pornographic images to gain understanding of their developing sexualities and to gain information about the performance of sex, their female counterparts are more likely to seek out literary references to obtain the same information. Feona Attwood, author of *Sexuality and Culture*, describes the different ways children use media and references to gain information about sex and sexuality.

...a study ...examined a range of issues relating to the construction of heterosexuality amongst young men and women, including the way they use media in order to gain sexual information. The study found that while both sexes relied on television for this kind of information, there were also some marked gender

differences in the use of media; where girls used dictionaries, books, magazines and romance novels, boys used pornography which was 'easily accessible and possibly hard to avoid'...For some young men, pornography was also educational in terms of the information it provided about female anatomy and sexual technique... (Sexuality and Culture, page 12).

Pornography negatively impacts youth because it creates false expectations about sexuality and warped perceptions about intimate relationships. Male children who first develop ideals about sexuality and the female anatomy through pornography, will be introduced to harmful information that devalues women and desensitizes them to issues of sexual violence against women. Children's first perception of sexuality is important and helps to create lasting attitudes. Young males gaining their understanding of sexuality from pornography contributes to harm against women by normalizing the debasement of women. While most men do not inherently intend to harm women, by gaining knowledge of sexuality from a young age through pornography, they subscribe to standards that perpetuate sexual violence against women. In pornography, archaic gender roles and the sexual violence perpetuated against the female sex actresses are normalized and contribute to sexual harm against women in real life. Gail Dines defines the harm of young males growing up desensitized to pornographic images within everyday spheres.

As boys grow up to be men, they are inundated with messages from the media, messages that both objectify women's bodies and depict women as sex objects who exist for male pleasure... They come at boys and men from videogames, movies, television, ads and men's magazines, and they supply them with a narrative about women, men and sexuality. What porn does is to take these cultural messages about

women and present them in a succinct way that leaves little room for multiple interpretations. While there are some media images that can be read in a number of ways... gonzo porn, particularly-with its overt contempt for women and incessant story line of how women like to be humiliated and debased- delivers a clear message to men, who have already developed a somewhat pornographic gaze by virtue of being brought up in a society filled with sexist...images, (Dines, page 86).

Young men are taught from an early age that sexual violence against women is normal. It is within the media they watch, the games they play, the ads they see, and when they get to a certain age, it is in the pornography they watch. These misogynistic attitudes about women are cultivated from a young age; while men may not mean to contribute to the demeaning culture against women; they are part of a culture that encodes violence against women.

Male children basing sexuality on what they watch in pornography can be harmful in their perceptions about sexuality and may result in misogynistic views about how to treat women. Female children consuming pornography will be taught that sex is solely for male gratification, and that sexual violence perpetuated against women is normal and that women are meant to be submissive and abused during intercourse. With the continued desensitization of sexual violence in pop culture, pornography must become increasingly extreme to garner interest and novelty. The pornography individuals consume presently, is the most violent it has ever been in history, portraying unequal power in sexual relations, and glorifying sexual violence against women.

There are over 68 million daily searches for pornography in the United States alone. The standards of sexuality that come from pornography are widely consumed. Beginning at a young age, individuals begin to gain knowledge about bodily anatomy and the functions of sex through pornography. These same individuals are immersed in a culture that promotes softer ideals of pornography within advertising, and pop culture. When surveyed, most individuals don't feel as though pornography affects their lives; this is because it is so immersed in everyday culture, it is no longer viewed as pornography.

Survey Results

Based on an anonymous survey, created for this paper to identify the differing attitudes women and men have towards pornography; it was found that while most women report feeling negatively impacted by pornography, both men and women find pornography to be mostly harmless. Of the 47 participants in the online survey, 70% were women and 30% were men, primarily between the ages of 21-29. 90% of the participants reported that they willingly watched or viewed pornographic material at some point in their lives; while 10% reported that they hadn't willingly watched or viewed pornographic material. Despite 10% having never willingly sought out pornographic material; every participant reported seeing pornographic material at some point in his or her lives. When asked when the last time the participants' viewed pornographic material, the majority, (52%) stated they had enjoyed pornographic material sometime that month, 28% within that week. These numbers were especially interesting when compared to the answers for the question of how often they felt they watched pornographic material, with a large number of the respondent's (48%) saying that they rarely, or never view pornography. These answers helped to establish the

frequency in which pornography was utilized for this group. Though the survey size was small, the answers collected reflect national surveys, stating that teens and individuals in their early twenties are the widest consumers of pornography. The survey also reflected the ideas that while most individuals consume pornography at least semi-frequently, most users believe that they watch or view pornographic material rarely when asked.

The next series of questions the survey covered were in regards to sexual violence, portrayals in pornography, and how the participants felt pornography contributed to their concepts of sex. When asked whether pornography had ever made them feel inadequate, 37% of participants reported yes, while 63% reported no. Respondents who answered yes were asked to detail their feelings of inadequacy in regards to pornography.

Unsurprisingly, all of the individuals who disclosed feelings of inadequacy were female. The respondents largely felt that their bodies didn't match those of the pornographic ideal, and that they couldn't perform sexually in the same ways as the sex actresses. "When watching porn, I don't feel fit enough, or pretty enough. Sometimes I worry that I'm doing something wrong, like one of the moves, that my partner wouldn't like," one participant reported.

Pornography creates misconceptions about the human form, portraying individuals as fit and well endowed. Society has largely mirrored these images creating unachievable standards. Women are taught from a young age what it means to be attractive, and when they are incapable of meeting these ideals, they are left with feelings of inadequacy.

Similarly, when asked how they felt women, and men were portrayed in pornography, respondents referred to the women sex actresses as tools for male pleasure, commenting on female objectification and their willingness to be subordinate. "Most of it is objectifying.

Porn seems overall to be made by men, for men, and therefore is largely focused around the male gaze. This is evident in the POV (point of view,) types of pornos in particular, but is evident in pretty much all porn I've seen. It tends to show female pleasure as little more than a device to validate the man's prowess," says one contributor. Respondents were much more likely to describe male sex actors positively, they tended to be referred to as dominant and powerful, and having very little regard to female pleasure. "Since porn tends to be created for men, it shows them as being the center of attention in sexual relationships. While the women are the visual centerpieces, they are there for the men to enjoy. Her orgasm is unimportant, fake, or not included at all, whereas his is the cinematic climax of the video." Many participants also reported feelings of discomfort when watching male sex actors in pornography, being that most of the respondents were female, this was an understandable reaction, because most women in heterosexual pornography are portrayed very submissively. Due to male depictions in pornography one individual even reported preferring not to watch heterosexual pornography, "Men are depicted as sexual animals. Even though I'm not a lesbian, I mostly watch lesbian porn because the men in porn gross me out." When asked how pornography portrays homosexuals, most users could only attest to lesbian porn and reported that it was very similar to the depictions of female porn actresses represented in heterosexual pornography, "I don't have enough experience with male gay porn to answer this fully, but I think that lesbianism in porn is depicted much more as a fetish-type of situation, rather than an orientation... Even lesbian scenes seem to cater to the male gaze." Despite participants acknowledging the unequal power structures within pornography, when asked whether or not they found pornography to be more harmful or helpful in general, only 31% of participants reported that they found

pornography harmful. The majority of respondents (55%) reported that they felt neutrally about pornography and that it was neither helpful nor harmful in general. However, when asked if the participants felt pornography was more helpful or harmful in its portrayal of sex, 48% of the surveyed, felt that it was harmful, due to its misconceptions. Respondents didn't feel that pornography was harmful or contributed to any adverse affects in general, but they did feel it could contribute to warped senses of sex. When asked if participants felt whether females were negatively or positively impacted by pornography's portrayal of women, 63% of respondents believed that women were harmed by females' portrayal in pornography. This was interesting since the majority of individuals felt pornography was not harmful in general. Being that pornographic ideals of sexuality are so integrated within westernized society, pornography is not recognized as contributing to hegemonic principals of gender roles. Ideals of pornography are immersed within advertising, and pop culture, desensitizing individuals to harmful perceptions of sexuality at a very young age. This was a subject that most participants recognized within the survey. Respondents were informed that the average male begins intentionally viewing pornography at age twelve, when asked whether or not they felt this could contribute to warped concepts of the performance of sex, 83% or participants answered yes, feeling that pornography presented unrealistic expectations and encouraged unprotected sex.

They (children) may think that pornography is how sex should be, without understanding that it is acting and an entire production. There is preparation for certain acts that may not be shown on camera.... Furthermore, porn often doesn't show condom usage, which is a very important precaution for youth to understand, (anonymous participant).

The majority of participants felt that youth learning about sex through pornography could contribute to warped perceptions of the performance of sex, how to treat ones partner, and issues involving safe sex; however, the majority of male youth do learn about sex through pornography. The male half of the population learns about sex through pornographic ideals, and the female half of the population learns submissive gender roles from cultural norms. The harm the participants defined from youth gaining knowledge from pornography is already in effect currently. While respondents seemed critical of the possible implications of sex learned through pornography, very few felt that it had already negatively impacted society. These questions help to establish how respondents felt about the different roles presented in pornography. To discern how individuals felt pornography had affected their own relationships, the survey shifted to personal questions about sexuality and sexual violence.

The participants within the survey seemed to have mixed feelings about pornography. While most felt that pornography largely didn't have an affect on individuals or society, many participants also commented on the adverse effects pornography has on youth and women. Being that pornographic ideals are immersed within western culture, the participants were asked personal experiences from their own relationships. These questions were designed to illuminate whether pornographic ideals were contributing to sexual norms and possibly sexual violence within the real world. When asked whether pornography had ever made them expect things from a sexual experience that didn't occur, 24% of participants answered yes, primarily stating that they expected to achieve orgasm easily,

As a female, porn teaches both men and women that it is common for women to experience orgasm from penetration alone. I find that in actuality, I as a female require more than that...to experience climax. Porn in general tends to be an immaculate and misleading depiction of female pleasure, (anonymous participant).

Other discrepancies with real sex and sex portrayed in porn involved individuals not being able to achieve certain positions or, significant others not performing in the ways their partners had expected. The majority of respondents (76%) reported that pornography had never made them expect things that didn't occur. This suggests that most of the participants are aware that pornography is an act and not a healthy depiction of sexual relationships. The participants were also asked if their sexual partner had ever compared their sexual intimacy to something that they had viewed in pornographic material. Once again very few respondents (13%) answered yes, while 87% of the surveyed answered no. This was interesting to compare to the answers received in the following question, which asked if the participants had ever felt pressured to perform for their partners based on something that their partner had mentioned enjoying from pornography. 26% of respondents reported that they had felt pressured to perform based on pornographic ideals, "I just felt like they wouldn't be happy with me unless I performed like the people on the screen. I was expected to be super 'sexy' and 'dirty.'" Another individual reported that they felt as though they weren't able to compete with what their partner saw on the screen. Every respondent who answered 'yes,' felt personal or external pressures to perform sexual acts in a way that mirrored pornography, rather than from their partner. This suggests that the pressures to perform to pornographic ideals are more from personal insecurities and expectations than from partners. This can be seen in the recent trend for

women to shave all of their pubic hair. Gail Dines discusses this in *Pornland*, stating that women have felt pressured by pornography and marketers mirroring pornographic ideals to shave away all of their pubic hair. When Dines asked young women why they would shave everything, the young women largely responded that it made them sexier or appear more sexually experienced. These women are not overtly being told they must shave completely, they are responding to societal pressures introduced from pornography; however, this does not mean that individuals still don't receive pressure from their sexual partners. To conclude this survey, participants were asked if they had ever felt sexually objectified by their partners. 23% of respondents answered yes, typically stating that they felt their partner was only interested in their physical intimacy. "I was made to feel uncomfortable by unwarranted sexual gestures or comments despite having told him I was not 'in the mood' ... and it became increasingly pressuring the longer it went on." While the question did not specifically mention objectification in regards to pornography, one individual felt that their partner was only objectifying during sex, and attributed this to pornography. "He was a lot more interested in things that objectified women during sex, even though that wasn't who he was as a person, sexually it came out. He would want to do things that I knew were from porn and even when I said no he would continue to push." This portrays the attitudes presented in pornography, in which men are dominant and can bend their partners to subject to their sexual superiority.

Through out the survey, individuals largely reported positive experiences in regards to their sexual intimacies. Despite that though, most individuals felt that pornography was harmful in its portrayal of women and could have adverse effects on youth. The ideals

presented in pornography begin at a young age, encouraging hegemonic masculinity and the subordination of women. Jean Kilbourne, states in her work, *Killing Us Softly*, that “turning a human being into a thing is almost always the first step towards justifying violence against that person.” While respondents who did report feeling pressured to perform to pornographic standards or who reported objectification were the minority in regards to their sexual experiences, they still presented a problematic view of pornography. The majority of participants may not have had negative experiences with pornography, but most individuals still recognized its harmful messages and roles. Pornography has largely influenced sexual roles in society by reinforcing pornographic attitudes within advertising and pop culture. Both male and female children are introduced to these gender roles and standards whether they are watching pornography or not. This creates an environment where young women are taught to be submissive and serving to their sexual partners while young men are taught to be aggressive and self-serving. These standards are so engrained within society, that while participants were able to identify the adverse affects of pornography when looking at the problematic roles individually, they were unable to recognize the ways pornography contributes to societal harm as a whole.

Conclusion

Pornography is an integrated part of western society, recently, the lucrative ideals of soft-core pornography have contributed to pop-culture and advertising. These mass medias assist in the establishment of cultural norms, which portray women as subordinate, and males as aggressive and domineering. In order to maintain novelty pornography has become more hard-core, increasing its use of shocking imagery, which causes regular

viewers of pornography to become desensitized to sexually violent themes. This in turn, creates a negative cycle, in which pornography must become increasingly extreme to garner interest and revenue. Being that westernized societies are so sexualized, children garner sexual interest at a much younger age. Most males' turn to pornography to gain knowledge on the ways sex is performed and the female anatomy, whereas most females turn to mass media and books. However, being that mass media has begun to resemble pornography, both young females and males are learning and practicing the same gender roles. This contributes to the submissive roles of females and the increasingly aggressive attitudes of males. Participants within the conducted survey largely felt that pornography didn't provide any real harm within society. However, being that the majority of the respondents were from the ages 21-29, it is feasible that porn has become more extreme since they first viewed it, allowing them to garner understandings of its fallacies. It is also feasible that the participants were also raised with similar ideals from pop culture, advertising and pornography and are not aware of the implications as a whole, viewing it as normal. Despite the majority finding no harm in pornography, some respondents still reported feelings of inadequacy, objectification, and pressure in regards to pornography. These issues will only continue to worsen as mass media persists in its liberation of sexuality. Viewers will become increasingly desensitized to objectifying images and children will be left with corrupt beliefs on the ways in which sexuality should be performed.

Women are already facing discrimination on socioeconomic and political levels and pornography largely contributes to this patriarchal paradigm. Women face inequality

within society, and the ways in which sexuality is perceived and practiced reflects that. Pornography is so engrained within westernized culture that it is difficult to discern what a world without pornography would look like. Pop culture, advertising and pornography cater to the degradation of women. These create cultural norms, which allow women to be objectified and debased. By allowing women to be seen as sexually inferior, it creates an unequal dynamic between the genders as a whole. Women are seen as objects rather than people. In gonzo pornography women are depicted as deserving of physical abuse and aggressive language. With so much of mass media depicting ideals of soft-core pornography, the majority of actual pornography is hard-core, meaning that the pornography most males are enjoying, (beginning at a young age,) depicts violence against women. Men becoming sexually stimulated to violent sexual acts against women constitute a message that harming women is normal and acceptable. These notions violate the ethics of equality both socially and sexually; they contribute to a world in which women are systematically oppressed and abused. Pornography is a major benefactor in sexual violence against women, and will continue to be so until both men and women are ready to subvert the patriarchal paradigm.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Attwood, Feona. "What do people do with porn? Qualitative research into the consumption, use, and experience of pornography and other sexually explicit media." *Sexuality and culture* 9.2 (2005): 65-86.

Attwood's article reviews qualitative research into the consumption of pornography and other sexually explicit media. This paper contributes to my research in the way that it illuminates the constructs of sexuality. Attwood examines the way's men, women, and young people see, experience, and use explicit material. Her work also seeks to illuminate the different ways in which sexual expression are practiced and understood by the public. This article assisted in my discovery about the adverse effects pornography has on youth, and the way's that it can distort early perceptions of sexuality.

Baker, Makenna D. "Affect of Pornography." *SurveyMonkey*. N.p., 25 Feb. 2016. Web. 06 May 2016.

I created this survey to explore the history of pornography, the affects it has on men, women, and youth, and whether or not there appears to be a correlation between pornography and violence against women. I found that the majority of the participants felt that pornography was neither negative nor positive in its affects on society; however, most individuals did report feeling objectified, and reported that they felt that pornography had adverse affects on both women and youth. My survey found that while most of the respondents didn't report feeling personally affected by pornography, they all reported negative sexual experiences that they attributed to pornography.

Buckingham, David, and Sara Bragg. *Young people, sex and the media*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

Buckingham and Bragg provide in depth research on the ways that children are prematurely sexualized. They connect their research to the study that young people are having sex younger and younger every year. They attribute this partially to pornography and portrayals of sex in pop culture. This research contributed to my examination of the ways in which pornography can be harmful to youth's perceptions of sexuality and the ways in which pornography has carried over to advertising and pop culture. The authors argue that easy accessibility to pornography contributes to misunderstanding of the ways we perceive sex.

Dines, Gail. *Pornland : how porn has hijacked our sexuality* / Gail Dines Spinifex Press North Melbourne, Vic 2010. Print.

Pornland is an interesting book that explores the ways porn contributes to the objectification and violence against women. Dines illuminates the impacts harm has on sexual aggression against women, while exposing the lucrative nature of the porn industry. Her research greatly contributed to my exploration of violence against women and how the portrayals of women within pornography exacerbate this issue. Her book also explores the ways that pornography has infiltrated everyday life and the ways that these effects are perceptions of sexuality.

Van Halen. *Dirty Movies*. Ted Templeton, 1981. *A-Z Lyrics*. Web.

Dirty Movies is a song written by Van Halen glorifying the pornography industry and encouraging young girls to become porn actresses. I included this song within my paper to exemplify the ways in which pop culture contributes to porn culture.

Jhally, Sut, Jean Kilbourne, and David Rabinovitz. *Killing Us Softly 4: Advertising's Image of Women*. , 2010.

Kilbourne's film, *Killing Us Softly* is an iconic piece that illuminates sexual objectification, and violence against women in advertising. Her research portrays the ways in which sexual violence against women has been destigmatized and glorified within media and the ways this contributes to violence against women in real life. I used her research within my project to elucidate the ways women are systematically objectified.

Kronja, Ivana. "Politics as porn: The pornographic representation of women in Serbian tabloids and its role in politics." *STEREOTYPING: REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN PRINT MEDIA IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE* (2006): 187.

Kronja discusses the ways in which South East Europe is growing and expanding, but their views and politics towards women are still archaic. Kronja expands upon the ways women are subjected to traditional gender roles and that all-powerful positions in politics are still considered to be reserved for men. In order to illuminate the harm these gender roles place on women, she explores the ways in which women are portrayed in media, including pornography. This was helpful for the research within my paper because not only does it enlighten upon the hegemonic gender roles within society, but she briefly recounts partial histories of pornography.

"Pornography". *Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online.*
Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2016. Web. 27 Feb. 2016
<<http://www.britannica.com/topic/pornography>>.

John Phillip Jenkins, history professor at Pennsylvania State University, examines the history of pornography, His research illuminates how pornography has changed since the beginning of mankind, focusing primarily on the Enlightenment, Victorian and Modern eras. This article discusses the ways pornography became the lucrative market it is today. This research greatly assisted my paper in regards to the history of pornography and the ways in which it has become violent and objectifying towards women.

Sorrow, April Reese. "Magazine Trends Study Finds Increase in Advertisements Using Sex."
UGA Today.
UGA, n.d. Web. 17 May 2016. <<http://news.uga.edu/releases/article/magazine-trends-study-finds-increase-in-advertisements-using-sex/>>.

This article contributed to my research about the frequency of the depiction of sex within advertising. This article discusses the frequency in which sex is used in marketing and the ways in which its frequency has increased over the years, based on quantitative research.

FINAL SYNTHESIS ESSAY

This semester's Capstone themes were very intriguing, but I was especially drawn to HCOM 475.4, the segment that specifically focused on Social Justice and Feminist Theory. Being a part of this course was incredibly enriching for me. HCOM 475.4 enlightened me to issues of both privileges and marginalization within class, race and gender. This section allowed me to become more aware of my own place on the social hierarchy and the systems that discourage equality, such as racism, sexism, classism, xenophobia, and heteronormativity. Both our text, and class lectures presented the perspectives of minority individuals and the injustices they face daily.

My specific interest was primarily in gender because, even before I signed up for capstone, I knew I wanted my theme to focus on women's rights. Socially, I believe that we live in an inequitable system, and I wanted the opportunity to illuminate aspects of that within my capstone. Women are largely objectified and deemed as inferior to men; this is disparaging considering that they make up half of the Earth's population. My research paper focused on the ways in which pornography contributes to gender inequality, because it encourages subordinate roles for women. Pornography is a very lucrative business and therefore pornographic ideals have taken over both advertising and pop culture, which greatly influence westernized cultural norms. Women are taught that they are meant to be sexually submissive to men, and that they are only there to cater to men's sexual fantasies. As pornography has become increasingly violent to maintain novelty, so too has advertising and pop culture; these issues have carried over into real life, desensitizing individuals to sexual violence against women. My capstone directly contributes to my section's ability to identify and describe major issues my illuminating social injustices that

are largely considered cultural norms. By identifying the major issues within the porn industry my paper helped to establish critical questions about cultural expectations of gender and the ways in which society helps to perpetuate misguided ideals.

My capstone course, reminded me to remain open minded and to consider intersectional issues regarding sexism. Every class, my peers and I would discuss the reading and collaborate ways in which we could incorporate what we learned within our capstones. Conversing about issues helped me to consider different perspectives that I may not have normally thought of. Finding ways to subvert destructive societal norms became a collaborative effort in our class, and we each found a way to integrate these lessons into our capstones individually.

This capstone was painstakingly important to me, and after hours of research and surveys, I began to discover more ways in which pornography contributed to issues of gender inequality. The porn industry encourages males to be overly aggressive, and it glorifies sexual exploitation of women. When I had begun my paper, I didn't expect to discover so many harrowing agendas. My project elucidated issues of gender inequality and the harmful result of gender roles. By writing about the issues of pornography from a feminist lens, I was able to discover innumerable problems. Before beginning this capstone, I considered myself a very sex-positive feminist, this included a general acceptance for the porn industry, I didn't expect for my views on pornography to change so drastically. I believe researching and writing this capstone lead me to have a much deeper understanding of the ways in which systems intersect in away that is damaging to society, especially in relation to the ways in which women are systematically oppressed. Our section specifically focused on systems of oppression towards racial, gender and sexual

minorities and women. After both the class and writing my research paper, I gained a much better understanding of the way these issues are intersectional and the ways in which these groups are subjected to oppression. I recall one class in particular that specifically correlated to my topic on pornography. My professor astutely pointed out that both in pop culture and pornography the focus is always on the mans pleasure, women will withhold sex as a tool, and are used as an object to conquer. I had never realized this pattern until she discussed it with us in class. This leant to my argument about the objectification of women within my capstone.

I believe that my capstone was very successful in identifying the ways in which women are systematically oppressed, and the ways in which pornography contributes to that oppression. It was a difficult subject that accurately depicted the marginalization of women. From a style perspective, my paper followed every guideline and exceeded the minimum page requirement. My paper was drafted multiple times before it was submitted to ensure that it was my best work possible. While it may be biased, I also believe that the substance of my work is very well done, beyond research, I conducted a survey to gain additional information on my capstone. If I could have done differently, I would have revised my survey to ask at what age the participants first viewed pornography, and I would have tried to gain more surveyors than 47 people; however, these are the only things I would have done differently.

Both my capstone section and my research paper served as very enriching tools to my education. I like to consider myself knowledgeable on most subjects about equality, but after taking this class, it is fair to say that there is always more to learn. This course allowed me to gain new perspectives about the ways media, politics and culture contribute to

societal ideals and how these ideals can lead to the segregation and marginalization of entire groups of people.