“Maybe I am addicted, but I don’t think it’s an addiction per se”: (Un)making Pornography Addiction

Kris Taylor

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Abstract

Over the last five decades the landscape of pornography as a medium, and the way that pornography is researched and discussed, have shifted. In the first instance, the migration of pornography to more powerful delivery networks has created predictable waves of anxiety about pornography's ubiquity, content, and consequences. However, in the second instance, the focus of these concerns have changed over time, from protests against pornography on political and sociocultural grounds, to become a battle of the pathological individual. In this thesis, I argue first that this shift represents a convergence of discourses, as old political agitation has given way to a sterile language of expertise and medicalisation. At the same time the unease which underpinned protests against pornography have remained, giving rise to an oxymoronic contemporary tension between pornography as both risky yet ubiquitous and largely unmoderated. Hereafter I argue that the concept of pornography addiction serves a reconciliatory function, as a way of delineating between acceptable and unacceptable pornography viewing. In turn, I argue that pornography addiction offers individuals – and society at large – a scapegoat upon which the excesses of pornography can be divested, while a widespread tolerance for pornography viewing remains intact.

As I will explore, the actual experiences of viewing pornography rarely fit into the neat formula of addictive or not, leaving pornography viewers suspended in a discursive gulf between the promise of pleasure and the threat of pathology. Indeed, while viewers of pornography present a peculiar cohort – contradictorily stereotyped as both perverts and sexually adventurers – the experience of pornography viewing as complex, challenging, and ambiguous is rarely considered or investigated. Utilizing media and social media analyses, survey responses, and interview data, this thesis drills down into the ways that pornography, addiction, pornography viewing, and "Pornography Addiction" are made sense of by its viewership. Here I argue, not only that vague understandings of pornography as addictive have created a confusing environment for researchers and pornography viewers alike, but that such pervasive sense-making is fertile ground for the contemporary flourishing of the very pathology being described.

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School of Graduate Studies
AskAuckland Central Alfred Nathan House
The University of Auckland
Tel: +64 9 373 7599 ext 81321
Email: postgradinfo@auckland.ac.nz

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Nature of contribution by PhD candidate	Research concept, data identification and collection (media and social media), data coding and analysis, manuscript preparation, journal submission and subsequent revisions.
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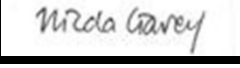
CO-AUTHORS

Name	Nature of Contribution
Nicola Gavey	Supervision of research, contribution to theorising methodology and ideas related to NZ historical context and feminist literature, detailed feedback on manuscript drafts.

Certification by Co-Authors

The undersigned hereby certify that:

- the above statement correctly reflects the nature and extent of the PhD candidate's contribution to this work, and the nature of the contribution of each of the co-authors; and
- that the candidate wrote all or the majority of the text.

Name	Signature	Date
Nicola Gavey		17.2.20

Part I

Chapter 1

Is it real? Making pornography addiction

> The recent public statements by athlete Nick Willis about overcoming an addiction to pornography have received a lot of attention. One question that is being asked is what actually is pornography addiction? In particular, many people may wonder if this really is an addiction, how common is it and how does it relate to 'normal' pornography use.
>
> –Associate Professor Simon Adamson, *New Zealand Herald*

Is pornography addiction real? I have frequently asked this question while scouring the vast literature on pornography. Throughout my reading I have observed that despite pornography research being conducted for much of the last half-century, it still says little with any certainty about how pornography and its audience interact (Attwood, 2005; Duffy, Dawson, & das Nair, 2016; Ley, Prause, & Finn, 2014; Kohut et al. 2019; Williams, 2014). Indeed, as I will discuss below, a question as to pornography addiction's "realness" is undercut by the fact that pornography addiction remains unrecognized "officially" as a discrete diagnosis or disorder. That is, "Pornography Addiction" remains absent as a diagnosis in the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-5) of the American Psychiatric Association (2013; see Weir, 2014) – or the subsequent revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11; see Kraus et al. 2018; Montgomery-Graham et al. 2015). At the same time however, comparisons between the "official" status of pornography addiction and public statements about the addictiveness of pornography show that pornography addiction's "realness" arises irrespective of – or perhaps because of – elusive empirical conclusions about pornography viewing. Indeed, the uniformity of questions asked of me at social events about pornography's addictiveness have made clear to me that pornography addiction has its own social life, not bounded by strictures of academic theorizing or clinical operationalisation.

In some sense then, at the current moment pornography addiction is both real and yet somehow not real – as a genuine "clinical" diagnosis at least. Thus, pornography addiction operates in a peculiar space, as an informal yet seemingly popular self-diagnosis: not officially recognized by researchers or mental health diagnostic bodies like the DSM and ICD, yet a seemingly understandable, if not familiar way to describe some pornography viewing/viewers. Take for example the routine tendency of news media reports to both acknowledge pornography addiction's uncertain official diagnostic status, while also describing this lack of designation as ancillary to self-diagnoses: "Whatever scientists might say, Tom feels he's addicted to porn" suggest the BBC (Wendling, 2016[1], n.p. see also Adamson, 2016; Blackstock, 2016; Blunden 2018, Fidgen, 2013; Kelly, 2017; MacDonald, 2016; Shepheard, 2009; Skinner, 2014; Weir, 2014). Such reports clearly illustrate a fascinating tension between a lack of official designation and the niche that such a designation would readily fill:

> While compulsive porn use may not be a diagnosable addiction by the DSM's standards, there's no doubt that for some, it's a real issue with potentially serious and negative consequences. But how do you know when porn use has crossed the line into potentially unhealthy territory? (Borrensen, 2019, n.p.)[2]

Without an official explanation as to the epidemiology of when pornography ostensibly "goes wrong", how are we to make sense of where this "line" between healthy and unhealthy pornography viewing lies?

In this introductory chapter I expand upon the tenuous ontological status of pornography addiction just described, hovering as it does between contested evidential base and authoritative social explanation. I begin by discussing the search for Pornography Addiction proper in the scholarly literature on pornography, introducing some of the research

[1] Wendling's (2016) article is titled "Is 'porn addiction' a real thing?"
[2] Borrensen's (2019) article is titled "Is porn addiction real? Here's what experts have to say".

relevant to the current propagation of a popular pornography addiction diagnosis. In doing so, I will highlight how an official Pornography Addiction diagnosis can only be vaguely made out, buried as it is under larger, more established fields of research on excessive behaviours and pathological sexuality. In exploring such research I aim to both introduce the (psychological) literature relevant to pornography addiction as it currently stands, while also gesturing towards how this literature supports pornography addiction's "realness" in social life. Thus, instead of looking at the validity of this literature *per se,* I aim to interrogate what the search for Pornography Addiction (in some psychological sense) might mean for making a concept of "addictive" pornography popular.

However, understanding the psychological research on Pornography Addiction is only part of the story: what about the questions put to me at social events about whether pornography is indeed addictive or not? Having briefly surveyed the empirical status of Pornography Addiction from a psychological research perspective, I will turn to the subject that makes up the bulk of my interest in the thesis to follow: the "social life" of the pornography addiction concept. Here I will turn my discussion of searching for the realness of Pornography Addiction towards the rhetorical appeal of the pornography addiction concept in popular culture more broadly. Following Willig (2000) here I will work to contrast "expert" discourses with "everyday talk" which can reflect and subvert expert language and terminology by changing its meaning according to context. That is, lay people may employ an expert vernacular of neuroscience, or a folk conception of addiction, in ways that challenge and shift the meanings of such language. In other words, while the Pornography Addiction concept may be deployed outside of academic jurisdiction, it is also being deployed in ways untethered from the restraint of any single psychological research paradigm. I will conclude by introducing the key arguments of the thesis to follow: pornography addiction works as a sociocultural phenomenon (to which psychological science

is largely auxiliary), which works to explain both the personal and social problems presented by contemporary pornography viewers. Crucially however, as I contend hereafter, this deployment of pornography addiction has in turn elided any substantive criticism of pornography viewing in general or the content and delivery of pornography itself.

Is it real?

The question of pornography addiction's realness – as hovering between contested evidential base and authoritative social explanation – is best introduced by way of example. In a 2016 article titled *Can you really be Addicted to Pornography?* Simon Adamson[3] interrogated two-time Olympic medallist Nick Willis's public confession of being a pornography addict. In the article, Adamson clearly exemplifies pornography addiction's peculiar ontological status:

> Firstly, the official manual of the American Psychiatric Association – which is also used in New Zealand – does not recognise pornography addiction. Gambling is the only behavioural addiction to receive official sanction for [sic] that organisation. In my practice as a clinical psychologist specialising in addiction, I see people for a range of substance problems. The most common non-substance behaviour that people seek my assistance with is pornography addiction, with many clients frequently using this term when first making contact. When I assess a person, it is important to keep an open mind about what is occurring for them. However I have consistently found that these men (and they have all been men) describe problems with compulsive pornography use that closely mirrors most of the symptoms of substance addiction. Furthermore, interventions that have been developed to work with substance misuse have seemed generally well suited to assisting these men recover from their pornography problem.

In drawing out the strange ontology of the pornography addiction concept, consider Adamson's employment of the word "really" in his article's title: "can you *really* be addicted to pornography?" On the one hand, taken at face value here it seems glaringly obvious that

[3] Associate Professor at the University of Otago's National Addiction Centre.

pornography addiction is real. For example, Adamson describes pornography addiction in very real terms: real enough for some (male) pornography viewers to describe themselves in such a way, and real enough for the application of treatments based on substance misuse. In this sense, removing "really" from this question, to instead ask "can you be addicted to pornography?" must provoke an almost unequivocal "yes": pornography addiction clearly exists in popular culture as a useful way for some people to describe problematic pornography viewing. However, following Austin (1962, p. 72), to ask whether this or that entity is "real" requires the specification, "a real *what?*" In this second sense, if the question of pornography addiction is whether it is a real psychiatric disorder, calling specifically on the authority of official recognition and evidence, then here Adamson is also describing pornography addiction as somehow "unreal" – or at least only provisionally real[4] – by virtue of its failure to reach official designation in the DSM-5.

A real disorder? Scholarly context

Because my interest is the ontology of pornography addiction specifically, here I would ideally be able to address only literature pertaining to "Pornography Addiction" directly. However, as I discuss hereafter, such a demarcation is difficult to make out or maintain. Indeed, the very fact that I am addressing this as the "ideal" scenario upfront, foreshadows just how conceptually slippery operationalising the concept of Pornography Addiction can be. As a case in point, it is worth noting that even in attempting to partition off a specific branch of Pornography Addiction research[5], I am already stepping out onto shaky taxonomic ground: the conceptualization of Pornography Addiction research as a sovereign scholarly territory is

[4] According to Austin (1962; see also Hacking, 1995), the very claim for something being "real" follows from the possibility that this same something is in some sense not real. That is not to say that it does not exist, but that the "something" under description is not a true version of what is ostensibly being described. As discussed below, in the case of pornography addiction, we might ask whether the label is a real addiction, a real clinical diagnosis, a real way to describe pornography viewing, and so on, which is not to say that the concept itself does not describe something, but that its claim to being that "something" is tenuous.

[5] That is, research working to investigate an "addiction" to pornography as opposed to dysregulated, compulsive, impulsive, or otherwise problematic pornography viewing, as discussed below.

complicated by the threat of annexation by any number of other pornography adjacent research traditions. For example, one might ask whether the pornography addiction framework is any more useful than an impulsive, compulsive, dysregulated or other conception of problematic pornography viewing. Indeed, it is a stark observation that the field of sex research already has a rich stockpile of viable taxonomies to describe problematic pornography viewing. Today "hypersexuality, sex addiction, sexual compulsivity, sexual impulsivity, dysregulated sexual behaviour, [and] out-of-control sexual behaviour" all enjoy some legitimacy in contemporary psychological literature (Walton et al. 2017, p. 2231; see Ley & Grubbs, 2017 for commentary), and could all feasibly incorporate problematic pornography viewing. Thus, the question as to whether the literature on the "other" conceptualisations of problematic sexuality can be described as evidence for – or against – the existence of Pornography Addiction rapidly becomes an almost philosophical exercise in semantics.

As I discuss below, while established bodies of research could seemingly offer a Pornography Addiction diagnosis some conceptual bedrock, the identification of a mechanism responsible for pornography's (negative) effect upon its audience is a well-worn, and diverse site of scholarship. For example, when engaging with the psychological research literature in psychology generally, it soon becomes obvious that pornography's ability to variously effect its viewers has been its most consistent recurring motif, no matter the delivery medium of the pornography in question[6] (see Cairns, Paul, & Wishner, 1970; Donnerstein, 1984; Donnerstein, Linz, & Penrod, 1987; Horvath et al. 2013; Malamuth & Check, 1985; Malamuth, Addison, & Koss, 2000; Montgomery-Graham et al. 2015; Wilson, 1973; Zillman & Bryant, 1984). These "effects" have most frequently been formulated as

[6] As discussed in Chapter 2, throughout history research initiatives have been developed in response to concerns about the effects of new technologies like film, radio, and television, indicating that assumptions of pornography's effects transcend the contemporaneous medium of concern (i.e. text, picture, audio, video, animation, etc.).

pornography being causative to men committing sexual violence (Allen, D'alessio, & Brezgel, 1995; Fisher, & Barak 1991; McKee, 2007a; Malamuth, Addison, & Koss, 2000), or being problematically "used" to excess because of an obsession, compulsion, or a drug-like dependence (Gola, 2016; Prause, Steele, & Staley, 2015; Kafka, 2010; Short, Black, Smith, Wetterneck & Wells 2012; Twohig, Crosby, & Cox, 2009; for criticism see Clarkson & Kopaczewski, 2013). As such, it is worth noting that pornography addiction is not a new conception of pornography being harmful to its audience, but is instead a new theoretical outcropping built upon an enduring substrate of research.

Such an outcropping seemingly follows a rich tradition of trying to unify the problems of pornography – and unruly sexuality in general – under a simple, singular diagnostic model. Indeed, in many ways the "official" status of Pornography Addiction might better be understood as a struggle to realise a chimeric promise of theoretical unification, than as representing the aetiology of a newly discovered disorder. For example, contemporary research on pornography appears in somewhat of a taxonomic crisis, as researchers have struggled to draw comparisons between studies due the theoretical, methodological, and taxonomic jumble that makes up the bulk of the last half century of pornography research. That is, despite decades of psychological research focusing on pornography's capacity to negatively "effect" its audience, today the psychological literature on pornography's negative consequences is limited by problems of vague definitional criteria and a glut of diagnostic tools (Duffy, Dawson, & das Nair, 2016; Prause, 2019; Ley & Grubbs, 2017; Willoughby & Busby, 2016). Indeed, it is worth noting that a considerable factor holding back contemporary research on pornography remains the establishment of a shared definition of what pornography actually *is* (see Horvath et al. 2013; Short, Black, Smith, Wetterneck & Wells 2012). As Kohut et al. (2019, p. 17) suggest in their recent review of the pornography viewer survey literature:

> It is clear that poor measurement practices have proliferated in the field of pornography research. The extent of inconsistent conceptual and operational definitions of pornography use across studies coupled with the lack of properly validated instruments for measuring this construct is troubling to us and is impeding progress in this area. We are far from the only voices to raise these concerns, but as of yet, little has been done to rectify the issues.

Put simply, whether pornography can discretely "effect" its audience (beyond sexual arousal) remains a site of contentious debate (for example see Gola, 2016; Prause et al. 2015, 2016), with addiction offering a new twist on an old recipe. As discussed further below, instead of representing a new conceptual venture in pornography scholarship, the "addiction" conception of pornography's harm makes for a superficially alluring proposition. For example, uniting ideas of sexual compulsion, impulsion, dysregulation, hypersexuality and so on under a single rubric of addiction is an appealing alternative to a seemingly ever expanding net of taxonomy. Indeed, the very existence of so many viable taxonomies for describing problematic pornography viewing might be seen by some researchers as evidence that these terms are all working towards describing some unified pathology (see Kendrick, 1996).

One distinct advantage of the addiction understanding of problematic pornography viewing in this field may be "addiction's" distinctly fluid contemporary morphology (Keane, 2004). As discussed further in Chapter 2, the development of a popular pornography addiction concept has been helped in principle by the precipitous expansion of research investigating behavioural addiction. Today drawing a line between ostensibly frivolous and dangerously addictive behaviours is not as simple a task as it might first appear. The last decade has seen a wealth of nominally bizarre addictions proposed by researchers including, but not limited to, sunbed tanning (Petit et al. 2014), air-travel (Cohen, Higham, & Cavaliere, 2011), fortune-teller seeking (Grall-Bronnec et al. 2015), and the Harry Potter franchise

(Rudski, Segal, & Kallen, 2009). Where Grohol (1999, p. 397) once noted that it would be as "ridiculous in future generations to refer to spending too much time online as a disorder as it is now to suggest telephone overuse or reading too many books are symptomatic of disorders", one need only look to proposals for mobile phone (Chóliz, 2010) and studying (Atroszko et al. 2015) addictions to appreciate the diverse application of the addiction concept.

However, the problem for academic researchers is that the rhetorical appeal of the addiction concept does not so readily lend itself to operationalisation as it does to social explanation. Ongoing academic debate as to whether behaviours can actually be addictive – or indeed whether addiction is a useful diagnostic term at all – casts the substance of this support into some doubt. For example, the expansion of the addiction concept to encompass almost any "excessive" behaviour has recently been described as risking "a severe overpathologization of everyday behaviours" (Billieux et al. 2015, p. 120; see also Conrad & Schneider, 1992; Reinarman, 2005; Room, 2014; Keane, 2004; Mihordin, 2012; Walters & Gilbert, 2000). As Schmitz (2005, p. 153) suggests: "the term 'addiction' has been overused and misused in society to the point that its scientific value is limited". Turning to pornography addiction specifically, the application of an addiction framework has not gone without contestation: Ley, Prause, and Finn (2014) have suggested many scientists overtly reject addiction as a description of high-frequency sexual behaviours, including problematic pornography viewing. Indeed, the usefulness of the addiction framework for problematic pornography viewing has recently been described in a therapeutic context as "a simplification of a complex individual's psychological functioning with limited clinical relevance" (Wéry et al. 2019, p. 124[7]). Finally, even when choosing whether or not to describe pornography as

[7] For example, in the absence of a consensus about the symptom domains of such addiction, Wéry et al. (2019) compare the applicability of three sets of "addiction" diagnostic criteria taken from the pornography literature. They conclude that "these theoretical models have a rather poor clinical utility" Wéry, et al. 2019, p. 119).

addictive, as Gola (2016) suggests in his defence of an addiction approach to problematic pornography viewing, the applicability of the addiction concept further depends upon which model of addiction a researcher chooses (Gola cites Incentive Salience Theory and Reward Deficiency Syndrome for example; see also Walters & Gilbert 2000). Even at a purely semantic level of consideration, the question must be asked as to how Internet, sex, cybersex, pornography, and any other number of addictions are supposed to relate: what is the addictive aspect? Is it the medium, or is it the content? Is the Internet addictive, or the content delivered by the Internet? (see Griffiths et al. 2016). How is a pornography addiction distinct from social media or cybersex addiction? Following Moser (2011, p. 228), the distinctly rhetorical appeal of a "pornography addiction" is further complicated by a consideration of how such a diagnosis relates to other dilemmas of nosology: "Individuals who obsessively or compulsively wash their hands may have an obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), but they do not have a hand-washing disorder".

Turning to the Pornography Addiction literature in particular (i.e. research that focuses on or mentions "pornography addiction" specifically[8]), this difficulty of translating between complex human behaviour and a unifying theory built on rhetorical simplicity is clear. First, it is worth reiterating that Pornography Addiction literature is a field dwarfed by other bodies of research that also describe the "problems" with pornography. For example, where "compulsive cybersex" could be interpreted as an analogue to pornography addiction, compulsive cybersex is a field unto itself (Cooper, Delmonico, & Burg, 2000) also struggling to eke out its own unique interpretation of problematic pornography viewing (see Wéry & Billieux, 2017). Indeed the term "Pornography Addiction literature" is used advisedly here, because besides research under the tangentially related addictions already mentioned (i.e.

[8] Although one could argue that some of the relevant literature described above (on compulsive sexual behaviour and Internet addiction for example) might contribute to the veracity of the Pornography Addiction concept, such an argument intrinsically acknowledges that the label itself is not widely employed by researchers.

cybersex addiction, sex addiction, Internet addiction, Internet sex addiction, etc.), research on Pornography Addiction specifically is made up of only a handful of brain imaging studies (e.g. Brand et al. 2016; Gola et al. 2017; Prause et al. 2015; Kühn & Gallinat, 2014; Voon et al. 2014), and several theoretical and/or conjectural review papers (Love et al. 2015), commentaries (Hilton, 2013), and case studies (Ford, Durtschi, & Franklin, 2012).

Second, psychological research on Pornography Addiction is a relatively young field when compared with the research on compulsive or otherwise dysregulated sexual behaviour highlighted above. Perhaps as a result of such research's relative immaturity (Kraus, Voon, & Potenza, 2016), where an extant body of Pornography Addiction literature does exist, conceptions of how pornography addiction can be differentiated from other understandings of problematic pornography viewing remain uncertain (Binnie & Reavey, 2019; Wéry et al. 2019). For example, where some Pornography Addiction literature focuses on the action of dopamine and the reward pathway specifically (Hilton, 2013; Kühn & Gallinat, 2014), others bypass mentioning the action of dopamine almost entirely (Brand et al. 2016; Gola, 2017). Inversely, where some rely on concepts of withdrawal and tolerance (e.g. Ford, Durtschi, & Franklin, 2012) others omit these criteria (e.g. Hilton, 2013). Where some research suggests that the brains of those with self-described "compulsive sexual behaviours" show similar activation when shown pornography to dependent drug users shown drug stimuli (Voon et al. 2014), other research suggests the opposite, with problematic viewers showing decreased activation (Prause et al. 2015).

Pertinently, in this last case it is worth noting that despite Voon et al.'s (2014) research focusing on men with "compulsive sexual behaviours" (raising questions as to whether this should be included in a review of Pornography Addiction literature as discussed above), their study continues to be interpreted by academics and researchers as lending credence to a Pornography Addiction concept (see Brand et al. 2016; Gola et al. 2017; Love

et al. 2015; Sniewski, Farvid, & Carter, 2018). The discrepancy between the stated target of Voon et al.'s (2014, p. 9) apparently influential research – which mentions "pornography" only once – and its subsequent interpretation by researchers as evidence that pornography itself can be addictive, exemplifies the inherent difficulties of translation described above.[9] For example, to take just one line of argument, a question must be asked as to how the translation between drugs and behaviours actually works in comparing compulsive sexual behaviour and pornography addiction: is pornography analogous to taking a drug, or analogous to being shown a drug? If the brain of a "drug addict" being shown a picture of a drug is the same as a "sex addict" being shown sex, then is sex or the representation of sex analogous to taking a drug? In other words, the justification for Pornography Addiction being a discrete diagnosis is significantly undercut by the seemingly obvious observation that compulsive pornography viewing could only ever be a subset of sex addiction or compulsive sexual behaviour, while the reverse cannot be so: either sex is the drug, or pornography is the drug, both cannot be true – or so it would seem.[10]

Pertinently, here it is worth noting that a substantial proportion of the empirical psychological research on Pornography Addiction is now made up of research that avoids this theoretical and taxonomic quagmire by instead investigating the "perception" of being addicted to pornography (Grubbs, Exline, Pargament, Hook, & Carlisle, 2015; Vaillancourt-Morel et al. 2017; Wéry, et al. 2019; Wilt et al. 2016; see Grubbs & Perry, 2019 for review). This body of literature is less interested in measuring Pornography Addiction in a realist sense, and more interested in the ways in which pornography may cause personal dilemmas which can in turn be explained by viewers as indicative of an addiction to pornography. For

[9] Pertinently, Voon et al. (2014) were at pains to highlight, in both the study and subsequent media reports, that their research did not show evidence for pornography as "addictive". In a recent article (Borrensen, 2019, n.p.), lead researcher Voon clearly states that their findings did not provide evidence for pornography addiction, or that pornography is addictive.

[10] As later discussion of the addiction concept will bear out, a change to what "addiction" means can make both of these "the drug" by divesting addiction of any diagnostic specificity beyond "losing self-control".

example, Perry's (2018) longitudinal and nationally representative research in the United States suggests that the association between viewing pornography and depressive symptoms "hinges largely on (1) the (in)congruence between Americans' moral beliefs about viewing pornography and their use patterns and (2) gender[11]" (p. 15). That is, such research suggests that some of the reported negative outcomes of viewing pornography seemingly arise as a direct result of the moral work done by its viewers, and how such moral work is reconciled within social contexts (discussed further in chapters 5 and 6). Indeed, in their review of research on moral incongruence and pornography viewing, Grubbs and Perry (2019) suggest, not only that such moral self-perceptions can predict negative outcomes for some pornography viewers, but also that such perceptions can predict a self-diagnosis of pornography addiction. Finally, other longitudinal survey research, by Grubbs, Exline, Pargament, Volk, & Lindberg (2017) has suggested that moral disapproval towards pornography is closely linked to a self-diagnosis of pornography addiction, which may in turn predict negative outcomes. For example, Grubbs et al. (2017) suggest that perceiving oneself as being a pornography addict is more closely related to psychological distress than the amount of pornography viewed (see also Vaillancourt-Morel et al. 2017; Wilt et al. 2016).

All of which is to say, the place of the Pornography Addiction diagnosis as a subset of broader diagnoses like sex addiction, or else as analogous to any number of recently proposed so-called behavioural addictions (see Billieux et al. 2015), remains a contentious issue among researchers in the area (see Clarkson & Kopaczewski, 2013; Giugliano, 2013; Ley, Prause, & Finn 2014; Spišák, 2016; Wéry & Billieux, 2017). As this review of the relatively small body of literature on Pornography Addiction suggests, despite the seeming popularity of the concept in popular culture, the official status of Pornography Addiction as a physiological

[11] While chapters 2 and 3, touch on some of the issues of gender and pornography, the gendered nature of pornography viewing and pornography addiction in particular are addressed in more depth in Chapter 4.

addiction, a clinical diagnosis, or some other unique construct of the psychological sciences remains dubious. Thus, a three-way tension becomes visible, between the lack of available evidence for the "realness" of pornography addiction, the claims of clinicians of an epidemic of self-diagnosed pornography addicts (see Adamson, 2016; Blackstock, 2016; Blunden, 2018; Carroll et al. 2017; Garfield, 2008; Giugliano, 2013; Kraus et al. 2015; Levine, 2010; MacDonald, 2016; Mitchell, Becker-Blease, & Finkelhor, 2005; Skinner, 2014), and the pornography viewers who are taking up the label for themselves. In this sense (as I discuss in Chapter 2) we must ask how the existence of a "real" pornography addiction is not an expression of a new, iatrogenic (i.e. created by health professionals) disease state, but instead a socio-cultural phenomenon reverberating through the topics and approaches chosen by researchers (Hacking, 1996; Jutel, 2009). Or put another way, perhaps scholarship on pornography addiction represents the reverse engineering of a social problem, searching for the cause of problematic pornography viewing inside a person instead of the social context in which such viewing is problematized to begin with.

Pornography problems? Social context

While Pornography Addiction may not (yet) be real in an empirical sense, pornography addiction is certainly a popular way to describe problematic pornography adjacent behaviour. That is to say, even without official designation pornography addiction currently flows throughout popular culture, offering a prognosis for problematic pornography viewing (e.g. as a form of infidelity, as engendering promiscuity, causing sexual deviance and/or criminality, as morally or ethically troublesome, and so on). Thus, in acknowledging the tenuous clinical status of Pornography Addiction above, the original question of pornography addiction's realness becomes a question of social construction: how is pornography addiction socially derived? Today pornography addiction circulates between social jurisdictions, a curiously versatile diagnosis shared by celebrities (e.g. Terry Crews, David Duchovny,

Russell Brand, Kanye West) and the otherwise ordinary pornography viewers described by Adamson (2016), along with rapists (Goldman, 2013) and paedophiles (McKenna, 2019). That pornography addiction can be used to describe the behaviours of these – presumably – disparate groups tells us something about the peculiar sociocultural utility of the concept, describing behaviours ranging from the seemingly frivolous to criminal. In the first instance, consider the release of HBO's Mrs Fletcher, a television series about the sexual awakening of a "porn-addict mom" (D'Addario, 2019) upon her discovery of so-called MILF ("mother I'd like to fuck") pornography. Or else the recent confession of actor Jada Pinkett Smith of her "little porn addiction", a term she uses colloquially to describe her previous "unhealthy" relationship with pornography (Borrensen, 2019, n.p.). On the other hand, the use of this taxonomy is made incongruous when set beside the story of a man "provisionally diagnosed with a pornography addiction and paedophilia disorder" standing trial for the kidnapping and subsequent sexual abuse of a 7 year old (McKenna, 2019, n.p.), or the account of a 17 year old whose "pornography addiction" ostensibly led him to repeatedly rape his then 14 year old girlfriend (New Zealand Herald, 2019). That is, while the application of a pornography addiction diagnosis could arguably be intuited as manifesting differentially between Olympian Nick Willis, and serial killer-cum-self diagnosed pornography addict Ted Bundy (see Chapter 2), it is precisely this contextual differentiation that interests me hereafter: the use of the same word – indeed, the same underlying concept of losing self-control – begs the question as to which version of pornography addiction is being taken up, by whom, at what point.

Here the Pornography Addict can be imagined as playing a sort of dividing role – a sentry standing between acceptable and unacceptable pornography viewing. In this dividing role, pornography addiction serves a largely ignored sociological function: foreclosing an interrogation of the very media that ostensibly causes addiction in the first place. For

example, it is crucial to point out here that the pornography addiction diagnosis works in ways that shield the hugely profitable, algorithmically delivered, virtually unmoderated, free apparatus of Internet pornography from scrutiny. Indeed, it is a unique observation going forward that while pornography addiction promises to explain the disordered pornography viewer, it is curiously silent on the role of pornography's content in this process (beside the viewer wanting more). Instead, as I will argue, pornography addiction works to explain changes to pornography over the last few decades – along with the ways that this might engender problematic pornography viewing – as a problem for the pathological viewer, without accounting for the various ways that pornography itself can be problematic.

As a case in point, consider the way that the advent of ostensibly "free" pornography streaming sites have created new commercial pressures, which have invariably in turn created new content trends. As Simon Hardy (2008) notes of the advent of so-called "gonzo" and "amateur" forms of pornography[12], while the sheer volume of pornography continues to increase, resultant commercial market logic leads to new models of eye-catching pornography produced for minimal cost. In turn, the new algorithmic delivery of free video-clips to viewers (see Ruberg, 2016), can be argued to have fundamentally changed both the content of pornography and the way that viewers interact with this content:

> It all began with the 'great crash of 2006'. That year, adult DVD sales experienced a sharp decline. The cratering coincided with the arrival of YouPorn, porn's version of YouTube featuring millions of pirated XXX videos that are free to stream. In 2011, YouPorn was purchased by Manwin, which proceeded to gobble up most of the other tube sites—before acquiring the adult industry's leading production studios as well. Female performer's wages dropped from around $3,000 to $600 a shoot, and even the biggest and brightest porn stars now flock to 'extreme' sites like Kink for work. Today, many of the premier porn studios are struggling; pirated videos, on the other

[12] Both forms of pornography that dismiss the importance of narrative structure, beyond a meta-narrative of doing "the making of pornography", thus requiring minimal technical and financial resourcing (Hardy, 2008).

> hand, make up approximately 95 percent of the porn consumed across the globe. (Stern, 2019, n.p.)

Indeed, to describe the transformation of the pornographic landscape over the last decade or so is to describe a tectonic shift in pornography's availability, production, and profitability. For example, today the availability of pornography via the Internet is often presented as a precipitating factor in the development of a pornography addiction (see Blackstock, 2016; Florida House of Representatives, 2018; Griggs, 2016; Miller, 2016; MacDonald, 2016; Weir, 2014).

What is curious here however, is that the changes to pornography as described above would presumably make every pornography viewer into a would-be addict. Returning to Borrensen's (2019) query above – "how do you know when porn use has crossed the line into potentially unhealthy territory?" – a necessary question becomes *where* the line between addictive and non-addictive viewing might lie. This question is complicated by the acknowledgement that, for the most part, (most) pornography viewing has been normalized. Today the drawing of a line between acceptable and unacceptable pornography viewing is not a simple matter of identifying who views which kinds of pornography, when, and how often. For example, it is somewhat ironic that a cliché in articles working to describe the dangers of pornography addiction often set such concerns alongside accounts of the relative harmlessness of such viewing:

> It is probably safe to say that the majority of Americans (myself included) have viewed some pornography when were were [sic] relatively young, however minimal, without having it dramatically alter our lives. That being said, the downside is that in our current environment, too many people (men in particular) are seeing their lives turned upside down as pornography has increasingly gained considerable control of their wellbeing — sexually, psychologically, socially, financially and in some cases, physically (Watson, 2014, n.p.).

It is a peculiar fact that at the same time as pornography is routinely described as hazardous, it is also routinely – indeed often concurrently – described as normal, if not a normative and "healthy" part of sexuality, especially for men and boys (Boyle, 2010; Favaro, 2015; Flood, 2008; McKee, 2007b; also Office of Film and Literature Classification, 2019[13]). Adamson (2016) too exemplifies this tension between describing normative and non-normative pornography viewing: "this does not mean all pornography use is problematic" he reassures in the second-to-last sentence of his article.

As such, as Karen Boyle (2010) has argued[14], rather than being vilified, pornography viewing has largely become normalized in popular culture. Whether in the self-depreciating humour of so-called "lad-mags", the visibility of references to pornography brands in films and television, or the centrality of pornography viewing in representations of teenage life, pornography viewing has been mainstreamed:

> Porn use is an in-joke, a homosocial experience, a 'natural' expression of youthful sexuality, even a mark of distinction and source of cultural capital. Taken collectively, these examples demonstrate that there is no such thing as 'a' media stereotype of the porn user (Boyle, 2010, p. 144).

Such stereotyping is also reflected in common language, whereby pornography can be framed in ways that normalize its viewing, for men at least (Favaro, 2015). For example, as Nikunen (2007) describes in an analysis of women's discussions of pornography online, criticisms of pornography can be made difficult by countervailing discourses of pornography as fun, educational, or as a sex-aid, thereby minimizing experiences of disturbance or disgust (see Paasonen, 2007; Parvez, 2006). According to Favaro (2015, p. 368) pornography viewing

[13] This OFLC research of over 2,000 New Zealanders aged 14-17 indicated that regular viewing was relatively low compared to the expected level within the same group: While only 6% of teenagers reporting viewing pornography weekly, and 7% viewing it monthly, 85% of teens suggested that it is common for boys their age to look at porn (the number for girls was almost half that).

[14] In response to McKee, Albury, and Lumby's (2008) claim that pornography addicts represent the dominant cultural image of the pornography viewer.

might not only be seen in these ways, but as a biological impetrative for men, explained as a "fact of life" for women to compete with. Thus, pornography addiction seemingly does more than describe the problems of the disordered viewer. Pornography addiction offers an exculpatory diagnosis for the clash between the economic machinery producing a surfeit of pornography online, longstanding concerns about sexual self-control, and a culture of sexual liberalism which can reduce the complexity of pornography viewing to a binary between a simple matter of "choice" and self-control.

(Un)making pornography addiction: The thesis ahead

In this thesis I will primarily argue that pornography addiction has become a popular way to discuss pornography because: i) it diagnoses a contemporary cultural anxiety towards pornography's ubiquity while avoiding an awkward critique of pornography's popularity, and ii) pornography addiction offers an exculpatory and meaningful explanation for, or confession to, behaviours that would otherwise be seen as a failure of self-control. In the first instance by offering a comprehensive explanation for a variety of personally derived pornographic dilemmas, I argue that pornography addiction protects normative pornography viewing at large by partitioning problematic viewing into an easily understood explanation of pathology. That is, the seemingly expedient function of pornography addiction as dividing acceptable and unacceptable viewing has squashed all of the possible dilemmas of pornography (i.e. interference in relationships, changes to sexual expectation, sexual dysfunction, paedophilic offending, feelings of losing self-control, moral incongruence, and so on) into a single basket. In turn, pornography addiction offers a readymade explanation to any of the problems offered by pornography, by making problematic viewers into disordered addicts while foreclosing a discussion about how viewers distinguish between normative and problematic viewing. Thus, where a Pornography Addiction diagnosis might describe pornography's harms as some kind of "organic phenomenon" (i.e. an innate function of

human behaviour instead of a cultural phenomenon; see Hardy, 1998), here I propose that the actual act of viewing pornography, along with its negative consequences, are better approached as experiences embedded in larger contextualizing social fields. That is, the explanatory simplification offered by the addiction label necessarily elides – if not actively forecloses – an exploration of the social conditions that make pornography viewing both popular and problematic in the first place. Pornography Addiction is no longer a physiologically measurable state waiting to be discovered by a canny scientist, but a discursive tool for describing almost any aspect of a collective social anxiety about pornography as it currently exists.

Second, pornography addiction can also be used by individuals to describe pornography viewing that is "non-normative" in a comprehensive, culturally meaningful way. In the same way that infidelity, promiscuity, sexual deviance, and criminality could be described under concepts like Don Juanism, erotomania, or satyriasis (see Chapter 2) the application of an addiction taxonomy seeks to locate the same problems of sexual self-control inside the disordered Pornography Addict, while ignoring the actual shape and formulation of the problems themselves. In this sense, the popularity of pornography addiction is an example of a sort of fundamental attribution error, whereby the salience of a personal, pathological explanation takes precedence over a social one (Hammersley & Reid, 2002; see also Billieux et al. 2015; Peele, 1990; Young, Higham, & Reis, 2014). Indeed, not only is the pornography addiction diagnosis shared by celebrities and paedophiles alike, but in more mundane ways this seemingly compressive explanatory lens has changed the way that pornography viewers make sense of themselves. In this sense, the recent "discovery" of pornography addiction reflects – to use a Foucauldian term – the operation of a "technology of the self", whereby uneasy individuals redeploy the powerful sign of addiction to confess to, sanction, and ostensibly solve what are in essence social problems.

Hereafter I argue that the ambiguous authority of the pornography addiction concept creates a sort of omnipresent lens through which to view both the personal and sociocultural consequences of pornography viewing. However, it does so in such a way as to diminish pornography's role in creating these consequences to begin with. Thus, this theses seeks to test this lens, ask what it makes visible and what it occludes, and finally ask whether it is useful or not. Such a line of research has important implications, not only for untangling the ways that a verbal shorthand like "pornography addiction" is now used to explain almost any problematic behaviour related to pornography, but further how making this self-diagnosis "real" bends towards a dismissal of personal responsibility, ethics, morals, criminality, and indeed, a consideration of the very social fabric upon which pornography viewing can be made sense of.

Roadmap

The following thesis is divided into two parts, roughly resembling my discussion above about the sociocultural and personal deployments of the pornography addiction concept. The remainder of Part I (Chapters 2 and 3) establishes the groundwork of the thesis, dealing with some of the broader social critiques that I have introduced above. For example, in Chapter 2 I outline the diverse historical threads of the addiction concept, as well as introducing the taxonomic problems inherent to describing pornography as an addiction, and how this process obscures pornography itself behind the face of personal pathology. As Chapter 2 makes clear, once we begin to tug upon the thread of pornography addiction, broad questions hinted at above begin to unspool: What does pornography addiction tell us about "normal" pornography viewing? What function does the Pornography Addiction label serve for the pornography viewer? What sort of pornography viewer is a pornography addict? Where *is* pornography in all of this? In Chapter 3 such questions are explored and extended through an analysis of both media reporting on pornography addiction, as well as the social media

reactions to such reporting. As such, while Chapter 2 establishes a more historically oriented sociocultural context, Chapter 3 fleshes-out the contemporary context, addressing the operation of the pornography addiction lens as it applies to today's viewers.

In turn, where Part I does the necessary contextual work to make sense of both the development and circulation of the pornography addiction concept in popular culture, Part II offers an analyses of the ways in which pornography viewers themselves describe their experiences through this lens. In Chapter 4 I begin by outlining my approach to the research that makes up Chapters 5 and 6, discussing both the methods used in the subsequent chapters, while also working to link the content of Part I with the focus of Part II. For example, Chapter 4 includes a discussion of methodology, necessitated by the observation that pornography addiction is a pathology applied to men specifically. Here I outline the ways in which approaches to men's and women's pornography viewing have helped to shape conditions of possibility in which pornography addiction has become a diagnosis that resonates particularly with men. In turn, Chapter 5 explores the application of pornography addiction as a lens through which male pornography viewers make sense of their own viewing. Here, using both interview and survey data I ask how the various definitions of pornography addiction discussed in Part I might make up new ways to be a pornography viewer. Next, Chapter 6 explores the paradoxical promise offered to my participants by virtually limitless pornography viewing online, demanding a significant reimagining of apparently normal and abnormal viewing. That is, here I address the shifting nature of pornography itself, and the ways in which new possibilities for viewing have created new possibilities for pornography's audience to describe themselves as "out of control". I conclude this thesis with a discussion in Chapter 7, which seeks to ask how removing the addiction lens might make room for other conceptions of pornography viewing, pornography viewers, and the current place of contemporary pornography itself.

Chapter 2

Pornography Addiction: The Fabrication of a Transient Sexual Disease[15]

> I think that there are sometimes fairly sharp mutations in systems of thought and that these redistributions of ideas establish what later seems inevitable, unquestionable, and necessary. (Hacking, 1995, p. 4)

Over the course of the last few decades, the concept of pornography addiction has been evolving, its perimeters redrawn, its criteria propagating, to the point that today – without apparent fanfare – pornography addiction has become a part of mainstream culture. Indeed, pornography addiction has become a routine part of almost any discussion about pornography. For example, a spate of resolutions recently passed in the United States argue that pornography has become a "public health crisis", suggesting not only that "recent research indicates that pornography is potentially biologically addictive", but further that "this biological addiction leads to increasing themes of risky sexual behaviours, extreme degradation, violence, and child sexual abuse images and child pornography" (Utah House of Representatives, 2016, p. 2).[16] Moreover, pornography addiction's social significance has been further bolstered by a wealth of anecdotal evidence offered by health professionals (see, for example, Garfield, 2008; Levine, 2010; MacDonald, 2016), suggesting not only that pornography can change viewers' brains (see Blunden, 2018; Doidge, 2013; Skinner, 2014), but also that the numbers of patients seeking assistance for a self-diagnosed pornography addiction are sizable: "The most common non-substance behaviour that people seek my assistance with is pornography addiction, with many clients frequently using this term when

[15] This chapter is an edited version of an article published in *History of the Human Sciences* (Taylor, 2019a).
[16] The Arkansas House of Representatives (2017, p. 2) suggests that "pornography addiction can negatively affect brain development and functioning and contribute to emotional problems such as low self-esteem and body image disorders", while the Florida House of representatives (2018, p. 2) simply states that pornography addiction results in "the user consuming increasingly more shocking material to satisfy the addiction".

first making contact" (Adamson, 2016, n.p.). Indeed, the recent advent of clinical trials testing naltrexone[17] on self-diagnosed pornography addicts (see, for instance, Bostwick & Bucci, 2008; Capurso, 2017; Kraus et al. 2015) indicates that despite pornography addiction's tenuous clinical status, such a diagnosis might be sufficient to warrant exogenous chemical intervention. However, as described in Chapter 1, pornography addiction also circulates outside of such professional jurisdictions, as Joseph Gordon Levitt's popular film Don Jon – a story of a struggling pornography addict that was released internationally in theatres in 2013 – can attest. More recently, the public confession of Hollywood actor Terry Crews (Griggs, 2016) suggests not only that self-diagnosed pornography addiction has become a legitimate way to speak about pornography in public[18] but has also become intrinsically enmeshed with the language of rehabilitation and recovery (see Hardy et al. 2010). All of which is to say that pornography addiction now stands as an intelligible subject circulating across popular culture, despite also being a contested category in clinical, academic, and legislative fields.

Just when, and how, did pornography become addictive? While today such visibility and attention might appear almost unremarkable, as late as the 1990s, pornography addiction did not command the same sprawling sociocultural real estate. Indeed, pornography addiction as we understand it today barely existed. For example, in New Zealand, newspaper coverage pertaining to pornography and pornography viewing did not employ the concept of "pornography addiction" until after the year 2000, mostly in stories seeking to account for the behaviour of paedophiles on the Internet (see Laugesen, 2007; Martin, 2002). In fact, it was not until after 2009 that pornography addiction moved away from being used to explain the motives of paedophiles – in the New Zealand press at least – to instead explain why other,

[17] A drug usually used in cases of alcohol and opioid dependence.
[18] Crews's Facebook video confessing his pornography addiction reached almost three million views and garnered more than 10,000 comments two weeks after posting (Griggs, 2016).

more unassuming, viewers of pornography might be at risk of addiction (see Shepheard, 2009). Indeed, this suggestion – that pornography addiction seemingly originated as an explanation for criminal sexual behaviours – is echoed in the United States, with serial killer Ted Bundy's self-diagnosis of pornography addiction in 1989 being one of the few significant pieces of coverage before the year 2000 (Newspaper Archive, 2018).

Hereafter, I aim to outline the necessary conditions that make a pornography addiction concept possible, how this concept has developed between different jurisdictions of knowledge, and what appeal the label holds for those who describe themselves as addicted to pornography. In what follows, taking my lead from Hacking's *Making up People* (1986), I argue that today's pornography addiction became possible only at some point during the 1980s. Along with that of Foucault (1970, 1977; 1990), Hacking's work is instructive here, not only because of its provocation to contextualize the emergence of a new category like pornography addiction within antecedent fields of knowledge, but further because the production of such new categories inevitably shape the experiences of those described under them – a process Hacking describes as *dynamic nominalism* (Hacking, 1986). Thus, attention to both the histories that make pornography addiction possible, and the interplay between these histories and people seeking to describe new forms of behaviour, is crucial in describing the current existence of the concept (see Hacking, 1995, 1996).

For clarity, my approach is divided into three successive sections: prehistories, recent history, and today's pornography viewers/would-be addicts. In the first section, I outline the necessary conditions for making a viable pornography addiction concept possible, namely: (a) the development of pornography as a genre of media; (b) the historical concerns around masturbation as a disease; and (c) the development of the disease concept of (behavioural) addiction. In these necessarily brief descriptions of what I describe as the prehistories of pornography addiction, I highlight the links between the emergences of these concepts as

products of larger social movements in which we can identify recurrent concerns about new technology, privacy, sexuality, excess, and self-control.[19] Second, having outlined the prehistorical conditions that help to make the pornography addiction diagnosis possible, I illustrate the operation of these conditions in the context of two case studies of governmental investigation into pornography viewing in the United States[20], in 1970 and 1986, respectively. I argue that both the United States President's Commission on Obscenity and Pornography (henceforth: President's Commission) and the United States Attorney General's Commission on Pornography of 1986 (henceforth: Meese Commission) serve as watershed moments in the developmental history of the pornography viewer. For example, these commissions trace the expansion of the pornography addiction concept through their legitimizing of pornography viewing as a topic worthy of serious scientific investigation, resulting in the creation of a new kind of pornography viewer (Hacking, 1996). Third, as interesting as these prehistories and case studies might be, I conclude by discussing the modern appeal of pornography addiction, in aid of denaturalizing the concept as the discovery of a new sexual disease to instead discuss its public function for those under its diagnostic umbrella. That is, following Foucault (1970, 1977), my approach necessarily rejects the concept of pornography addiction as the culmination of expert knowledge about how pornography works upon an individual, to instead expose the disparate claims to

[19] While these prehistories are presented hereafter as separate and sequential, it is not my intention to suggest a simple linear, stepwise progression from one condition to another. Nor is the demarcation of these conditions to suggest that they are not interrelated. In fact, as I hope to illustrate, these ideas necessarily overlap in predictable ways. For example, in highlighting the operation of expert authority in describing the designation of a behavioural addiction, and how such a designation makes possible a description of a new kind of person (Hacking, 1996), I am not suggesting that this designation occurs in some top-down manner. Rather that the concept of a behavioural addiction must draw upon a wealth of already circulating public forms of knowledge about medicine, excessive pleasure, self-control, technology, and so on.

[20] For the sake of brevity, the concept of pornography addiction as a cross-cultural concept cannot be explored in this thesis, and must remain unchartered territory, earmarked for future research. However, considering that the both majority of debate around, research into, and commercial activity in both producing and combating pornography, addiction, *and* the pornography addiction concept itself are manifestly American projects, a focus on these histories in the United States is to be expected (see also Plummer, 1995).

knowledge making up this modern assemblage, highlighting its fabricated and transient nature and the political work done through its circulation. Here Hacking's dynamic nominalism is instructive, suggesting not only that the category of pornography addict is the product of historically contingent conditions, but also that the actions of those described under the category are integral to pornography addiction's profile: pornography addiction's existence depends upon its uptake by a population willing to accept the category as a meaningful way to describe themselves, as pornography addiction resonates historically while also being understood as ahistorical.

To be clear, I am not suggesting here that there were not people who looked at pornography before 1980, those who probably felt such viewing brought about negative consequences, or indeed those for whom viewing pornography produced significant negative outcomes. Instead, my claim is that these people who viewed pornography were not described, and would not have described themselves, as pornography addicts in the peculiarly modern sense: as sufferers of an addiction comparable to substance abuse, dependent on changes in brain chemistry, and significantly negatively impacting an individual's life. Moreover, it is important to underline that nor am I attempting to diminish or make light of the distress of those pornography viewers who describe themselves as addicted hereafter. In fact, I argue that this very real distress, and the efforts to confess such distress in a comprehensive and meaningful way help to make pornography addiction a popular modern self-diagnosis (see, for example, Adamson, 2016). At the same time, however, I also argue that the uptake of the pornography addiction concept suggests a gradual process of stripping pornography of substantive critique outside of the limited realm of negative viewer effects, resulting in a new kind of pornography viewer: one embodying all of the historical ills of pornography and masturbation, yet is simultaneously detached from such histories via the transient designation of Pornography Addict.

Prehistories: Conceptualizing pornography, masturbation, and addiction

Pornography

Debates around the impact and distribution of the "obscene", and increasingly "the pornographic", are recorded as only really beginning in earnest in 17th- and 18th-century France and England, and it was not until the 19th century that "pornography" emerged as a specific category more closely resembling that which we now recognize (Hunt, 1993; Kendrick, 1996). This is not to say that there has not been a preponderance of sexualized material across history but instead that, while this did exist, it served a variety of different functions, was not strictly called pornography, was not strictly for masturbation, and was certainly unlike anything described as pornography since the 1970s (see Kendrick, 1996). As Phillips and Reay (2011) have argued, sexually graphic material documented prior to the 18th century was not produced solely for the purpose of evoking sexual arousal – although such an effect cannot be discounted – but instead took the form of medical pamphlets, reprints of sexual medical examinations, bawdy poems, and political or religious tracts, as well as scandalous novels. By way of illustration, as early as the 1740s, the popularity of printed novels had led some intellectuals to warn against the dangers of private reading as an undoubtedly "addictive" avenue of escapism from everyday life, and a site for the erosion of morality (Mudge, 2000; Starker, 1990). Novels were seen by some as unsophisticated works designed only for pleasure and devoid of any morality, encouraging masturbation, infidelity, and divorce by plunging uneducated and naive readers into aroused states that they themselves could not understand (Hunt, 1993; Laqueur, 2003; Stora-Lamarre, 2005). According to Starker (1990, p. 59), the novel offered an ultimate corruption: "the direct undermining of reason by imagination, the glorification of emotion and sensuality, the compromise of social reality in favour of silent, solitary, self-gratification". In effect, sexual depictions in text – as well as texts without sex – were a specific site in which to locate

multiple overlapping anxieties of the time. The most obvious of these threats was the encouragement to masturbate, although more diffuse concerns about new technology, increased literacy, and the possible social ramifications of these changes were also present (see Stora-Lamarre, 2005).

As Kendrick (1996) argues, the creation of pornography as a specific genre depended significantly upon the rise of a disciplinary culture of censorship. For example, governments in Europe, the United Kingdom, the United States, and elsewhere increasingly took an interest in limiting the distribution of pornographic text and imagery, under the guise of protecting the most vulnerable in society from the corruption of explicit sexuality. Indeed, ensuing criminal trials of works deemed inappropriate for public consumption or obscene were generally not grounded purely in concerns over depictions of graphic sexuality as a threat to the public per se – although this was certainly part of the concern. Instead, such trials began to culminate in a negotiation between legitimate and illegitimate writing and art, or else, between writing for reason of art and virtue and writing for a common readership (Kendrick, 1996; Laqueur, 2003; Mudge, 2000). Working under such a model, obscenity court cases in the United States throughout the 20th century against the likes of *Ulysses* (1922) and *Tropic of Cancer* (1961), as well as the overturning of obscenity charges against 18th century works, such as *Fanny Hill* in 1966, increasingly called upon the knowledge of experts to testify to the value of particular expressions of obscenity (Kendrick, 1996). As Kendrick suggests, such a process, whereby expert knowledge was brought to bear to determine the value of a particular piece of social text, effectively worked to refine and give shape to contemporary pornography as anything that did not hold such artistic or scientific value. For example, *Fanny Hill* was saved in part by virtue of having been written in the 18th century, and therefore being of value as a historical document, despite its content remaining undoubtedly sexually explicit and sensational.

Put plainly, therefore, media that could be redeemed through appraisal as being "of value" was no longer deemed pornography through a process whereby once obscene artworks, pseudo-medical treatises on sex, and works of political protest could be made legitimate. On the other hand, however, sexual media that could not be legitimized as having value to the arts or sciences were cleaved from this body of valued works, relegated instead to the genre of pornography, or that which had no redeeming value beyond arousal – and presumably masturbation. It is therefore useful to bear in mind for what follows that not only was the designation of pornography as a specific form of media a relatively new phenomenon by the middle of the 20th century – where we pick up the development of pornography addiction – but also that through pornography's fate of becoming the signifier of media without value, many of the anxieties underpinning the social concerns about novels (e.g. privacy, excess, sensuality, and the corruption of morality) were integral to its creation as a separate media genre.

Masturbation

Alongside the development of pornography as a specific genre, the history of masturbation naturally presents a parallel, complementary history integral to understanding the prehistory of the pornography addiction concept. Central to this history was the publication of the interminably titled *Onania; or the Heinous Sin of Self-Pollution, and All Its Frightful Consequences, in Both Sexes, Considered, with Physical Advice to Those Who Have Already Injured Themselves by This Abominable Practice. And Seasonable Admonishment to the Youth of the Nation of Both Sexes* in England at some stage between 1708 and 1716 (Hare, 1962; Laqueur, 2003). This publication, originally distributed as a medical brochure alongside which retailers would sell various remedies to cure a wide range of sexual ailments – from involuntary emission of semen to infertility (see Stephens, 2009) – soon became widely distributed and read as it was swept up in the expanding print culture of England and

Europe at the time. Importantly, the assertions made in this original *Onania* appear to have acted as at least one source of inspiration for eminent Swiss physician Samuel Auguste Tissot, who drew heavily on this work in his own book on masturbation, *Onania, or a Treatise upon the Disorders Produced by Masturbation* (Hare, 1962; Laqueur, 2003; Tuck, 2009). With the publication of this new *Onania* in 1760 – around the same time as private reading was beginning to be seen as a social problem – the hitherto nascent, yet longstanding concept of post-masturbatory disease gained the sort of medical legitimacy needed for its widespread propagation – while still retaining its undeniable moral foundations. For example, while Tissot's claims in his *Onania* were centred upon his medical understandings of the "disease", one of the few true cures presented by him for the ill effects of masturbation were abstinence and moral fortitude: "I advised him to abstain from this horrid vice, and to think of the Eternal's threat, who excludes all such from the Kingdom of Heaven.—1 Cor. vi 9" (Tissot, 1832, p. 100). In other words, Tissot's ostensible medical expertise deployed in his *Onania* abounded in the same moralistic rallying of religious and puritanical concerns that had gone before it, now bolstered with a "crude functionalist concept of 'science' [that] produced the new disease of 'Onanism'" (Tuck, 2009, p. 83).

As Hare (1962) has argued in his history of masturbatory insanity, it was not until the publication of Tissot's *Onania* that the harmfulness of masturbation, once the purview of the church, came under the jurisdiction of medicine where it would persist in one form or another for much of the next two hundred years. However, although the harms of masturbation remained a constant focus for medicine, theories of masturbatory disease would soon be replaced by theories of masturbatory insanity, which would in turn be supplanted by psychoanalytic theories of sexual maturation that would open the door to the collapse of medical theories of masturbation as harmful at all. For example, while early claims to the harms of masturbation in both of the *Onania* books mostly concerned genital symptoms and

other forms of corporeal disease – employing conceptions of "weakened firmament" and "masturbatory strain" – medical advances in locating the sources of such ailments eventually led to a decline in the belief of a link between corporeal illness and masturbation (see Stephens, 2009). Nonetheless, these technical and theoretical advances did not undermine understandings of masturbatory disease altogether, or the much older anxieties about seminal incontinence in general with which masturbation still frequently overlapped throughout the 19th century (Hare, 1962; Stephens, 2009; Tuck, 2009). Instead, attention began shifting away from the diseased body towards understandings of masturbation as causing mental disorders, a transition that also saw the masturbator become a new kind of person/patient. While the specific details of this process are doubtless complex and fraught, it is safe to suggest that the end of the 19th century saw a turn away from the diseased body, first towards insanity, and eventually towards nervous disorders (Laqueur, 2003; Stolberg, 2000). For example, in one of only a few mentions of masturbation in his *Medical Inquiries Upon Diseases of the Mind* (1812, p. 33), physician Benjamin Rush avoids suggesting that masturbation is causative to corporeal disease, instead noting that "four cases of *madness* occurred, in my practice, from [masturbation] between the years 1804 and 1807" (emphasis added).

However, as links between various sorts of masturbation induced physical failings had eventually been replaced with ideas of a relationship between madness and masturbation, by the end of the 19th century, theories of masturbatory insanity had too fallen out of favour. At this time, the increasingly sophisticated practices of psychiatry were propelling the link between madness and masturbation towards a seemingly inevitable conclusion, turning its attention to an interest in masturbation as linked to neuroses. Such a focus upon masturbation as linked to neuroses opened up the possibility that neuroses were not a product of masturbation as explained by a model of disease at all, but were instead better explained by

"worry over exaggerated opinions of its consequences" (Hare, 1962, p. 9). In other words, the establishment of a link between masturbation and nervousness and agitation led some to wonder whether neuroses were not so much the result of masturbation per se, but simply reflected the anxiety that people felt about masturbation.

As a result, over the course of the following century, the old masturbatory hypotheses continued to dissolve, as Freud's psychoanalysis reframed masturbation, not as causative of disease or mania, but as a universalized practice of infantile exploration that most people would outgrow (Laqueur, 2003). According to psychoanalysis, the neuroses attached to masturbation were a product of regression, and a rejection of realizing an appropriate, mature sexuality in coitus. Such a reframing of masturbation gave way to what Hare (1962) describes as an ongoing project of health professionals attempting minimize the harms of masturbation, not as the result of some corporeal or mental disease, but instead as a conflict with oneself on grounds of guilt. This reconceptualization of masturbation as simply a phase of self-exploration also subsequently led to another shift in the understanding of the masturbator as a kind of person, setting the stage for a reclamation of self-pleasure.

Indeed, masturbation throughout the 1960s and 1970s underwent a partial rehabilitation, whereby it was in part reclaimed from the jurisdiction of medical authority and swept into a new politics of autonomy.[21] Masturbation, and the masturbator, were again transformed, coming to symbolize rebellion against long-held sexual imperatives geared towards partnered sex, as well as a rejection of wider cultural expectations. The publishing of books like *The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm* in 1968, and *Our Bodies, Ourselves: A Course*

[21] Although arguably this new discourse of sexual autonomy would later set the stage for new prescriptions, shifting definitions of "healthy sex" from "too much", to "not enough", before eventually medicalizing both. For example, the DSM-III (1080) includes such terms as "anorgasmia" (not having orgasms) and "inhibited sexual desire" (i.e. low levels of sexual desire), developed to classify those not swept up in new cultural mood of sexual autonomy (Levine & Troiden, 1988). Thus, following Foucault (1990), this new autonomy would eventually produce new dictates, as imperatives to have specific types of sex led to an abundance of cultural anxieties of how to "do sex" correctly (Irvine, 1995; Reay, Attwood, & Gooder, 2013).

by and for Women in 1971 were emblematic, not only of a wholesale rejection of Freud's theories linking masturbation to guilt and neurosis, but of an increasingly authoritative feminist critique of a culture of sexuality premised on the pleasure of men (Laqueur, 2003; Long, 2012). Thus, while theories of negative individual effects had persisted throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, and into the 20th, due to significant cultural shifts beginning around 1940, the notion of masturbation as causative to illness became widely regarded as outmoded (Hare, 1962; Laqueur, 2003). That is, in the wake of the psychoanalytic reformulation of masturbation, the publication of Kinsey's reports in the 1940s and Masters and Johnson's *Human Sexual Response* in 1966, and the critiques from grassroots feminist movements seeking to shift discourses of sexuality away from hegemonic heterosexuality towards a politics of women's pleasure, the masturbator was unbridled from the yoke of medical taxonomy.

Addiction

Around the same time as the novel was being described as a corrupting and harmful force, and masturbation was becoming a disease with the publishing of Tissot's aforementioned *Onania*, a fascinating broader convergence of ideas was taking place about how to categorize excessive behaviours. Put plainly, the development of the "addiction" concept is most closely related to the concerns around pornography and masturbation in the sense that addiction has for most of its history been understood as a "disease of the will", broadly used to diagnose a loss of self-control. That is, as already discussed, novels and early forms of pornography were described as addictive in that they were seen as undermining the reader's social responsibilities, and causing masturbation, an act already inherently enmeshed with concerns about a loss of self-control and thus presenting an even greater risk of excess. As Garlick (2012) has argued, an addiction to masturbation in many ways presented significantly more danger than an addiction to reading, alcohol, or sex, because an addiction to masturbation

required no external input, and thus did not depend on any economic, interpersonal, or coital exchange.

Here the work of Benjamin Rush (1812) again indicates concomitant concerns about addiction and masturbation as losses of control. Indeed, Rush himself both helped to develop a paradigm of excessive drunkenness as a disease involving loss of self-control (Conrad & Schneider, 1992), while also being involved in establishing the links between masturbation and loss of control, as already mentioned. Essentially, Rush's work in *Medical Inquiries upon Diseases of the Mind* is illustrative of a discursive shift – more marked than Tissot's thinly veiled moralism – away from strictly moral understandings of deviant and excessive behaviours, towards the more physiologically focused medical language of addiction as a disease of willpower, quite distinct from desire (Conrad & Schneider, 1992; Levine, 1978). Such a shift is indicative of a reconceptualization of the drunkard-as-patient, a modification that divested the individual of deviance to reframe them as suffering from a disease that *any* drinker could fall victim to.

In turn, it is clear that the most viable explanation for masturbation fell under these same conditions as alcohol addiction as a loss of self-control: an excessive behaviour that was thought to cause negative outcomes as described by the medical community of the time, and which could ostensibly be done to excess against the wishes of the masturbators themselves. By way of example, in the first American translation of Tissot's *Onania*, titled *A Treatise on the Diseases Produced by Onanism* (1832), the word "addiction" was liberally used as a description of the ills of masturbation, sometimes in ways that aligned strikingly with the modern descriptions of pornography addiction described below. Only a few decades later, Freud was positing that masturbation might itself be the primary addiction upon which all others are based (Laqueur, 2003). Thus, addiction is historically intertwined with the

development of ways to make sense of both pornography and masturbation as forms of loss of self-control.

Along with an addiction to masturbation, sex addiction is the closest analogue to pornography addiction, and along with addictive gambling was the forerunner to an expansion of the addiction label to other deviant behaviours, as discussed later.[22] Sex addiction was effectively coined in 1977, when a member of an Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) chapter in metropolitan Boston modified the AA's Twelve-Step Recovery program to help him reduce his infidelity and frequent masturbation (Irvine, 1995; Levine & Troiden, 1988). However, like Tissot's *Onania*, the AA model of sex addiction also required legitimacy in order to make the leap between lay and expert jurisdictions of knowledge. Although a shift towards a legitimized medical model of addiction as a "brain disease" had already begun in earnest by the 1960s, the concept of addiction as a more generic disease of the will had persisted after Rush's formulation. That is, while addiction science only really became established in the United States after 1960 – with the combination of funding from the Nixon administration and new theories of drug dependence (see Vrecko, 2010) – lay understandings of addiction had continued to circulate within popular culture before 1960, as groups like AA and the *Yale Research Centre of Alcohol Studies* popularized the theory of alcoholism as a disease. As a result, by 1970 the shift towards understanding drugs in objective chemical terms had combined with long-held beliefs about the action of drugs as a process of brain chemistry, to lead in turn to shifts in how addicts were perceived: Newly identified heroin and morphine "junkies" were remade as addicted patients (Agar, 1977; Conrad & Schneider,

[22] For the sake of brevity, the complex and convoluted relationship between sex and pornography addiction cannot be wholly unpacked here, as to do so would require a more thorough analysis of sex addiction itself. The principal difficulty in such a task is the constantly shifting evidence, definitions, and meaning-making of both of these fuzzy concepts (discussed further in Chapter 4). However, the critical exploration of sex addiction elsewhere (see Irvine, 1995; Keane, 2004; Levine, 2010; Levine & Troiden, 1988; Ley, 2012; Reay, Attwood, & Gooder, 2013) necessitates my bias here towards unpacking pornography addiction in a manner that might suggest, wrongly, that it somehow operates independent of sex or any other behavioural addictions.

1992; Zola, 1972), echoing both the shift of masturbatory illness from the diseased body to the diseased mind, and the reconceptualization of the drunkard as a patient over 150 years before.

This is not to suggest that the addiction concept was becoming more stable over time however, or that the new understandings of addiction as the province of neurological inquiry were refining the concept of addiction to only a few key criteria. Indeed, as Reinarman (2005) illustrates in a comparison of World Health Organization (WHO) definitions of addiction between 1950 and 1981, while the meanings attached to addiction were changing in the 1950s and 1960s (i.e. from moral to chemical), the actual criteria of addiction were beginning to expand beyond the chemical to reclaim morality under its umbrella (see also Conrad & Schneider, 1992). For example, in what Reinarman (2005) describes as a "chronicle of conceptual acrobatics", at the same time as theories of addiction were increasing in specificity – made possible via burgeoning fields of neurological investigation – the actual definition of addiction as a disease was simultaneously becoming divested of specificity. With the introduction of each new criterion (such as "habituation" and "dependence") to the WHO's addiction concept, the definitional boundaries of addiction were progressively expanding, until by 1981 the WHO had established a definition that could fit "virtually any behaviour that is substituted for a prior behaviour – even behaviours that entail no use of psychoactive substances" (Reinarman, 2005, p. 312; see also Keane, 2004).

Without this shift, which would ultimately allow addiction to make the jump from substances to behaviours, pornography addiction would not exist in its current formulation. In other words, such an expansion of the addiction concept to encompass any excessive behaviour, with a concurrent validation of addiction as a disease of the brain, effectively opened the door to new legitimate claims to diseased behaviours through which the ghosts of masturbatory insanity, concerns about changing sexual values, and the medicalization of

excessive sex could be channelled. Indeed, with the door already opened in 1981 with the WHO's expanded definition of addiction as a behavioural dependence (Reinarman, 2005), 1983 saw psychologist Patrick Carnes publish *Out of the Shadows*, a book that effectively took the aforementioned AA model of sex addiction and combined it with the newly animated addiction science, pushing sex addiction towards medical legitimacy and into popular culture at the same time (see Irvine, 1995; Keane, 2002; Ley, 2012).

Effectively, like the previous discussion about masturbation, this framing of excessive sex, and eventually excessive behaviours in general, as analogous to the chemical action of alcohol and other drug abuse managed to take the early concerns about excess, and set them within a prevailing therapeutic paradigm in which a person might become the victim of their own excess. Along with the aforementioned jump that the addiction label was making during the 1980s, it is also worth noting Irvine's (1995) suggestion that sex addiction flourished at this time because it encompassed, and gave voice to, cultural anxieties (see also Reith, 2004). For Irvine, at its creation sex addiction worked to meaningfully explain the rapidly shifting understandings of sex and sexuality, particularly in light of the HIV/AIDS epidemic at the time, in outwardly medical and morally neutral parlance. Moreover, Irvine (1995, p. 431) argues that sex addiction exposed deep cultural anxieties about sex, while also situating deviance outside of social judgement, to instead reside in each individual person's body: "Sex addiction seeks an individual solution to a social problem".

Recent history: Pornography (and its viewer) as a social problem

Thus far, I have outlined at least three prominent preconditions contributing to pornography addiction becoming possible at some point during the 1980s. However, a fourth facet of the creation of pornography addiction is crucial for making sense of the concept as it currently exists: the emergence of the pornography viewer as a discrete subject. Here, following Hacking (1986), I will tease out the interweaving of historical, social, and political pressures

that have "made up" pornography addiction as a new, thinkable way to understand pornography viewing and, crucially, pornography viewers themselves. Although it is not my intention to present the development of the Pornography Addict as a simple two-step process, for the sake of clarity the discussion of this section focuses upon two prominent events in the history of pornography: the President's Commission of 1970 and the Meese Commission of 1986. Not only do both commissions help to illustrate the operation of the various historical concerns just outlined – around pornography, masturbation, and addiction – but they also act as highly visible proliferations of discourse about pornography viewers as new subjects, which culminated in making the designation Pornography Addict possible as a kind of person (Hacking, 1996). In the following case studies, therefore, I first address the ways that pornography and pornography viewing became objects of political and scientific inquiry, which in turn created a newly visible population of pornography viewers beginning in the 1970s. However, I also address the fact that, by the 1980s, this population was undergoing a similar medicalizing process as the masturbator and the drunkard in the early 1800s, and the same shift from junkie to patient as that just described, in a process that created the pornography viewer-as-patient, and which shifted pornography from a social to a personal problem.

The President's Commission, 1970

In writing about medicine as an institution of social control, Zola (1972) suggests that by 1970, medicine had already attained an explanatory force that could be used to describe ordinary activities as unhealthy, and that as a result such medical discourses were increasingly being drawn upon to advance the legitimacy of political interventions. The instantiation of a new science of pornography viewers, beginning in 1970 with the President's Commission, therefore exemplifies the first shift towards solving social moral concerns via the objectivity of an individually focused science and medicine. Indeed, the United States

President's Commission on Obscenity and Pornography – appointed by President Lyndon B. Johnson and funded by the United States Congress in 1968 to ascertain the "effects" that pornography might have on the public – represents the first major research-based review of pornography and its supposed effects by any governing body anywhere (Lewis, 2008). The instantiation of this Commission was provoked by significant public debates arising throughout the 1960s that had propelled pornography towards being seen as a significant social problem. In part, such debates were likely the product of the increased access, and consequent visibility, of pornography over the course of the 1960s. As Kendrick (1996, p. 221) suggests, every new medium invented during the period between 1840 and 1960 was in aid of saturating culture with representations of all kinds, "in an apparently unstoppable drive toward the total availability of total detail".

Indeed, as Wartella and Reeves (1985) illustrate in their research of historical trends in media effects research on children between 1900 and 1960, in light of the increased visibility of any new media, public concern about such media have in the past been a reliable predictor of the establishment of new fields of research inquiry. Moreover, not only do Wartella and Reeves (1985, p. 123) suggest that "as public concerns about film gave way to concern about radio and then television, academic research made corresponding shifts", they further note that in such research, violence, sex, and advertising are of recurring central interest. We need only note the casting off of interest in those media in favour of research on the proposed dangers of the Internet to validate this trend). Accordingly, in reference to its establishment, the director of the President's Commission, W. Cody Wilson (1973, p. 9), suggests that concerns about pornography tend to wax and wane in similarly predictable ways in the wake of various technological developments, with pornography becoming a social problem following "a relatively rapid increase in the availability of such [pornographic]

depictions from a relatively stable base".[23] Indeed, Wilson suggests that the instantiation of the President's Commission, and the publication of their subsequent report, were mainly in response to both the greater availability of increasingly explicit pornography beginning in the 1960s, and the subsequent increase in public discussion and concern about such pornography. According to Wilson (1973), public concerns about pornography at this time fell into two camps: one camp was the concern about the increasing amount of pornography in circulation; and the other a concern about the "effects" that such pornography might have on those who viewed it. In the first instance, throughout the 1960s, before pornography had become a significant target for feminist protest, women's liberation groups had begun to mobilize around concerns related to sex and violence at a cultural level. Pertinent to the discussion about pornography, alongside their mobilization around issues like abortion and equal pay, women's groups in the 1960s had also begun to protest the objectification of women in media and advertising specifically (Assiter, 1989; Bronstein, 2011; Long, 2012). Alongside such movements, an increasingly radical branch of feminist theory and literature was becoming well established, some of which argued that pornography was instrumental in perpetuating a culture that normalized rape and the threat of rape.

This feminist mobilization against pornography coincided both with the feminist critiques of male violence and the pervasiveness of violent and sexist media to that end, and anticipated the era of so-called "porno-chic", in which films like *Deep Throat* (1972) would break into mainstream culture. Indeed, the increased popularity of such pornography, along with the portrayals of extreme violence in films like *Snuff* (1975), could readily be seen as a backlash against this nascent women's rights movement (Diamond, 1980). As Carolyn Bronstein (2011) argues in her history of anti-pornography feminism in the United States

[23] Wilson goes on to suggest that the aforementioned concerns about pornography and private reading were a direct result of the advent of new printing technologies and increased literacy in the 18th and 19th centuries.

between 1976 and 1986, the coalescing critiques of the so-called sexual revolution, the exposure of the pervasiveness of men's sexual violence against women – as a product of the aforementioned consciousness-raising movements – and the radical feminist positions against the patriarchal institutions of the nuclear family, monogamy, and heterosexuality, meant that the perpetuation and advertisement of these exact issues through pornography would became a natural target for feminist criticism. At the same time, as Wilson (1973, p. 11) suggests, across a variety of news articles, "from *Readers Digest* to the *New York Times Magazine*, from *American Legion Magazine* to *Commentary*, from *Time* to *Look*", discourses around pornography's possible effects on its viewership were also becoming widespread, as well as extraordinarily diverse: sexual aggression, incitement to rape and incest, an obsession with sex, changes in sexual orientation, misinformation about sex, homicide and suicide, a rejection of reality, ennui, and many more were offered as potential outcomes of viewing pornography. Thus, both an increasingly visible feminist critique of sexist media and a resurgent social anxiety about the negative effects of new forms of media were both beginning to come to a head by 1970.

Under such conditions, in which a lack of significant pornography research had left an evidential vacuum readily filled by public opinion, the first task of the President's Commission was to discern between the generic public concerns above and the empirical "truths" of pornography's effects in order to tease apart lay and expert understandings of what pornography could and could not ostensibly do (see Wilson, 1973). Indeed, from its outset the President's Commission worked to establish an extensive social science research programme to investigate these concerns about pornography's purported effects, where little previous research existed (United States Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, 1970; Wilson, 1973). The Commission's research effort, perhaps in reaction to the public's concern, focused extensively on scientific studies, with the final report utilizing a rhetorical structure

that frequently "pitted a brief gesture to what *people think* against a long and detailed exposition on what *experts know*" (Lewis, 2008, p. 14; my emphasis). In doing so, the Commission not only attempted to address the concept of negative viewer effects, but went further, establishing panels to investigate the distribution and legality of, as well as positive approaches to, pornography – the latter of which addressed sex education and industry self-regulation (Johnson & Goodchilds, 1973). Each of these working panels bolstered their findings with original empirical investigations, eschewing the sort of public hearings often favoured by such commissions in the past (United States Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, 1970).

In short, in their enthusiasm for establishing the empirical foundations of pornography's effects, the President's Commission effectively dismissed public opinion in order to investigate pornography from a position of apparent objectivity. Somewhat ironically however, considering the Commission's use of scientific inquiry as a safeguard against such critique, the published findings of the Commission in 1970 were viewed by many in the Republican Party at the time, including recent presidential successor Richard Nixon, as camouflaging a vested liberal position towards sexuality. In fact, some of the study's claims, which included suggestions of possible positive outcomes of pornography viewership, caused massive controversy and were roundly rejected by both the United States Senate and Nixon, the latter of whom stated that he had "evaluated that report and categorically reject[ed] its morally bankrupt conclusions and major recommendations" (Nixon, 1970, n.p.). Essentially, the findings of the 1970s Commission had sought ostensibly "objective" knowledge about pornography viewership, and had not found any that matched deeply entrenched perceptions of pornography's supposedly undeniable harmful effects.

Regardless of the veracity of the maiden findings of the 1970 Commission however, the presentation of their results was significant in highlighting pornography as worth

studying, and the pornography viewer as the source of such information. In the first instance, the investigation of the President's Commission simultaneously instantiated "a new area of concern for the behavioural sciences" (Johnson & Goodchilds, 1973, p. 231), and, ironically, managed to validate the link between violence and pornography in making it a subject worthy of study. In other words, regardless of their conclusions, investigations like that of the President's Commission, and the subsequent controversies and debates that they engendered, helped to construct, refine, and legitimize the very links between pornography and its effects that they were tasked with explaining and attempting to settle (see Hacking, 1996; Rutherford, 2017). Indeed, as Kendrick (1996, p. 215) suggests, the ensuing proliferation of research on pornography was likely in part propelled by the Commission's conclusion that no evidence was found implicating pornography in causing delinquency or criminal behaviour, as such a conclusion suggested "an air of tentativeness, as if evidence were available but had simply not been discovered yet".

In light of the discussion above, following Hacking (1996), the proliferation of such investigations of what pornography might "do" to its viewers helped make a new kind of person: one who could be affected by pornography. As Hacking suggests, the creation of new kinds of people – in this case the Pornography Viewer – opens new avenues for investigation, and such investigations modify understandings of how that kind of person is formed. As discussed below, the Pornography Viewer would be made into the Pornography Addict precisely because pornography viewing would require explanation through inquiry:

> There is a looping of feedback or feedback effect involving the introduction of classifications of people. New sorting and theorizing induces changes in self-conception and in behaviour of the people classified. Those changes demand revisions of the classification and theories, the causal connections, and the expectations (Hacking, 1996, p. 370).

Thus, as I argue in the final section of this article, not only did the results of the President's Commission instantiate pornography as a subject worthy of political, academic, and scientific interventions, but this identification worked to separate the pornography viewer as a new kind of person from the newly liberated masturbator already mentioned. Indeed, 1970 saw a cleaving away of the masturbator from the pornography viewer, and the more that masturbation was divested of harm, the more the inverse was true of viewing pornography. That is, as masturbation was being mainstreamed throughout the 1970s, the Pornography Viewer was becoming increasingly corrupt, until by the 1980s the Pornography Viewer would be synonymous with organized crime, the sexual abuse of women and children, and, at a larger level, a general rejection of civilized society. The creation of these new categories of person in turn created new possibilities for action, new ways of being, and new ways to be seen and to see oneself: Where the masturbator's embrace of autarkic pleasure would become a space in which to exercise agency and personal fulfilment, the Pornography Viewer of the 1980s increasingly became seen as a dangerous, immoral, and out of control figure.

The Meese Commission, 1986

On the 13 of December 1983, in front of the third session of the Dworkin-MacKinnon Anti-Pornography Civil Rights Ordinance in Minneapolis, pornography "user" Michael Laslett testified that "pornography becomes a source of addiction much like alcohol" (Minneapolis City Council, 1988, p. 127). During that same session, therapist Charlotte Kasl testified that a pornography addict's sexual behaviour would escalate and become out of control, leading to voyeurism, exposing oneself in public, and in particular, child abuse. In Miami in November 1985, two years after the testimonies at the Civil Rights Ordinance and fifteen years after the release and subsequent dismissal of the findings of the President's Commission, a young man, Larry Madigan, also offered his testimony, this time before the newly formed Meese Commission. According to Vance's (2002, p. 360) account of Madigan's testimony, Madigan

stated: “if it weren’t for my faith in God and the forgiveness of Jesus Christ, I would now possibly be a pervert, an alcoholic, or dead. I am a victim of pornography”. Madigan’s therapist, Dr Miranda, went on to testify that in his practice he was concurrently treating multiple patients for “mental problems brought on by pornography” (Vance, 2002, p. 360). Finally, although pornography “addiction” was mentioned only sparingly in the eventual report of the Meese Commission, such testimony appears to have held some sway with some members. For example, in the final report, Commissioner James Dobson – founder of Christian conservative organization Focus on the Family – listed the harms posed by pornography as he saw them, the first three being: (a) that violence in pornography caused violence against women; (b) that men were becoming “addicted” to pornography in a similar way to drugs and alcohol and – somewhat peculiarly – food; and (c) that pornography was degrading to women in a way that, again, encouraged men to commit crimes against them. Between 1970 and 1980, therefore, perceptions of pornography as causing negative outcomes look to have ossified, its negative effects transformed from indeterminate, but certainly immoral, to causative of violence against women and children, as well as of harm to those who viewed it themselves. Pornography had become potentially addictive.

While the 1970s had seen at least a superficial shift towards an increased sexual liberalism, by the mid-1980s excessive sex had reappeared as a problem worthy of psychiatric concern. This shift was thanks in part to a number of intersecting social changes, such as public and governmental reactions to epidemics of HIV/AIDS, as well as institutional attacks on reproductive rights, sex education, and homosexuality by an aggressive political conservativism that had taken power in the US and UK (Irvine, 1995; Levine & Troiden, 1988). Concurrently, throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s, some radical feminists had continued and amplified the aforementioned critiques of sexist representations of women in media, and by 1980 had begun arguing that pornography specifically represented anti-women

propaganda that perpetuated violence against, and sexual abuse of, women (see Brownmiller, 1975). To many radical feminists, such violent imagery was the product of institutionalized gender inequality, supported by the patriarchal institutions of the nuclear family, monogamy, and heterosexuality (Vance, 2002). Moreover, as Brownmiller (1975, p. 396) clearly outlines, such feminist critiques were also directly aimed at a flimsy sexual liberalism, which had become established in the early 1970s, and in particular the willingness of so-called "liberal activists" to critique demeaning portrayals of race in film and television while criticizing those campaigning against pornography as censorious, "prissy", and against freedom of speech. In this way, by the early 1980s a radical feminist project against sexist media had become squarely focused upon pornography, most visibly in the form of politically active groups like Women Against Pornography (WAP), as well as the aforementioned Dworkin-MacKinnon Anti-Pornography Civil Rights Ordinance in Minneapolis in 1983, often pointed to as a definitive moment in the anti-pornography movement (Bronstein, 2011).

At the same time however, when it came to pornography, radical feminists against pornography had to contend with both criticisms from ostensibly liberal institutions like the American Civil Liberties Union (see Brownmiller, 1975) and an uneasy sharing of aims with radical political conservatives. Here I wish to avoid re-treading the tired assertions of cosy relations between some radical feminists and members of the conservative political establishment. Such histories frequently focus on a few familiar figures and slogans, without paying attention to how such movements approached their critiques of pornography and pornography viewership in ways that were fundamentally incompatible (Bronstein, 2011; Long, 2012; Vance, 2002). Instead, I argue that it is through the *differences* between these approaches to pornography – between a re-energized political conservatism and a legislatively engaged radical feminism – that a larger gestalt switch between the Pornography Viewer as deviant and the Pornography Viewer as patient can be illustrated. Where the

politically conservative and explicitly religious members of the Meese Commission saw pornography as morally wrong, within pornography many radical feminists had identified a pattern of societal violence: pornography was at the very least a graphic illustration of the ways in which heterosexual relationships reproduced male domination (Assiter, 1989; Irvine, 1995). As Diamond (1980) outlines in a critique of the President's Commission's findings of 1970, while so-called "traditional moralist" positions against pornography were concerned predominantly with how pornography intervened in correct forms of sex as procreative and heterosexual – thereby locating wrongness in its corruption of the viewer – for feminists, attention was focused not on the viewer, but instead upon institutionalized violence against women. However, Diamond goes on to suggest that a liberal approach to pornography was also a problematic feminist ally, in that the "what" of pornography for liberals was simply sex, and the "who" of pornography was the male consumer/producer, while for feminists, the what of pornography was power and violence, and the who were the women who experienced gendered violence in relation to pornography, as well women more generally "whose oppression is reinforced by the dissemination of distorted views of women's natures" (p. 188). Thus, while feminists and conservatives could agree that pornography had a deleterious social impact, the conservative position had more in common with the liberal "what" (sex) and "who" (men) of pornography than with feminist critique.

The actual mandate of the Meese Commission, instantiated by President Ronald Reagan and appointed by Attorney General Edwin Meese III in 1985, was explicitly to find "more effective ways in which the spread of pornography could be contained" (United States Attorney General's Commission on Pornography, 1986, p. 215), as well as to review the evidence of a relationship between the viewing of pornography and anti-social behaviour. Unlike the 1970 President's Commission, which had eschewed public hearings in favour of a research project to ostensibly discover the "truths" of pornography's harms, the Meese

Commission saw what commissioner and forensic psychiatrist Park Elliott Dietz described in the report as the return to a "tradition of those who have been charged with formulating social policy for the whole of human history" (p. 37). Here Dietz was effectively situating the Meese Commission within a historically continuous project of public hearings, a tradition that the President's Commission had apparently violated, to its own detriment. Happily, such views were also in keeping with radical feminist critiques of the empirical enquiries into pornography that underpinned the findings of the 1970 President's Commission. For example, for radical feminists Brownmiller (1975) and Griffin (1981), the use of scientific methodologies to illustrate what was already self-evident in pornography was not only redundant, but a further illustration of how social science could misuse its claims to objectivity while still operating within the confines of a patriarchal culture in which pornography was popular. Indeed, Brownmiller (see also Diamond, 1980) points out that in its search of objective facts, the President's Commission had failed to adequately engage with the underpinning appeal of pornography, which was inherently political: what use was relating that a majority of women described disgust and offence at viewing pornography, without an adequate appraisal of why women felt this way?

Therefore, despite the differences between the increasingly proactive political conservatism, which was reacting against pornography on religious moral grounds, and the increasingly visible feminist criticism of pornography on sociocultural and political grounds, both groups shared a willingness to combat pornography through governmental intervention, and to canvas public opinion rather than undertake new research. Consequently, either to avoid the embarrassment of the 1970 Commission's failure to find evidence of the negative effects of pornography, or in response to the arguments of radical feminists against investigating pornography utilizing a biased social science with limited application, the Meese Commission made significant use of testimonies from victims of pornography – in

particular, women who implicated pornography in their experiences of abuse. However, the employment of public testimony presented exactly the issue that the President's Commission had attempted to avoid in employing an ostensibly objective empiricism sixteen years prior. Namely, despite the 1970 President's Commission's challenges to such beliefs, the same diverse public concerns about pornography's effects – along with the burgeoning behavioural addiction concept – had continued to circulate in the public sphere.

Thus, instead of arguing that pornography was simply immoral, or else that social science indicated that pornography caused negative effects *per se,* conservative commissioners like James Dobson took up an anti-violence position, allowing the testimonies of the public to argue the ostensibly irrefutable link between violence and pornography on their behalf. As a result, as Carol Vance (2002) has suggested, during the course of the Meese Commission's hearings, feminist tools of consciousness-raising and listening to victims were readily assimilated and redeployed by conservative claim makers, most noticeably by appropriating the issue of violence against women specifically. However, while radical feminists viewed pornography as representative of the kind of masculine hegemony and privilege that created the conditions for gendered violence, such a focus presented a significant dilemma for the kinds of conservatives presiding over the Meese Commission: Arguing against pornography could not *also* entail an endorsement of the radical feminist critique of pornography as a product of gender inequality and patriarchy. In effect, pornography was no longer simply a social problem in and of itself; it was a social problem implicated in the unquestionably horrific testimonies presented to the Commission. In turn, these implications illustrated the common-sense appeal of naming pornography as causative to gendered violence, instead of a symptom of a sexist culture of which both gendered violence and pornography were the product.

Accordingly, rather than implicating masculine hegemony in the incidence of violence, many of the victim testimonies presented to the Meese Commission singularly connect pornography to the incidence of rape, incest, child abuse, prostitution, torture, murder, racism, sexually transmitted diseases, sexual harassment, and so on. Thus, while pornography maintained its status as a vulgar medium – recuperating many of the previous fears of new media forms as causing the erosion of morality – the findings of the Meese Commission, unlike those of the President's Commission before it, showcase an explicit redeployment of concerns about new technology, privacy, excess, and self-governance via a curious mechanism of both personal and expert conceptions of pornography viewing. The Meese Commission therefore not only represents a discursive shift in how knowledge about the dangers of pornography were being employed – re-establishing the general public as the experts on matters of pornography – but, ironically, also mark the beginning of a steady decline in the politicizing of pornography as a moral and ethical problem as the Pornography Addict becomes a new target of public concern.

This process is well described by Plummer's (1995) discussion of the burgeoning construction of recovery tales and the culture of self-help – which also helped birth Carnes's (1983) book on sex addiction – whereby subjective narratives were becoming subsumed by scientific principles, language, and metaphors. Plummer suggests not only that the types of sexual recovery tales intrinsic to understandings of sex and pornography addiction illustrate a peculiar quasi-objective rhetorical turn in the evidentiary use of personal accounts swept up in the genre of self-help, but also that such recovery tales can work to remake social problems as non-political personal problems (see also Irvine, 1995). In the pornography addiction example, in light of the testimony of Michael Laslett in 1983 and Larry Madigan in 1985, and the personal comments of James Dobson in the final report in 1986, the responsibility for gendered violence did not lie with the average pornography viewer, or even simply

pornography. Indeed, even the Meese Commission (1986) conceded in their final report that pornography that did not contain violence or degradation was unlikely to cause negative effects. Instead, the testimony of negative effects being visited upon susceptible men suggests that those who were once deviant pornography viewers could now be seen as suffering from a disease not dissimilar to the sort of addictive disease previously attached to masturbation and drunkenness: "As these are addictions, they follow a course of escalation. They follow a course of compulsion. *They are out of control*" (Charlotte Kasl's testimony in Minneapolis City Council, 1988, p. 120; my emphasis). Following Irene Diamond (1980), the weight given to the public testimonies of Laslett and Madigan make clear two factors crucial to the modern operation of pornography addiction: first, that the who of pornography was not the women victimized within and through pornography, but was in fact its predominantly male viewership; and second, that even the worst of these pornography viewers were not to blame for their actions, having become recuperated under the designation Pornography Addict.

In effect, by 1986, pornography's myriad proposed effects were being reconceptualised along the lines of alcohol, not only in that it was addictive, but in that it would only have negative outcomes for those deviant drinkers who became "out-of-control". Indeed, 1980 had seen the loss of one's self-control become the defining feature of addiction, and in turn the reigning explanatory metaphor – or meta-metaphor – to meaningfully describe personal problems while divesting them of their political, cultural, or historical contexts (see Granfield & Reinarman, 2014; Reith, 2004). Moreover, in his discussion of biological explanations for kinds of people, Hacking (1996) suggests that the biologizing[24] of a category of person can cause people that fall under that category to react to their description and/or treatment accordingly. For example, Hacking suggests that an obvious effect of creating such

[24] The tendency to describe categories of people through "biochemical, neurological, electrical, mechanical, or whatever is the preferred model of efficient causation in a given scientific community or era" (Hacking, 1996, p. 372; see also Zola, 1972).

"biologized kinds", as have been used for alcoholism, is that such a description can be exculpating, offering as it does an alternative to a moral acknowledgement of some sort of deviance. As a result, people are encouraged to take responsibility, and ostensibly remedy their biological attributes through regimens of self-governance, in the form of abstinence, spirituality, exercise, and so on (see Reith, 2004), as discussed next.

Today's pornography viewers/pornography addicts

With academic debates about pornography addiction remaining at a seemingly irrevocable deadlock since the release of the 1970 Commission's report, we must still ask why pornography addiction is a label that has persevered, to thrive across the multiple jurisdictions already described: as a topic of celebrity confessions, popular film, drug trials, and new rounds for contemporary governmental intervention eerily reminiscent of 1986. In the final section of this chapter, I turn my attention to those who take up the label of Pornography Addict for themselves, and examine how such a tendency to self-diagnose pornography addiction helps to describe the operation of the label in contemporary culture as a meaningful way of confessing self-ascribed deviance.

Clearly, by the mid-1980s pornography addiction was already being utilized as a way to explain men's problematic pornography viewership, even in contexts in which pornography was also being implicated in causing considerable harm to women and children. But why pornography "addiction"? As already argued, the reframing of masturbation as first an act partly divested of the historical concerns about negative effects, effectively made a modern masturbation addiction impossible. However, I would speculatively suggest that in many ways pornography addiction has replaced masturbatory illness – or subsumed it – and that it is through our fixation upon pornography addiction that we can invoke the ills of masturbation without speaking its name. Such a claim is plainly illustrated in examples of failure to mention masturbation in both research and news coverage of pornography

viewing/addiction. For example, despite researchers' assertions that conceptualizing masturbation as harmful is one of the primary conditions making the pornography addiction diagnosis possible, all too frequently the masturbation has remained unspoken in studies on the subject (Boyle, 2000; Garlick, 2012; Tuck, 2009).[25] However, perhaps as a result of this failure to "speak" masturbation, contemporary news stories that shore up pornography addiction, suggesting that "studies have shown that the viewer's brain is overloaded with dopamine when exposed to web porn" (Blunden, 2018, n.p.), still tend to omit any mention of masturbation, opting instead to describe neurological responses to viewing pornography. Curiously, such an omission implies that it is something about *pornography* itself that is addictive, while managing to avoid the question of masturbation altogether.

Here, however, I argue that pornography addiction is a result of a broader shift towards self-surveillance and self-governance within a context that has seen the proliferation and coalescing of two integral conditions for pornography addiction's construction: (a) the simultaneous rise of Internet pornography and the promotion of the addiction concept as applicable to viewing pornography via the Internet; and (b) the explanatory power of the pornography addiction diagnosis for distressed pornography viewers. First, today's pornography addiction self-diagnosis depends upon the obligation to govern one's own sexual behaviour in the face of unlimited access to pornography via the Internet, placing the onus on the pornography viewer to resist this invitation to excess (see Granfield & Reinarman, 2014; Reith, 2004) and to choose a way to be a responsible pornography viewer.[26] By way of example, in the case of addiction, the coining of sex addiction itself was emblematic of what would become a concomitant rise in imagining "excess" as addiction.

[25] To be fair, perhaps the role of masturbation in the aetiology of a pornography addiction has been overlooked in academic contexts because the link between pornography and masturbation is simply too obvious (see Garlick, 2012) or too vulgar (see McKee, 2009), and as pornography addiction has become better established, it seems that the role of masturbation is starting to be taken more seriously (see Prause et al. 2016; Prause, 2019).

[26] A theme explored in more detail in Chapter 6.

During the 1990s, not only was the concept of non-chemical addiction being reformulated in an attempt to explain behaviours ranging from obsessive-compulsive disorder and compulsive spending to overeating and hypersexuality (Griffiths, 1996; Marks, 1990), but it was simultaneously becoming "one of the fastest growing areas of psychiatry" (Goleman, 1992, n.p.). Accordingly, as mentioned in Chapter 1, the 1990s saw the beginning of a precipitous rise in research on behavioural addiction that was marked by a continuous array of proposals for new and novel disorders, many of which relied upon a number of theoretical equivalences between excessive behaviour and excessive substance use (Billieux et al. 2015). For example, consider Kimberly Young's influential book *Caught in the Net: How to Recognize the Signs of Internet Addiction and a Winning Strategy for Recovery* (1998), a sort of analogue to Carnes's *Out of the Shadows*, in which Young describes her inspiration for the clinical "Internet Addiction" concept arising after seeing a television programme focusing on people who were spending hours online debating the O. J. Simpson trial: "Sounds strikingly similar to the effects of gambling addiction, I mused. Was there something sinister going on in cyberspace?" (Young, 1998, p. 3).

Here, not only does Young illustrate the role of grassroots activism in actively creating a new diagnostic category (see Irvine, 1995), but she also, somewhat ironically, anticipates the role that the Internet itself would eventually play in the globalization of a burgeoning self-medicalizing impulse (Conrad & Bergey, 2014; see also Jutel, 2009). Today the Internet provides a wealth of lay health information services, functioning as a marketplace in which individuals can research and choose their addiction. A search online for pornography addiction returns a swathe of comprehensive articles with extensive lists of symptoms, possible causes, and options for treatment. Indeed, just as literacy, novels, and books about masturbation spread in the 18th and 19th centuries, cyberspace has also become the pathway to diagnosing and treating the very disorders that it produces: The Internet is

proprietor of both pornography in excess and information about the dangers of such excess (Reay, Attwood, & Gooder, 2013), even if the actual criteria for pornography addiction remain vague.

However, pornography addiction's popularity also depends significantly upon its viability as not only a possible diagnosis, but a meaningful diagnosis. That is, the popularity of pornography addiction depends upon the pornography viewers *themselves*: Without a population willing to govern their own pornography viewing, and to seek out sources to help establish a meaningful diagnosis, the pornography addiction diagnosis would never have propagated. Today a self-diagnosis of an addiction to certain behaviours has become a convenient way to describe any number of one's own deviances through ostensibly neutral, medical language.[27] Indeed, as Reith (2004, p. 296) argues, the uptake of self-diagnosed addiction represents an inversion of the promise of consumer freedom: the proliferation of consumer choice, alongside the understanding that anyone can be addicted to anything, results in an imperative to "be vigilant, to regulate behaviour, to guard against risk and keep watch on subjective states – to continually monitor one's freedom" (see also Rose, 1990).

Moreover, it is clear that pornography addiction can be used to explain a veritable cornucopia of morally and ethically distressing scenarios, with the apparently bona fide biological underpinnings of the label offering explanation, and therefore exculpation (Hacking, 1996). Accordingly, some recent evidence suggests that pornography addiction is often taken up in the wake of moral and religious experiences of transgression (see Grubbs et al. 2015; Vaillancourt-Morel et al. 2017; Wilt et al. 2016). Considering the wealth of moral issues that pornography addiction can explain, perhaps it is not surprising to see the uptake of such a versatile diagnosis. For example, besides the various news stories about pornography addiction, on Carnes's own sex addiction website (www.sexhelp.com) under the heading

[27] A theme explored in Chapter 5.

"educate *yourself*" (my emphasis), sex addiction is compared to eating disorders, "financial disorders", and Internet and pornography addictions.[28] Indeed, as has already been hinted at, Hacking's (1996) discussion of "biologized" kinds of people suggests that the tendency towards biological explanations of behaviour can lead in turn to personal projects of self-governance – an imposition that has expanded drastically with the advent of the Internet and the democratization of addiction criteria since the 1990s. Here Hacking's (1986, 1996) dynamic nominalism is again instructive in explaining how the circulation of new ways of being a pornography viewer and new ways of being an addict could be reorganized, solidified, and broadcast as a new-fangled kind of person addicted to pornography, ready to be picked up as a biological explanation of deviance. In part, therefore, pornography addiction has seemingly persisted because the discourse of losing sexual self-control has been a historical constant, and the Internet has combined this discourse with notions of excess and behavioural addiction to make self-governance not only possible, but imperative.[29]

Conclusion

> Reorganisation is critical. Very seldom do we devise a wholly new human kind. Rather, as in all our endeavours, we build on old ones. (Hacking, 1996, p. 374)

As I have argued, the societal impulse undergirding the development of the pornography addiction concept has persisted across long historical periods, thanks in part to the flexible way in which new taxonomies react to and incorporate cultural anxieties (Irvine, 1995; Reay, Attwood, & Gooder, 2013). Pornography addiction is the site of coalescing lay and expert knowledge about pornography, a site at which disparate concerns about excess and self-

[28] Considering the points already covered, it is perhaps unsurprising to note that masturbation is not mentioned in any of the information on pornography or sex addictions.

[29] Of course, this migration of new psychiatric disorders online is not simply the result of the creation of the Internet, but also a larger product of social change in which the responsibilities of maintaining health and conformity are no longer the sole jurisdiction of medical or psychological authorities (see Conrad & Bergey, 2014; Conrad & Schneider, 1992; Hacking, 1995, 1996; Plummer, 1995; Rose; 1990).

control, sexual liberalism and conservatism, pleasure and danger have collided to produce a diagnosis that ostensibly solves all of these conflicts. Moreover, while pornography has historically been a significant site of public and societal concern, the gerrymandering of medical and expert fields over pornography has changed it from a political to a personal matter: As recent resolutions in the United States suggest (see Arkansas House of Representatives, 2017; Florida House of Representatives, 2018; Utah House of Representatives, 2016), pornography is now being remade as a public health problem.

However, without a population willing to take up the pornography addiction diagnosis and apply it to their own experience, the concept of pornography addiction would have remained impotent. The Pornography Addict is not a passive entity, simply swept up in a new system of classification, but is instead an active agent in the creation and continuation of the concept as a viable way to describe oneself. In large part, pornography addiction has succeeded not because of an academic or medical imperative to diagnose pornography viewing – although as Chapter 1 suggests this is becoming a factor – but because pornography viewers themselves take up the label. As argued throughout this chapter, such a process clearly reflects Ian Hacking's (1986, 1996) dynamic nominalism, in which those to whom a description is applied react to and change the label under which they are described. In the case of a possible pornography addiction diagnosis, such a category now operates in both lay and expert fields of knowledge, existing in a state of flux as the label is developed between these and other fields, all the while circulating as a possible way to be a pornography viewer and being reshaped in its adoption by these very same viewers.

In effect, today's pornography addiction offers an explanatory framework through which the negative personal consequences that might be associated with viewing pornography can be made sense of in a way that is significant and culturally meaningful, precisely because it is the product of such a durable conceptual lineage. Yet, pornography

addiction and pornography addicts continue to be made and remade, as pornography addiction is stretched, poked and prodded, investigated, debated, and talked into continued existence. In turn, the lack of apparent fanfare around the popularization of the pornography addiction concept as it has entered mainstream culture in the form of celebrity confessions, magazine articles, popular blogs, and mainstream films is in part explained by its resonances with the same concerns that have plagued western societies for hundreds of years – and its utility in silencing these ghosts. In exposing this lineage, not only are the foundations of pornography addiction's apparent contemporary popularity unearthed – which should give pause to those working explicitly to foster the concept – but this process, whereby pornography viewers themselves take up the mantle of self-diagnosis, suggests that pornography addiction is effectively transforming our well-established social concerns and anxieties about pornography into a transient sexual disease. As a consequence, where accounts of many clinicians (see Adamson, 2016; Blunden, 2018; Garfield, 2008; Levine, 2010; MacDonald, 2016; Skinner, 2014) contend that pornography addiction is spreading like an epidemic of a new disease, pornography addiction might more clearly be viewed as the propagation of a ready explanation or confession for the distressed pornography viewer.

Chapter 3

Pornography addiction and the perimeters of acceptable pornography viewing[30]

> Not sure if your X-rated habits are normal? Take this quiz to determine if you need professional help.
>
> –Mensfitness.com

On 6 March 2016, the *New Zealand Herald* published an interview with New Zealand Olympic medallist Nick Willis relating the perils of a self-diagnosed addiction to pornography (Miller, 2016). In the interview, Willis explains that at one time his apparent pornography addiction threatened his relationship with his wife and "his ability to be a father", going on to articulate his hope that any ensuing publicity around his story will help others struggling with pornography. In turn, Willis's interview garnered considerable attention, generating conversation on social media and inspiring five further articles focusing on pornography addiction in the *New Zealand Herald* in the ensuing months. This upsurge of conversation appeared to suggest that pornography's presumed ubiquitous consumption was now open game for critique, presenting the Pornography Addict as the focal point for such discussion.

However, while one might expect that a discussion of pornography addiction would address the object of the addiction, "pornography", the descriptions of what was actually being watched remained curiously vague in the ensuing conversations. Such an oversight likely occurs because defining pornography has never been a straightforward task, with contemporary Internet-based pornography offering a new manifestation of a medium that is notoriously difficult to describe. As discussed in Chapter 2, what we understand as

[30] This chapter is a lightly edited version of an article published in *Sexualities*, co-authored with Nicola Gavey (Taylor & Gavey, 2019).

pornography today is a relatively recent category, its identifiable characteristics and consumable status representing an aberration in a long history of obscene cultural objects (Kendrick, 1996). By way of example, consider that many works of literature, film, and art that were once relegated under the jurisdiction of that same word, pornography, are now lauded as cultural artefacts. Alternatively, perhaps a sense of propriety prevails, rendering a definition of the pornography under discussion too graphic to print. Another explanation again might be that pornography was not defined here because a shared understanding of what pornography "is" could simply be assumed between the authors and the readership. Whatever the explanation, it is worth foregrounding that, despite pornography's apparent effects being the central focus of the media discussion described above, pornography itself was mostly described in indefinite, apolitical terms, its dominant social ramifications contingent upon its addictive potential and *not* its content.

This framing of pornography might seem somewhat surprising considering the observations made in Chapter 2 that during the 1980s at least, dominant public discussions of pornography and its presumed effects were viewed as inherently political. Pornography was criticized by many feminists as an eroticization of unequal power relations in intimate relations, through sexualized depictions of violence and force aimed at female performers, the evocation and celebration of racialized and gendered stereotypes, and the reiteration of heteronormative sexual practices (Bronstein, 2011; Duggan & Hunter, 2006). In New Zealand specifically, during the 1980s feminist groups like Women Against Pornography (WAP) conspicuously campaigned and protested against pornography as evidence of a widespread acceptance of the exploitation of women. In fact, the impetus for the New Zealand government's Ministerial Committee of Inquiry into Pornography (Morris, Haines, & Shallcras, 1989), commissioned in 1987 by then Minister of Justice Geoffrey Palmer,

largely arose in response to local feminist criticisms of pornography's content (Bynum, 1990).

However, this is not to say that an anti-pornography position adequately describes the overarching public opinion in New Zealand during this time. For example, in their overview of submissions received by the Ministerial Committee of Inquiry into Pornography, Morris, Haines, and Shallcras (1989, p. 24) highlighted the concerns of a so-called liberal position, which "remains a vigorous element of New Zealand society" on issues of censorship. Notwithstanding, the authors conclude that "foremost in numbers, range and urgency are women's opinions" (p. 24) and that "women's rights are a major, perhaps the major, political issue of the day" (p. 24). Moreover, the authors of the report suggest that a concern for violence in pornography, general media, and popular culture was universal across the submissions. Conspicuous in its absence in these debates is any mention of a pornography addiction, so prominent in the 2016 *New Zealand Herald* coverage. Conversely, violence is noticeably absent from the discussion following Willis's interview, although Willis himself states his concern for the victims of sex trafficking and abuse.

But what does this modern appearance of a pornography addict figure tell us about political engagement with the contemporary boom of Internet pornography? As McGlynn (2010) has argued in the UK (for broader critique, see Boyle, 2000), feminist criticisms and debates about pornography – be they radical or anti-censorship – have historically been drowned out by arguments focusing upon viewer effects. McGlynn (2010) argues that through the proposed regulation of pornography by governments feminists of all stripes have found themselves pushed to the fringes of the debate. For example, using the case of a law criminalizing so-called "extreme pornography" in England and Wales, which came into effect in 2009, she suggests that the end result was "legislation which does not meet feminist demands – from any feminist perspective" (McGlynn, 2010, p. 190). McGlynn (2010, p. 201)

further argues that while feminists are united across pornography debates by a concern for the position of women in society and, pertinently here, the "dominance of masculine perspectives on sex and sexuality", it instead appears that this unity has been consistently overridden by other concerns. That is, by extension, a narrow focus on the disordered viewer has trumped broader feminist critiques.

The current research

Superficially at least, the Pornography Addict could be a powerful agent to redeploy a number of feminist critiques of pornography: he highlights tensions in an area of culture steeped in stereotypes of gender and race, he sets the stage to critique the commodification and commercializing of sexuality, and he holds the capacity to problematize assumptions of male sexual supremacy and female submissiveness. Moreover, the Pornography Addict can strike at the complex moral core of the normalization of pornography's content, in that his rejection of pornography as maybe too graphic, too violent, or too misogynistic would be a rejection of the overarching problematic structures of pornography critiqued by many feminists. On the other hand, perhaps the Pornography Addict's rejection of pornography is on grounds not necessarily shared by feminists critical of pornography.

Does the ascendance of the Pornography Addict as a public figure indicate changes to public conversation about pornography? Or does he instead help to normalize pornography's ubiquity by focusing on viewer effects which reify certain boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable pornography viewing? The purpose of the following explorative study is to investigate the marginalization of feminist debate (be it "pro", "anti", ambivalent, or something else) in favour of a focus on the viewer, specifically in the form of pornography addiction. It is my hope that in highlighting the resources and interpretive repertoires that underpin pornography addiction the underlying moral scaffolding that supports such a focus will be made visible. In other words, this chapter aims to identify if and how pornography

addiction might simultaneously foster rejection of feminist critiques and instead protect traditional gendered sexual arrangements.

Method

Data

The following analysis examines text taken from six newspaper articles published in the *New Zealand Herald* (NZH) and the 1430 social media responses to them. The six articles utilized here represent the sum total of articles published to the NZH Facebook page between 6 March and 7 August 2016 that focused on pornography addiction. This timeframe represented the most focused local discussion around pornography addiction specifically up to that point. The NZH was selected for three key reasons: First, the NZH is New Zealand's largest circulating newspaper, its online content alone reaching 1.99 million New Zealanders each month (New Zealand Herald, 2017). Second, the NZH was the only local newspaper that maintained local pornography related coverage and editorials from health professionals, and which regularly posted these to Facebook across the time period. Third, the NZH Facebook community responded enthusiastically to the coverage on pornography addiction, generating substantial discussion.

While these news articles may already present a possible site in which prevalent discourses are produced and reproduced, this analysis also asks how these ideas presented are given meaning through the interpretation of the newspaper's readership (Baker, 2006). As such, all social media content posted on the NZH Facebook page in response to each story, totalling 1430 responses across five posts, was selected for analysis. Such forum type data has elsewhere been utilized to investigate meaning making around pornography viewership (Lindgren, 2010), and pornography addiction/abstinence (Taylor & Jackson, 2018). For ease of indexing, the published NZH articles have been numbered in chronological order, and are identifiable under the designation NZH[x] (See Appendix A). Furthermore, because the news

articles offer a mix of expert and lay perspectives on the topic of pornography addiction – with two articles written by accredited health professionals (NZH 3 and NZH 5), and two articles relying significantly on the testimony of other professionals in the field (NZH 4 and NZH 6) – the quotes from these authorities on pornography's addictiveness are designated by their credential proceeding their quote (e.g. "Clinical psychologist Simon Adamson, author of NZH 3").

In order to distinguish extracts derived from Facebook, on the other hand, all comments have been numbered according to originating source (the source being one of the NZHs), as well as whether the post was in reply to a previous comment, if relevant. For example, *(4.2.27)* indicates that the extract referenced is the 27th reply to the second comment on the fourth article (i.e. NZH 4). Comments that are not a direct reply to another post, but instead sit in the body of the thread proper, are ordered by their position in the thread, with all direct replies to any previous comments collapsed. All extracts have been reproduced verbatim. Finally, in order to add further clarity, each section of the following analysis will begin by addressing the relevant media data taken from the NZH articles, followed by an analysis of the reader reactions to the repertoires produced in such articles.

Analytic approach

This analysis utilizes a critical discursive methodology situated within a broader Foucauldian approach, drawing upon the concept of interpretative repertoires as outlined by Potter and Wetherell (1987). According to Potter and Wetherell (1987), an interpretative repertoire is a lexicon of recurrently used terms and metaphors, utilized to construct an account in one of many possible ways. In the current case, the central focus is in the variety of interpretative repertoires utilized by the authors of both the NZH articles and the Facebook comments to make sense of pornography viewership. Utilizing such an approach is not seeking to uncover

an underlying process by which pornography becomes addictive, but is instead interested in how the building of pornography addiction is *achieved*.

In employing a Foucauldian (1990) tradition of discourse analysis, recurrently drawn upon repertoires around topics of sex and sexuality, can be seen as helping to constitute boundaries of appropriate sexual practices by invoking discourses of what is, or is not, "normal" or "natural". For example, as later references to Hollway's (1989) influential critiques of the familiar "male sexual drive" and "have and hold" discourses suggest, specific ways of talking about sex can legitimate men's apparently insatiable desire for promiscuous sex and women's role as the supplier of that sex in exchange for a relationship as biologically derived imperatives. Such discourses in turn allow behaviours like sexual assault to be understood as actions taken by men who lose their sense of self-control after being provoked by women who have apparently signalled her availability. Consequently, a woman becomes the subject of blame for her assault due to her provocation of a man's ostensibly natural sexual aggression. Thus, beyond simply identifying the repertoires used to construct pornography addiction, this analysis attend to the ways that these interpretative repertoires make visible the perimeters of normative pornography viewing, privileged sexual practices, and gendered power dynamics.

Given this approach, I wish to highlight that the data presented hereafter are not intended as representative of all pornography related media coverage (for critique, see Boyle 2010). Instead, they form an example of a contextually particular and geographically specific site of conversation, in which certain ways of interpreting and speaking about pornography viewership are employed. These data are intended to illustrate the ways that public discussions about pornography can tap into, and make visible, readily available framings in which both problematic and normative pornography viewership can be demarcated and made sense of in a public discussion.

Procedure

I began the analysis with multiple close readings of both the articles and Facebook comments to become familiar with the data set as a whole. Next, I generated codes with an eye towards how authors of both articles and Facebook comments alike oriented towards viewing pornography and pornography addiction. However, special attention was paid to the ways in which Facebook commenters responded to claims made within the newspaper articles, and how particular claims to knowledge were redeployed. Moreover, attention was paid to points of agreement, disagreement, and ambivalence between the articles and the audience. Codes between these data sets were compared and contrasted. These codes were then collated by the different ways that they constructed pornography, pornography viewership, and pornography addiction, signifying the repertoires available to make sense of pornography's framing. That is, if a number of codes referenced analogies to drugs, drug use, alcoholics anonymous, gambling, and so on, then such codes suggest (perhaps unsurprisingly) that the similarity or dissimilarity to a drug is an important resource for constructing pornography viewership. Such repertoires could be shared agreed-upon accounts of the legitimacy of pornography addiction (in the case of being similar to a drug), ambivalence and inconsistencies when discussing pornography (e.g. whether it is natural or not), or outright ridicule and rejection of the whole discussion (e.g. the pornography addiction is an excuse).

Ethics

The study of readers' reactions to a controversial topic like pornography requires ethical consideration. Although all analysed comments were posted on a public Facebook page, some researchers have queried whether social media users knowingly make these statements online with the understanding that their posts can be viewed and reproduced by anyone taking an interest (Holtz, Kronberger, & Wagner, 2012). While the content posted on the NZH Facebook page is relatively benign, and generated in an open forum in which commenters

readily engage in debate with strangers, all Facebook sourced extracts reproduced anonymously as a gesture of respect for users' privacy.

Analysis

Before outlining a few of the key ways that the pornography addict was constituted across the target NZH articles and Facebook posts, I will first address three overarching observations. Firstly, as mentioned in Chapter 2 and this chapter's introduction, although pornography can mean many things, the form of "pornography" under discussion was not explicitly clarified in either the articles or Facebook threads. That extensive conversation about pornography was achieved between commenters without having to distinguish explicitly between pornography in different mediums, in different genres, or for different intended audiences corroborates my identification of a public consensus surrounding pornography as an agreed-upon discursive object referenced without definition. Again however, whether this failure to define the pornography under discussion was due to propriety, or because a definition is considered unnecessary is not immediately obvious.

It is also important to note that the omission of an agreed-upon definition can have serious implications for how pornography addiction is understood by readers. That is, despite the operation of an apparently shared – yet unspecified – grasp of what pornography represents in the data, people's subjective judgements about what does, and does not constitute pornography can vary significantly between individuals, engendering confusion (Willoughby & Busby, 2016). For example, when attempting to establish a reliable definition of contemporary pornography, the most frequently offered is a variant upon: a form of media produced with the intent of evoking sexual arousal (Kendrick, 1996). However, such a definition of pornography not only implicates a diverse array of media forms in its lack of specificity – from written erotica to controversial artworks, sexually explicit song lyrics to commercial films containing sex scenes – but also elides an engagement with the conventions

that sexually arousing media might employ. Notwithstanding this observation, however, here we can infer from the few descriptions of pornography that *were* employed (e.g. NZH 3 and 4) that the pornography under discussion was Internet-based, ostensibly legal, heterosexual, and produced with men as the target audience.

Secondly, although the repertoires presented hereafter are highly representative of how pornography addiction was constructed, this is not to say that all Facebook commenters contributed to this process equally. For example, some users instead commented on Nick Willis's sporting abilities, while others suggested his private life should remain private. As these contributed only marginally to the actual construction of pornography viewership and addiction (except to say that it should remain private), these will not be addressed at any length here.

Finally, as the authors of the NZH articles and Facebook comments co-constructed pornography viewership and addiction, this constitutive work overwhelmingly returned again and again to defining the perimeters of normal pornography viewership. As the following analysis works to illustrate, discussions about pornography's addictiveness are built upon the foundation of an ostensibly normal type of pornography viewership within the population, in order to advance the construction of a pornography viewer that is comparatively "abnormal", as opposed to suggesting that all pornography viewership could negatively affect all viewers. In other words, the recursive deployment of pornography addiction is necessarily underwritten by pornography *also* being described as normal.

Viewing pornography is like a drug

Most likely due to the context of the conversation focusing upon how pornography might be addictive, the most readily identifiable construction of viewing pornography was of it being similar to a drug. While this point may be somewhat unsurprising considering the terminological similarities – both are called addictions after all – it is also worth considering

whether the ostensibly problematic viewing of pornography by any other name would engender the same comparison, or the same forms of evidence. In other words, echoing the arguments made in Chapter 1, the comparison between drug abuse and viewing pornography is implicit in naming it addictive – as opposed to, say, compulsive or disordered – and as a result the analysis identified many instances of established drug addiction repertoires being easily mapped onto the problematic viewing of pornography.

Interestingly, while the aforementioned debate amongst psychological researchers as to whether pornography can be addictive or not remains contentious and unresolved (see for example Gola, 2016; Prause et al. 2015, 2016), the ready deployment of addiction in the articles and Facebook discussions indicates that the addictive status of pornography does not require such an official consensus. With a prevalence of online tests and criteria for pornography addiction, in many ways the *addiction* part of pornography addiction now transcends medical or professional jurisdiction: diagnosing an addiction can be done by anybody (as discussed further in Chapter 5). Thus, metaphors of drug addiction were widely used both within the NZH articles and by the Facebook commenters to substantiate the veracity of an apparent pornography addiction. Firstly, within the NZH articles multiple claims to the biological mechanisms of pornography's addictiveness were made: "I have consistently found that these men (and they have all been men) describe problems with compulsive pornography use that closely mirrors most of the symptoms of substance addiction" (clinical psychologist Simon Adamson, author of NZH 3); "We see alcohol and drugs as a threat, but we don't see the damage porn can do to relationships and people within those relationships" (sex therapist Mary Hodson, interviewed in NZH 4); "We also recognise that through repeatedly engaging in pleasurable behaviour, we set our body up, through the over use of our brains [sic] own chemicals (or "neurotransmitters" and dopamine specifically) to get "hooked" on behaviour" (psychotherapist Kyle MacDonald, author of NZH 5;

parenthesis in original); "This phenomenon, where sex causes the production of reward chemicals in the brain, has been described by researchers to be equivalent to the addiction to cocaine" (journalist Russel Blackstock, author of NZH 6). Here substance use metaphors evoke a common-sense link between addictive substances and pornography, suggesting that viewing pornography shares similar physiological attributes. For example, even though sex therapist Hodson utilizes the term "out-of-control sexual behaviour" in her interview in NZH 4 to avoid using the addiction label, elsewhere in NZH 4 she suggests that "a chemical change in the brain, probably linked to the feel-good hormone oxytocin, is likely to be proven soon".[31]

Crucial to the validity of these claims for pornography's addictiveness as being similar to a drug is the fact that these claims are offered by those in positions of authority on the matter. Three of the extracts are made by recognised health professionals, either as authors of articles in which their ascribed expertise is deployed to educate the reader about what a pornography addict might look like, utilizing anecdotes from doctor/patient interactions (NZH 3 and NZH 5), or as quoted by a journalist (NZH 4), while the fourth extract above (NZH 6) simply cites "researchers". Interestingly, in the case of Adamson's article (NZH 3), he suggests that the men he sees are the ones who describe their pornography viewing like an addiction. Elsewhere in the article he notes that "many clients frequently [use] this term [addiction] when first making contact". Such observations echo recent studies in which similar neuroscientific metaphors were drawn upon by individuals to help construct both addictive and non-addictive behaviours alike (Briggs, Gough, & das Nair, 2017). In their interviews with nine men, five of whom described themselves as sex addicts, Briggs, Gough, and das Nair (2017) found that participants commonly utilized similar

[31] Such a claim clearly resounds with the suggestion made in chapters 1 and 2, that the very existence of research can help make pornography addiction real by presupposing the validity of its findings. That is, the physiological substrate of addiction is presumed to exist here, simply waiting to be uncovered by scientific enquiry.

psychological and biomedical language to construct overt sexual behaviours as biologically determined, thereby giving cause to their loss of control. In turn, the deployment of self-control over their biological urges sits well within the purview of a male sexual drive discourse. However, more pertinent to the above extracts is Briggs, Gough, and das Nair's (2017) identification of the weight given to scientific language employed by "experts" as evidence. Such language can help sex addiction sufferers to construct the validity of their sex addiction diagnosis, further legitimizing boundaries between normal and abnormal sexual conduct.

The circulation of repertoires of pornography as an addictive substance were not limited to the writing of experts, however. As highlighted above, an addiction to pornography can be speedily diagnosed with a free online questionnaire. Thus, it is not surprising that many Facebook commenters also constructed the viewing of pornography as being similar to abusing drugs, employing a variety of addictive substances for comparison: "Good on you guys for talking about this topic. So many people are affected by this addiction. To say that watching pornography is harmless is like saying cigarettes are harmless" (1.52); "It's an addiction if you are not in control of it. Needing porn means you have a problem, just as needing a beer does" (4.1.8); "But it's the obsessiveness of it and how it pervades lives – men and women. They start to need it like a drug" (5.1.44); "It's called addiction omg the addiction can be likened to crack cocaine. No two ways about it" (6.1.11). These claims for pornography's addictiveness similarly build upon the assumed similarity between substance abuse and pornography abuse within the NZH articles, with extract 6.1.11 virtually repeating NZH 6's suggestion of an equivalence between sex and cocaine. Taken together, these extracts suggest that this form of evidence is indeed a valuable repertoire for bolstering the veracity of some pornography viewing as an addiction, especially when accredited experts reproduce the evidence in easy to understand ways.

Essentially the construction of pornography as a dangerously addictive substance separates what pornography "is" from what pornography "does", thereby occluding an engagement with pornography's content to instead focus on its addictive potential. Therefore, viewing pornography can be negative, but not in a sense that renders pornography immoral. Instead, critical positions against pornography's content are sidestepped, making the pornography addict's brain chemistry leading to a lack of self-control the central problem with pornography.

Viewing pornography is not the problem

This avoidance of discussing the content of pornography and the moral implications of viewing it were furthered in the NZH articles by defending pornography viewership as normal, despite still acting as a site that risks addicting it viewers. For example, while viewing pornography in general was described with an overarching tone of liberal tolerance in four of the six articles (NZH 3, 4, 5, 6), pornography addiction was simultaneously described in these very same articles as patently dangerous. This creates an awkward juxtaposition in which viewing pornography is both normal but also implicated in a range of symptoms and negative outcomes, including an inability to stop viewing it, increased frequency of viewing, a need for "harder" content, and the possibility of relationship breakdown and employment issues. Thus, viewing pornography is ambiguously constructed as a threat when taken "too far" but not necessarily a noteworthy subject if "used" correctly: "My clinical experience tells me that compulsive pornography use can helpfully be understood, and treated, as an addiction. This does not mean all pornography use is problematic" (clinical psychologist Simon Adamson, author of NZH 3); "[Sex therapist Mary Hodson] believes it is not the porn itself that is the problem, but the extent to which it is used and the problems that develop as a result" (NZH 4); "In fact for many it is a little harmless fun, or a normal part of a varied and healthy sex life – that is of course taking for granted that

the porn enjoyed is legal, and consensual" (psychotherapist Kyle MacDonald, author of NZH 5); "[Counsellor Bridget Wilson] says it is not porn that is the main problem, it is the mind" (NZH 6).

The assertion that pornography is not the cause of pornography addiction at first appears counterfactual: obviously one of the principal causes of pornography addiction *must* be pornography. However, it is clear that these articles' authors are at pains to assert that pornography addiction is not caused by pornography itself, but is instead the fault of the disordered viewer. In turn, in solving the tensions between outlining the dangers of pornography addiction while defending the viewing of pornography as normative, the extracts above give rise to repertoires that focus upon the individual viewer of pornography. Thus, pornography addiction principally acts as an obvious boundary between normal and abnormal pornography viewership, whereby those who view pornography need only worry if their viewing deviates from expected norms.

As such, this repertoire of liberal tolerance towards pornography, within specific but as yet unspecified boundaries, was also taken up by many of the Facebook commenters. As with the NZH articles, these commenters attempted to tread the same tenuous borderline between positioning pornography as "normal" alongside an acceptance of viewing pornography as a possible risk: "Porn addiction is different to just looking at porn guys, when it controls your life and effects other people you care about" (1.2.11); "But porn in itself is not the issue. Why can't consenting adults watch other consenting adults have sex as a form of entertainment?" (5.1.26);

> how is it not natural to watch others enjoy themselves? most of you people who say its not natural will sit down and watch a game of rugby or other sports or "reality tv" shows whats so different about watching 2 or more people enjoy themselves. (4.1.52)

More so than the newspaper extracts, these comments suggest a few ways that viewing pornography operates as unremarkable, such as "just looking at porn" as light entertainment

akin to sports or reality television. Thus, viewing pornography is constructed as a normal behaviour, positioning the Pornography Addict as engaging with pornography beyond the bounds of normalcy. Again, framing pornography's content as "not the issue" attributes the *issue* of pornography as not with the product itself, but with those individuals who are viewing pornography in unacceptable ways.

Viewing pornography is unnatural, false, and fake

So far I have outlined the ways that the problematic uses of pornography have both been constructed as outside of a viewer's control like a drug addiction, and maligned as a problem specific only to those who are addicted. However, in his open and confessional interview published on 6 March (NZH 1), Olympic runner Nick Willis articulates what he sees as the main issues of pornography for addicts and non-addicts alike: the nature of the pornographic media itself. Chiefly, he suggests that those who are viewing pornography are naïvely doing so as an artificial substitute for "real" sex, and that this substitution can ruin a person's life. Thus, regardless of whether pornography is addictive or not, Willis argues that the viewing of pornography is a significant problem because of its fraudulent offer of sexual satisfaction:

> Porn makes you think you are having sexual needs met. But really, they are hollow and leave you feeling empty and lonelier than before. Basically, pornography is a *very unnatural* (and very temporary) solution that people use to satisfy *a natural desire*. Pornography will not and cannot love you back. [….] Don't believe *the lie that this is a natural* and fine thing for men to participate in. It will affect everything in your life, especially your ability to experience *true* intimacy. [….] My eyes have now become truly open to *the lies of pornography*, that it is *a completely fake distortion* of sex and women. It is not sexy nor appealing. I am *no longer duped by a false reality.* (Nick Willis, interviewed in NZH 1, emphasis added throughout)

Throughout Willis's testimony is a strong dichotomy between the "natural", "true", and "real" on the one hand, and the "unnatural", "false", and "fake" on the other. The concerns evidenced in Willis's extracts suggest that *all* pornography viewing is "unnatural", interfering

with an undefined, "natural" sexuality. Such a dichotomy between natural and unnatural sets up a boundary that separates appropriate from inappropriate sexual behaviours, implicitly sketching not only the outlines of how an addiction to pornography can be comprehended, but also the reasons that such an addiction can be so destructive. Similarly, other commenters took up comparable positions in relation to pornography being fake and unnatural: "Addiction changes the brain, disturbing the normal hierarchy of needs and desires" (1.138.1); "And no I don't watch reality TV because of the mere fact that it seems very fake to me. Just like porn. Not a realistic or natural way to view sex at all" (4.1.6).

Despite a lack of significant engagement with pornography's content itself – beyond its "unreal" status outlined above – it should be noted that there were a few occasions that pornography as a moral issue came to the fore. For example, on 7 March, an amended version[32] of Willis's interview was published on the NZH website and Facebook page entitled "Olympic star Nick Willis on the *real* victims of his pornography addiction – Women" (NZH 2; emphasis added). In the new introductory paragraph, Willis attempts to shift the focus from the Pornography Addict as the primary victim of "his pornography addiction", to emphasize the plight of trafficked women forced into performing in pornography. For example, he suggests that "even if someone thinks there's no harm for themselves in viewing a little porn here and there (despite the extensive research that refutes this), there are real victims being exploited to provide that viewing content". Thus, Willis retains the possibility of personal harm in using pornography generally (notably appealing to unspecified "extensive research" to bolster his claim), while also appealing to the empathy of the pornography viewer to consider the "real victims" of viewing pornography.

[32] The article included a new, albeit brief, introductory quote from Willis, before repeating the entirety of the 6 March (NZH1) article in full.

However, where some Facebook users took up this shift away from a focus on pornography's effects on the individual viewer towards an engagement with ethical and moral considerations of pornography's ubiquity, these were a minority. For example, the following interaction between two commenters in the conversation thread of NZH 2 indicates that the construction of the pornography viewer as supporting a sexist or exploitative industry is trumped by the pornography viewer as the primary victim of his own viewership:

> […] Millions of women are caught up in [the sex trade] being exploited all over the world and pornography is a part of it. Why do you think their is so much violence against women in this world? [Pornography addicts] loose all moral judgement, all sense of respect for women, they become abusive and live only for their own immoral pleasure. (2.3.4)

This extract utilizes some arguments against pornography reminiscent of the anti-pornography feminist movement. However, this line of argument against pornography was explicitly rejected by another Facebook commenter, who initially agreed with the above extract as "right on the money" (2.3.7), but subsequently shifts the focus of harm:

> […] However I feel that wasn't the point that Nick was trying to emphasize. There has been research into a link between ED [erectile dysfunction] and watching too much pornography. Meaning watching excessive amounts would lead to a massively increased chance of ED. Meaning it would make sexual relations a lot more difficult with a real person when no pornogrophy [sic] is involved. To my knowledge there's no link between pornogrophy and the extreme violence you're talking about. […] Also women watch pornogrophy a lot too. (2.3.8)

Here extract 2.3.8 explicitly rejects the critique of pornography's content or its celebration of violence in favour of a focus on the negative impact experienced by male pornography viewers specifically. It is striking that this commenter essentially rejects Willis's attempt to address women as victims of pornography in NZH 2, in favour of pornography's negative effects being most visibly visited upon those who view it (and any "real" person they may

want to have a sexual relationship with). In fact, overall this construction of pornography as "unnatural, false, and fake" appears to have less to do with the content of pornography itself as fake, and more to do with what using this fake content can mean. These concerns echo similar anxieties espoused by groups of men who abstain from online pornography (Taylor & Jackson, 2018). Through their discursive analysis of comments made within pornography abstinence forums, Taylor and Jackson suggest that the pursuit of "real" (as opposed to virtual) sex, and pertinently "real sex" with "real women", is deployed as an important way for these men to maintain their masculine credentials while also rejecting pornography.

Viewing pornography is interfering with intimacy

Beyond conceptualizing pornography addiction as similar to substance abuse, both the NZH articles and commenters consistently suggested that one of the key indicators that a person might be addicted to pornography was that viewing pornography could interfere in their daily life. Where up until now the boundaries of when somebody becomes an addict have been somewhat ambiguous, the employment of pornography viewing as interfering in a person's primary sexual relationship was overwhelmingly agreed upon as a key criteria of abnormal pornography viewership. For example, both clinical psychologist Simon Adamson and psychotherapist Kyle MacDonald agree that pornography addiction can be a significant problem within committed relationships: "Michelle recently discovered Tim's use and although she had previously been unaware, found this helped to explain some of the emotional distance in their relationship" (clinical psychologist Simon Adamson, author of NZH 3);

> In my mind then, porn addiction is actually an intimacy problem: the immediate and constantly available nature of Internet pornography offers a quick, one dimensional and ultimately unsatisfying fix of gratification. It replaces the messy, complicated and at times conflicted "real" relationship. (psychotherapist Kyle MacDonald, author of NZH 5)

In the above extracts, pornography is explicitly constructed as able to complicate real relationships, in MacDonald's case by presumably offering easier sexual satisfaction. At the same time, pornography's ability to fulfil sexual "needs" is constructed as inherently unsatisfying, while still managing to interfere with a couple's intimacy. In other words, pornography's appeal lies in its ability to satisfy sexual desires quickly and without complication. Interestingly, these concerns recall Willis's warning that "porn makes you think you are having sexual needs met" in that pornography's danger is that it might replace a "real" sex life, and yet also be a poor replacement for real sex. This begs the question as to how pornography is imagined to replace real sex if real sex is fundamentally better than watching pornography. Thus, somewhat ironically, here pornography is being both thoroughly discounted as unsatisfying in NZH 5, while also causing some kind of emotional distance in the relationship as described in NZH 3.

A way of remedying this conflict between using pornography as inadequately pleasing yet convenient enough to be threatening was to repeatedly valorise sexual intimacy within a monogamous relationship: "There is lots of research that shows that strong sexual relationships create strong families, and strong families create strong communities and strong communities create a strong New Zealand" (sex therapist Mary Hodson, interviewed in NZH 4); "Richie Hardcore from Auckland, realised his early sexual relationships were more about sex than intimacy – he didn't see it as being an emotional connection with a partner" (journalist Russel Blackstock, author of NZH 6). Significantly, sex therapist Mary Hodson's evocation of the family brings to the fore a question as to what sort of intimate relationships are being constructed as threatened by pornography. That is, the extract above is an explicit disciplining of sexual conduct, whereby the authority of unspecified "research" produces an imperative to appropriate sexual contact for the sake of the Nation. Moreover, upon a close reading across the NZH articles, the concerns about pornography's impact are not simply

presented to presumptively monogamous couples, but specifically to heterosexual monogamous couples: "My understanding of how to form real relationships with the opposite sex became hijacked" (Nick Willis, interviewed in NZH 1); "The content he watches is "mainstream" adult heterosexual material" (clinical psychologist Simon Adamson, author of NZH 3); "Rediscover the intoxication of your partner, and talk with her about your fantasies" (psychotherapist Kyle MacDonald, author of NZH 5);

> At this stage they've been accessing hard-core pornography for half their lives and they can't function on many levels – can't talk to female peers, can't function sexually when presented with the "real" thing – that is, not a porn star – and they have no ability to be sociable. (counsellor Bridget Wilson, interviewed in NZH 6)

Besides a simple presumption of heterosexuality[33], there are a number of relational assumptions at work here that require unpacking. First, as is no doubt obvious by now, both the pornography viewer and addict have been reliably constructed as male. Second, in constructing the viewer of pornography as both exclusively male and heterosexual by default, there is an erasure of the possibility not only that women could view – and presumably become addicted to – pornography, but also that the viewing of pornography by women might not be a problem to the same extent. Third, if it is assumed that women do not engage with pornography willingly, then their primary engagement with pornography must be when a male partner's pornography viewing interferes in a relationship. Therefore, viewing pornography and pornography addiction are framed as a primary concern for sexually agentic men, which in turn becomes a problem for the sexually passive and presumably oblivious

[33] While I have already hinted at the heterosexual focus of the pornography addiction diagnosis, here I must offer a brief explanation (one that is fleshed-out in chapters 4 and 7) for my own perpetuation of this focus in this thesis. That is, it is curious to note that the pornography addiction diagnosis remains, as Reay, Attwood, and Gooder, (2013, p. 15) describe of sex addiction: "remarkably heterosexual in its predilections […] as befitting a normative discourse in a heteronormative culture". Thus, because it is precisely the interplay between overarching normative conceptions of (hetero)sexuality and gender, and how pornography addiction disrupts – or at least *appears* to disrupt – them, my omission of a direct address to gay, bi, or non-male pornography "addicts" is not the result of ignorance, but of my subject focus (see also Williams, 2014).

women in their lives. Here, the impetus and importance of gendered demarcations in pornography research are made clear: within this dynamic women's pornography viewing becomes either invisible[34] or viewed as alien when compared to the seeming mundanity of pornography's appeal for men.

This repertoire of pornography interfering with intimacy most vividly demonstrates pornography addiction as a threshold, used to explain when viewing becomes problematic. The key way that it does so is by reifying both the male sexual drive and have/hold discourses, first presented by Hollway (1989), as key sites from which to resist pornography consumption. Briefly, the male sex drive discourse describes men's desire for sex as derived from a common-sense belief that men's sexuality is derived from a biologically imbued sexual aggressiveness to ensure reproduction. The have/hold discourse describes women's sexuality within a relationship as an investment to secure familial stability and/or offspring. In employing the male sex drive discourse here alongside the have/hold discourse, men's need for sexual release is reiterated and conveniently relegated to intimate relationships, where female partners are expected to "fulfil" such needs. Thus, the repertoire of relationship interference *as* pornography addiction in turn helps to affirm both gendered power relations and the relational context in which these relations are lived out.

Put plainly, pornography was seen as most addictive when a man could not or would not have real sex with a partner, opting instead for "virtual" sex. This arrangement threatens to fundamentally contravene understandings of male sexual drive as innately reproductive and biologically derived, and as a result pornography's appeal is necessarily constructed as illusory: men's natural desires have become high-jacked. As a case in point, social media commenters took concerns about pornography's ability to interrupt sex somewhat further

[34] A theme discussed further in Chapter 4.

than the NZH articles, suggesting in response to NZH 1 and NZH 2 that the obviousness of Willis's pornography addiction was a function of his inability to have sex with his wife:

> Hope you're able to get over your addiction but mate look at your wife so supportive but also what an absolute stunning woman. Bro back here in NZ we call that a hottie, a bab I could go on why look anywhere else when you have her at home. (1.9.3)

> This article doesn't go into detail about how porn affected him or his wife, which is not helpful. Did he stop having sex with his wife? (some do). Was he not going out at all? Did it interfere with his training? Some further information would have been good. (2.6)

Where extract 2.6 encapsulates and queries some of the issues surrounding the possible ways that pornography addiction is supposed to manifest, extract 1.9.3 suggests that Willis's pornography viewing was almost incomprehensible considering the apparent attractiveness of his wife. The consistency and prevalence of comments suggesting that having a wife as attractive as Willis's would negate the need for using pornography was striking among the Facebook comments. However, such comments only raise further questions. For example, we might ask whether a lack of an appropriately appealing partner could make using pornography unremarkable. Alternatively, what if the pornography viewer's partner was unwilling or unable to have "real" sex? Thus, there is some underlying constitutive work being done here outlining the sexual expectations of so-called intimate relationships.

Indeed, the makeup and normality of Willis's marriage here remains conveniently unstated and assumed, where a preference for pornography over sex with his wife is indicative of a pathological imbalance of priorities. That pornography may be more satisfying, differentially satisfying, or even equally satisfying to sex is not a possibility discussed. However, a number of commenters *did* outline the imperative to "have sexual needs met" within a relationship directly by questioning Willis's wife's sexual availability (as opposed to his own availability), suggesting that "maybe his wife should of put out more

often, she looks like a dirty girl" (1.48) or "maybe she holds out all the time, and he needs to get his fix!" (1.7.4). Here Willis's viewing of pornography becomes justified by way of the male sex drive discourse (Hollway, 1989), the force of which is brought to bear when the normative sexual expectations outlined thus far break down. Obliquely, perhaps pornography addiction would be less of a problem if the partners of pornography viewers – presumably male and female – would consider "putting out" more.

Pornography addiction is an excuse

In this final repertoire, I will briefly outline the most prevalent way that commenters undermined the legitimacy of the construct of pornography addiction: as a convenient excuse to deploy upon the discovery of one's pornography viewing. Instead of being dangerous like a drug or a threat to relationships, pornography addiction here becomes a justification employed by a (male) pornography viewer. Interestingly, this was the repertoire in which the NZH articles and Facebook comments diverged most significantly. While taken up readily by the Facebook readership, as far as this repertoire was even acknowledged in the NZH articles it was only done so expressly to debunk the claim:

> It's also still controversial, with some believing it is wrong to label it as such: it's just an excuse for bad behaviour […] That hasn't been my experience. Many conversations with men over the years have convinced me that porn addiction is indeed very real. (psychotherapist Kyle MacDonald, author of NZH 5)

This repertoire draws upon simultaneous assumptions that men are pornography viewers who lack ethical qualms about its content, but that this consumption can also be difficult to account for when confronted. For example, despite the NZH articles' disavowals of the excuse repertoire, Facebook commenters suggested that Nick Willis's case did not qualify as pornography addiction, namely because he was simply using the label of "addict" to justify a transgression: "And lets be honest hes been caught too many times, is sick of his misses having a nut about it and pulled the 'addiction' card oh no I need help, no mate you need a

hobby" (1.4.24); "Face it You got busted lol and there's no such thing as a porn addiction 😂 as you like to call it 😂 You just got caught that's all 😂" (2.47);

> By his own admission he said 2 maybe 3 times a week. Doesn't seem to suit the definition of serious addiction. After now googling it I see his wife is highly religious. If he was caught he would have had to come up with some excuse and that seems like the only half viable one I can think of. (4.1.4)

Here pornography is constructed as a form of borderline infidelity, in that men can view pornography as long as their partner remains oblivious. In turn, pornography addiction becomes the "get out of jail free card" played to counter any charges of betrayal. As a result, this shifting of pornography addiction from legitimate label to excuse still encapsulates and redeploys the constructions of viewing pornography as a threat to intimacy. That is, the construction of pornography addiction as an excuse inherently suggests that the discovery of pornography viewership within a relationship requires justification, and that pornography addiction may be the most legitimate excuse available. In turn, this repertoire constructs pornography addiction as only arising within this context, rendering an unspoken amount of pornography viewing – viewing which presumably does not interfere in an intimate relationship – as again normal and/or unremarkable.

Discussion

Both the NZH articles and Facebook comments saw the employment of seemingly internally contradictory statements about pornography's status. However, the analysis indicates that pornography addiction was used to reconcile both a liberal tolerance for, *and* a moral objection to, pornography. That is, in the first instance pornography addiction allowed for a demarcation of the disordered pornography viewer, while the majority of ostensibly normal viewers remained unscrutinised. In the second instance, pornography addiction gives a platform whereby pornography can be rejected without engaging with its content at all. In

other words, moral objections to pornography's use were reliably constructed independently of conversations about pornography's content. Within this analysis, the viewing of pornography essentially only became a pornography addiction, and thereby unacceptable, under particular conditions: when it was used like an addictive substance, when it interfered in real relationships, or if labelling the viewing of pornography as an addiction was expedient. Consistently, these repertoires outlining the boundaries of pornography viewership constructed the Pornography Addict as an outlier in an environment where viewing pornography is otherwise normative for men, despite women's presumed objection.

Thus, it appears that pornography addiction facilitates a sidestepping of debates about pornography's role in society in favour of debates about how viewing pornography can act like a drug and threaten our taken-for-granted, or "normal", sexualities. Suggestions that pornography might represent the graphic illustration of the way that normative heterosexual relationships readily reproduce gendered stereotypes are replaced with a focus on protecting the hallowed institutions of heterosexual monogamous relationships and the gendered assumptions that reside therein. It seems ironic that the very institutions that both anti-censorship and anti-pornography feminists were so vocally criticizing in the form of heterosexual power dynamics, and the role of doctors and psychologists to categorize appropriate sexual behaviour (Chapter 2), are now the repertoires most heavily drawn upon to criticize pornography, dressed in the language of addiction. This transformation of the early feminist pornography debates about gender, sexual expression, and consent to questions of pathology and sexual dysfunction have stripped pornography of its inherently political standing. In fact, it appears that within the data presented here, it was no longer necessary to even define what pornography is, how it is made, or what it represents, as such considerations have become all but irrelevant.

With that said, these assertions deserve a number of critical considerations. Firstly, it would be a mistake to interpret the data and conclusions here as accurately demonstrating a wholesale shift towards favouring a focus on the consumer instead of critiques of pornographic media *per se* (Boyle, 2010). As already touched upon, both the articles and comments sections speak to a singular, technologically bounded, highly curated site of discussion where participation is representative of only the most vocal contributors on any one issue. Moreover, although the NZH represents a large national newspaper, it must be acknowledged that that a selection of articles from a rival newsgroup, with a different audience, could produce different repertoires around the viewing of pornography. It is also not to suggest that criticisms of pornographic media's place in culture, the representations within it (gender, sexuality, race, disability, age, etc.), its production, or the ethics of its viewership do not also circulate in popular culture. However, considering the contemporary pervasiveness of a pornography addiction discourse, research that builds upon and extends a focus upon the popular circulation of the pornography addiction concept would continue to deepen understandings of how apparently ubiquitous Internet pornography viewership is being framed and made sense of in the public sphere.

Conclusion

According to these preliminary findings, the prevalence of the Pornography Addict does not suggest a mainstream shift towards critiquing pornography viewership. Instead, this analysis indicates that pornography addiction is less likely employed as a way to express concern for violent or disturbing content, and more likely used to delineate between appropriate and inappropriate pornography viewing. Thus, as opposed to aligning with feminist critiques of pornography, the construction of pornography addiction echoes Irvine's (1995) critique of sex addiction, as both represent a convergence of discourses that could be described as socially conservative. And yet, this conservative position is employed in such a way as to

shield most pornography viewing from critique, reminiscent of the relatively recent relegation of feminist perspectives in debates about extreme pornography (McGlynn, 2010). Instead the Pornography Addict becomes a convenient figure of blame: at once allowing for a superficial critique of pornography, while simultaneously ignoring the historical and cultural contexts that he is a product of. In other words, scapegoating the Pornography Addict conveniently elides the conditions of his creation, the most obvious of which are the ways that expectations of gendered sexuality combine with pornography's contemporary ubiquity. Within this formulation focus is upon the ways that viewing pornography becomes an addiction, only when it manifests as an individual problem. However, we might instead begin to consider why ubiquitous pornography has only become a contemporary mainstream problem when we view it through the pornography addiction lens.

Part II

Chapter 4
Part II Methodology and Method

> As psychologists we are continuously adding constructs to this world: stress, burnout, PTSD, schizophrenia, and the like. Further, each of these terms is embedded in forms of discourse that favour certain segments of the population or certain patterns of conduct, while discrediting others (for example: reason is honoured; emotion is anti-rational; men are more rational than women; rationality is needed in positions of responsibility; and so on). With the objectification of such discourse, so occurs the ossification of social pattern. Required, then, is a form of professional investment in which the scholar attempts to de-objectify the existing realities, to demonstrate their social and historical embeddedness, and to explore their implications for social life. (Gergen, 1990, p. 32)

This chapter bridges Part I's broad exploration of public discussions about pornography addiction as a means through which pornography viewing is discussed – often without actually addressing pornography *per se* – and the pornography viewers to whom these discussions ostensibly refer. For example, in Chapter 3 I utilized news media and social media data to help outline circulating definitions and concerns about pornography addiction as they currently operate in popular culture. In this sense, Chapter 3 can be understood in the context of this thesis as illustrating the "naturally occurring" instances of discourses relating to pornography addiction. In turn, the current chapter outlines my adoption of a methodological approach explicitly informed by the discussions contained in Part I, linking the broad discursive underpinnings of pornography addiction described above and the individual interpretation and expression of these discursive resources, as explored below.

I begin this chapter by addressing a glaring – although seemingly seldom considered – issue in most pornography research: the gendered nature of pornography viewing. That is, much like the public discussions in Chapter 3, research on pornography viewing tends to concentrate exclusively on men who view pornography, often based on the observation that

men feel more positive towards pornography than women (Kohut et al. 2019) and ostensibly make up the majority of pornography viewers (Price et al. 2016). However, the question that is left unaddressed in such research is whether the presumably higher rates of pornography addiction amongst men (see Adamson, 2016; Blackstock, 2016; Blunden, 2018) is simply a proportional outcome of some male viewers being "predisposed" to addiction, or else the result of men being more inclined to describe their pornography viewing as such. Thus, it is crucial to begin with this consideration of the gendered nature of pornography viewing, and how different conceptualisations of women's and men's sexuality can shape the possibilities for making sense of pornography viewing as an addiction. Such considerations are crucial to outline in this chapter as they not only work to justify the methods adopted hereafter, but pull through important elements of the previous chapters to inform the very design of the research to follow.

Following this discussion of how to best approach men's pornography viewing specifically, I then move to a consideration of methodology, drawing upon the groundwork laid in the previous chapters to inform the analytic framework of what follows. For example, following discussions raised in Part I, the analytic focus of Part II is not upon the ontological validity[35] of pornography addiction, but upon how a prevalence of an addiction lens as applied to pornography viewing creates new conditions and subjectivities for its viewers. In other words, here I am not concerned with settling debates as to whether pornography is "really" addictive or not, but am instead focusing upon the ways that individuals utilize available discursive resources to make sense of – and indeed, "make up" – the Pornography Addict. I conclude this chapter by describing the methods adopted in light of these methodological considerations, along with all of the practical detail required for making

[35] To reiterate, following Austin (1962) the questions as to the "realness" of pornography, pornography addiction, the findings of research on pornography, or indeed the accounts offered by participants in the current study also prompt further qualification: real in what sense?

sense of the following two chapters (i.e. participant demographics, procedures of analysis, and so on).

Picking Participants: Why men?

During the recruitment stage of this research (as discussed further below) I received several emails from women expressing dismay at my intention to exclusive focus on men's pornography viewing. While this focus was a deliberate decision on my part, these emails suggested that my interest in studying men's pornography viewing should include some justification. That is, the perceived lack of interest in, or ignorance of, women's pornography viewing clearly remains a point of contention for some, and is thus worth addressing when formulating pornography related research. Indeed, as I discuss below, because research on pornography in general tends to default to focusing on men's pornography viewing, here I must rationalise my privileging of a group that has been the focal point of such research for much of the last half century. In this section, I will briefly sketch the tangle of meanings that bind considerations of gender and politics to research on pornography, and how my attention of the gendered assumptions that often underlie research on pornography – in psychology at least – have led me to research men's pornography viewing specifically.

While my decision to study men's pornography viewing could be seen as an unawareness of the gendered nature of research on pornography, it is actually the case that I came to the decision to study men through three specific considerations. First, both academic pornography adjacent literature, and media and lay accounts of pornography's harm, tend towards describing pornography's problems – broadly defined – as being visited directly upon men. For example, as a general rule, the bulk of research on pornography over the last fifty years has tended to search for problematic behaviours arising as the result of pornography viewing amongst men (e.g. Allen, D'alessio, & Brezgel, 1995; Bostwick & Bucci, 2008; Brand et al. 2016; Cairns, Paul, & Wishner, 1970; Donnerstein, 1984; Fisher, &

Barak 1991; Gola et al. 2017; Kühn & Gallinat, 2014; Malamuth, Addison, & Koss, 2000; Prause et al. 2015; Twohig, Crosby, & Cox, 2009; Voon, et al. 2014; Williams, et al. 2009; Wright, 2013). Indeed, as noted in Chapter 3, the negative outcomes described in public discussions of pornography seemingly describe specifically gendered negative outcomes of pornography viewing: while men might lose control of their viewing, women are not described as harmed by pornography viewing *per se*, but by men's problems with pornography by proxy.[36] That is, the findings of the previous chapter suggest that pornography addiction is an ailment publicly constructed as a distinctly male problem.

Secondly, and more pertinently here, while men's pornography viewing has remained a key site of pornography research, research on women who watch pornography – when they have been studied at all – have often been approached in different, more nuanced ways than male viewers. That is, where the research on men's pornography viewing seeming pivots on a fulcrum of measuring and naming a loss of self-control, a smaller, relatively more recent body of literature has been investigating women's pornography viewing outside of a narrow focus on pornography's presumed negative effects.[37] Indeed, when not being compared to men, research on women's pornography viewing offers a more sophisticated picture of the ways in which people might interact with pornography beyond simply being negatively affected by it. By way of example, Parvez (2006) found in research with 30 pornography viewing women, that these women actively engaged with the perceived authenticity of female pornographic performers, as filtered through their own biographical experiences, thereby suggesting a complex interplay between arousal and upset. That is, these women's

[36] That is, within the news articles discussed in Chapter 3 women's engagement with pornography was rare, unless discussing women as pornography addiction's victim by proxy: "To many women, porn is offensive. They see it as dreadful, unethical and immoral. They've been taught to think that way, and so it is very damaging for them." (Sex therapist Mary Hodson, quoted in Munro, 2016).

[37] It is worth noting that a growing body of diverse research has attempted to work outside of the quantitative boundaries besides those discussed below (see for example Antevska & Gavey, 2015; Ashton, McDonald, & Kirkman, 2018; Attwood, 2011; Barker, 2014; Boyle, 2010; Favaro, 2015; Garlick, 2012; Hardy, 1998; Kendrick, 1996; Löfgren-Mårtenson, & Månsson, 2010; McKee, Albury, Lumby, 2008; Litsou, K., & Byron, 2019; Paasonen, 2006; 2010; Ruberg, 2016; Thomas, 2016; Vörös, 2015; Williams, 2014).

identifications of a performer's "authenticity" were mediated by their own experiences of sexual violence and economic hardship, suggesting that pornography viewing – and the pleasure that may be derived thereof – are contingent upon nuanced sociocultural contexts and meaning-making (see also Ciclitira, 2004). Correspondingly, in their research interviewing 73 sexually diverse women in focus groups, Chadwick et al. (2018) found that the women who viewed pornography employed strategies to increase the likelihood of positive experiences and negate the possibility of negative ones. For example, the authors suggest that some of these women avoided viewing pornography following previous negative experiences with the medium, although for some "past negative experiences resulted in feeling discouraged from pornography use despite *wanting* to use pornography to gain the positive benefits" (p. 1863, emphasis original). Finally, Gurevich et al. (2017) focused on the ways that women negotiate pornography's role in the formation of sexual desire and agency, and how these women incorporate or reject pornographic sexual scripts. Within their interviews of 40 women the authors found again ambivalence and complexity: pornography viewers did not simply watch and mimic pornography, but instead described the representations and possibilities within pornography as variously prescriptive and irrelevant, exciting and shocking, aspirational and absurd, desired and derided, and so on.

Put plainly, these studies suggest that the experience of viewing pornography can be a fraught exercise, presenting conflict, contradiction, pleasure, danger, and appeal, for women at least. Here I propose that these differential research approaches to pornography viewing depart most significantly in the sense that where men's pornography viewing has predominantly been researched as creating some physiologically derived "problem", research on women's pornography viewing is premised upon a distinctly political view of the act of watching pornography. That is, the body of qualitative research focusing on women outlined above approaches the topic of pornography through a lens of what it might differentially

mean, and as a result is fundamentally different to the bulk of research on how pornography negatively "effects" the men who watch it (see Chapter 1). For example, Hardy (1998) describes early feminist research perspectives on pornography, and research on women's pornography viewing specifically, as a dual political act. Hardy (1998, p. 100) argues that the act of conducting research with women can "increase substantive knowledge and at the same time [challenge] the dominance of masculine knowledge". Or in other words, as Ashton, McDonald, and Kirkman (2018, p. 334) suggest, because pornography is viewed in a social and cultural context which is invariably gendered, "the roles of pornography in women's lives cannot therefore be safely inferred from what is known about men". In this sense, because pornography viewing is understood as a politically salient act for women, research on women's pornography viewing is not only a reaction against implied inferences of men's and women's pornography viewing as similar, but is itself a political statement about the gendered nature of both pornography viewing and research:

> Although women and men are engaged and involved in all levels of the production and consumption of pornography, women have received less attention than men in pornography research. Consequently, much less is understood about women's experiences (Ashton, McDonald, & Kirkman, 2018, p. 334).

Thus, research on women's pornography viewing can be understood as a statement of visibility for women as pornography viewers, and a simultaneous rejection of the dominant paradigm of pornography viewing as the domain of men. However, that research on men's pornography viewing is largely stripped of such political valence is salient here for two interrelated reasons. First, differential research approaches to men's and women's pornography viewing seem to ironically reify larger stereotypes about pornography viewing as a physiological problem for men and an emotional problem for women. Second, these stereotypes can inform research approaches as assuming that pornography viewing is simpler, or at least less troublesome, for men than women. For example, consider my contention

above that research on men makes up the bulk of pornography research, a focus usually justified by an observation that men make up the majority of pornography viewers[38] (see Ashton, McDonald, & Kirkman, 2018; Carroll, Busby, Willoughby, & Brown, 2017; Horvath et al. 2013; OFLC, 2019; Price et al. 2016). Broadly speaking, the bulk of this – what might crudely be called "mainstream" – pornography research on men is quantitative, and focuses on the harm that pornography might do to this predominantly male audience (Borgogna, Lathan, & Mitchell, 2018)[39]. However, it strikes me that this approach to men's pornography echoes simplistic and utilitarian conceptions of men's sexuality[40], while the qualitative research with women described above construes women's viewing in more complex, sensitive, or even emotionally vulnerable ways.

By way of example, in a contrast between the research of Chadwick et al. (2018) and Sun, Ezzell, and Kendall (2016), dichotomous understandings of male pornography viewing as problematic and the varied possibilities for women's pornography viewing are readily drawn out. For Chadwick et al. (2018, p. 1863), their (female) participants utilized strategies such as fast-forwarding or else only listening to the audio of pornography in order to avoid negative experiences, leading the authors to conclude that "women do not necessarily use pornography as it was designed by a director or producer; rather, women may often act as co-constituents in the creation of the sexual material they wish to consume". Pertinently however, in research conducted by Sun, Ezzell, and Kendall (2016) interviewing 16 heterosexual men, these men utilized uncannily similar techniques to the women in Chadwick et al.'s (2018) research: "when encountering scenes that were too violent or disgusting to bear, respondents reported fast-forwarding or lowering the volume to mute the verbal abuse"

[38] Let us not forget Adamson's claim from Chapter 1, that those who self-diagnose as pornography addicts "have all been men".
[39] Consider for example the relative novelty of research on women with problematic pornography related behaviours (Lewczuk et al. 2017).
[40] As already discussed in Chapter 3 men's pornography viewing is most readily defined as problematic when it interferes in relationships or can be understood as acting like a drug.

(Sun, Ezzell, & Kendall, 2016, p. 12). Crucially however, where such actions were read as a textual interplay on the part of the women in Chadwick et al.'s (2018) research, Sun, Ezzell, and Kendall (2016) suggest that such techniques were used by the men in order to avoid empathizing with the performer: "these men managed their own discomfort but avoided empathizing with the female performers whose experience of degradation was made invisible" (Sun, Ezzell, & Kendall, 2016, p. 12).

I suggest that such results echo a hitherto unacknowledged, yet broad, trend in that research focusing on women has produced results fundamentally different to research with men, not only because men and women's experiences of pornography viewing are different, but because the approach of the research is itself demarcated by gendered expectations of differential viewing (see Chadwick, et al. 2018; Ciclitira, 2004; Gurevich et al. 2017; Parvez, 2006; for review see Ashton, McDonald, & Kirkman 2018). I do not want to be misunderstood here, however, as this is not to suggest that the motivations for lowering the volume or fast-forwarding pornography might not be different between male and female viewers. Indeed, it seems clear that pornography viewing would be a differentially gendered practice, simply by nature of pornography's history (Kendrick, 1996), marketing (Paasonen, 2006), and content (Klaassen & Peter, 2015) being overwhelming male centric. Instead, what I am suggesting here is that the *interpretation* of male viewer's as not fast-forwarding pornography for the same – at least similar reasons – as female viewers carries with it a proposition that men either lack the capacity to respond to pornography in more nuanced ways, or else dismisses this capacity.

However, as Whisnant (2010, p. 14) has suggested of men who view pornography, a presumption of their misogyny – and by that same token lack of engagement with the gendered and sexist issues inherent to pornography – is to close down approaches to men as anything other than an enthusiastic audience whose brains might sometimes betray them:

> While some of these [male] consumers may be sociopaths or utterly unregenerate misogynists, I assume that the majority are neither. Thus, many consumers must experience ethical qualms about at least some of the pornography they encounter and about themselves in so far as they enjoy such material. These qualms pose a threat to their continued enjoyment of pornography. Thus, if they are to continue consuming pornography, they must find ways to silence their ethical concerns.

Accordingly, it is worth noting that a few key studies have worked to investigate pornography viewing as a specifically gendered practice for men. To my mind, two separate but complementary studies have investigated men's pornography viewing in ways more closely resembling the more nuanced approach to women's. The first is a study by Antevska and Gavey (2015), which offers an investigation of men's accounting for the pleasure of pornography viewing. In individual and group interviews with 21 men addressing the appeal of pornography, the authors were interested in whether men's justifications for watching pornography would conflict with overarching societal goals of egalitarian gender relations. The authors found that the majority of their participants rarely engaged critically or rose to the challenge of addressing possible ethical and moral predicaments as a result of consuming "hard-core" material. Moreover, the authors suggest that participants were clearly unaccustomed to critically engaging with the pornography they viewed. Such results are corroborated, yet re-contextualized, by the results of a second study by Vörös (2015) in which he interviewed 34 interviewees (30 men) one-on-one. In his interviews, Vörös worked to ingratiate himself with his interviewees, and in his analysis reflects on how his gender, sexual presentation, and the role of building and violating homosocial bonding dictated the tenor of the interviews:

> Switching from empathy to contradiction also makes visible porn viewers' reflexivity: how they make sense of their experiences in relation to public debates on pornography (especially regarding performers' working conditions and the representation of women), and their complex, multifaceted and sometimes

> contradictory relationships with pornography. In sharp contrast to anti-pornography feminist views, my research reveals that among heterosexual male viewers, those who participate in porn fan cultures (e.g. debating on forums or editing blogs) are very aware of and interested in feminist critiques. They also express more intense reflexivity towards the gender norms and hierarchies that organize masculinities than other heterosexual men. (p. 146)

Thus, where the men in Antevska and Gavey's (2015, p. 623) study indicated difficulty accounting for their pornography viewing, leading the authors to postulate that talk about the potentially troubling nature of pornography represents a "discursive no-go zone" (at least with a female interviewer), Vörös's (2015) observations suggest that this "no-go zone" may manifest differently under different circumstances. For example, perhaps the men's unpreparedness/inability to account for their viewing of troubling material, or the gendered dynamic in Antevska and Gavey's (2015) data collection, could itself have facilitated the response of detachment towards pornography. Indeed, the authors themselves highlight that the talk of participants was explicitly situated within the context of focus groups conducted by a female researcher, a context in which men may be more inclined to take up defensive, self-conscious, or other masculine subject positions towards both the interviewer and each other (see also Broom, Hand, & Tovey, 2009; Flood, 2013).

The takeaway point here being that in research on men's and women's pornography viewing, the ways in which experiences of watching pornography are necessarily informed by the differently gendered meanings of pornography viewing. Indeed, here I have suggested that the very approach to researching pornography is dictated by the same vectors of gender as the social and cultural contexts within which pornography is viewed. Put plainly, while research on men's pornography viewing seemingly dominates the field, here I argue for a migration of the qualitative approach taken towards women's viewing (i.e. Chadwick, et al. 2018; Ciclitira, 2004; Gurevich et al. 2017; Parvez, 2006) because men's pornography

viewing must itself be filtered through a masculine worldview. Thus, an investigation of men's accounting for pornography viewing with a sensitivity towards the way that gendered dynamics might play out in both data collection and interpretation, might produce results that complicate our understandings of both pornography addiction, and pornography viewing at large as a natural, uncomplicated pastime for men (Antevska & Gavey, 2015; Vörös, 2015; see also Hardy, 1998; Hite, 1981; Loftus, 2002[41]). Such a migration is essential in considering the possibilities for men's pornography viewing as a similarly complex and negotiated process, as opposed to ossifying crude, functionalist stereotypes of male pornography viewers. Of course this is not to suggest that the context of an interview between two men would not itself engender new discursive possibilities while closing down others (Vörös, 2015), but instead that the novelty of this approach promises to at least produce some unique results. Therefore, my decision to study men rests on a question as to whether applying a similarly, qualitative, gender aware, and – dare I say – sympathetic lens to men's pornography viewing, might produce complex, nuanced, and important responses in the vein as those described in the research with women described above. This is not to suggest that these responses will be "the same" as women's responses *per se*, but is an attempt to take Whisnant's (2010) proposition above seriously: if male viewers experience ethical qualms, then the research methodology employed must at least be amenable to this possibility.

Methodology

Considering the discussion above, and the groundwork already laid in Part I, it is only reasonable to continue my investigation in a qualitative vein. Indeed, here it would be methodologically incoherent to not adopt methods focusing on the use of language,

[41] Where these three early books interviewing pornography viewing men *do* seem to contradict some contemporaneous assumptions about male sexuality as some kind of stable, monolithic, social constant (see Gould, 1981), they been omitted in this discussion on account of their obsolescence. That is, thanks to the rapid development of technology, the findings of these publications have been outmoded, as the rapid changes to the delivery and nature of pornography has changed the relevance of published research.

considering that thus far I have posited that the contemporary expression of pornography addiction is itself the result of be "talked into existence".

Analytic framework

In considering the discussion above about the gendered nature of pornography viewing, and the ways that research methods themselves might inherently reify entrenched understandings of sexuality and gender (see Gergen, 1990), my interest here is in the ways that the discursive field surveyed in Part I might operate through the accounts of individual, male, pornography viewers. The analyses of the following two chapters are not only in a similarly qualitative tradition to the approaches taken in Part I (i.e. textual, not numerical) but can broadly be understood as poststructuralist in nature, focusing as they do on the relationship between public discourse, and the possibilities created and closed down by such discourses. The following chapters, like Chapter 3, draw considerably from a Foucauldian tradition of discourse analysis. To reiterate, such a tradition focuses not on the structures of language *per se*, but instead upon the way that different discourses (i.e. systematic and coherent sets of images, metaphors, descriptions, and so on, that construct an object or subject in a particular way; Burr, 2003) can enable and constrain our ways of being and acting in the world (see Burr, 2003; Foucault 1990; Gavey, 1989; Wetherell, Taylor, & Yates, 2001; Willig, 2000).

Utilizing this analytic lens orients the following analyses towards making sense of action through language, and how such sense-making in turn constructs conditions of possibility. Moreover, it turns a critical eye towards the ways in which the academic discipline of psychology – in which this thesis is itself implicated – continually creates and reinforces favouritism for "certain patterns of conduct and the discrediting of others" through its practises and explanations of behaviour (Gergen, 1990, p. 32; also Hacking, 1986; 1990; Rutherford, 2017). For example, as described in Chapter 3, descriptions of pornography as negatively effecting its audience (i.e. by making them into addicts) have routinely trumped

feminist critiques of pornography's place in popular culture (see Boyle, 2000; McGlynn, 2010). Accordingly, while this thesis certainly attends to the ways that circulating discourses of pornography addiction create new public discussions about pornography, it is also concerned with how individuals work within, against, and alongside the possibilities offered by the pornography addiction concept as constituent producers of discourse in their own right (Willig, 2000).

The following two chapters follow Willig's (2000, p. 554) provocation to "move beyond critical deconstruction of health-related discourses and practises", to instead consider how such discourses are appropriated and modified in peoples lived experience. In this sense, the following chapters are most indebted to Hacking's (1986; 1995; 1996; 1998; 2007) extension of Foucault's work, reconceptualising the ways that categories arise within antecedent fields of knowledge, how new categorisations of people invariably shape the experiences of those within that category, and identifying the ways that flows of knowledge between categorizer and categorized co-create new understandings of behaviour.[42] For example, where media sources may orient their readership towards particular framings of pornography and addiction, these readers in turn may bring perspectives of their own into contact with the discourses presented, and with one another (e.g., political or religious critiques of pornography, defences of pornography, medical and neuroscientific modes of explanation, understandings of Alcoholics Anonymous's disease models, etc.). In turn, pornography viewers must operate in tandem with a category like Pornography Addiction, imbuing it with their own meanings beyond those offered by media coverage, information online, conversations with friends, narratives in films and television, and so on, to in turn reshape the category to suit their own purpose (see Willig, 2000). That is, where pornography

[42] The application of this theoretical lens is more thoroughly discussed in Chapter 5, where I discuss Hacking's "making up people" and the "looping effect" in more detail.

addiction might partially be made into a viable classification through new forms of enquiry which name, specify, measure, propose symptoms, and validate new ways of being a pornography viewer (i.e. as disordered, compulsive, hypersexual, addicted, and so on), such newly evolved measures and symptoms are in turn taken up by pornography viewers themselves. In turn, these new ways of being a pornography viewer as an "addict" are fed back into the machinery of classification by those under description, creating a perpetual conveyer belt of knowledge exchange between the diagnosed, diagnosis, and diagnoser.

A brief note on terminology

As already discussed in Part I, it is not uncommon for in depth discussions of pornography to take place, without establishing exactly "what" is being discussed, both academically (see Ashton, McDonald, & Kirkman, 2019; Short et al. 2012; Willoughby & Busby, 2016) and in lay discussions (see Nikunen, 2007; Taylor & Jackson, 2018). However, an operational definition of pornography and addiction has not been adopted at any point in this thesis. The key reason for this originally arose from the aforementioned observation that, despite its inherent inaccuracy, there is a shared understanding of what Pornography "is" which researchers and the public seem to rely upon. That is, in the following chapters I am less interested in what the definitions of pornography or addiction "are" than how these ambiguous referents "work", a task which offering a definition would intrinsically close off.[43] Indeed, the adoption of a specific definition leaves pornography unchallenged as a catch-all, protean label, limiting any conclusions as to the specific forms of content being viewed. Instead, hereafter, all discussions of addiction and pornography are explorations of the

[43] For example, as described in Chapter 3, when attempting to find a reliable definition of contemporary pornography, the most frequently offered is a variant on: "a form of media produced with the intent of evoking sexual arousal" (see Kendrick, 1996; Horvath et al. 2013). However, accepting a similar definition here invariably collapses magazine pornography from the 1960s, cinematic pornography from the 1970s, VHS pornography from the 1980s, DVD pornography from the 1990's, and Internet pornography of the 2000s into a single category, along with all of the changes of genre, theme, production, representation, and explicitness that accompany this chronology (Ashton, McDonald, & Kirkman, 2019).

idiosyncratic ways in which these referents are applied, what they signify, and what these applications make possible.

Method

The Survey

All participants described in this and the following two chapters were recruited via an article published online in the *New Zealand Herald* (Appendices B and C). The decision to recruit in this way followed directly from observations of Chapter 3, where the prevalence of discussions about pornography in popular media suggested a natural avenue for recruitment. That is, because so many people freely offered their diverse opinions about pornography addiction, pornography viewing, and indeed pornography in general, I aimed to capitalize on this interest through the same media channel (in this case, the *New Zealand Herald*). In the recruitment article, I was interviewed about the focus of the current research, describing the study as directly addressing contemporary concerns around the availability of pornography. In the interview I was at pains to address men with a wide range of views on pornography – from those who unabashedly enjoyed pornography to those who might have ethical or moral questions about it – although the only criteria for participation was that the respondents identify as men, and that they had viewed pornography previously. Readers who fit these criteria were invited to complete a survey, linked to at the end of the article.

The survey's information page guaranteed those that participated anonymity, as well as informing them of the structure of the survey itself, the estimated time that the survey would take to complete, and offered my contact information in the case that they had any queries (Appendix D). The survey itself was constituted of 6 open ended qualitative questions addressing both definitions of pornography, thoughts about pornography use in general, and pornography addiction specifically, as well as including 5 demographic questions (age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, relationship status, and religious affiliation; Appendix D). The

survey garnered some 213 full responses, with 372 responses submitted blank[44]. Of the 213 valid responses submitted, the majority of respondents identified themselves as men[45] with ages ranging from 15 to 83 and a normal distribution ($M = 42$, $SD = 13.36$). These men predominantly identified themselves as heterosexual (>66%), with approximately 18% identifying as bisexual and approximately 9.5% as homosexual (5.5% did not respond). Most were either married/de facto (54%), or in a relationship (10.5%) with just under one-third responding as single (31.5%). The majority identified their ethnicity as Pākehā (of European descent) (70%), Māori (6.5%), Māori/Pākehā (5.5%), Asian (5%), Pasifika (2%), or ambiguous (7.5%, e.g. "New Zealander" or "Kiwi"). Finally, 60% identified as either irreligious or atheist, 19% identified as adhering to a Christian denomination, with the remainder either too diverse to warrant collation (e.g. 2 Mormon, 2 Buddhist, 1 Jedi, etc.) or else submitted blank.

While the survey partially acted as a recruitment tool, as discussed below, the data garnered from the survey were understood as important in their own right, illustrating a broad circulation of pornography discourses as taken up and/or resisted by pornography viewers. The survey data also offered a supplementary application beyond data generation and recruitment, as survey responses proved invaluable to the development/refining of interview questions. For example, where I had expected – perhaps naively – a dichotomous response (i.e. I feel good/I feel bad) to the survey question "how do you currently feel about your own pornography use and/or how have you felt about it in the past", I was surprised and intrigued to find significant negotiation and ambivalence across the responses. The presence of such

[44] This was likely the product of curious readers clicking through the survey to preview the questions.
[45] One participant was excluded because of her declaration of being a woman: "As a FEMALE..... Odd because I'm a female. I've expressed my interest of porn to my husband (who found it odd for a female to like porno and watching porno). As I've aged I've become more dishearten by some of the material being available" (emphasis original).

noisy data in turn guided the interview approach in an attempt to work through some of the intricacies raised in the survey.

Interview recruitment

The survey concluded by thanking participants for their time, and extending an invitation to be contacted via email for a follow-up interview. An invitation email, including details of the interview procedure, a copy of the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix E), and an invitation to be interviewed via phone, in person at the University of Auckland, or at a place of their choosing, was sent to all participants who left an email address at the end of the survey ($n = 111$). In total 55 survey participants responded to this initial email invitation. Due to a combination of respondent dropout and/or unavailability, combined with my own allocation of resources, 30 interviews were completed. All interviewees were fully briefed prior to commencing the interview, and were explicitly reassured that their participation would be confidential (Appendices E and F). The final 30 interviewees had a similar spread of age ($M = 46.2$, $SD = 14.2$), with a preponderance of Pākehā (90%) and Māori (6.6%) men, with 83.3% irreligious, atheist or agnostic, (16.6% Christian), along with a slightly broader range of sexual diversity to the survey cohort (57% heterosexual, 26.5% bisexual, and 16.5% homosexual).

Interviewing

Where the survey analysis promised to render broad illustrations of the ways that pornography viewing and addiction can be constructed, it was my intent to further interrogate how these understandings were employed, rejected, negotiated, and recuperated by "normal", "abnormal", and "addicted" pornography viewers alike. By speaking directly to viewers of pornography who may feel defensive, liberated, distressed, ambivalent, excited, bored, or disturbed by their experiences with pornography, the underlying discursive workings and attributes of pornography addiction as a catchall diagnosis could be made visible. This

approach also meant that discussions of pornography, different types of pornography, and pornography addiction could be foregrounded by the aforementioned questions about definitions of addiction and pornography, along with inquiries as to how criteria for problematic and addictive pornography viewing might be applied.

All interviews were conducted either in person or via telephone. The length of the interviews ranged in length from 40 minutes to 2 hours depending upon the participants input. All interviews followed an interview guide (Appendices G and H), although the semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for elaboration, clarification, and departures from the question at hand. Indeed, much as the responses to the surveys informed the formulation of the interview questions, it is worth noting that the actual process of conducting the interviews also informed subsequent questions. For example, the interview guide itself went through four iterations as I made revisions based on notes taken during the interviews. As a comparison between the original interview guide (Appendix G) and the fourth and final version of the interview guide (Appendix H) indicates, the extent to which the preceding interviews informed the latter was significant (for example, the final version contains roughly 32 questions, compared with the 21 of the original).

In light of the discussion above around the gendered nature of pornography viewing and pornography research, I approached the interviews with the intention of taking advantage of my ability to tap into the undercurrent of masculine social mores to propel and inform the discussions (see Vörös, 2015). That is, I understood that within the interview context gender is not simply an internally consistent state or attribute, but a performance that must be both deployed and affirmed through talk and action (Broom, Hand, & Tovey, 2009; Burr, 2003; Flood, 2013; Presser 2004; 2005; Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2001). As Broom, Hand, and Tovey (2009) argue, the manner in which a researcher reinforces and/or resists a participant's rhetorical expression of gender can influence the shape and flow of an interview by both

enabling and restricting various rhetorical repertoires (also Edley & Wetherell, 1997). This framing is important to attend to here because within the context of an interview – in this case between two men speaking about, what may be, sensitive topics – the possibilities of speech are necessarily mediated via the reciprocal enactment of different modes of masculinity (Broom, Hand, & Tovey, 2009; Presser, 2004; Terry, 2012; Vörös, 2015). Indeed, my presentation as a (relatively) young, heterosexual, male, Pākehā, academic, familiar with the generic conventions and grammar of pornography, invited a number of possible positions towards which my interlocutor could position himself, and to which I in turn had to orient. For example, at times my young age – relative to older interviewees at least – offered both of us a variety of orientations, particularly as they related to changes in pornography over time, being responsible for children, sexual experiences across the lifespan, and so on. Similarly, differences in sexual orientation also resulted in dynamics that could be described as insider-outsider as some participants worked to educate me in areas that I was perceived as being naïve. Elsewhere, where a number of participants engaged in friendly banter about the limited value of academic expertise (e.g. one participant remarking that “academics talk a load of bollocks half the time”), such jokes were responded to in-kind. In turn, my awareness of these dynamics meant that the interviews themselves often evoked, what one participant described as, the “secret undercurrent” of men’s pornography talk:

W.	I was in a meeting at work with a guy at work the other day and we were trying to ah fix a [website] and had to test something. And he was like "aww pop it in a private window because if you pop it in a private window none of your browser history or your cookies is there" right? um and it was like, as two guys in an office environment- or wherever else, I was just kind of like you know "aww" jokingly you know ‘oh what is this private window thing you speak of? Are you familiar with it’ you know what I mean? This kind of-
Kris	Like a shared-

W. It is, it's shared - but it's always under the surface. No one would ever use the word pornography, you know in an office setting ever, but *everyone* knew exactly what was being talked about and whatever else and so it's- it's there and it exists under the surface. There is this- as men there's almost this is its...it's funny I think there's a like a- I don't remember the right word but like a camaraderie, there's a connection about it, do you know what I mean? Like we were both able to talk in code and kind of laugh and joke about what a private window is-

Kris Is it a bit like a sort of *Fight Club* thing

W. Yeah exactly

Kris 'The first rule of *Fight Club* is you don't talk about *Fight Club'*

W. You don't talk about it um...so but it's funny cause it's like ah having- having shared secrets is one of the um one of the kind of shared norm and shared secrets and you know shared ceremonies and whatever is the basis of any community or group do you know what I mean? And so it's- this is something that guys across the board share.

It is worth highlighting, that at times these friendly exchanges led to awkward ethical scenarios, especially in the cases where such a positioning encouraged my collaboration in justifications for harmful behaviour or expressions of misogyny (see also Flood, 2013; Terry, 2012). At its most extreme, this dynamic played out between myself and participants who had expressly sought child pornography. For example, where one man described having regularly viewed child pornography, my mode of empathetic engagement prevailed over my inclination towards disparaging his remarks as self-exculpatory. Relatedly, in the cases in which expression of misogyny were expressed, like Vörös (2015) the tension between remaining in a quasi-masculine mode of address in the face of some of the expressed repudiations of feminism, (women) sex-workers, and women more generally, led to awkward personal negotiations between continuing the interview in a way that could preserve the sense of geniality, or else offering resistance. However, overall, in line with Flood's (2013; also Hardy, 1998; Löfgren-Mårtenson & Månsson, 2010) account of interviewing men, contrary

to expectations of male non-disclosure, for the most part my interviews included many intimate disclosures, personal reflections, and moments of genuine warmth. In almost all cases I was able to slip easily into a kind of frank, conversational back-and-forth, which was complemented by easy transitions between friendly banter, and the more therapeutic and/or confessional mode that the interviews would sometimes assume.

Analytic Procedure

As participants were guaranteed anonymity, all extracts are indexed by code: survey responses with a number ranked in order of question and submission number (e.g. “Response 173, Q. 2”), and interviewee’s coded by letter (e.g. “Interviewee H”). All codes are contiguous between chapters 5 and 6, and all survey and interview extracts are reproduced verbatim hereafter, with only light editing for clarity. All text from the survey was exported from the online platform Qualtrics into separate spread sheets and all audio-recordings of interviews were transcribed verbatim. All survey text was also exported to qualitative data analysis computer software, NVivo 11. The analysis included multiple close readings of both the survey responses and interview transcripts, as well as repeated listening to the recordings to become closely acquainted with the dataset as a whole, and to identify any repetition of patterns and/or conflicts between statements.

Survey responses and interview transcripts were coded thematically by identifying repeated patterns of speech, metaphors, and explanations employed by interviewees, first within, and then across the datasets. For example, in the case of addiction, I attended to the multifaceted constructions of the concept: how it might manifest in others, how it might feel subjectively, how information sources are used to bolster claims, different uses of metaphor and analogy, moments of certainty and uncertainty around criteria, how criteria were understood and whether these were important, and so on. In turn, sections of data were then collated thematically, both by relevance and prevalence. Chapter 5 is an exploration of the

ways that some of these themes worked to explain routes to becoming, and being, a pornography addict. Chapter 6 on the other hand describes the viewing of pornography as an activity subject to the risk of addiction, and how this is negotiated.

It is worth noting that appearance of thematic coherence in the following analyses is not (as an anonymous reviewer remarked of Chapter 5 during peer review) the result of compiling dichotomously posed questioning (e.g. is pornography addiction real? See interview guides in Appendices G and H). Instead, the majority of inquiries were open-ended (e.g. what do you think about pornography addiction?), and the identification of consistent themes arose across different domains of the data, in response to various questions, and were shared between the survey and interview data. Nor is this apparent coherence intended to suggest that the concept of pornography addiction found unanimous support, and a few accounts of resistance are included in the analysis. As such, the accounts in the following two chapters are not presented as representative of any one group. They are instead evidence of commonly circulating explanations of pornography viewing, offered by New Zealand men under survey and interview conditions. That is, the resources used to describe pornography and pornography addiction hereafter, and how these bring underlying sense-making of pornography viewership to light, are the focus here, not the individuals who participated in the study. However, the following findings represent significant agreement and overlap by participants in both the survey and interviews when describing the dilemmas of navigating the pornographic landscape.

Chapter 5

Nosology and metaphor: How pornography viewers make sense of pornography addiction[46]

> Addiction is addiction is addiction (Schneider, 2005, p. 75).

What does a pornography addiction look like? This superficially simple question can raise a chorus of varied, and at times competing answers. In popular culture, pornography addiction self-diagnoses are offered online (e.g. Waugh, 2017) and celebrity confessions of Hollywood actors like Terry Crews (Griggs, 2016) suggest that pornography addiction might be mitigated by attending professional rehabilitation treatments akin to drug rehabilitation. In the US, a shift is currently under way at the legislative level to recognize pornography as a "public health crisis", in part because "recent research indicates that pornography is potentially biologically addictive, resulting in the user consuming increasingly more shocking material to satisfy the addiction" (Florida House of Representatives, 2018, p. 2). In academic debates, the causes, diagnosis, and terminology for problematic pornography viewing remains contested and controversial (see Duffy et al. 2016; Kraus et al. 2018; Prause et al. 2015, 2016), and even the application of an addiction label to an ever expanding range of everyday behaviours is being brought into contention (see Billieux et al. 2015). Pornography addiction remains absent from the most recent edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-5) as "hypersexuality" (which included a pornography dependence subtype) was rejected as an official designation due to insufficient empirical evidence (Weir, 2014). Yet, the proposed inclusion of a "Compulsive Sexual Behaviour Disorder" in the World

[46] This chapter is an edited version of an article published in *Sexualities* (Taylor, 2019b).

Health Organization's forthcoming ICD-11 raises fresh questions about how pornography addiction can be interpreted (Kraus et al. 2018; Ley, 2018).

Notwithstanding these examples of the different ways to make sense of problematic pornography viewing, it is apparent that regardless of its designation, some form of a pornography addiction diagnosis is currently circulating freely within popular discourse. Anecdotally at least, clinicians are increasingly approached by people who have taken up a self-diagnosis of pornography or sex addiction to help explain various sources of distress around their viewing habits (see Blunden, 2018; Garfield, 2008; Levine, 2010; MacDonald, 2016; Skinner, 2014). As an associate professor at the University of Otago's National Addiction Centre suggests "the most common non-substance behaviour that people seek my assistance with is pornography addiction, with many clients frequently using this term when first making contact" (Adamson, 2016, n.p.). In such circumstances, when faced with distressed clients, it is reasonable that some clinicians are not overly concerned with whether pornography is "really" addictive or not: the metaphor seemingly serves a purpose and equivocating over semantics does not change this fact. However, given some of the uncertainty of how to define and operationalize pornography addiction (Duffy et al. 2016), it is important to consider how such taxonomic ambiguity is negotiated by those who view pornography themselves. In other words, if lay understandings of pornography addiction are increasingly being presented to clinicians, who are in turn invested in one or another view of behavioural addiction, it follows that an important possible avenue for pornography research is a focus upon how the label "pornography addict" is made sense of between such professional and lay jurisdictions: does pornography addiction mean the same thing to everybody who uses it?

Such an investigation has important resonance, not simply as a critique of how pornography addiction is reported in popular culture, but also in highlighting how such

popular understandings help to shape the outcomes for those seeking assistance with their pornography viewing. For example, Essig (2012) has suggested that when clinicians use addiction to describe behaviour in a professional context, it is transformed from a metaphor to become a diagnosis: "we are saying the nature and causes of the problematic behaviour, as well as the prognosis and optimal treatment choices, are the same as other problems in the diagnostic category of addiction", going on to suggest that the use of addiction as a label could "prematurely and problematically direct treatment choices in the absence of sufficient data while simultaneously limiting the range of future research" (2012, p. 1176). Similarly, Mihordin (2012) suggests that shifting towards using addiction to diagnose behaviours "represents the taking of a harmless metaphor and using it as the theoretical foundation for a class of psychiatric diseases. This shift takes us from vernacular speech 'I'm addicted to Sinatra' or 'He's a golf addict' to a medical construct of psychopathology" (2012, p. 489). Finally, Adams has suggested that while a disease metaphor might be useful for coordinating professional efforts and managing the expectations of the patient, if adopted in a "literal or fixed fashion, it can stand as an obstacle to benefiting from alternative ways of looking at such issues" (Adams, 2008, p. 172).

Thus, the semantics of a word like addiction matter a great deal here, because confusion between understanding viewing as "potentially biologically addictive" (Florida House of Representatives, 2018, p. 2), and a heuristic term to simply describe problematic behaviour can lead to very different outcomes for those diagnosed. That is, while such metaphors exploit familiar objects and relations to describe various behaviours, experiences, and abstract concepts in concrete terms, as already highlighted (Adams, 2008; Essig, 2012; Mihordin, 2012) distinguishing between a useful shorthand and a literal diagnosis is important. As Grubbs et al. (2015) suggest in their one-year longitudinal study focusing on university students who perceive themselves as being pornography addicts, "pornography use

itself is relatively unrelated to psychological distress, but perceived addiction to Internet pornography is associated with distress both concurrently and over time" (2015, p. 1065). This, and other recent investigations into how people take up a diagnosis of pornography addiction suggest that the current popularity of the pornography addiction concept may well be because it effectively explains moral and religious conflicts in a meaningful way (see Grubbs et al. 2015; Thomas, 2016). Crucially however, if pornography addicts are indeed utilizing pornography addiction as a shorthand to describe problematic behaviours in a more morally neutral way (see Conrad & Schneider, 1992; also Jutel, 2009), then interventions based on the theoretical similarity between pornography and substance addictions are misguided. A glaring example of such a confusion between possible meanings of addiction is well evidenced in the case of studies describing drugs like naltrexone (usually employed in the treatment of alcohol and opioid dependence) being prescribed to self-diagnosed pornography addicts (e.g. Bostwick & Bucci, 2008; Capurso, 2017; Kraus et al. 2015).

There is clearly a fascinating dynamic at work in how the concept of the pornography addict currently operates here. Today pornography viewers are negotiating a complex terrain between academic debates over the symptoms and causes of pornography addiction, the circulation of a viable lay self-diagnosis, and the advertisement of the *possibility* of pornography addiction through news media. If pornography addiction is indeed an increasingly popular self-diagnosis as many clinicians suggest (Adamson, 2016; Blunden, 2018; Garfield, 2008; Levine, 2010; MacDonald, 2016; Skinner, 2014), it is worth digging into the construction of the pornography addict label itself, working to elaborate upon the relationship between metaphor and nosology, and how pornography viewers negotiate, if not create, these different possible meanings.

Making up people

The following analysis is influenced by Hacking's (1986, 2007) aforementioned conception of dynamic nominalism (Chapter 2), and his theory of "making up people", which are used in the current study to frame the addiction part of the pornography addiction equation. Essentially, making up people describes the ways that new classifications create new understandings of how to be a particular "kind" of person, and how such classifications work upon the person under such a classification via a looping effect. Broadly, making up people refers to the ways in which classifications, like pornography addict, create new descriptions of how to be this or that kind of a person. Following Foucault, Hacking (1986, p. 166) outlines how, when "new modes of description come into being, new possibilities for action come into being in consequence". From this perspective, "Pornography Addict" is a description of a kind of person currently operating in popular culture – although this kind of person may not necessarily describe any specific self-diagnosed pornography addict, or even what the addictive behaviour itself looks like.

Instead, the Pornography Addict as a kind of person is constructed via various intersecting influences, including the kind of debates about behavioural addictions outlined in this chapter's introduction, as well as social, governmental, and infrastructural shifts that flesh out and legitimize various forms of knowledge about drug addiction, behavioural addiction, technology, pornography, and so on. For example, as new understandings about behavioural addictions were gaining popularity in psychiatry during the 1990s (see Goleman, 1992) these new understandings were in turn helping to *make up* new ways of being a pornography viewer as a possible addict, along with anyone whose problematic behaviour seemed out of control for that matter (we might further speculate whether pornography addiction would exist at all without the expansion of a behavioural addiction concept in expert fields like psychology and psychiatry at this time). Put plainly, the pornography addiction concept could not exist without the broader circulation of a common-sense

addiction concept, and such an understanding of label construction, again following Foucault (1977, 1990), necessarily rejects the concept of pornography addiction as simply a culmination of expert knowledge about how pornography itself works upon an individual.

However, here it is important to highlight that this is neither to suggest that pornography addiction does not exist, nor to dismiss the very real distress expressed by those under the description of pornography addict. In fact, it is very much the centrality of the distress of such pornography viewers, in line with considerations of the moral conflict engendered by viewing pornography that makes pornography addiction possible. This is because categories of people are not passive: individuals under the description pornography addict inevitably interact with, and change their behaviour as a result of, being classified and/or taking up that classification for themselves. In his formulation, Hacking's (2007) *looping effect* is employed to describe a process whereby classifications work upon groups, who in turn change in ways that shift the system of classification. That is, while pornography addiction may in part be made legitimate through forms of enquiry (i.e. social scientific research) which name, measure, and propose symptoms and causes for behavioural and pornography addictions, these newly evolved measures, symptoms, and causes can in turn be taken up and modified into new ways of being a pornography viewer *outside* of these jurisdictions: pornography viewers today can utilize available information about behavioural addictions to make sense of their own behaviour in ways that are both personally and culturally meaningful. Thus, considering that the self-diagnosis of pornography addiction is a phenomenon seemingly well-documented by clinicians (see Adamson, 2016; Blunden, 2018; Garfield, 2008; Levine, 2010; Skinner, 2014), an investigation of the ways that the *addiction* part of the pornography addict equation is taken up by pornography viewers themselves will invariably help to make sense of the spread of the pornography addiction self-diagnosis itself.

Analysis[47]

In this chapter I seek to examine how pornography addiction is made sense of by pornography viewers, but also specifically attempt to investigate how pornography viewers understand pornography addiction as either a literal disorder requiring professional intervention, a metaphor used as shorthand to describe various behaviours as excessive, or some combination of the two. Crucially, such an approach sets to one side whether there is any singular underlying process by which pornography becomes addictive, and instead focuses upon how knowledge about pornography addiction is utilized by its viewers to make sense of viewing pornography.

In aid of offering some broader context to the data set as a whole, the following analysis should be foregrounded with an acknowledgment that, while Pornography Addiction[48] was largely described in varying and ephemeral ways by participants, across the majority of both the survey and interview responses, the participants still acknowledged the *veracity of the concept*. That is, even in those cases where pornography addiction was only loosely described, or else was dismissed, the manner in which participants unavoidably oriented to the addictive potential of pornography suggests that pornography addiction operates discursively as an inescapable filter through which to parse one's pornography viewing. At the same time however, in attempting to uncover the actual criteria employed by pornography viewers to either adopt or dismiss a self-diagnosis of pornography addiction, the descriptions given were conspicuously vague (see Spišák, 2016). Where one interviewee described his pornography addiction as interfering with his ability speak with women, another described how his pornography addiction had driven him to act out criminally. Where

[47] For full method see Chapter 4.

[48] To reiterate, neither pornography, nor addiction, were defined for participants in either the survey or the interviews. Here the focus was specifically on how viewers themselves defined and made sense of such terms, rendering the offer of a strict definition counterintuitive to the study's aims. Thus, instead of providing a definition for participants, the current research worked to understand what the respondents themselves classified and defined as pornography

another interviewee suggested that his pornography addiction had led to the break-up of his relationship, others described themselves as addicts because they wasted too much time viewing it. These various accounts suggest that pornography's ability to impact upon expected behaviours is the most robust sign of addiction, with self-control acting as a central site for the negotiation of appropriate pornographic viewership (see Taylor & Jackson, 2018). Thus, as an overall finding, instead of suggesting that pornography viewers described pornography addiction according to this or that criteria or mechanism, the variety of ostensibly convincing evidence brought to bear on the pornography addiction concept by the participants suggests that a wealth of evidence is available to legitimize pornography addiction, despite this evidence circulating largely unrestrained by theoretical or conceptual boundaries. In other words, because pornography addiction lacks a unifying theory, any evidence linked to the concept can be made legitimate.

Such a seemingly paradoxical observation, of pornography addiction as *both* authoritative yet insubstantial, necessarily foregrounds this analysis because it is within this struggle for legitimacy that the evidence for or against pornography addiction's validity must be deployed by its viewers. That is, arguments and rivalries between various criteria, descriptions, and frameworks used to describe the pornography viewer in turn help to construct a more robust pornography addict through repeated appeals to new forms of evidence, and the need to discover such new evidence, despite such evidence rarely falling within a coherent diagnostic formulation. Such incoherence echoes what Spišák describes as the "blurry notions of harm" (2016, p. 134), which can influence a pornography viewer's perceptions of their own viewership as dangerous, despite being premised on ambiguous interpretations of evidence.

Here two of the most prominent patterns – addictive personality and neurological addiction – have been selected to illustrate the diverse ways that pornography addiction was

made sense of. As such, while these themes were readily identifiable, they are not presented here as exhaustive, but instead serve to highlight the nuanced and tenuous status of the addiction concept as related by pornography viewers in reference to their experiences of viewing pornography.

The addictive personality: "As with any addiction it comes down to an individual's susceptibility"

Addictive personality, like the Pornography Addict, is born of a wealth of varied, yet inconclusive research. For example, in an article published in the *Psychological Bulletin* in 1976 looking back on 30 years of research programmes attempting to describe the personality of the alcoholic, William Miller concluded that "most reviewers have abandoned all hope of diagnosing alcoholics through the use of traditional personality measures" (1976, p. 667). Yet, like the Pornography Addict, the concept of the addictive personality remains to this day, in popular vernacular at least, despite a lack of empirical support or predictive validity (Amodeo, 2015; Nathan, 1988; Szalavitz, 2015).

However, when describing the Pornography Addict, the "addictive personality" was regularly invoked by participants. In part, the evocation of the addictive personality works towards explaining cause in tandem with the question of why everyone with access to pornography is not an addict: if access is the only causative condition for pornography addiction, then it follows that everyone who watches pornography would become addicted. Thus, the addictive personality works to delineate between normal and addictive pornography use by specifying what *kind* of person might become an addict:

> It is no more addictive than watching TV, playing computer games, eating, or anything else that can be addictive if a person has the traits for being someone with addictive personality. For most I would argue it isn't addictive, but for a few it could definitely be addictive, but equally if they didn't have access to pornography, they would be addicted to either drugs, food, TV, or something else. [Response 186, Q. 3]

> I would say that it could definitely be a reality for people with an addictive personality, but isn't a 'given' that anyone would get addicted. I think my use of it is reasonably measured and not unhealthy, but occasionally I find myself craving it and realizing I'm slightly addicted at times. [Response 51, Q. 3]

> Personally I believe it is addictive to certain personality types, especially people who struggle with impulse control. I am one of those personality types, when stressed my consumption goes up and I struggle to control my use. It's like a different person takes over. This appears common, there are several online forums filled with people distressed at their lack of ability to control their use of porn. [Response 133, Q. 3]

These survey extracts suggest that while access to pornography has increased, such access will only negatively affect a part of the population who are predisposed to a form of addiction. By suggesting that being a pornography addict is the result of being an addictive personality, this deployment allows other pornography viewers to situate the problems that might arise from viewing pornography squarely within each individual. And yet, while the concept of addictive personality helps to explain why some pornography viewers might become addicted, it also presents a new unease: if addictive personality has no set criteria, then where do these addictive personalities come from?

As already suggested, as predictive criteria for addictive personality do not exist, the diagnosis for an addictive personality, much like a pornography addiction, relies on subjective assessment. Here, a tension between pornography addiction as a diagnosis and a metaphor is readily evidenced. For example, the foregoing extracts from survey responses 51 and 133 above illustrate how loose the criteria for addiction might be if self-assessment is treated as a literal addiction diagnosis. In the account offered in the second extract, the rapid oscillation between "reasonable", and "not unhealthy" viewing suggests a transient state of addiction dependent on such self-appraisal. However, by describing himself as "slightly addicted" this respondent distances himself from being described as a full-blown addictive personality. In contrast, respondent 3 suggests, not only that a failure to control one's

impulses might be a way to be an addictive personality, but also that the testimony of other pornography viewers might be an important resource for establishing a sense of how "common" it is to describe one's behaviour as such. Thus, these subjective assessments of either being, or not quite being, an addictive personality, act as resources by which to measure one's disposition towards becoming a pornography addict.

Therefore, while the addictive personality was used as a resource to describe the course of pornography addiction as it relates to access, this label also acted as an inroad to illustrate how robust pornography addiction might be, and where it sits on a diagnosis/metaphor continuum. That is, as a state of addiction requiring outside intervention or a shorthand to help make sense of, and describe, one's behaviour. For example, a few of the interviewees struggled to reconcile what might be described as normal and abnormal viewing of pornography as it related to being an addictive personality. Thus, where some of the survey responses were relatively straightforward regarding addictive personality, the accounts from the interviews offered a much more in-depth view of the ambiguities of the addictive personality and pornography addiction concepts. As a case in point, the following extract from an interviewee, L., indicates a transient and perhaps context-specific quality to his self-diagnosis:

Kris	I was – I was wondering um – so currently like um wha – what's your kind of current thinking about your own pornography er use?
L.	Um, yeah. To be perfectly honest with you it's bad um insofar as the amount and um … I'm – I'm – if I was an addictive personality I would say I – I was addicted to it um. I am a very high user um … a – but I have – I can – like I went away for two weeks and had no access to it and that was fine.

Here L.'s self-diagnosis of being a pornography addict appears to depend upon whether he thinks of himself as being an addictive personality or not. In other words, L.'s pornography viewing does not have to change to become a pornography addict, only his

perception of himself as being an addictive personality or not. However, at the same time, pornography's status as addictive is thrown into some doubt by the suggestion that not having access to pornography for two weeks "was fine". In this sense, L.'s pornography viewership is accounted for in relation to the possibility of addiction, and here he has entertained the possibility of being an addict and rejected it. Thus, there is a recognition of what a pornography addiction might look like and a refusal of the label.

Another interviewee, J., echoed a similar sentiment, both in how ambiguous being an addictive personality and/or pornography addict might be, as well as doubts about the diagnostic criteria and the veracity of the classification in general:

> J. … In my – my opinion of addiction right? I mean, and maybe I've got a little bit of an addictive personality, I don't know. I like all these risk-taking things but at the same time I also believe I can control those things so I tell myself it's not an addiction. Whether it might be classed as one, I don't know. But in terms of the downside, I don't believe so, you know. I don't believe that if I stopped I would have any serious problem functioning.

Here, as with L.'s comments earlier, pornography addiction is understood as both possible, but perhaps not applicable. For example, pornography addiction is presented as contestable on multiple fronts, both in the sense of J.'s ability to maintain self-control, but also in his ability to tell himself that his pornography viewing is not an addiction. And while he suggests the existence of a third party who might class his viewing as addictive, like L. he rejects the possible negative consequences that ostensibly accompany a pornography addiction diagnosis.

Thus, both L. and J. have found ways of "un-defining" themselves as addicts: recognizing elements of what an addict might look like in their own behaviour according to this or that criteria, while also distancing themselves from being a pornography addict. In this sense, pornography viewership is defined in relation to pornography addiction, with each

piece of evidence for pornography addiction's veracity weighed against one's own behaviour and personality. Thus, on one hand both L.'s and J.'s extracts accept the possibility of being labelled as an addict or an addictive personality, but also work to reject pornography addiction in whatever form each speaker understands it. Accordingly, here the suggestion is that the addictive personality can be described as both a definable figure, while simultaneously amorphous and transitory. At the same time, pornography addiction as a literal addiction is softened, spoken about in similarly ambiguous and ephemeral ways. However, pornography addiction is also not strictly a metaphor here either, as both L. and J. indicate the possibility of serious negative consequences when abstaining from pornography. Thus, it appears that both L. and J. are making sense of pornography addiction through a kind of "trying on" of the diagnosis to test the fit, and checking its applicability before rejecting it as a description of how to view themselves. Accordingly, such a process depends inherently upon an orientation by pornography viewers towards a literal pornography addiction which describes possible negative effect criteria (a kind of drug withdrawal symptomology in L. and J.'s cases), but which may not fit that person at that moment.

Neurological addiction: "You can get addicted to anything that provides dopamine and adrenaline"

The most striking way that pornography addiction was discussed in concrete terms, and where the most expert knowledge was deployed, was through a construction of pornography addiction specifically, and addiction more generally, as the product of a particular neurological state. As already briefly touched upon in the introduction however, subjective assessments like loss of self-control, when treated as the result of specific, undesired processes within the reward circuitry of the brain, present a slippery slope towards blurring what we consider addictive and non-addictive (Billieux et al. 2015; see Reith, 2004), opening up the possibility that anything that is enjoyable can become addictive (Grohol, 1999). Thus,

perhaps unsurprisingly, as an illustration of what a robust understanding of addiction this is, large numbers of men participating in the survey (largely responding to the question "Pornography addiction has been in the media a lot recently, what are your thoughts about this idea?" see Appendix D) echoed this sentiment:

> People get addicted to anything that gives them pleasure. Gaming, running, drugs. If you can't stop it at will then you're addicted. [Response 94, Q. 3]

> Entirely logical that this exists. The high and intense satisfaction of watching porn (particularly if enhanced with masturbation) activates chemical responses in the brain that build addiction. Many other experiences in a day cannot compete with delivering the same 'hit' and so your brain nags you to watch more. Drugs, alcohol, smoking, and smartphone use are no different. [Response 73, Q. 3]

> Humans tend to get addicted to anything that releases endorphins into their system. [Response 19, Q. 3]

> I use it for masturbation and that makes me feel good. Anything that makes you feel good can be addictive. I have used it as a distraction from other stuff in my life so try to be conscious of how much/how I use it. I think it can be addictive but so can plenty of other stuff. [Response 93, Q. 3]

The suggestion that people can be addicted to anything pleasurable raises a number of important questions. Ironically, despite the appeals to the apparent physical action of addiction, it is here that the boundary between behavioural addiction as a literal drug-like state and as a rhetorical shortcut is at its most tenuous: if anything can be addictive, then how can we distinguish between disparate activities like ingesting potentially life threatening substances, using a smartphone, exercising, or viewing pornography? For example, even in extract from survey response 73 above, where he suggests that other daily experiences cannot compete with "the high and intense satisfaction of watching porn", this survey respondent goes on to also suggest that a relatively benign behaviour like using a smartphone is no different. Crucially, because these behaviours are at least superficially very different, then an

appeal to some kind of authoritative knowledge/evidence of the underlying structure of addiction is required to explain how anything pleasurable can be addictive.

Consequently, multiple claims to a universal biological explanation of addiction were identified in the data. Unlike the invocation of the addictive personality in the previous section, which restricts addiction to a designated group of people, this unbounded construction of behavioural addiction as the consequence of "too much of a good thing" requires constant vigilance on the part of any pornography viewer, drug user, shopper, gamer, and so on. In other words, unlike the addictive personality (i.e. a kind of person prone to addiction), the idea of anything being addictive because of rewarding chemicals in the brain constructs a necessary boundary between normal and abnormal pornography viewing, without dictating exactly where that boundary lies. As a point of tension however, unlike the addictive personality, which is specific to a predisposed population, pornography is caused by natural processes that presumably reside within everybody:

Kris	Um, what do you think about the neurological or neuroscientific explanations of porn addiction?
O.	I feel like it's because of that [pause] I dunno, like when we do exercise – or when we say eat chocolate we get dopamine and umm, like it feels good and so we are like 'aww yeah I like chocolate' yeah 'going to have some more chocolate', I feel like it's the same with porn like – like we masturbate and we do it with porn as well and so then the brain associates that feel good chemical with the porn and umm, and then your body just starts to get hooked on it like 'yeah yeah I like – I just watch – like I – I need – I want – I want that – like I could do that so easily right now I – I'll just get that dopamine and I'll feel good like I –
Kris	Would that be the same as for chocolate or for like other – other things like, I dunno, ah exercise or anything –
O.	Yeah, in a way so much but it's just so easy, so accessible, so and umm it just gets people so hooked on it you know?

The suggestion offered by interviewee, O., that pornography addiction is akin to an addiction to exercise or chocolate immediately raises two consecutive points of conflict. First, such a comparison speaks directly to the way that an expansion of a literal addiction diagnosis to behaviours produces an ever-expanding net of analogy. In fact, survey respondents addressed this point either indirectly, elsewhere suggesting that "there's other addictions out there, so why not porn?" [Response 67, Q. 3] or more pointedly "if gambling is an addiction, I can't see why pornography is not" [Response 143, Q. 3]. Second, such responses go some way towards illustrating an ironic process whereby circulating knowledge/evidence about addictive behaviours work to validate pornography addiction as a non-metaphorical process by appealing to the authority of other, more metaphorical addictions. That is, the initial question put to interviewee O. about specific neurological resources, was in turn made sense of by drawing upon other similar, ostensibly addictive behaviours.

Crucially however, the Pornography Addict is not likened to a cocaine or heroin addict. In fact, in line with O., there was a strikingly consistent use of chocolate as a metaphor to demonstrate the neurological process of pornography addiction, in both the survey (e.g. "people eat chocolate and get addicted while others are fine with normal consumption"; survey respondent 10) and interviews ("there's definitely a – a physical and neurological process taking place as much as there is [in] eating a bar of chocolate"; interviewee C.). These suggestions that pornography addiction is more akin to other tenuous addictions like chocolate (see Benford & Gough, 2006) than to an established substance addiction suggests that some comparisons are more or less tenable than others. For example, perhaps in comparing the negative outcomes of pornography addiction with the negative outcomes potentially lethal substance addictions presents an inherent barrier to making direct comparison. In this sense, perhaps the brain can be addicted to any behaviour, but the severity

of such an addiction depends significantly upon what a person is addicted to. Indeed, another interviewee, Z., seems to indicate the operation of a rough scale of addiction severity, on a spectrum between drugs and behaviours:

Z.	I think that's got validity. I think, um, they show that people, um, gamble and it's like methamph – methamphetamine because of dopamine release, like their – yeah, you – you do this pleasurable thing and your brain releases dopamine, you go, 'ooh, that feels quite nice, I'd like some of that.' And I think the pornography is probably on a similar range.
Kris	Did you – like that, um, formulation of like the understanding of dopamine release, where – where did that information come from?
Z.	Um … I think I was actually, doing a paper on drugs and alcohol and I think they were talking about methamphetamine, and they were saying the different things which can release dopamine in your brain once – once orgasm to no other – gambling and meth-methamphetamine usage and I think – I know, it's just where – where I pulled that from.
Kris	Right. Do you think that they're at the same scale? I mean –
Z.	No. I think – I think what they were saying I – I – I can't remember specifically, but the methamphetamine was like, you know, a thousand – one thousand or something like that and maybe gambling was five hundred and maybe orgasm was two hundred or something like that.

Essentially, this suggestion of a hierarchy of addictiveness helps to solve the issue arising earlier around whether pornography addiction is literally like a drug addiction. It does so by suggesting that perhaps pornography viewership stimulates a similar system to that of drugs, in this case dopaminergic, only to a lesser degree than a more severe substance addiction to methamphetamine. In this sense, pornography addiction is not employed as a metaphor, but a literal, measurable, identifiable biological process, although frequently described via analogy.

However, despite the ostensible concreteness of such evidence, descriptions of how this neurologically derived addictive process works varied significantly. For example, a few participants dismissed the analogy between pornography and substance use out of hand, ("study heroin addiction…it changes how you feel and then if you stop doing it you could possibly die. That's a proper addiction"; interviewee E.), while others suggested that orgasming to pornography could be more, not less, addictive than some drugs ("I've heard it described as being actually more addictive or stronger than crack cocaine"; interviewee S.). The majority of responses tended towards the middle of these positions however. Such responses tended to either utilize one or another neurotransmitter (i.e. dopamine, norepinephrine, serotonin, adrenaline, and prolactin were all alluded to across the different interviews), a general mechanism in one's brain (e.g. "there's obviously something happening in my brain or maybe it's– maybe it's– it's– it's not my brain chemistry, it might just be my, er, my cog – cognitive thinking at the time, you know"; interviewee X.) or other analogies to more benign addictions ("I understand that people can become addicted to even things like Coca Cola"; interviewee L.).

Such accounts suggest that understandings of a literal addiction to a behaviour or substance are very diverse. Taken together, the extracts in this section suggest that even when lay understandings of pornography addiction rely on the interpretation of behavioural addictions as biologically derived, such evidence can be incongruent and still heavily reliant on metaphor and analogy. Interestingly, many behaviours that people might enjoy were also described as addictive, although such addictions were not presented as something that was problematic. And yet, these descriptions of chocolate, Coca-Cola, or exercise addictions were offered with the reassurance of the very same evidence of biological process and brain science used to describe addictions to substances of abuse.

Discussion

The current chapter sought to identify the ways that pornography viewers might make sense of the concept of a pornography addiction. Importantly, such a focus works to highlight the variety of ways that pornography addiction can be understood by those who may have considered the label in the context of their own pornography viewing. The findings suggest that whether the Pornography Addict is described as the product of an addictive personality, which predisposes viewers to a general form of addiction, or of specific neurochemical mechanisms that makes all pleasurable behaviours potentially addictive, descriptions of pornography addiction were notably diverse. What is clear from across the different perspectives offered by both the survey respondents and interviewees is that pornography addiction does not describe one thing, and even when it does, its status is tenuous. For example, despite a clear circulation of various resources that offer knowledge about pornography addiction, there was little agreement about the cause, criteria, or impact of pornography addiction among viewers and self-described addicts alike.

Returning to Hacking's (2007) "looping effect", the various possible causes offered and the various ways that pornography viewers oriented to these causes, suggest a complex process of looping that significantly undercuts the efficacy of pornography addiction as a literal diagnosis, and instead highlights the ongoing construction and making of pornography addiction outside of expert jurisdictions. Such observations echo research that investigated whether a cohesive definition of addiction might be identified when asking for criteria from both addiction experts, and prison inmates enrolled in a drug education class (Walters & Gilbert, 2000). In their results, Walters and Gilbert suggest not only that the criteria for behavioural addiction differed between the groups as a function of which group's definition was used, but also that there was little agreement *within* either group. For example, the most popular criterion for the expert group, physical dependence, was affirmed by only half of that cohort, while diminished control, the most popular criterion for the inmates, was endorsed by

only a third of those respondents. These results led Walters and Gilbert to suggest that addiction functioned as a "folk concept with the capacity to represent a wide range of psychological phenomena within a single framework" (2000, p. 217). This observation is certainly pertinent when considering the relatively recent diversification of behavioural addictions (Billieux et al. 2015), as well as the variety of addictive criteria mobilized throughout this analysis.

The current analysis indicates that pornography addiction's boundaries are elastic, its definitions transient and metaphorical, despite the use of various sources of evidence pertaining to a literal interpretation. Such evidence is no doubt derived from a number of institutional sources, including filtered versions of scientific knowledges about addiction and the brain. The employment of such evidence speaks directly to a looping effect (Hacking, 2007) that makes up contemporary pornography addiction. That is, as neurological investigations into the biological causes of pornography addiction create new ways to describe, and be, a pornography addict (e.g. as neurologically similar to a drug addict, as not morally responsible for their actions, as genetically predisposed to pornography addiction, etc.), these findings are in turn taken up within popular culture, with snippets of the language stripped of context distributed and utilized by those "trying on" the pornography addict label as a way of being a kind of pornography viewer. Pertinently, as one survey respondent suggested "media coverage of this has made me concerned that my own use may be of an unhealthy amount, and I feel I constantly self-monitor my use of pornography, asking myself frequently if it has become an addiction" (Interviewee A.). In turn these people seek help, and in doing so relay expected behaviours, language, histories, symptoms, and self-diagnoses back to the clinicians and academics who treat such accounts, not as a metaphor for a subjective loss of self-control, but a specific and diagnosable disease state. Clearly then, the semantic and contextual use of a word like addiction deserves considerably more critical

attention, as differential meanings of such a word can mean the difference between colloquial shorthand and rehabilitation and/or medical intervention. That is, it is worth considering whether the apparent epidemic of self-diagnosed pornography addicts seeking help today perhaps represents the ready uptake of a relatively new way to *describe* one's problematic behaviour, and not the development of a modern disease entity whose description should dictate its treatment.

Chapter 6

"I think the challenge is that with porn consumption everyone is their own curator": Negotiating pornography

> Although the concept of addiction began as a reasonable scientific theory that allowed medicine to engage with problems of drinking and drug use, the concept has escaped into popular use where 'addiction' is now the answer, not the question. (Hammersley & Reid, 2002, p. 19)

The presumed inability of pornography viewers to correctly moderate their viewing is the lynchpin at the heart of the pornography addiction concept. Whether it is relatively mundane sexual dysfunction (i.e. erectile dysfunction; see Blackstock, 2016; Blunden, 2018), marriage problems otherwise not specified (Carroll et al. 2017; McDonald, 2016; Miller, 2016), men's ostensible "craving" for increasingly hard-core pornography (Doidge, 2013; Kelly, 2017), or subsequent criminal sex offending (Dines, 2010, Laugesen, 2007; Martin, 2002; McKenna, 2019; New Zealand Herald, 2019), pornography addiction can be generally understood as the continued watching of pornography despite a veritable bounty of negative consequences. However, as I have argued throughout this thesis, pornography viewing remains a normalized behaviour – for men at least. For example, as noted in Chapter 3, pornography viewing can be described as both disordered in the cases of losing self-control and when interfering in (heterosexual) relationships, while also being described as harmless to much of its audience. In this sense, the centrality of self-control to pornography addiction – and as I will argue to pornography viewing in general – raises significant questions as to how pornography viewers distinguish between their own problematic and non-problematic viewing. That is to say, through a pornography addiction lens non-disordered viewers can be described as simply choosing pornography as a form of entertainment, while for disordered viewers it is made into matter of self-regulation and pathology.

While pornography addiction seemingly cleaves unacceptable from acceptable pornography viewing, it also elides the details of how pornography viewers actually make these distinctions. In this sense, pornography addiction becomes the answer to the question of controlling one's viewing, thereby replacing a series of questions as to how such viewing is supposed to become out of control in the first place. Indeed, the central problem with – and perhaps superficial appeal of – the pornography addiction explanation at large is that it represents a tautological account of pornography related problems: "his pornography viewing is problematic because he is addicted" (see Peele, 1989).[49] By reducing the addiction concept down to simply a symptom of "losing control"– in whatever form this might take – pornography addiction becomes both conceptually imprecise, yet eminently expedient. For example, as Keane (2004) has argued, despite the morphologies of alcoholism and sexual addictions being in virtual opposition to one another, both can readily be unified as "addictions", conceptualized as simply a loss of self-control (see also see Briggs, Gough, & das Nair, 2017; Room, 2014). That is, as Keane (2004) argues, where alcoholism is marked by a pathological rigidity of desire[50] sex addiction – and pornography addiction with it – describes a search for increased novelty, with such novelty seeking becoming indicative of pathology. In this sense, these two behaviours can only be united under an addiction rubric if addiction is made less precise, used to describe a loss of control and dismissing the other inherent differences between the behaviours (see Granfield & Reinarman, 2014; Reith, 2004).

In turn, not only are the different morphologies of these disparate behaviours conflated, but crucially the different social meanings and cultural significances of sex and

[49] It is worth noting that a neuroscience approach to problematic pornography viewing further removes the agency of the pornography viewer, designating the problem of pornography as a change in the brain: brain changes make a viewer addicted/he is an addict because of his brain (e.g. Buchman, Illes, & Reiner, 2011; Brand, et al 2016; Doidge, 2013; Gola, 2017; Hilton, 2013; Voon et al. 2014; for critique see Vrecko, 2010).
[50] The physiological underpinnings of alcoholism purportedly engender an unvarying schedule of "required dose to maintain a certain level of alcohol in the blood rather than a fluid pattern of social events or psychological moods" (Keane 2004, p. 198).

drinking are flattened into a simplified conception of losing self-control. Indeed, as Room (2001) suggests, contemporary understandings of addiction – as the continued engagement in a behaviour despite negative consequences – speak to the culturally and historically bound origins of addiction as an inherently social phenomenon (see also Levine, 1978; Room, 2014). Room (2014) suggests that the roots of the addiction diagnosis echo a sort of secularized notion of spirit possession, whereby an afflicted person is controlled by a will outside of their own to commit acts otherwise seen as socially inappropriate, immoral, or illegal (see also Hammersley & Reid, 2002). Pertinently, it is worth noting that the analysis of Chapter 5 has already described pornography addiction as more readily mapped onto a folk addiction conception of alcoholism, than a substance understood as more acutely addictive.[51] Those findings suggest that pornography addiction operates as a colloquial shorthand for describing a subjective loss of control, rather than the presentation of a physiological pathology with a coherent symptomology.

Thus, pornography addiction can be made into a cohesive solution for describing the social problems engendered by some people's pornography viewing. Accordingly, researchers have suggested that pornography becomes an addiction when viewing causes "significant personal distress or significant personal consequences such as loss of a relationship, legal problems, or job-related problems" (Ford, Durtschi, & Franklin, 2012, p. 337; also Griffiths, 2012[52]; Laier et al. 2013; for commentary see Clarkson & Kopaczewski, 2013; Ley, Prause, & Finn, 2014). Such a formulation is conceptually imprecise, not only because it is vague[53], but further is almost entirely dependent on subjective assessment. For

[51] In the analysis of Chapter 5, participants more readily compared pornography addiction to a chocolate or exercise addiction than an addiction to heroin.
[52] Griffiths's (2012, p. 120) concludes of so-called Internet sex addiction: "if the cybersex user experiences clinically significant distress or impairment because of their engagement in sexual behaviours on the Internet, it appears relatively safe to claim that s/he suffers from Internet sex addiction".
[53] What kinds of legal or job related problems are caused by pornography viewing? Are they all the same? How is the difference in the severity of these consequence measured? And so on.

example, this kind of pornography addiction could be applicable to a person who sees soft-core pornography once, and not applicable to a person who views hard-core pornography daily. Indeed, as Twohig, Crosby, and Cox (2009, p. 263) suggest in their study of the prevalence of problematic pornography viewing among university students: "If viewing is contrary to an individual's values or moral base, then even one instance would be experienced as problematic". Thus, pornography is seemingly made addictive at the point at which a viewer determines their own behaviour to be personally problematic (see Gola, Lewczuk, & Skorko, 2016; Grubbs, Exline, Pargament, Hook, & Carlisle, 2015). How viewers actually make a distinction between problematic and pleasurable pornography remains unasked and unanswered.

Analysis[54]

The analysis in this penultimate chapter focuses on how pornography viewing is made sense of within a cultural milieu that both problematizes pornography as dangerous and addictive, yet implicitly accepts pornography viewing as commonplace, if not normative – for men at least. Accordingly, this chapter offers an analysis of how the survey respondents and interviewees described in chapters 4 and 5 account for their experiences of seeking pleasurable pornography in complex and sometimes ambiguous ways. In particular, my interest in this chapter is the way in which pornography viewers might describe themselves as pornography seeking agents, asking how narratives of risk and addiction might intersect with these accounts of agentic pleasure seeking. For example, where Chapter 5 saw the deployment of two mechanisms through which pornography addiction might be understood – the addictive personality and neurological claims to addiction – the presence of these constructions of pornography addiction cast the pornography viewer himself in a paradoxically passive light. That is, while pornography viewing might ostensibly be

[54] For full method see Chapter 4.

understood as a pleasurable activity through which one can explore one's sexual fantasies, here the viewer is seemingly also put "at risk" of becoming out of control of his own viewing. This proposition, that pornography viewers are at risk of losing control over their own viewing, raises a significant challenge in accounting for the appeal of pornography, insofar as viewers are seemingly caught between notions of the unlimited choice offered by pornography on the one hand, and the risk of becoming addicted on the other.

Survey results

Here I explore the most prominent themes offered by survey respondents accounting for their pornography viewing – in whatever form this was described. This is not to suggest that pornography viewing was always described as a complex behaviour *per se*[55], but that expressions of negativity and ambivalence were common. For example, throughout the survey responses the development of easily accessible, inexpensive, and diverse pornography on the Internet was a key theme. Here the increased availability of pornography via the Internet, and the new avenues provided for finding content through online streaming services, were frequently drawn upon to describe how modern pornography offers new dilemmas and risks to pornography viewers. In this sense, the survey responses below suggest that pornography viewers are understood as needing to negotiate a field of seemingly infinite pornography, choosing between content which they may or may not want to see:

> Modern pornography, of which internet 'tube' type sites are the main example is a particularly addictive and corrosive form of something which has existed for millennia in a variety of forms. The social stigma around discussion of pornography and easy access to the Internet has allowed for a massive growth in use of this particular type of porn and very little is known about what the effects of it might be long term. [Response 182, Q. 1]

[55] Many survey respondents offered single syllable responses to a question about their feelings about their pornography viewing (Q2. How do you currently feel about your own pornography use and/or how have you felt about it in the past?), describing feeling simply "fine", or otherwise "comfortable" with their viewing.

> I think we're addicted to everything that's convenient. Fast food, internet/devices, medications etc. Porn is easily accessible, so we follow the easy route and stream it instantly because we can. We then rely on that convenience and suddenly can't cope without it. [Response 36, Q. 3]

> With the ease of access I would expect pornography addiction to be on the rise. What is readily available seems to be becoming more and more extreme and I wonder if this is having a detrimental effect on people's ability to form 'normal' views of sexuality. [Response 69, Q. 3]

Between these extracts is a suggestion of how pornography addiction is made possible – or at least more likely – through ready access to pornography on the Internet. Such descriptions construct pornography addiction as a specifically modern phenomena, in the sense that the increased availability of pornography on the Internet is ostensibly causative to such an addiction. Moreover, here it is worth taking note of the ambiguous threat such online freedom seemingly evokes, presenting consumers with an obligation to moderate their own access (Reith, 2004). Indeed, as some survey respondents describe, the ability to access more pornographic variety has, at times, presented them with inadvertent personal dilemmas:

> I am comfortable with what I do and don't think it adversely affects my relationship with my wife or children. I generally use a sampler type website so see all sorts of different porn types at times. I have found myself feeling uncomfortable about the way I am turned on by a scene or act that I wouldn't consider in my own life or that could even be illegal (sex slave type scenes). I try and keep with more consensual type porn to keep my mind clear on this. [Response 137, Q. 2]

> I feel mostly positive about my porn use. I enjoy it and I love masturbating (just being honest). However the secretive side of it bothers me, and some of the material I see upsets me. I'm also occasionally disturbed that some elements that I find morally questionable, or potentially illegal, still turn me on. When I was younger I was ashamed about my porn use, and felt guilt for consuming porn that people were exploited to produce. These negative feelings have diminished in the past four years

> as I've come to terms with my sexuality, but also disengaged a great deal from political concerns. [Response 100, Q. 2]

> With the advent of the Internet the considered normal level of acceptable use and material has changed vastly. Seconds away and anything you can think of pretty much. Curiosity has led me to see things that I found offensive and also to other things that I have found enjoyable. Unfortunately a lot of people seem unable to make this distinction and think that the more "extreme" the porn is the "better" it is. [Response 144, Q. 1]

These survey responses suggest an interplay between finding enjoyable material and the risk of coming into contact with material that is problematic in different ways. Particularly salient is the sense in which all of these extracts include allusions an evocation of personal agency in negotiating negative experiences: "I try and keep with more consensual type porn", "as I've come to terms with my sexuality, but also disengaged a great deal from political concerns", "unfortunately a lot of people seem unable to make this distinction". In this way, the respondents above are able to describe themselves as inoculated from negative outcomes.

Indeed, while these survey responses suggest that increased access to pornography online might lead to viewing "offensive" pornography, it is crucial to note that such exposure was framed positively by other respondents. For example, a strikingly consistent sentiment expressed by survey respondents when asked to describe contemporary pornography (i.e. in response to the question "what are your views on contemporary pornography?") was that of Internet pornography "catering" to the diverse sexual desires of its audience:

> Pornography is a lot different now than previously. There is significant amounts of amateur style, home produced content with individual clips for purchase type online stores. Also a lot more availability of webcam interactions. Opposed to purchase of hard copy video or subscription to a single style of internet site. Pornography now seems to be very personable to the individual viewing with increasingly diverse options for experiences. [Response 150, Q. 1]

> Contemporary pornography allows anyone to find something that they get sexually fulfilment from. There is a category for literally everyone to find/develop their kinks, you could say. [Response 93, Q. 1]

> I like how easy it is to go online and search for the categories you are interested in. There is also a lot of shit porn out there (figuratively not literally) so finding the good clip or porn-star becomes an endeavour all of its own. [Response 141, Q. 1]

Such responses outline ways in which pornography, on the Internet specifically, offers not only a variety of content, but also an avenue of sexual discovery. That is, whether it is through "diverse options for experience", the "endeavour" of finding enjoyable pornography amongst these diverse options, or even developing specific sexual tastes, the field of online pornography is here presented as open and ready for exploration. Thus, while the earlier survey extracts might describe access to pornography as causative to pornography addiction, or else as exposing its audience to dilemmatic material, it is important to note that the concept of pornography as offering an avenue of sexual discovery is seemingly at odds with such claims. In other words, these responses suggest that the consumer can "curate" their experience, constructing one's viewing of a variety of pornography as a wilful exploration, a framing that inverts what could otherwise be interpreted as examples of addictive escalation (e.g. Doidge, 2013). For example, consider the following two responses to Q. 4 ("What do you use pornography for?"), both describing the increased availability of pornography via the Internet as presenting new sexual possibilities to the viewer:

> Primarily, I use it to assist me to climax. I also use it to help broaden by sexual fantasies. Too often, standard sex can get a little boring – with pornography you can escape the everyday and imagine yourself indulging in all kinds of sexual activity that you normally wouldn't get a chance to do. The type of pornography I use are the kinds that address my specific sexual fantasies. [Response 197, Q. 4]

> Masturbation. Also to be exposed to a wide range of bodies – wasn't getting much of this as single dad 10yrs. Visual appreciation – not only of pictures I thought were great pictures but also to overcome my own body hang ups, there are people of all shapes and sizes proudly showing what they've got or are doing. Greater acceptance - self and others, leads to happier less inhibited sexuality. [Response 166, Q. 4]

Taken together these responses describe a level of personal negotiation inherent to pornography viewing. That is, where some viewers labelled the content that they saw online as personally problematic, others described the increased availability of pornography as creating a positive avenue for sexual discovery. Here narratives of choice and curation run parallel with accounts of personal discomfort, suggesting a complex terrain offering both pleasure and risk to its viewers (see Paasonen, 2007):

> Sometimes I feel like I watch it too often because when I am in bed with my laptop it just kind of easy to slip into the 'ol routine' and just look something up if I am about to go to sleep, or just even bored. Also, when I am in a relationship you would think there was no need for porn but I still watch it, though not as often. I kind of see it a as a quick fix to get off. It's kind of interesting sometimes finding out where you can end up being and what you are watching, I almost think it defines your kinks in some ways that you may not have on offer in real life, as in it lets you browse and figure out what you're in to because of all the different categories that exist, even though directly afterwards you may have this kind of gross feeling about what you have just done, but I mean you sometimes have that after some strange sex, then you think, hey, actually I don't give a fuck this is me. [Response 97, Q. 2]

> In the earlier years it was uncontrollable. It was a horrible addiction that has taken 30 plus years of quitting to get a measure of self-control. Now I do not view except for the rare fall of standard which will normally last for two to three days. However, even now, I feel strong temptations weekly to return to internet pornography. The content changed. First I enjoyed what was available which was normally vaginal sex by hetero and lesbian couple or groups. Then I found that "a good movie" required adultery or anal sex and double penetrations. Then I moved to a requirement for scenes where wives or girls had to eventually submit. To scenes where bondage or

> forced sex occurred. Then to scenes where sex was played out in libraries. [Response 85, Q. 5]

Such complex constructions of pornography viewing suggest a level of idiosyncratic negotiation by the viewer, whereby he weighs his pornography viewing against a series of other considerations. In the first extract above, response 97, the respondent seemingly suggests that successful pornography viewing depends upon a series of evaluations (e.g. routine, relationship status, overcoming "gross" feelings), while also describing pornography as defining his sexual predilections in some way. He goes on to conclude that these considerations seemingly do not matter anyway, as his pornography viewing reflects something about himself. Comparatively, the second extract above, response 85, describes a similar trajectory, with this respondent's sexual predilections being shaped by pornography, although these are explicitly couched as a problem of losing self-control. For example, self-control is deployed here as a way of refusing the weekly "temptations to return to Internet pornography", despite also describing a transition between different pornographic genres. In this sense, where a shift in pornographic taste is constructed in response 85 as indicative of addiction, in the earlier accounts such a shift could easily be described as seeking pornography that fulfils "specific sexual fantasies", or else offer the option to see "sexual activity that you normally wouldn't get a chance to do".

Thus, taken together, the survey responses idiosyncratically construct pornography online in both positive and negative ways. Indeed, the ability of the Internet to deliver a smorgasbord of pornographic content could be interpreted positively and/or negatively depending on a respondent's self-perceived ability to control himself. In other words, successful pornography viewing was described as contingent upon a viewer's ability to curate their own viewing experience, while pornography addiction was described as pornography viewing curating the viewer himself.

Interview results

The survey analysis above suggests that there is a dynamic tension at work between conceptualizing pornography viewing as a site of exploration and choice on the one hand, and a site of addiction and/or moral dilemma on the other. For example, while the majority of survey participants seemed to suggest that access to pornography had changed pornography's content, the framing of this change varied between respondents. In turn, whether the changes to pornography's availability and/or content were constructed with a positive or negative valence seemingly hinged upon a self-perception of being able to control the flow of the pornography watched. Thus, in light of these survey responses, my interests in the interviews was to dig into constructions of pornography viewing as simply a matter of "choosing" which pornography to view – or not – to instead ask how viewer's themselves negotiated these choices. In other words, my interest hereafter is to interrogate the ground between pleasurable and problematic viewing, with an eye towards where the audience might make this distinction.

Wilful viewing/unintentional exposure

As a general rule, those who did not describe themselves as pornography addicts described their addiction as the result of being able to properly regulate their viewing (be it the content or amount/duration[56]), while those who described themselves as pornography addicts did not (see Briggs, Gough, & das Nair, 2017). Instead, self-described pornography addicts frequently defined their addictions as the result of feeling guilty and/or ashamed about their viewing, despite the sources of such guilt/shame remaining variable or ambivalent. For example, sources of guilt were described in the interviews as arising from conflicts with one's religious background or upbringing, one's partner's negative views towards

[56] Content versus volume of pornography is discussed further below. However, for a discussion as to whether the amount or content of pornography is a better predictor of seeking treatment of "problematic pornography use" see Gola, Lewczuk, and Skorko (2016).

pornography, or other changes to their life circumstances such as having children (see Chapter 5). However, while it might be tempting to presume that pornography addicts and non-addicts would describe pornography addiction differentially as a problem of regulation, a similar discourse of self-control was prevalent in addict and non-addict accounts alike[57], thereby situating "addicted" and "non-addicted" interviewees as taking up the same mantel of self-regulation, regardless of how they described themselves.

By way of example, throughout the interviews (in sections not explicitly focused on pornography addiction) the invitation to discuss the "choice" of viewing different forms of pornography often arose when the interviewee and I worked to establish a shared definition of so-called "extreme" pornography. Strikingly, the majority of respondents suggested that seeing some kind of extreme pornography was relatively common[58]. In turn, such admissions opened up a line of questioning as to how these men distinguished between extreme and non-extreme pornography, and – echoing the survey responses above – how participants differentiated between pleasurable and/or unwanted pornography viewing in general:

Kris	What do you think I mean when I say extreme pornography?
W.	When I think extreme I think um...more violent essentially um so and that's what I was talking about you know the prospect of a woman being forcibly thrown on a bed and fucked while she you know is crying or gagging or you know what I mean that's that's what I-
Kris	That would be extreme for you?
W.	Yeah.
Kris	Have you ever seen that kind of pornography?
W.	Yeah it's you know it's- and that's the thing, I think it's um- and again that's how porn is uh you know very scientifically optimized- it's very

[57] It is worth noting, like Briggs, Gough, and das Nair (2017) I have not separated addict and non-addict accounts. That is, hereafter the mingling of both "addict" and "non-addict" accounts (and the difficulty in telling the difference) illustrates the shared, overlapping discursive negotiations offered by interviewees.

[58] Echoing Antevska and Gavey's (2015, p. 610) research in which their interviewees could readily identify a wide range of pornographic genres, including "material that some might consider 'extreme' (practices like gagging and 'ass to mouth' [ATM], for instance), but which participants suggested was 'normal within the pornography they watched'".

> difficult on the Internet to find a video on a page typically there will be thumbnails and typically gif animated thumbnails of multiple other videos at any given time and so um I don't think it's- regardless of whether you choose to click on them, inevitably at some point, out of curiosity or whatever, um you know that stuff is absolutely there and present.

Here W. not only describes extreme content as readily accessible, but further suggests that some exposure to it can be explained as unintended. On the one hand, such an account constructs the very act of searching for pornography as involving seeing – and being invited to enjoy – content that might push against a viewer's stated self-set boundaries. On the other hand however, such an account seemingly situates this viewer as passively negotiating an online world of pitfalls where he might "accidentally" be exposed to content he would otherwise no see or seek (see Whisnant, 2010).

Other interviewees too, echoed such accounts of being accidentally exposed to pornography, which they described as personally undesirable, while in the process of seeking content they wanted to view. For example, in the following extract, P. presents his exposure to "extreme" pornography as the consequence of navigating the pornographic field, part of a process of hailing him as a consumer to explore beyond his own boundaries:

> Kris Yeah [laughs] I- I find it really interesting that most of the guys that I- I speak to can easily define extreme pornography and then they're like, "Oh, yeah, no, I've definitely seen it".
>
> P. Yeah. I think it's 'cause like when you- if you log onto Porn Hub or X Videos or whatever, often it just- it just comes up, um, and- or like what I found is you'll click a video 'cause you've seen the thumbnail and you're like, oh yeah, I'd be into that, and then it gets halfway through the video and they start twisting and you're like, whoa, this is not what I came here for. […] Yeah. I- yeah, I often find that, that there's like uncomfortable moments when, um, you open something that you just really didn't wanna see, um, or particularly like the one I

> find the worst is the pop up ads on the side like on Porn Hub or whatever, they're often showing really like- sometimes they show extreme sex and you're just like, ah, I don't want to see this, but it's like on the side of the video that I do want to watch and it's really frustrating.

Thus, while the majority of interviewees claimed that they were not interested in expressly violent or degrading pornography, their accounts simultaneously describe seeing such content as non-negotiable in some sense. Indeed, pornography viewers described regularly being shown/finding content that they did not want to see, thereby constructing unpleasant pornography as a hazard of the pornographic environment itself. For example, as the following extract further illustrates, dilemmas were described by viewers as arising through the very act of looking for pornography online:

Kris	Um, 'cause I was wondering if you'd ever like gotten into a kind of grey area of content where- which you'd- which you'd kind of like tested your limits or test-
Q.	Oh yeah, for sure.
Kris	Yeah.
Q.	Yeah, for sure.
Kris	Yeah, what's it- do you have an example of-
Q.	Stu- stumbling on porn where the woman does not look like she's consenting. Yeah, like in immediate- like close the browser. Not interested. Don't wanna go back there. It- it just triggers something in me that places me in that kind of like- complicit in that role.
Kris	Right. Okay.
Q.	Yeah.
Kris	What does that feel like though? What's the-
Q.	Oh, that's fucking gross.

Again, like the survey responses above, issues of the "choice" to view content are brought into conflict with the interviewees repeated descriptions of having to choose which forms of

pornography to avoid, and the difficulty in doing so. Indeed, that Q. might "stumble" across content that would cause him to abandon his viewing – at that time at least – positions him as both curating his pornography viewing while also opening himself up to negative experiences.

How much is too much?

It is worth further considering the ways that such accounts of apparently "accidental exposure" position the viewer as seemingly out of control of his own behaviour. On the one hand, an accidental exposure narrative positions interviewees as simply swept along in a river of pornography, in which troublesome pornography is an environmental – or perhaps recreational – hazard. On the other however, such a description positions the pornography viewer as not needing to account for why he entered this river of pornography in the first place. Accordingly, following the survey results, it would be a mistake to suggest that interviewees did not attempt to directly invoke a sense of autonomy when describing their own, ostensibly problematic, viewing:

Kris	Um, what do you think about your own pornography use currently?
G.	Um, I think it's, well, acceptable.
Kris	Yeah [laughing]
G.	I don't think that it's um- I- I'm not addicted. I don't ne- I don't have to watch pornography, you know. Like I'm- and many cases I've just gone oh nah, and just stopped watching it- consciously stopped watching it. Like not just oh, didn't get round to it kind of thing. Like I'm, no, no, I'm not gonna watch any porn, I'm just gonna do without it for x amount of time period that I think I want to and then if or when it crosses my mind again then I might indulge in it but that's about it. Um, and … because I'm a single guy it's assumed that I watch pornography and especially being an older single guy. And um, you know, the creepy old guy [both laugh]. And it's like well, that's- I- I- I'm comfortable with that, like people that assume that. It's like because I'm comfortable enough to know that I'm in control of what

I'm doing and watching and, you know, and it's like I don't feel like I um have to race home to watch porn, you know.

Kris Yeah. Yeah. You're not like looking at your watch going 'oh'.

G. Yeah, yeah, I don't have porn on my phone. I don't, you know, like that kind of thing.

While G. describes himself here as "not addicted" because of his ability to "consciously" abstain from pornography, his account illustrates a seemingly contradictory tension, in that his pornography viewing is described as "acceptable", but not pleasurable. Indeed, G.'s description of his need to "control" his pornography viewing comports with the way that survey responses above described inoculating themselves against pornography's dangers. For example, also echoing the analysis of Chapter 5, here G. has seemingly accepted the description of pornography viewing as potentially addictive. At the same time however, he manages to distance himself from the possibility of such addiction by virtue of his ability to set personal limits ("I'm in control of what I'm doing") despite of – or perhaps because of – stereotypes of single older men as pornography viewers.

Other interviewees also described pornography as threatening to become a problem premised on a conflict between pornography's availability and a sense of self-control. In these cases, like G. above, the actual content of pornography was subordinate to an inability to control one's own behaviour:

Kris Yeah [laughs] you had said that you were concerned from a time point of view, that you thought it was taking up too much time. Were there any other concerns that would go along with that?

A. It's just too- ya know ya know, if ya want to look up- or you find your horny in the day and your partners not around you can go to a porn site like *that* [snaps fingers] it's just way too easy

Kris But, sorry, what I mean is, why is that a problem? Like why is that something that would cause you distress?

A. Cause I'm a control freak and I'm losing control.

Kris	Right because you want to...
A.	Yeah, I-I- one part of me needs to watch- to do that, and the rest of me is saying ‘fuck don’t do it’
Kris	Right, okay.
A.	Does that make sense?
Kris	So I’m really interested in what it is-
A.	So it’s the guilty- it’s the guilty-
Kris	So I’m saying that you have that part of you that says ‘don’t do it’, but I’m interested in why you would *not* want to
A.	Aww, why I’d not want to?
Kris	Aww well you know you said-
A.	Because I over think things and think ‘this is not good’. I'm not in control here, there’s something else that’s saying ‘go and do something bad’ eh, it’s not different from you- or I’m guessing, 3 o’clock in the morning you’re at the pub and you think ‘will I have another drink?’

A.’s problem with pornography is described here as a struggle against viewing too much. His difficulty with pornography is described only as the result of “that part of” him telling him to abstain from watching pornography, without going on to describe why part of him “would *not* want to” watch pornography besides this feeling of being out of control. In other words, here pornography becomes synonymous with self-control, as A. describes his simultaneous “need to watch” pornography coming into conflict with his self-identification of being a “control-freak”. In this sense, pornography viewing is seemingly described here as a problem of availability that hails men to “do something bad”, a siren song that must be resisted through some ambiguous, idiosyncratic tendency towards self-moderation.

Drawing a line under (some) content

Besides claims to pornography’s danger as seemingly residing in its availability – and thus the necessity of restricting one’s volume of access – other interviewees described the need to curate/moderate their pornography viewing experience in terms of content itself. One strikingly specific way this was done was by making literal comparisons between the

possibilities offered by pornography and the possibilities offered to consumers in everyday life. For example, interviewees compared making choices among different types of pornography as equivalent to developing a palette for wine (interviewee B. “They try red wine. They go, oh, actually I kind of like that one better”), choosing which sandwich to have for lunch (interviewee Y. “It’s like anything, if you had a chicken sandwich every day for lunch one week you might go for a beef sandwich one day, a lamb sandwich the next day”), or resisting junk food (interviewee W. “no-one sees what I look at which means it is entirely incumbent upon me as the person who binges any time there’s free sausage roles, you know, to place limits on my own behaviour”). Commonly, mirroring the negotiated viewing described in the survey and interview extracts above, interviewees worked to explain this curation process through the metaphor of “drawing a line”:

> M. Yeah, but I think that, for me you bounce around in a box. So, you’ll try one boundary, and then you’ll cross the boundary and say I don’t particularly wanna go there. I’m gonna explore something else. Wh- when you go back to this boundary you don’t step straight over to where you before. The boundary almost resets itself back to where your original boundary was. The reason that you’re- you’re getting titillation out of crossing a line that you know is there, but you don’t end up- for me you don’t end up on the other side of the line but you come back again.

Such a process of erecting a boundary of appropriate pornography viewing, as well as the ongoing assessment of one’s own behaviour in relation to this boundary, were evident across the interviews in varying ways. For example, some of the men who had seen forms of pornography that they themselves described as “extreme” echoed M.’s description above, describing the establishment of some threshold against seeing some of those types of pornography again. Indeed, one specific way that the dichotomous “drawing of a line” was applied – to viewing troubling pornographic content specifically – was to describe a negative

physiological reaction towards viewing personally dilemmatic pornography. This hitherto ostensibly “subconscious” line, was a surprisingly consistent way of accounting for the moral dilemmas of choosing, viewing, and (sometimes) refusing more extreme forms of pornography – however this was defined:

K. It- it’s … To me it’s sort of you’re almost sort of it comes back to the- the, um- it- it’s almost like you’re jolted out of it um, whatever you’re sort of, you know, you- you end up in a- in a headspace with it all and then suddenly you’ll see this and you think nah, this is- this is just that half a step too far. I- I- they probably are perfectly legal um but to me they are too young um and- and you sort of- you sort of crunch out of it.

[…]

Z. Yeah that is again that is a- I guess that comes down to- I mean it’s a pretty gut reaction I guess but how is that- how does that come about? I guess that’s built up by your, you know, your values and moral and all those things that create you um and I guess in a very split second you make that decision and go- a gut decision that says ‘whoa that’s not for me’.

[…]

R. Yeah. The- the endorphins or whatever just completely drop off and you drop out. It’s like the illusion is shattered.

[…]

Y. Yeah. It’s just a little bit- I suppose you could feel that knot in your tummy and go oh, no, I don’t really like that um and you just close the browser and go to something more enjoyable to get over that- Yeah, go back to your like safe- safe zone. Yeah [laughs] sort of that shock, yeah. Safe- safe zone yeah. Yeah.

In these extracts these four interviewees separately describe the establishment of a moral boundary as arising from different kinds of physiological reactions evoked by the wrong type of pornography. Such descriptions work to establish the line perhaps beyond an established moral system, and instead as some force acting upon the men, leading them to reassess the

content they are viewing. Pertinently, none of these four men had given up pornography as a result of finding content disturbing, but instead described having set up personal boundaries to avoid seeing such pornography again (see Chadwick et al. 2018).

Indeed, it is worth noting here that these descriptions of a subconscious line are described as both cause of, and solution to, such problematic pornography viewing. That is, the desire of the viewer himself to seek and view pornography, make distinctions between types of pornography, and reflect on his choices of pornography are made essentially redundant here. Beyond the ostensibly accidental exposers to the "wrong" pornography in the cases above, the question remains as to why pornography viewers would be watching pornography that they did not "choose" to see, and how their choice are described as playing a role in negotiating negative outcomes (i.e. they are seemingly not able to choose *not* to see unwanted content). For example, consider the following extract from O., who describes a fascinating series of choice making, in which he describes himself as, at turns, both an agentic pornography curator and passive audience member:

Kris	Have you ever seen something that you would consider to be extreme pornography?
O.	Nah.
Kris	So you've never umm, maybe like ventured into areas of like pornography that was a bit more umm…
O.	Like hardout?
Kris	Yeah, hard-core, you know like BDSM or like, something like that you know how we were talking about the exceptions to the mainstream earlier-
O.	Yeah, nah, I actually haven't but I like, I dunno, I- for me? I'm quite like- I'm quite conscious about how I watch it, especially lately. I mean so when I first got into it I was just kind of like experimenting and like 'aww yeah, like what's this? What's this?' Like just like on the basic stuff and then I'd start- I-I discovered that like I-I start like- all this stuff like a guy with a huge dick like it's just completely

> destroying a woman you know what I mean? And that's like, I don't really like- I mean A. it's like unrealistic and B. it's like, it- clearly the woman- I mean sex I find is quite a mutual thing so like clearly the woman's not getting anything out of it I mean- so probably the-the worst I've got would be just like a guy with a huge dick and I'm like, I'm not- I'm on it for like 20 seconds- *Although* I find that [sigh] you- when you're like horny and such and you go and look at pornography like, it's easier- I-I found sometimes I'm on videos of these chicks who are mud ugly but like like old- older women and this sort of stuff and then like obviously I use it and afterwards I look back and I'm like- like- like I wouldn't find that girl attractive.

Here O. not only describes a process of initial exploration, where he would see pornography he describes as extreme (i.e. men with large penises and women being "destroyed"), but goes on to describe "using" pornography that would give him pause, thereby complicating the earlier proposition of pornography as simply a case of curation. For example, O. describes himself as both conscious of curating the pornographic content watched, before going on to describe watching pornography when he is "horny" in a peculiarly passive way ("I've found sometimes I'm on videos of these chicks"). Indeed, later on in the discussion, when challenged O. worked to explain how this negotiation between pleasurable and ostensibly less-pleasurable pornography might work:

Kris	Umm, so, what do you think about that idea that pornography can desensitize you? In particular in relation to real life sexual experiences
O.	Desensitize as in...
Kris	As in like that you would prefer pornography to real life sex
O.	Hmm, umm, I feel like...I feel like as you say like that kind of- having those perfect girls and that sort of thing cause I mean the girls in pornography are the hottest of the hot like they've got the best bodies, I mean they're- they're good looking for sure

Kris	Yeah, you had said though that you did uh at times enjoy ugly or [O. Yeah] less attractive [O. Exactly] girls-
O.	Just- it's just when you're horny your brains just pushing you just like you know, I just don't care like and also- and sometimes in a way like, it makes a little bit more realistic? I mean obviously cause- I mean just the fact that I- you're not going to see one of those insane porn girls just walking around and like that sort of thing you know what I mean, but umm, yeah like-like it- I would say it it- it um...it does desensitize people because umm [sigh] like yeah you don't have those amazing girls when you do come to that sexual encounter?

Here O. again treads a delicate boundary between describing himself as both an active consumer of pornography and somehow not fully in control of his decisions in the moment ("when you're horny your brains just pushing you").

In this sense, the concept of curation and boundary drawing are seemingly deployed as ways that allow viewers to pronounce a mastery over pornography viewing, while simultaneously seeming to acknowledge that they do not, or cannot, fully control their own behaviour. Consider for example the following final extract, in which S. describes seeking images of naked children[59] alongside the same narratives of "stumbling" across extreme pornography used by Q. earlier and the physiological drives in the brain described by O. above:

Kris	What do you think I mean when I say extreme pornography?
S.	Well I would certainly think of either violence umm or uh sexual abuse of children they are the two things I most commonly think of.
Kris	Yeah, and have you ever seen extreme pornography?
S.	[Pause] Um, occasionally I've stumbled across um something with some violence in it, not- not extreme violence but where someone's being forced against their will but I'm not- I don't like it and I tend to

[59] This interviewee was one of two that spoke of actively seeking such material in the past.

shy away if I accidently come across one of that kind. I've never seen any child sexual pornography, I've looked at images of children naked but not involved in any sexual acts

Kris So following on from this do you think that pornography is always pleasurable or do you think that there are aspects of using pornography that can be more complicated?

S. I think it can be complicated um obviously one of the reasons that um men anyway do it is for the dopamine hit and the- and obviously the excitement of the pleasure centres in the brain ahh and so that's a very strong element, but it's more complex than that and certainly in my case I was well aware that I was medicating ah- at least that was I started looking at it on any particular occasion um medicating for uh technically childhood wounding and my perceived deficient-personality deviancies or um so on.

It is interesting to compare this account of being steered away from certain types of pornography ("extreme violence") and drawn to others (via "dopamine"), with O.'s account above in which he too describes his pornography viewing as a product of his "brain" pushing him to view pornography of "ugly" women. That the same rhetorical appeals can be applied to seeking images of naked children (as interviewee S. described in his interview) and seeking pornography of unattractive women certainly echoes the sort of conceptual ambiguity of pornography addiction described in Chapter 5, where participants struggled to define when pornography viewing becomes an addiction. Importantly too, pornography addiction is framed here as a problem for men specifically because of "dopamine", and form of self-medicating for S. specifically. In this sense, along with his passive position in his account of curation (e.g. "I've stumbled across", "if I accidently come across") here S. distances himself from the moral import of his pornography viewing by appealing to physiological mechanisms. Thus, such accounts illustrate a sort of outsourcing of moral authority (Thomas, 2016), whereby a viewer's own physiology (i.e. the gut and the brain) can be used to explain

a seemingly momentary losses of self-moderation, while ironically positioning these viewers as passive in the decision to both view and refuse pornography. They can surrender "choice" when pornography viewing causes a problem while also celebrating their ability to curate pornography when it is enjoyable and non-problematic.

Discussion

The salient theme running throughout the analyses above is an evocation of a sense of self-control, for addicts and non-addicts alike[60] (see Briggs, Gough, & das Nair, 2017). That is, in the survey and interview analyses above viewers describe their pornography viewing as fraught with negotiation, as they appear to struggle to account for their own agency in the act of seeking pornography. In turn, the analyses above illustrate a tension between normalized pornography viewing on the one hand, and the operation of a discourse of risk in the form of excess on the other. In the first instance pornography viewing was described by participants as an appealing behaviour. The possibilities offered by pornography were described by some interviewees and survey respondents as allowing them to curate their viewing experiences by exploring new fields of pornography. In the second instance however, self-control was designated as a necessary element of successful navigation of the pornographic environment. Indeed, the prevalence of a narrative of having to control oneself both constructs pornography viewing as attractive to these men, while setting up a risk that they may somehow be unable to moderate their own viewing. In this sense, echoing the findings of Chapter 5, the manner in which addict and non-addict participants oriented to the potential risks of pornography suggests that pornography addiction – or at least the threat of losing control of pornography – operates discursively as a filter through which to parse one's viewing.

[60] Crucially here the shared descriptions of self-control in relation to pornography makes it difficult to discern any unique constructions of self-control between these two groups. The fact that any of the above accounts could be interpreted as describing an addicted account corroborates the argument made throughout this thesis that pornography addiction can explain almost any problematic behaviour to do with pornography, offering instead a "simplification of a complex individual's psychological functioning with limited clinical relevance" (Wéry et al. 2019, p. 124).

Here I want to attend specifically to the ready overlap between these notions of proper pornography viewing as dependent upon the maintenance of controlling one's sexual behaviour, and the gendered notions of sexuality caught up in this formulation. First, it is worth considering how a notion of addiction itself carries with it particularly masculine connotations (see Reid & Burr, 2000). For example, as Room (2014) has noted of representations of addiction in US popular culture, such narratives of addiction offer the possibility of struggle and triumph, whereby the addict overcomes possession through sheer force of willpower, or else in the case of men with the help of a "good woman". In this sense, addiction is constructed as a battleground for redemption, whereby addiction is recast as a site of both social alienation and the promise of successful reintegration through proper self-governance. Second, turning to pornography viewing specifically, as discussed in Chapter 2 pornography is itself inherently tied to notions of self-control through concerns about masturbation and appropriate sexual expression. For example, as Garlick (2010; also Stephens, 2009) has argued of the fears of excessive masturbation, historical concerns about masturbation represented deeper social anxieties around men's failure to control their own nature – and indeed, nature at large. Indeed, in Tissot's aforementioned *Onania* (see Chapter 2), men's masturbation is described as a violation of the "use" of semen, insomuch as masturbation represented both a loss of both self-control and a refusal of the proper (hetero)sexual order. Moreover, according to Stolberg (2000, p. 10), the historical concept of post-masturbatory illness described men as losing control over both their own bodies and minds: "With self-control and rationality at risk, masturbation also posed a fundamental threat to masculinity".[61] Thus, the analyses above illustrates the coalescing of anxieties about men's sense of sexual self-control (Briggs, Gough, & das Nair, 2017; Terry, 2012), notions of

[61] That erectile dysfunction is commonly recalled as a negative outcome of pornography addiction offers a very concrete example of how a man might lose control of his "manliness" to pornography viewing.

addiction as losing control (Keane, 2004; Reith, 2004), and the spectre of the pornography addiction concept that has become legitimized in this space.

Considering that the men above consistently worked to account for their failures of self-control alongside discourses of agency and free pleasure seeking, it is further worth considering how pornography is supposed to threaten their agency. For example, following Hollway (1989), perhaps pornography offers a usurpation of the male sex drive discourse. That is, where the male sex drive discourse constructs men as imbued with a natural propensity to seek sex and reproduce – a function pornography presumably mimics – pornography's distinctly non-reproductive outcome threatens to undercut this premise. In other words, if men are constructed as biologically inscribed to seek sex – presumably with women – in order to safeguard the ongoing survival of the human species (Hollway, 1989), then pornography's "fake" fulfilment of this function is a slippery slope to the end of humanity. Such a claim calls to mind Nick Willis's rejection of pornography described in Chapter 3: "pornography is a very unnatural (and very temporary) solution that people use to satisfy a natural desire".[62] However, at a more mundane level, it would seem that masturbating to free pornography is inherently dilemmatic for men because such behaviour itself offers a surrender of bodily autonomy, as the male masturbator is both positioned as taking control of his sexual drives yet seemingly also victim to them (see Terry, 2012). Indeed, previous research has suggested that the motivations for pornography addicts to abstain from pornography are readily interpolated by discourses of masculine self-control and reproductive sexuality (Taylor & Jackson, 2018). For example, as Taylor and Jackson (2018) found in an analysis of men's motivations for abstaining from pornography in an online forum, autonomy and heterosexual agency where frequently used to account for a refusal of

[62] The claim that men might perceive pornography viewing as a decoy for "real" sex (Taylor & Jackson, 2018) in turn offers new considerations of pornography's incessant claims of representing "real" scenarios, people, and sex through the proliferation of so-called "reality" genres like "amateur", "gonzo" and elsewhere (see Gossett & Byrne, 2002; Hardy, 2008; Paasonen, 2006; Ruberg, 2016).

watching pornography. In other words, the men in that study expressed concerns about pornography's apparent power over them, recounting explicit concerns about pornography's ability to interfere with their capacity to attract women and have "real" sex with them. Indeed, rehabilitation from pornography addiction was explicitly premised by these men as dependent upon being able to have real sex, with real women, thereby reclaiming their "real" masculine selves.

Conclusion

The survey and interview analyses in this chapter lay bare a terrain of personal negotiation that sustains the pornography addiction concept. In these analyses, men constructed their pornography viewing in ways that implicated – and sometimes undercut – their own sense of agency as pornography viewers. In turn, it is interesting to note the ways in which applying a pornography addiction lens to the extracts above manages to obfuscate these seemingly inherently complex and contradictory accounts of browsing for the correct type – or else regulating the right amount – of pornography. That is to say, removing the lens of pornography addiction here removes an explanatory framework that turns the act of watching pornography into a simplistic continuum between acceptable and unacceptable (discussed further in the next chapter). In this sense, pornography curation and pornography addiction are two sides of the same coin, as all of the extracts above seemingly describe struggles to strike a balance between proper and improper pornography viewing. The ability to "curate" one's pornography viewing seemingly depends on one's ability to effectively choose which pornography not to see, while pornography addiction suggests a failure of curation, requiring a confession of losing self-control. Thus, pornography addiction is itself better understood, less as a problem of curating pornography *per se*, but a problem of curating oneself as being this or that kind of pornography viewer, in or out of control of himself.

Chapter 7

Conclusion: (Un)making Pornography Addiction

> Where pornography is a highly personal, conscience laden dilemma for man, for science it is simply a response to the environment. Where man is self-punished by moral transgressions, science is non-morally concerned with the problem in the simplistic terms of behavioural neuroses. Thus, for man there is right and wrong, good and bad, while for science there is only modified behaviour.
>
> –Bernard Bonniwell,
> *The Report of the Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, 1970*

In this thesis I have argued that pornography addiction works as both a public and personal explanation for the apparent ubiquity of contemporary pornography. In the first instance, in Part I I addressed the ways in which pornography addiction has become a primary resource through which pornography is discussed. To set the foundation of the argument, Chapter 2 outlined a genealogy of pornography, addiction, politics, sexuality, and technological change, thus offering a schematic of pornography addiction's ancestry. In Chapter 2 I proposed that the pornography addiction concept was born at some point during the 1980s, recast as the most recent outgrowth of an imperative to discover the material "truths" of pornography's harm. In that chapter I went on to argue that pornography addiction gives voice to historically contingent social anxieties while dispensing with overtly political critiques of pornography's content and meaning. In Chapter 3 I extended this critique by situating pornography addiction's role as a viable articulation of unease within a contemporary context. My focus there was upon how naming pornography viewing as an addiction works within popular contemporary discourse to both delineate between acceptable and unacceptable pornography viewing, and further explain pornography's content as an externality.

Turning to Part II, there I investigated these sociocultural concerns as presenting new conditions of possibility for pornography's audience. That is, if pornography's content and

normalized viewing could be partitioned by the pornography addiction concept, here I asked how this might inform pornography's audience's interpretations of their own and others viewing. Following Chapter 4's introduction of methodology and method, Chapter 5 described how pornography viewers orient themselves to the possibility of pornography addiction, despite the diagnosis's diverse and tenuous character. Here, pornography addiction was exposed as operating freely between fields of meaning and evidence, as both a diagnosis and a metaphor. The findings of Chapter 5 suggest, in line with the preceding chapters, that the definition of pornography addiction seemingly acts as a sort of ambiguous – yet relevant – heuristic through which pornography viewers can interpret their viewing. Finally, in drawing this thesis to a close, Chapter 6 extended this investigation, asking how discourses of pornography's risk might inform viewer's negotiation of the pornographic field itself. In line with the groundwork laid in Part I that analysis suggested that self-diagnosed pornography addiction indeed channels – or at least echoes – historically salient concerns about self-control and sexual disease. Moreover, it was shown to do so in ways that foreclose other considerations of what pornography is, what viewers do with it, and why. Thus, while the changes to pornography since the introduction of the Internet may have produced new dilemmas for pornography viewers to explain, pornography addiction voices concerns of masculine sexual self-control and reproductive sexuality in such a way as to naturalize these concerns as the central problem with pornography.

In concluding this thesis I want to return to the question posed in Chapter 1: "Is pornography addiction real?" My contention in that chapter was that pornography addiction is in some sense, being made into a "real" diagnosis through the lay presentation of readymade addiction criteria coming into contact with journalists and clinicians. As I have shown throughout this thesis, pornography addiction is undoubtedly real in the sense that the label seemingly fulfils the need for a public explanation of modern pornography's place in popular

culture. At the same time, I have raised a concern that the adoption of addiction criteria in popular culture has created a sort of interpretive lens, whereby problems with pornography become symptomatic of an addiction, rather than discrete problems in their own right. Today almost any pornography adjacent problem can be interpreted through the addiction heuristic as the hijacking of a pornography viewer's brain. In turn, this interpretative lens has slid over spheres of research and academia, offering both the promise of a new unitary categorisation for yet another problematic sexual behaviour, as well as a creeping moralism shrouded by medico-scientific vernacular. As a result, as the following quote from the *Daily Mail* attests, new accounts of pornography as physiological threat are being deployed in public, ossifying the legitimacy of pornography addiction as a new disease state:

> Watching porn erodes an important region of the brain, rewiring it into a juvenile state, a researcher warns. Rachel Anne Barr, a neuroscience PhD student and researcher at Canada's Université Laval, says studies show people who regularly watch adult entertainment often develop damage to the prefrontal cortex, the brain region that controls morality, willpower and impulse control. That brain region is, crucially, one that does not fully develop until adulthood. Barr warns the research suggests porn could cause users to struggle with their emotions and impulses, possibly leading to compulsive behaviour and poor decisions. (Watching Porn Rewires the Brain, 2019, n.p.)

As such, it is worth revisiting the intersection between scholarship and social context in light of the analyses offered in the chapters above, to ask how this thesis intervenes in the process of making pornography addiction real.

Revisiting scholarly context: "Maybe I am addicted…"

One of the central arguments threaded throughout this thesis has centred on a contention that pornography addiction offers a lens for making sense of pornography viewers as the arbiters of whether pornography is problematic or not. That is to say, pornography addiction sets the issue of pornography itself to the side, in favour of considering how a viewer might be

(negatively) effected by pornography. In the face of the inherent difficulties of operationalizing a cut-off point for when pornography becomes problematic, this distinction between acceptable and unacceptable viewing remains dependent upon the subjective assessment of the viewer – at least for now. Indeed, I have also described the way that research on pornography has seemingly followed – if not helped propagate – this trend towards legitimatizing self-diagnosis in the main. As covered in Chapter 1, pornography research is interested in the pornography viewer, not pornography: A considerable oversite of contemporary pornography research has been a failure to not only distinguish what pornography "is" (see Duffy, Dawson, & das Nair, 2016; Horvath et al. 2013; Kohut et al. 2019; Short, Black, Smith, Wetterneck & Wells 2012; Willoughby & Busby, 2016) but further, how pornography and its audience interact. Arguably, issues of pirated pornographic content (Brown, 2014), the dynamics of labour and content in so-called amateur pornography (Klaassen & Peter, 2015; Ruberg, 2016), the monopolisation of Internet pornography by enormous tech-companies (Barnett, 2019; Pinsker, 2016; Williams, 2014), or the problems with regulating pornography online (Blake, 2019), hint at a complex network of meaning more pertinent to questions of the "problems" with pornography than the spread of a pornographically derived disease. Indeed, while the interviewees and survey respondents quoted in the chapters above suggested that animated thumbnails, pop-up and banner advertising, and the curation of content as driven by "clicks" were all part of their pornographic negotiations, the research in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge[63], the first to describe such a dynamic as a factor for pornography viewer's sense of agency in their pursuit of pornography.

[63] A notable exception is Paasonen's (2006) analysis of how the gendered address of pornographic email spam hails its readers.

Thus, the substance of my argument here – the pornography addiction elides a critique of pornography itself – places this thesis in a liminal research space. Indeed, while this thesis shares some of the critiques of the few scholars critiquing pornography addiction specifically (discussed below) the conclusions reached by these scholars are in direct opposition to my contention that pornography addiction works to protect pornography from critique. For example, Oeming (2018) has made similar observations to those in Chapter 2, suggesting that pornography addiction signifies a remarkable shift towards the medicalisation of the male pornography viewer and the coalescing of age-old cultural anxieties about technology, masturbation, and gender. However, Oeming (2018, p. 214) concludes that the explanatory function of pornography addiction excuses the viewer and places the blame on pornography itself: "The porn addiction narrative frees consumers from moral judgement – it is compulsive, what can they do? – and puts the blame on the product, porn proper". Similarly, Ley's (2018) criticism of the "public health crisis" approach to pornography – as an extension of a pornography addiction concept – centres on a contention that pornography addiction blames pornography for the problems of its viewers: "It takes our focus away from the person, places it on pornography, and ignores the user's social, religious, and personal contexts".

Here my contention remains that far from blaming pornography for pornography addiction, pornography addiction allows for a convenient omission of meaningful engagement with pornography's content or place in popular culture. In contrast to Ley (2018) and Oeming (2018), as I have argued throughout this thesis, pornography addiction actually sidesteps implicating pornography as the cause of the pornography addiction problem, because doing so threatens normative expectations of watching pornography as a simple matter of choice (discussed further in the next section). Instead pornography addiction can be deployed in such a way as to describe pornography related problems as occurring in the brain

of the disordered viewer. That is, I have argued that pornography viewing currently sits at a crossroads between normalized behaviour and a site of significant risk. Indeed, to this point, the current state of research on pornography supports pornography viewing as normative, constructing pornography viewing is relatively straightforward for most viewers, while only becoming problematic for "a small, but significant, percentage of individuals" (Sniewski, Farvid, & Carter, 2017, p. 218). In this sense, while the increased availability of pornography might offer a number of significant issues for a liberal tolerance of pornography viewing[64] pornography addiction siphons these issues into a problem of pathology for a small number of viewers. Indeed, as the analyses of Part II suggest, pornography addiction does not free consumers from moral judgement as Oeming (2018) suggests, but may well reflect the dearth of discursive resources available to pornography viewers in communicating their negotiation of the medium outside of a framing of consumer choice.

Following Ley (2018), while I agree that pornography addiction ignores the "social, religious, and personal contexts" of the pornography viewer, this is through a process of medicalising the viewer, not censuring/censoring pornography. Indeed, when people take up the pornography addiction diagnosis, I argue that they are not simply excusing their pornography viewing, but are shouldering a scrutiny that might otherwise be directed towards the social conditions that make pornography problematic to begin with. Consider for example, the way in which an "addiction" intervention for pornography viewing ignores the potentially complex place of "choosing" pornography in a person's life, instead making the inherently rhetorical basis of the speech act "I am addicted" into an invocation of the biological underpinning of addiction (see Wéry & Billieux, 2017; Wéry, et al. 2019). The quote below, taken from a case study of a man originally undergoing medication management

[64] For example, questions about children's access to pornography, people using pornography instead of having sex one another, ready exposer to pornography that might be considered immoral, racist, vulgar, unpleasant, or illegal, and so on.

of anxiety (Capurso, 2017, p. 115) perfectly exemplifies this flatting tendency, whereby the lens of Pornography Addiction is used to justify the trialling of opioid antagonist naltrexone:

> After approximately 8 months of failed smoking cessation work, the patient revealed that he believed he was not able to quit smoking because he spent several hours each night watching Internet pornography while smoking cigarettes. When discussing pornography use, he reported multiple failed attempts at cutting down, cravings during the day, watching for longer periods of time than intended, and needing to watch increasing amounts. He also stated that he was not able to derive enjoyment from watching pornography if he was not concurrently smoking. He expressed a desire to cut back on pornography use with the ultimate goal of quitting smoking.

The interpretative framework offered here displays the sort of rhetorical sleight-of-hand that can produce a pornography addiction diagnosis – for the diagnosed viewer and diagnosing clinician alike (see also Bostwick & Bucci, 2008; Kraus et al. 2015). In this example pornography addiction becomes intrinsically bundled in with an addiction to smoking, working on the presumption that some underlying addictive process drives both conditions. As a result, through the correct application of addiction symptoms to the behaviour (Billieux et al. 2015) an intervention based on other addictive disorders is made applicable, while the sorts of complex – and seemingly necessary – negotiations of pornography as described in chapters 5 and 6 become addictions. Other possibilities for describing subjectively assessed problematic pornography viewing are flattened here to a delineation between disordered and normative behaviour:

> The patient reported that the effect of naltrexone was striking and immediate. Over the subsequent 2 weeks, pornography use and smoking markedly decreased to an average of 16 minutes of pornography and 10 cigarettes daily. Prior to taking naltrexone, the patient said it was rare for him to go a single day without watching pornography (Capurso, 2017, p. 115).

In this sense, Pornography Addiction scholarship represents a reverse engineering of a problem with pornography: searching for the pornography's dilemmas inside a person's

physiology instead of the social context in which such viewing is problematized to begin with. Indeed, following Young, Higham, and Reis's (2014) critique of the concept of "flying addiction" it is worth considering here the political work that such a program of research reflects. First, rather than the pornography addiction concept representing a conceptual critique of the structural, sociological, historical, economic, and political ambiguousness of contemporary pornography, pornography is instead reduced to a narrow, individual, psychological issue. In other words, if pornography addiction were indeed deployed as an indictment of pornography proper, as Ley (2018) and Oeming (2018) seem to suggest, then it stands to reason that the pornography addiction concept would be built upon a criticism of how the product of pornography itself is supposed to addict its viewers. Instead, the pornography addiction concept is conspicuously inarticulate on exactly how pornography on the Internet remains popular if it is indeed so dangerous. Or as Young, Higham, and Reis (2014) argue:

> the dressing-up of a complex social issue created by the emergence of a consumer society as the failings of the undisciplined, irrational and excessive subject (i.e. the lens of addiction) allows capital to reproduce itself by discursively presenting solutions to the problems it has produced, and to apportion blame with the 'flawed consumer'.

Thus, in light of the argument laid out in this thesis, scholarship on pornography addiction represents a case of fundamental attribution error, whereby the problem of pornography is made into a problem of personal disposition. What the previous chapters suggest is that the application of the addiction taxonomy to pornography viewing can be reframed as an critique of contemporary discourse on pornography at large, as pornography addiction effectively closes down – if not actively protects – the mushrooming of a new algorithmically delivered, hegemonic commercial Internet pornography to instead focus on pornography viewing as personal pathology. Following Gergen (1990), interrogating pornography addiction in this

way is to draw back the veil of how psychological research works to add constructs to the world by objectifying clusters of cultural anxieties into discrete, measurable, taxonomically coherent objects. Embedded in this process is an inherent favouritism for patterns of conduct whereby pornography viewing remains normal, until it becomes a problem. Indeed, following Zola, "the labels health and illness are remarkable 'depoliticizers' of an issue (Zola, 1972 p. 213; see also Jutel, 2009). As such, the bourgeoning "making" of Pornography Addiction through a social science apparatus is the removal of pornography's implications upon social life, instead transforming a turn of phrase into a disordered disease state.

Revisiting social context: "…but I don't think it's an addiction per se"

As I have argued above, pornography addiction locates the problems of pornography squarely within each disordered viewer. However, as the research in this thesis suggests, the pornography addiction label also represents a sort of self-problematizing that happens outside of the boundaries of "official" designation. Indeed, on balance, the adoption of a pornography addiction in the public sphere and the work to uncover the biological substrate of this addiction by researchers, represents a process more grass-roots than iatrogenic. That is, throughout this thesis I have discussed the ways that pornography addiction solves the problem of needing to distinguish possible motives, desires, ambivalences, and tensions experienced by pornography viewers, to instead frame these issues as a singular personal pathology. In turn, I have posited that pornography addiction has conveniently set up a boundary between normalized pornography viewing in contemporary culture and pornography viewing which is seen as negative and dangerous. However, outside of this convenient duality, questions as to where the boundary between acceptable and unacceptable viewing resides remain unasked, or else unchallenged.

Clearly, pornography addiction offers an oversimplified public engagement with the complex and awkward issue of widespread viewing of pornography in contemporary

societies. As I have argued above, over the last few decades the framing of the "problem" with the pornography viewer as an addict has facilitated a shift away from the criticisms of pornography's circulation, production, or content on overtly moral or ethical grounds – although these are clearly at play – to the negative outcomes for a minority at-risk population of viewers instead. Here I argue that the prevalence of conversations about pornography's addictiveness and those describing themselves as pornography addicts are a predictable outcome of normalized pornography viewing coming into conflict with idiosyncratically held social values, all of which become flattened under a singular explanation of pornography addiction: "he's an addict". In other words, the dominance of a discourse of pornography addiction has suspended pornography viewers between the poles of *laissez-faire* sexual and technological liberalism and the promise of a diagnostic panacea described above.

In this sense, pornography addiction might better be understood as a sort of explanatory confession. Indeed, following Foucault's (1990) treatise on the role of confession as presumed to produce some "truth" of sexuality, pornography addiction today represents a clinical codification of some public truth of pornography viewing. That is to say, today the confession of a pornography addiction is the result of a medicalising impulse towards sexual confession which in turn cleaves the viewer from the social embeddedness of their viewing. For example, if a viewer is distressed by their pornography viewing – in almost any conceivable way – then the pornography addiction diagnosis wields the kind of explanatory power to successfully describe and assuage such distress. Such explanatory flexibility is indicative of what Thomas (2016) describes as the outsourcing of moral authority through a narrative of personal harm. Thomas's (2016, p. 192) study, which analysed articles pertaining to viewing pornography between 1956 and 2014 in *Christianity Today*, suggests that during the 1990s pornography addiction was becoming a principal way to describe pornography's harms to evangelical Christians:

> one can easily imagine pastors and denominational leaders being less inclined to interpret the rise in evangelical pornography use as a failure of their moral guidance and instruction, and more inclined to interpret the rise in evangelical pornography use as the outcome of a 'biological disease' beyond their control.

Here a confession of disease is a preferable explanation for pornography viewing than an acceptance of repeated moral failing. That is, the feelings of being sexually or socially abnormal become legitimized by finding a diagnosis that can explain such abnormality as the result of some biological quirk (Hacking, 1996; Irvine, 1995; Jutel, 2009; Schirmann, 2013, Vörös, 2009). In turn, pornography addiction is reproduced as an exculpatory confession, promising a smooth road from presumed abnormality to rehabilitation through the adoption of the ostensibly authoritative metaphor of addictive disease. Thus, where the accounts of clinicians (see Adamson, 2016; Levine, 2010; Macdonald, 2016; Skinner, 2014) might imply that pornography addiction is spreading like an epidemic of some new disease (as argued in Chapter 3) here pornography addiction is better viewed as the propagation of confessions made by distressed pornography viewers.

Put crudely, it is not the pornography that makes addicts of its viewers *per se*, but the belief that their confession describes an addiction that creates a "real" addiction. That is, pornography is not addictive in the sense that it represents a particular kind of pornography viewer who has become out of control, it is addictive in as much as it is popularly described as addictive. The evidence that men are seeking help for their pornography viewing with the addiction self-diagnosis already in hand suggests that this self-diagnosis seemingly describes something about how they are able to make sense of pornography. This is not to suggest that pornography related distress is not "real" in any sense, but that pornography addiction is only as real as health professionals, academics, news media, and especially viewers interpret pornography related confessions as such. Indeed, returning to Hacking's (1996) looping effect and the discussion of chapters 2 and 4, the circulation of symptoms for describing

pornography addiction create new frameworks through which to describe a behaviour, for experts and lay people alike. As Pornography Addiction criteria circulate, pornography viewers interpret their behaviour through this lens, taking up the sort of explanatory language seemingly indicative of an addiction. Indeed, Simon Adamson's (2016, n.p.) quote from Chapter 1 is again perineal and portentous: "The most common non-substance behaviour that people seek my assistance with is pornography addiction, with many clients frequently using this term when first making contact".

This is an especially salient critique when we consider the shift towards pornography addiction as problem for men and boys. As the analysis of Chapter 6 suggests, pornography addiction echoes longstanding beliefs about men's sexuality as something that is both lauded yet a site requiring constant self-surveillance and control. Accordingly, it is interesting to note that while scholarship on pornography and pornography addiction routinely focuses on men and boys, there seems to be little interest in why men and boys view more pornography and/or why they make up the majority of self-diagnosed pornography addicts. In the first instance, it is worth considering the ways that the reproduction of the presumption that men view pornography as a matter of course in turn perpetuates this very behaviour. That is, the productive power of an expectation that viewing pornography makes up a normal part of being a man, may in turn help to normalize pornography viewing for boys and men alike (see Boyle, 2010; Favaro, 2015; Flood, 2008). Accordingly, as the OFLC's (2019, p. 25) research of over 2,000 New Zealanders aged 14-17 indicates, while only 6% of teenagers reported viewing pornography weekly, and 7% viewing monthly, 85% of these teens also suggested that it is common for boys their age, leading to the conclusion that "there appears to be a gap between perception and reality in relation to young people's use of pornography".

In the second instance, an interesting factor of treating pornography addiction as a gendered practise is that pornography addiction completely obfuscates this discursive

normalisation of pornography viewing as a part of being a man. As such, it is worth considering how pornography addiction creates self-fulfilling conditions for confession: pornography viewing as both normal yet abnormal. Indeed, it strikes me that pornography addiction, with its common-sense, technical, and exculpatory possibilities, is a distinctly "masculine" mode of explanation through which men can make sense of troublesome pornography viewing (see Keene, 2019). That is, pornography addiction can be understood as deployed in aid of confessing to a form of transgressive behaviour that might not otherwise be readily explained by men. Instead, following Thomas (2016), appeals to expert discourses of neuroscience, physiological dependence, and the control of irrepressible sexual drives perhaps offer a more palatable discursive pill of exculpation than doing a thorough inventory of pornography's role in one's life.

Unmaking pornography addiction

> We must hope that the on-going political controversy over pornography will not once again be allowed to co-opt academic research, leading to a repolarization of the debate around issues of harm and censorship, and thus prevent a serious and critical analysis of the emerging significance of pornography in our lives. (Hardy, 2008, p. 63)

To return Austin's (1962) observation from Chapter 1 – to describe something as "real" prompts the specification, "a real *what?*" – we must conclude that pornography addiction is as real as what it can describe, and currently it can be used to describe almost any unacceptable behaviour with any proximity to pornography. In light of the discussion in the section above, here I want to close my interrogation of pornography addiction with a provocation: what happens to accounts of problematic pornography viewing as an "addiction" – whatever form these accounts might take – when the addiction lens is removed? Here I ask what the application of addiction (as an explanation placing the root cause of negative outcomes in the brains of its viewers; see Buchman, Illes, & Reiner, 2011; Schirmann, 2013) does to explain pornography viewing when it goes wrong, that cannot be

adequately achieved by simply focusing on the specific problems that pornography addiction apparently confesses to. Consider for example, psychiatrist Norman Doidge's (2013, n.p.) *Guardian* article, in which he outlines a theoretical model of pornography addiction. In the article, Doidge describes the outcomes of pornography addiction as causing men to watch increasingly extreme pornography (i.e. "angry sex, men ejaculating insultingly on women's faces, angry anal penetration, etc.") which can ostensibly cause these men to find their (female) partners less attractive (e.g. "far from getting more turned on by the idea of sex with his partner, he was less attracted to her"). In turn, he describes the increased viewing of extreme pornography and the loss of sexual interest as the result of pornography's ability to change the brains of its audience.[65] Indeed, for Doidge the root problem of pornography is described in the article as a man's craving for pornography (despite ostensibly not enjoying watching it) and such craving changing his sexual tastes by changing his brain (again described as inherently negative because it ostensibly interferes with forming and maintaining, presumably heterosexual, monogamous relationships).[66] However, in setting to one side the descriptions of reward pathways, dopamine, and neuroplasticity, the line for when pornography becomes addictive are distinctly socially derived, leaving only a series of distinctly social problems.

Thus, in removing the addiction lens from understanding pornography viewing, we are not removing the problems but instead grounding them within the idiosyncratic contexts in which they arise. That is, where the addiction explanation for pornography viewing suggests that the negative outcomes associated with pornography stem from changes in (some of) its audience's brains, understanding pornography viewing as a site of personal dilemma

[65] "A damaged dopamine system makes one more 'tolerant' to the activity and needing more stimulation, to get the rush and quiet the craving. 'Tolerance' drives a search for ramped-up stimulation, and this can drive the change in sexual tastes towards the extreme."

[66] "Yet, though he craved it, he didn't like it (porn paradox 1). The cravings were so intense, he might feel them while thinking about his computer (paradox 2). The patient would also report that, far from getting more turned on by the idea of sex with his partner, he was less attracted to *her* (paradox 3)" (emphasis added).

and confession situates the problems with pornography as stemming directly from the place of pornography itself. Removing the pornography addiction explanation changes problems of subjective distress from "the brain", to become questions of content and accessibility. Problems of pornography interfering in relationships shift from questions of "compulsion", to instead become questions about the place of pornography within relationships themselves. Problems of the ubiquity of problematic pornography are shifted from the diseased viewer to questions of pornography's appeal, economic clout, and algorithmic expansion. In this sense, removing pornography addiction breaks down the distinction between acceptable and unacceptable pornography viewing to highlight the ways that the promise of unlimited free internet pornography has created new obligations for all pornography viewers, not just the addicts.

Future directions

How does neoliberal corporatism intersect with the production and distribution of pornography? How does this pairing challenge/reify dominant tropes about gender, race, sex, and sexuality for profit? Are moral and ethical considerations identifiable within such a model? How might a visual economy catered to a viewer's "choice" inversely violate a viewer's choice not to see? How might the algorithmic regime of infinite pornography, the collection of browser data, and the targeting of advertising situate viewers as both subject curators and curated subjects?

In researching the concept of pornography addiction from the perspective that I have, I have uncovered a series of questions that have either been ignored in the research literature, or else have been only lightly touched upon. For example, the striking consistency with which participants described their dissatisfaction with pornography on the grounds of its "authenticity" (e.g. many described pornography as both unrealistic yet "real enough" to find pleasure in, in the moment at least) suggests to me that pornography's content offers viewers

further negotiations between how much they subscribe to or dismiss the fantasy elements of pornography, and raises questions as to how they employ this "realness" as a way to distance themselves from content that they might find troubling. Elsewhere, the familiarity with which interviewees spoke of finding, and masturbating to their parent's (usually their father's) pornography suggested an abandonment of concerns about familial sexuality and the process of informal sex education in the domestic sphere. My observance of these and other research avenues bear out my argument that, for the most part, pornography addiction – and indeed research on pornography's effect more broadly – lacks the necessary scope of imagination to meaningfully describe pornography viewing in all of its complexity.

Here I will briefly gesture towards a few of the themes of research that I think would most benefit the progression of our understandings of pornography and pornography viewing. First, although I believe that the focus on religiousness as a proxy for moral conflict is overly-simplistic, the bourgeoning field of such research (see Grubbs & Perry, 2019; Vaillancourt-Morel et al. 2017; Wilt et al. 2016) holds potential to legitimize a critique of the addiction model within "mainstream" psychological literature. From here I would hope to see an expansion of the moral incongruence model beyond religious groups, as underpinned by a more sophisticated conception of where moral incongruences might arise, as hinted at in Chapter 6, as well as the research discussed in Chapter 4 (e.g. Antevska & Gavey, 2015, Chadwick, Raisanen, Goldey, & van Anders, 2018; Ciclitira, 2004; Gurevich et al. 2017; Parvez, 2006; Vörös, 2015). Such research opens further doors to the spread of interesting theorisations of pornography viewing beyond a realist conception of addiction while still interrogating the social prevalence of the construct. The second site for future research is a broader investigation of the actual content, production, and distribution of pornography. Having read a large amount of literature on pornography in completing this thesis, it is incredible to me that so few content analyses of Internet pornography exist (see Klaassen &

Peter, 2015). While I have some significant reservations about the methods and usage of content analyses of pornography in general[67], here I argue that more data will at least start to offer a consistent referent for researchers when studying pornography and pornography's viewers – as well as making a definition easier to define. Third, a surprisingly under-researched element in studies of pornography is the role of algorithmic delivery in shaping viewer's experiences. Indeed, it is worth noting that the research contained in this thesis suggests a significantly more complex relationship between the agency of the viewer, the curation of their pornography viewing experiences, and the resources through which to describe and make sense of these experiences than most research on pornography will allow. While some research has harnessed the actual search functions and resultant data as a basis for an analysis of the appeal of pornography (see Vasey & Abild, 2013), along with content analyses this form of research remains nascent and surprisingly underdeveloped. Other avenues earmarked for research on the interaction between technological change and the viewer would focus on how the actual action of browsing is done (see Vörös, 2015), expectations of perceived privacy and security for viewers, and further investigations on the mediations made by viewers between perceptions of content as more or less "real".

Final thoughts

I have asked myself repeatedly about the "realness" of pornography addiction, and especially the possibility of a future official designation for clinical diagnosis. Following the arguments made throughout this thesis pornography's realness remains an ambiguous proposition, although one that demands attention. Official Pornography Addiction may not yet be real, but pornography addiction discourse still exists. As this thesis shows pornography addiction works to explain behaviours which seemingly cannot be explained as problematic in and of

[67] For example, as discussed above, without an adequate framework to make sense of the economic and social drives that create such content, content analyses themselves can do little more than crudely describe the terrain, and not its import.

themselves. That men seemingly cannot reconcile viewing pornography with other parts of their lives is here not treated as evidence of pathology, but evidence of a struggle to reconcile contradictory behaviours borne out by an impulse to confess. Pornography addiction offers such reconciliation, and it does so in a way that protects the very pornography that supposedly causes such harm.

As I have illustrated throughout the analyses in this thesis, pornography addiction forecloses dissent by subsuming all other possible critiques of pornography. Thus, the invention of problematic pornography viewing as an addiction is not only the ossification of a medical vocabulary to ostensibly "solve" the social problem(s) of pornography, but is also a clear illustration of Boyle's (2010) "generic impossibility" of criticizing pornography outside of this framework. Within this context, viewer unease is filtered through addiction discourse, thereby channelling viewer conflict away from the proliferation of pornography itself – and the questions posed above – into the explanatory cul-de-sac of addiction and self-governance. In this sense, pornography addiction describes pornography viewers as ideal neoliberal citizens, implicated in the logic of Internet pornography's very existence: their "right to choose" and cater their online experiences are framed as inalienable rights, rather than the very conditions that give rise to uncomfortable experiences. As I have argued, the propagation of an uncriticised Pornography Addiction leads to an inevitable avoidance of these complex public debates. Instead the Pornography Addict becomes the personification of the cultural impossibility of critiquing pornography as a complex social phenomena, as *laissez-faire* commercial online pornography and its audience struggle to make sense of, and curate, one another.

However, the possibilities for problems with pornography are vast, and as I have argued throughout this theses, complex beyond the beguiling simplicity of any single taxonomy. While pornography and pornography research remain contested sites of

discussion, it is precisely the convergence of ambiguity, complication, rupture, and tension that makes it a worthwhile topic of study. Optimistically the research contained in this thesis offers new perspectives on pornography viewing as a negotiated and complex exercise in a field that has, since 1970 seemingly tried to strip away all complexity to leave instead a single referent to which to point and state: “there is the problem of pornography”. All the while, technology continues to change, pornography evolves, and research on pornography seems, only now, moving away from simplicity to face the multiplicity of Internet pornography and the multifariousness of the viewer experience.

Appendixes

Appendix A: Table for *New Zealand Herald* articles cited in Chapter 3

Code	Date (2016)	Author	URL
NZH 1	March 6th	Corazon Miller (journalist)	http://www.nzherald.co.nz/sport/news/article.cfm?c_id=4&objectid=11600782
NZH 2	March 7th	Corazon Miller	http://www.nzherald.co.nz/sport/news/article.cfm?c_id=4&objectid=11601256
NZH 3	March 7th	Simon Adamson (clinical psychologist)	http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=11601461
NZH 4	May 2nd	Bruce Munro (journalist)	http://www.nzherald.co.nz/lifestyle/news/article.cfm?c_id=6&objectid=11632164
NZH 5	July 21st	Kyle MacDonald (psychotherapist)	http://www.nzherald.co.nz/lifestyle/news/article.cfm?c_id=6&objectid=11678076
NZH 6	August 7th	Russel Blackstock (journalist)	http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=11688567

Appendix B: University of Auckland Press Release

Media release

Faculty of Science
University of Auckland

8 March, 2017

New study will explore pornography attitudes and addiction

A new study at the University of Auckland seeks to understand pornography use and the role that pornography might play in conceptions of masculinity, society and individual's lives.

Doctoral researcher in the School of Psychology, Kris Taylor, says while there is increasing concern over the widespread use of pornography by young men in particular, and the effect regular consumption of pornography may have, research in this field remains hotly contested and inconclusive.

"Access to pornography has only increased in recent years with so much available on the Internet, so given this high level of consumption, we need to know more about how men are consuming pornography and how they feel about it," Mr Taylor says.

While there is strong debate and discussion over potential harmful effects, it is not clear whether or not it's possible to become addicted to porn or whether the term 'addiction' is even useful in this context, Mr Taylor says.

"That's why we want to talk to as wide a range of men as possible, from those who unabashedly enjoy pornography, to those who've had ethical or moral questions around pornography use, and anyone in between."

Questions the research aims to answer include what reservations men have over representations of both men and women in pornographic material and how men might feel about some of the content of contemporary pornographic material.

Men taking part in the research will remain anonymous. Those willing to take part would initially complete an online survey and some will be asked to do a follow-up interview.

"The identity of all participants, whether they simply complete the online survey or whether they're willing to take part in an interview, will be kept strictly confidential and interviewees will only be expected to respond to questions they feel comfortable with," Mr Taylor says.

The online survey for the research can be accessed here:
https://auckland.au1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_1zXuCIOupqyAgOF

For more information contact:

Anne Beston I Media Relations Adviser, Communications, University of Auckland
Email: a.beston@auckland.ac.nz, Tel: +64 9 923 3258, Mobile: + 64 (0) 21 970 089

Appendix C: Recruitment Article

URL: http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=11816769

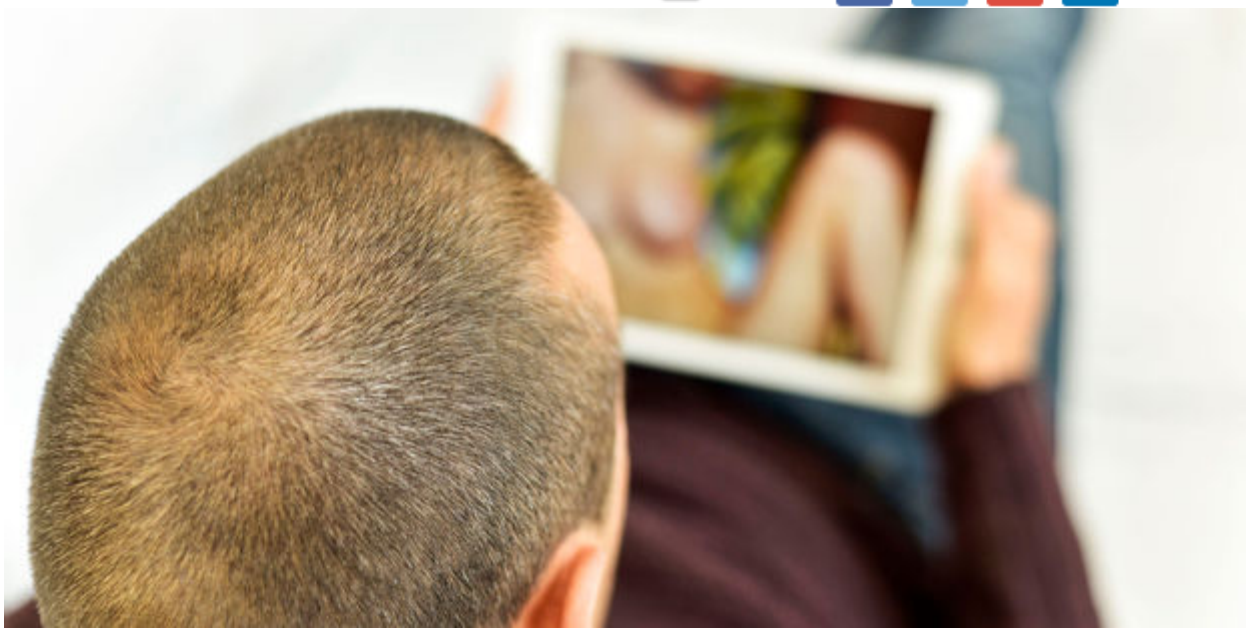
Jamie Morton Jamie Morton is the NZ Herald's science reporter.

Email Jamie
@Jamienzherald

NZ study: Inside the minds of porn users

10:18 AM Sunday Mar 12, 2017

Addiction | Health | Internet | Lifestyle | Mental Health | ... SHARE:



A Kiwi researcher is set to peer inside the minds of porn users, in what's to be one of the most in-depth New Zealand studies yet on the oft-controversial subject. Photo / 123RF

A Kiwi researcher is set to peer inside the minds of porn users, in what's to be one of the most in-depth New Zealand studies yet on the oft-controversial subject.

While there's increasing concern over the widespread use of porn by young men in particular, along with the effect it can have, research in the field remains hotly contested and inconclusive.

Now, University of Auckland psychology doctoral researcher Kris Taylor aims to capture the views of hundreds of male porn users through surveys and interviews, covering ground that's long been lacking from previous work.

"Access to pornography has only increased in recent years with so much available on the Internet, so given this high level of consumption, we need to know more about how men are consuming pornography and how they feel about it."

University of Auckland doctoral researcher Kris Taylor. Photo / Supplied

Over recent years, a major focus has been on whether porn can be addictive.

A 2015 study of Internet porn users suggested a person's own feeling of being "addicted" to online porn drove mental health distress, while another recent study showed how porn could trigger brain activity in people with underlying compulsive sexual behaviours.

Yet researchers say there's still no hard evidence to show porn addiction actually exists - and "pornography addiction" was not included in the recently-revised Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders because of a lack of scientific data.

Research also tended to point to either positive or negative effects, including whether it re-inforced sexist attitudes toward women, lowered intimacy or contributed to divorce rates.

"Depending on what view you have on pornography, you can marshal research that either aligns with your position of it being bad or of it being good."

Instead, his study would attempt to go "between" the two camps.

"That's why we want to talk to as wide a range of men as possible, from those who unabashedly enjoy pornography, to those who've had ethical or moral questions around pornography use, and anyone in between."

Key questions the research aimed to tackle to answer included what reservations men have over representations of both men and women in pornographic material and how men might feel about some of the content of contemporary pornographic material.

While there had been some studies on porn use in New Zealand, including a qualitative project at Victoria University, Taylor said there was relatively little data and information to work with.

"One of the notorious problems with doing porn research is that the data is incredibly hard to come by, in terms of finding out how many people are using it and what type of porn they are watching, because the people who own the data are the porn companies themselves."

What was known was that the large majority of porn users were men.

Taylor is seeking men who have consumed pornography for the research and all respondents will remain anonymous.

Those willing to take part would initially complete an online survey and some will be asked to do a follow-up interview.
"The identity of all participants, whether they simply complete the online survey or whether they're willing to take part in an interview, will be kept strictly confidential and interviewees will only be expected to respond to questions they feel comfortable with."
People interested in participating in the study can visit take the online survey here email Taylor at kris.taylor@auckland.ac.nz

Pornography research in New Zealand

• An Otago University study last year indicated the more porn a man watches, the less sexually intimate he is with his female partner. The study of 136 heterosexual women, which questioned them on their own use of porn and that of their partners, found 39 per cent used pornography in the preceding 12 months and 65 per cent said their partner had used porn in that time. For the 48 women who reported their partner had not used porn at all in the preceding 12 months, the mean sexual intimacy score was 65 - out of a maximum possible score of 96. But for the 24 whose partners used porn at least weekly, the mean level of sexual intimacy was lower, at 55.
• A 2015 University of Auckland qualitative study of 21 men indicated that many of these men did not engage critically with possible sexist representations within pornography, although a minority of participants did express some reflection of possible ethical dilemmas.
• In other recent research, University of Auckland student Ashlee-Ann Sneller found that, among youth using porn, one of the biggest risks was an unrealistic expectation created when it is used as a form of sex-education. Sneller also found that most young people said they were not intentionally looking for pornography, but instead had clicked on pop-ups on their computers or phones; watched it on Facebook or clicked on a link which then sparked their curiosity.
• In January, major porn company PornHub released figures showing that New Zealand ranked fifth on a top ten list of countries that watch the most porn, suggesting the Kiwis, on average, view 173 pages each. The value of the figures has been questioned.
- NZ Herald

Appendix D: Survey

Hello, and thank you for your interest in this PhD research project looking at men's interactions with pornography. There have been a lot of claims made recently about the role that pornography plays in individual's lives, and society more broadly. As such, the following brief survey aims to investigate how men in particular think about contemporary pornography and its use.

The survey will take 10 to 20 minutes depending on how much you choose to write. On the following page you will find six short answer questions for you to fill out, followed by five brief demographic questions. Please feel free to leave answers blank, and to write as little as you wish. This survey is savable, and as such you will be able to return to it up to 2 weeks after beginning.

The survey will conclude by asking whether you are interested in participating further in the research.

Your participation in this survey will be completely anonymous, and any use of your answers will be done under a pseudonym to protect your identity. The completion and submission of this survey will be taken as your admission of consent to participating in the current research.

If you would like to know more about this project please contact the Principal Investigator Kris Taylor, School of Psychology, The University of Auckland, Email kris.taylor@auckland.ac.nz, Professor Nicola Gavey, Email n.gavey@auckland.ac.nz (supervisor), or the Head of School, Professor Will Hayward, School of Psychology, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142, Phone 09 923-8516, Email w.hayward@auckland.ac.nz. For any other queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair of The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Research Office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Phone 09 373-7599 ext 83711, Email ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz

This research has been approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on 27th February, 2016 for three years. Reference number 018619

How would you define pornography?

What are your views on contemporary pornography?

If you use pornography or have used it in the past, how frequently would you use it (and does this change)?

What do you use pornography for?

How do you currently feel about your own pornography use and/or how have you felt about it in the past?

'Pornography addiction' has been in the media a lot recently. What are your thoughts about this idea?

Demographic Information

Age:

Ethnicity:

Sexual Orientation:

Relationship Status:

Religious Affiliation:

Thank you! If you would like to explore more of these types of questions and be further involved in our research, we are currently looking for men who are willing to participate in an initial one-to-one, audio recorded interview about pornography, men, and masculinity. We are looking for a variety of views, so whether you are really into porn, struggle with its use, or are not even sure what you think, then we would like to hear more from you.

Your involvement would take between 1 and 2 hours, with the possibility of a follow up interview at a later date. The interview would take place either at the University of Auckland, over the phone, or at a location convenient to you (e.g., a local cafe). If required you will be reimbursed for your travel cost.

The interviewer will ask about your views, experiences, and reflections on a range of issues relating to masculinity and pornography. Your identity will be kept secret from everyone except for the core research team, and you are welcome to withdraw from the project at any point up to one week after the interview.

If you would like to participate, please enter a contact email address below. You will be contacted by Kris Taylor from the University of Auckland's School of Psychology to discuss any questions you have about the project and to arrange the interview. Alternatively you can contact Kris directly with any questions or feedback about the survey at kris.taylor@auckland.ac.nz

Email address:

Appendix E: Participant Information Sheet

SCIENCE
SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY

Level 2, Building 302
Science Centre
23 Symonds Street
Auckland Central
Email: psych@auckland.ac.nz
New Zealand
T +64 9 373 7599 ext 88413 or 88557
The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland 1142 New Zealand

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Project Title: Masculinity and Pornography: Addiction and the Negotiation of Moral and Ethical Questions

Principal Investigator: Kris Taylor, kris.taylor@auckland.ac.nz
Supervisor: Professor Nicola Gavey, n.gavey@auckland.ac.nz

The possible negative outcomes of 'excessive' pornography use among young men is a concern increasingly surfacing among journalists, academics, and the wider public. One common concern in particular centres around what effects pornography use may have upon users. Further concerns revolve around the 'pathological' nature of 'excessive' Internet pornography use, with research on Internet pornography frequently focused upon the underlying 'causes', such as obsession and/or compulsion. However, one perspective, 'pornography addiction' has gained particular traction, both academically and in popular culture (a search for 'pornography addiction' online offers up a wealth of 'Are you a Porn Addict?' surveys, candid celebrity admissions, and user support websites).
The concept of 'pornography addiction', however, has been the subject of criticism. For example, some have likened the move towards 'behavioural addictions' as simply the reframing of 'sins'. Furthermore, the pornography addiction argument fails to address the actual voices and criticisms of pornography users themselves with any nuance. That is, debates around pornography addiction fail to engage pornography users' reservations or pleasure, their understandings of production and cultural impacts, or their resistance and/or engagement with sexualized representations.

The current project is part of a PhD study looking for men who are willing to participate in an initial one-to-one, audio recorded interview about pornography's role in conceptions masculinity, society, and their own lives. Your involvement would take between 1 and 2 hours per interview. The interview would take place either in an interview room at the University of Auckland, via telephone, or at a public location convenient to you (e.g. a local cafe). Research participants will be reimbursed for transport costs that they incur as a result of their participation in this research study. This will be conditional upon the

presentation of a receipt, will not exceed $20, and will be made available to you even in the event that you withdraw from the research.
The interviewer will ask about your views, experiences and reflections on a range of issues relating to masculinity and pornography. These will include questions about your own pornography and others' use, as well as questions relating to what you think about the content of contemporary pornography and pornography addiction. As such the University requires us to raise with you the **potential 'risks and benefits'** of being involved, and ask you to think carefully about those before deciding whether or not to participate. The possible benefits of participating in this research is to have a confidential forum in which to air experiences, concerns, or points that you may not have been able to speak about previously. This has the capacity to be an interesting and thought provoking opportunity in which your opinions and concerns will be listened to. As such, you may also be invited to attend a follow-up interview in which we will discuss any subsequent insights that you may have had as a result of our initial discussion. This interview will be approximately 1 hour depending on the length of your answers.
However, there are some risks, although they are few. Due to the private nature of the topics being discussed, we are aware of the possibility of some feelings of unease, or even personal distress. We will endeavour to make the interview as comfortable as possible for you, and to offer you further support after the interview should it be required. Your identity will be kept secret from everyone except for the interviewer conducting the interview. You are also welcome to withdraw from the project at any point without giving a reason at any time. However, while it is our duty as researchers to uphold your confidentiality at all times, in the case of disclosures of conduct that would cause serious harm to either yourself or to others we would be obligated to disclose this information to appropriate authorities.
Moreover, your participation in the first interview does not obligate you to participate in the second interview. If you would like to participate, we will discuss any questions you have about the project before we begin any interviewing. During the interviews, you would only be asked to answer questions that you feel comfortable responding to, and can skip questions without explanation. We will also ask for some basic demographic details (age, ethnicity, etc.).

What happens to the audio recordings? The audio data will be kept on a password protected computer, and a password protected external hard-drive. Your transcript will be allocated a random pseudonym and then transcribed by either the principle investigator, or a professional third party transcription service (who will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement). These transcripts will be analysed by the principle investigator, Kris Taylor. These transcripts, along with the original audio data will be destroyed after the term of 6 years. Segments of the interview conversation may be reproduced in publications, presentations, and a doctoral thesis.
If you would like to know more about this project please contact the Principal Investigator Kris Taylor, School of Psychology, The University of Auckland, Email kris.taylor@auckland.ac.nz, Professor Nicola Gavey, Email

n.gavey@auckland.ac.nz (supervisor), or the Head of School, Professor Will Hayward, School of Psychology, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142, Phone 09 923-8516, Email w.hayward@auckland.ac.nz
For any other queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair of The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Research Office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Phone 09 373-7599 ext 83711, Email ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz
This research has been approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on 27th February, 2016 for three years. Reference number 018619

Appendix F: Consent Form

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SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY

Level 2, Building 302
Science Centre
23 Symonds Street
Auckland Central
Email: psych@auckland.ac.nz
New Zealand
T +64 9 373 7599 ext 88413 or 88557
The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland 1142 New Zealand

CONSENT FORM

THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF 6 YEARS

Project Title: **Masculinity and Pornography: Addiction and the Negotiation of Moral and Ethical Questions**

Principal Investigator: Kris Taylor, kris.taylor@auckland.ac.nz

Supervisor: Professor Nicola Gavey, n.gavey@auckland.ac.nz

I have read the Participant Information Sheet, and I understand what this PhD project is about, what it involves, and have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I understand that segments of this interview may be reproduced in publications, presentations, and a doctoral thesis, albeit under a pseudonym. I also understand that in the case of disclosures of conduct that would cause serious harm to either yourself or to others the researchers are obligated to disclose this information to appropriate authorities.

- o I voluntarily agree to participate in this project
- o I understand that this involves an audio recorded interview which will be subject to transcription and analysis
- o I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent without giving a reason up to one week after this interview
- o I would like to receive a summary of findings upon completion of the study ☐
- o I would like to be contacted in the future in relation to a follow up interview ☐

Name (please print clearly):

Email address:

Signature:

Date:

This research has been approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on 27th February, 2016 for three years. Reference number 018619

Appendix G: Interview Guide - Version 1

THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
NEW ZEALAND

SCIENCE
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Level 2, Building 302
Science Centre
23 Symonds Street
Auckland Central
Email: psych@auckland.ac.nz
New Zealand
T +64 9 373 7599 ext 88413 or 88557
The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland 1142 New Zealand

Commented [KT1]:

Masculinity and Pornography: Addiction and the Negotiation of Moral and Ethical Questions

1st Semi-structured Interview Guide

(Model comments and questions for the interviewer to put to participants are written in upright font; instructions for interviewers are written *in italics*. These questions may become more refined across the course of interviewing).

Interviewer introduces himself

Interviewer reminds participants:

[This introductory narrative is a guide – to be adapted as required to flow with beginning conversation]

"Thank you for coming along.

As you know, in this study we are interested in talking to New Zealand men about pornography, masculinity, and addiction. We are interested in what you think about contemporary pornography, how it makes you feel, how it relates to modern conceptions of masculinity, and what your thoughts are on the idea of pornography addiction.

SCRIPT

We are also interested in whether you discuss or share pornography with your friends, and what these conversations or transactions entail.

Before we get started – can I just go over the information about the study and the consent form and get some basic information from you..."

Check that they have read the PIS and understood it; ask if they have any questions. Advise participants that they may skip giving answers to any question

PIS READ?
Q's?

by saying 'pass' and may withdraw their participation at any time without giving a reason [If they start to talk about the topic of the research in any detail, ask if is ok 'if we come back to that'].

Give participant(s) Consent Form to sign (go through where there are options to check that they have marked one)

Ask if it ok now to turn the audio recorder on.

Begin Interview proper:

1. **Introduction:** To start with, can you tell me about what caught your attention about this study, and why you were interested in participating?

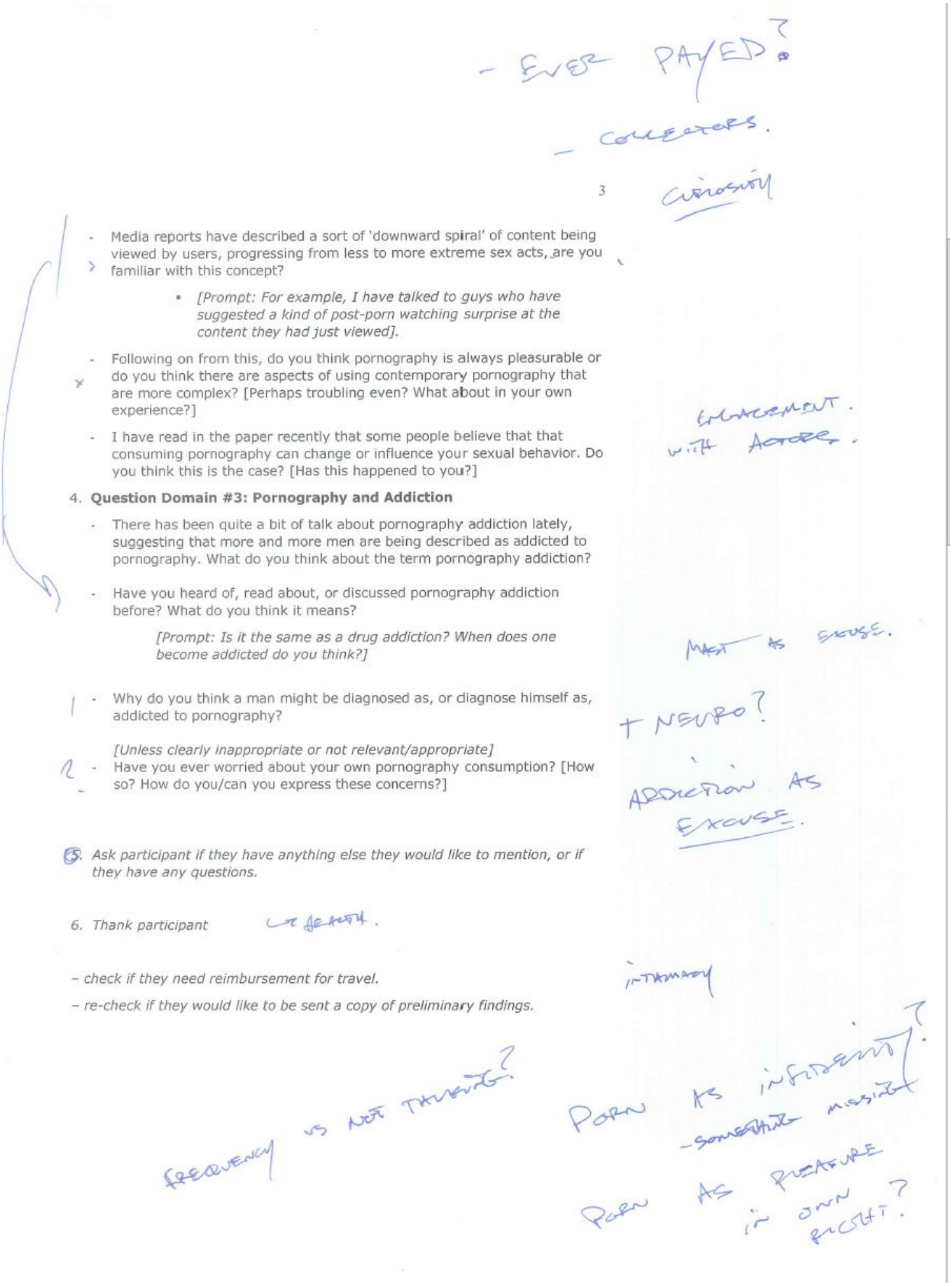
2. **Question domain #1: Pornography and Culture**

   - ~~So to begin with~~, what do you think about the assumption that all men watch porn?
   - I completed some research recently with men asking them about discussing porn with their mates. Do you think that men have conversations about pornography? Do you yourself speak about pornography with others? [What do you talk about?]
   - What do you think about the depictions of men and women in pornography?
   - Do you think these depictions tie into ideas of masculinity?

     [Prompt: Like do you think that men emulate porn? Do you think porn says something about men's sexuality?]
   - Critics often note the 'mainstream' pornography shows men as sexually dominant in relation to women. Do you think this is true?
   - What do you think people mean when they mention 'mainstream pornography'?
   - Have you ever heard of alternative/feminist/~~queer~~ pornography? What do you think about these?

[Use prompts and follow up questions to elicit rich and detailed descriptions of sites, material, encounters, etc. What is normal or unremarkable? What is considered extreme etc.

3. **Question domain #2: Pornography and the Individual**



- EVER PAYED?
- COLLEAGUES.
- CURIOSITY

3

- Media reports have described a sort of 'downward spiral' of content being viewed by users, progressing from less to more extreme sex acts, are you familiar with this concept?
  - *[Prompt: For example, I have talked to guys who have suggested a kind of post-porn watching surprise at the content they had just viewed].*
- Following on from this, do you think pornography is always pleasurable or do you think there are aspects of using contemporary pornography that are more complex? [Perhaps troubling even? What about in your own experience?]
- I have read in the paper recently that some people believe that that consuming pornography can change or influence your sexual behavior. Do you think this is the case? [Has this happened to you?]

ENJOYMENT. WITH ANGER.

4. **Question Domain #3: Pornography and Addiction**
   - There has been quite a bit of talk about pornography addiction lately, suggesting that more and more men are being described as addicted to pornography. What do you think about the term pornography addiction?
   - Have you heard of, read about, or discussed pornography addiction before? What do you think it means?

     [Prompt: Is it the same as a drug addiction? When does one become addicted do you think?]

MASK AS EXCUSE.

   - Why do you think a man might be diagnosed as, or diagnose himself as, addicted to pornography?

+ NEURO?

     [Unless clearly inappropriate or not relevant/appropriate]
   - Have you ever worried about your own pornography consumption? [How so? How do you/can you express these concerns?]

ADDICTION AS EXCUSE.

5. *Ask participant if they have anything else they would like to mention, or if they have any questions.*

6. *Thank participant* OR DEATH.

- *check if they need reimbursement for travel.*
- *re-check if they would like to be sent a copy of preliminary findings.*

INTIMACY

FREQUENCY VS NOT TALKING?

PORN AS INFIDELITY? - SOMETHING MASKED

PORN AS PLEASURE IN OWN RIGHT?

Appendix H: Interview Guide - Version 2

THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
NEW ZEALAND

SCIENCE
SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY

Level 2, Building 302
Science Centre
23 Symonds Street
Auckland Central
Email: psych@auckland.ac.nz
New Zealand
T +64 9 373 7599 ext 88413 or 88557
The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland 1142 New Zealand

Commented [KT1]:

Masculinity and Pornography: Addiction and the Negotiation of Moral and Ethical Questions

1st Semi-structured Interview Guide

Scripting

As you know, in this study we are interested in talking to New Zealand men about pornography, masculinity, and addiction. We are interested in what you think about contemporary pornography, how it makes you feel, how it relates to modern conceptions of masculinity, and what your thoughts are on the idea of pornography addiction.

Check that they have read the PIS and understood it; ask if they have any questions.

*Some questions may be repeated. Advise participants that they may **skip** giving answers to any question by saying **'pass'** and may **withdraw their participation at any time** without giving a reason [If they start to talk about the topic of the research in any detail, ask if is ok 'if we come back to that'].*

Before we get started – can I just go over the information about the study and the consent form and get some basic information from you..."

Give participant(s) Consent Form to sign (go through where there are options to check that they have marked one)

Ask if it ok now to turn the audio recorder on.

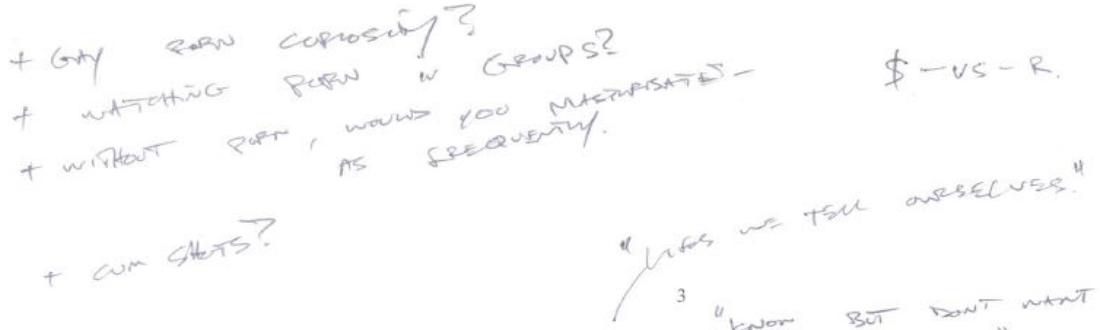
1. **Introduction:** To start with, can you tell me about what caught your attention about this study, and why you were interested in participating?

2. **Question domain #1: Pornography and Culture**

   - What do you think people mean when they mention 'mainstream pornography'?
   - Have you ever heard of alternative or feminist pornography? What do you think about these?
   - How accepted do you think pornography use is in New Zealand?
   - Do you think about that all men watch porn? What about women?
   - I completed some research recently with men asking them about discussing porn with their mates. Do you think that men have conversations about pornography? Do you yourself speak about pornography with others?
   - Do you think pornography has changed? [For example storylines? What about sex acts? How do you feel about these changes?].
   - Critics often note that 'mainstream' pornography shows men as sexually dominant in relation to women. What do you think about this?
   - What do you think about the depictions of men and women in pornography?
   - Do you think these depictions tie into ideas of masculinity?
     - *[Prompt: Like do you think that men emulate porn? Do you think porn says something about men's sexuality?]*

3. **Question domain #2: Pornography and the Individual**

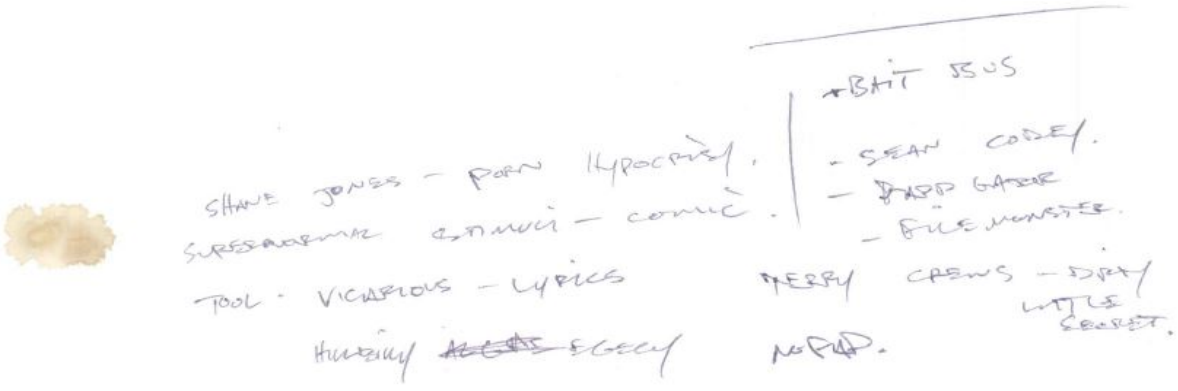
   - What do you think about your own pornography use/consumption?
   - Have you ever payed money for pornography? Why/why not?
   - What do you think I mean when I say 'extreme pornography'. Have you ever seen 'extreme pornography'?
   - Following on from this, do you think pornography is always pleasurable or do you think there are aspects of using contemporary pornography that are more complex?
   - Is there a grey area where content that you have watched has tested your limits [– *search for conflict* -]
   - Have you ever heard of 'shock pornography?'



- Do you ever wonder about the actors in pornography? What about the performer's pleasure? [Do you find it convincing? – *search for conflict* -]
-
- What role do you think pornography plays in a relationship?
    - *[Prompt: is it valuable? is it infidelity? does it prevent infidelity? Is porn its own sex act? Etc.]*
- I have read in the paper recently that some people believe that that consuming pornography can change or influence your sexual behavior. Has this been your experience? [What about youth? – *search for conflict* -]

4. **Question Domain #3: Pornography and Addiction**
    - There has been quite a bit of talk about pornography addiction lately, suggesting that more and more men are being described as addicted to pornography. What do you think about the term 'pornography addiction'?
    - Media reports have described a sort of 'downward spiral' of content being viewed by users, progressing from less to more extreme sex acts, are you familiar with this concept?
        - *[Prompt: For example, I have talked to guys who have suggested a kind of post-porn watching surprise at the content they had just viewed].*
    - What about the idea that pornography can desensitize you?
    - Why do you think a man might be diagnosed as, or diagnose himself as, addicted to pornography?
        - *[Prompt: Is it the same as a drug addiction? When does one become addicted do you think?]*
    - What do you think about neurological explanations of pornography addiction?
    - Have you ever worried about your own pornography consumption? [How so? How do you/can you express these concerns?]

5. *Ask participant if they have anything else they would like to mention, or if they have any questions.*



Appendix I: Ethical Approval and Amendments Ethics info

Conditional Approval 17 February, 2017
Full Approval (with comment) 27 February, 2017

Office of the Vice-Chancellor
Finance, Ehtics and Compliance

The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland, New Zealand

Level 10, 49 Symonds Street
Telephone: 64 9 373 7599
Extension: 87830 / 83761
Facsimile: 64 9 373 7432

UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE (UAHPEC)

27-Feb-2017

MEMORANDUM TO:

Prof Nicola Gavey
Psychology

Re: Application for Ethics Approval (Our Ref. 018619): Approved with comment

The Committee considered your application for ethics approval for your project entitled **Masculinity and Pornography: Addiction and the Negotiation of Moral and Ethical Questions .**

Ethics approval was given for a period of three years with the following comment(s):

Please make these modifications to the following public documents:
Press Release: Please remove the statement: This research has been approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on ..... for three years. Reference number 018619 from the content of the press release. This wording should only be used at the end of the text.

Followup interview consent form : Please add the approval wording to the end of the text on the last page.

The expiry date for this approval is 27-Feb-2020.

If the project changes significantly you are required to resubmit a new application to UAHPEC for further consideration.

In order that an up-to-date record can be maintained, you are requested to notify UAHPEC once your project is completed.

The Chair and the members of UAHPEC would be happy to discuss general matters relating to ethics approvals if you wish to do so. Contact should be made through the UAHPEC Ethics Administrators at ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz in the first instance.

All communication with the UAHPEC regarding this application should include this reference number: **018619.**

Approval of amendment to the survey (word choice) 8 March, 2017

Office of the Vice-Chancellor
Finance, Ethics and Compliance

The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland, New Zealand

Level 10, 49 Symonds Street
Telephone: 64 9 373 7599
Extension: 87830 / 83761
Facsimile: 64 9 373 7432

UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE (UAHPEC)

08-Mar-2017

MEMORANDUM TO:

Prof Nicola Gavey
Psychology

Re: Request for change of Ethics Approval Ethics Approval (Our Ref. 018619): Amendments Approved

The Committee considered your request for change for your project entitled **Masculinity and Pornography: Addiction and the Negotiation of Moral and Ethical Questions** and approval was granted for the following amendments on 08-Mar-2017.

The Committee approved the following amendments:

1. To minor amendments to the survey questions.

The expiry date for this approval is 27-Feb-2020.

If the project changes significantly you are required to resubmit a new application to the Committee for further consideration.

In order that an up-to-date record can be maintained, it would be appreciated if you could notify the Committee once your project is completed.

The Chair and the members of the Committee would be happy to discuss general matters relating to ethics approvals. If you wish to do so, please contact the UAHPEC Ethics Administrators at ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz in the first instance.

Please quote reference number: **018619** on all communication with the UAHPEC regarding this application.

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