\*The embedded Prezi can be found here:

<https://prezi.com/bu9it1oppa41/women-in-pornography/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy>

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**Research Questions**

For this project I wanted to examine **to what extent pornography constitutes liberation or oppression for women in the arena of female sexuality.** To do this I was guided by the following questions:

1. How did each side of the feminist sexuality debates about pornography (Feminist Sex Wars ca 1970s -80s) characterize themselves?
2. What is the philosophy behind dominance feminism and sex-positive feminism?

### Has feminism allowing women to be more sexually expressive led to a destruction of moral values in contemporary American society?

### Is pornography an expression of male culture through which women are commodified and exploited?

### Should pornography and other forms of female sexualization in the media or online be a part of pop culture and capitalist culture as it is today?

**Hypothesis**

I believed that after doing my research an overwhelming percentage of women would

perceive pornography as a perpetuation of male commercialization of women’s sexuality.

**Methodology**

To conduct my research, I used a survey that helped quantify how women perceive pornography and objectification. The survey consisted of nine questions assessing a woman’s opinion of pornographic content and how this may be liberatory or oppressive.

**Survey Questions**

1. To what extent are women more objectified than men? (1-5)

2. When you see ‘explicit’ images of ‘promiscuous’ women online or anywhere else, how does it make you feel? (images inc)

* It's pleasurable and liberating because the feminine physique should be appreciated
* Offended because it's derogatory to women
* I don't feel anything

3. 1-5, to what extent are men responsible for the objectification of women?

4. 1-5, to what extent are women responsible for their own objectification?

5. What is your position towards pornography?

* pro (pornography benefits women both personally and politically, so I support it)
* anti (pornography is degrading to women and is a commercialization of women's sexuality so I am against it
* liberal (I believe in free speech but I am not sure about my attitude on pornography)

6. What is your opinion towards women involved directly in the production of pornography?

* They are submitting to men's commercialization of women's sexuality
* They are good examples of liberation for women
* No opinion of them

7. To what extent should pornography and other forms of female sexualization in the media or online be a part of pop culture and capitalist culture as it is today? (1-5)

8. To what extent has feminism allowing women to be more sexually expressive led to a destruction of moral values in contemporary American society? (1-5)

9. To what extent is pornography an expression of male culture through which women are commodified and exploited? (1-5)

**Sample Group**

I gave my survey to 40 women. I chose this group because I wanted to gauge the females perspective on how pornography has either given them a sense of liberation or feelings of oppression post 70s second-wave feminist era.

**Results and Analysis**

**To my question of:** “To what extent are women more objectified than men?”

* 72.5% women said that men were significantly less objectified
* 12.5% said that women are not more objectified than men
* 15% said it was about the same

**Analysis:** Associated with second-wave feminism, the phrase “sexual objectification” is now readily seen throughout media campaigns, advertisements, etc., Though objectification of women is under the guise of empowerment, it has actually led women to be treated like sex objects, serving another’s sexual pleasure. This sexist media has led many women to confirm the patriarchal notion of feminine physique serving only a means to sexualize and objectify women. Foucault’s concept of docile bodies parallels how the media ‘disciplines’ the female body by subjecting it to the ‘model’ ideal to keep women oppressed and men dominant.

**To my question of:** “When you see ‘explicit’ images of ‘promiscuous’ women online or anywhere else, how does it make you feel?”

* 50% said it was offensive and derogatory
* 25% said it was liberating because the feminine physique should be appreciated
* 25% said they didn’t feel anything

**Analysis:** Whether it’s conflating a woman’s breasts with beer cans or submitting her to interchangeability, the explicit nature of female representation in the media has become rampant. 50% of the women in the survey said that the explicit images offended them, while 25% thought the images were an appreciation of the feminine physique. Since the 1970s and more so the 80s, women have been given a freedom to maneuver and control their own sexuality as they please. To be able to have a publicized medium in which to glorify the physicality of women perhaps leads to this feeling of liberation. Still, however, half the women who argued against its liberatory nature felt that such exploitation of women was merely the man’s ploy to capitalize and make substantial profit off of the female body.

**To my question of:** “To what extent are men responsible for the objectification of women?”

* 50% said men were mostly responsible
* 17.5% said men were not responsible
* 32.5% said to some degree men are responsible

**Analysis:** Men dominate ad agencies, media outlets, and other sources of entertainment whether online or off. A man’s gaze has fueled pop culture, with greater exposure to advertising and increased sexual explicitness almost everywhere. Marketing companies use any fertile ground they can get their hands on to make money. Men who read magazines that objectify women do not respect sexual boundaries to a high degree because they are given a false impression about female physicality. Men are conditioned to objectify women because in male culture, this is acceptable; it is a bonding experience. Still, we shouldn’t blame men’s libido for their primate-like urges. The less developed a man is, the more unconscious his behavior will be toward women. Men need to stop succumbing to immoral, sexualized behavior by blaming it solely on their biological makeup. 50% of the women above, and 32.5% realize that men have also learnt rationality and complex thought processes, so they too should be able to make fair judgments in the presence of an attractive woman.

**To my question of:** “To what extent are women responsible for their own objectification?”

* 37.5% said women were mostly responsible
* 20% said women were not responsible
* 42.5% said to some degree women are responsible

**Analysis:** I think that those who answered mostly yes to this question (37.5%) or those that answered ‘sometimes’ (42.5%) realize that given our reality, women should also take part in minimizing their own objectification. A woman can dress any way she wants, it’s her legal right. Practically speaking however, it isn’t the smartest thing to do given the reality in which we exist. Keeping in mind, that things like pornography, advertisements, and pop culture has had a hand in shaping this reality. At the same time, however 20% of the women who said women were not responsible think that feminism (particularly second-wave feminism) has given women the right to be sexually expressive, and that is completely fine.

**To my question of:** “What is your position towards pornography?”

* 57.5% said they were liberal
* 7.5% said they were pro
* 35% said they were anti

**Analysis:** There are three categories that feminists breaks themselves into regarding pornography. People who were anti-pornography (35% of the sample group) think that pornography is an expression of male culture through which women are exploited. Women who were pro (only about 7.5%) argue that porn benefits women both politically and personally. The liberal position which makes up the largest percentage of the sample group (57.5%) would most likely argue that they don’t approve of it, but since everyone has the right to consume or produce words and images, no one should condemn people engaging in pornography. I think many liberal feminists who are personally uncomfortable with pornography are often intimidated into silence because they are accused with identifying with their ‘oppressors’ and so this survey gave them a chance to express that silenced opinion.

**To my question of:** “What is your opinion towards women involved directly in the production of pornography?”

* 57.5% said women are submitting to men's commercialization of women's sexuality
* 35% said they are good examples of liberation for women
* 7.5% had no opinion of them

**Analysis:** 57.5% think that pornography, the commercialization of women for the pleasure of men, is an act of gender oppression. It is a subordination of women through pictures that dehumanize them as sexual objects. These women are “reduced to body parts, penetrated by objects and tortured in a context that makes conditions sexual.” These women subscribe to the view that law should protect virtue in that it should come into play when there is a breach of public morality. The 35% who answered that women in pornography are good examples of liberation would argue that law should protect choice. Pornography allows women to enjoy situations that would be anathema to them in real life. “It breaks cultural stereotypes, and provides a sexual outlet for women.” It demands sexual freedom, in which pornography is free speech applied to the sexual realm.

**To my question of:** “To what extent should pornography and other forms of female sexualization in the media or online be a part of pop culture and capitalist culture as it is today?”

* 67.5% said it should not
* 10% said it should
* 22.5% said it should to a degree

**Analysis:** 67.5%of the sample group see an oppression of women by men. Male interests are maintained by a capitalistic structure which they call ‘patriarchy’. Many would argue that sex is a social construct and that sexual essentialism should be rejected. Overtly saying that sexual preferences are not biological but ideological. Men play a role in constructing a woman’s sexuality through the ‘texts’ of society as Foucault would argue. “After this construction of images, men commercialize women’s sexuality and market it back to them in the form of pornography.” So, through pornographic content, men define women sexually, determining every aspect of her role in society. To end this, capitalist culture must be destroyed. This is a view held by many radical feminists.

**To my question of:** “To what extent has feminism--allowing women to be more sexually expressive--led to a destruction of moral values in contemporary American society?”

* 37.5% said it did
* 30% said it didn’t
* 32.5% said it did to a degree

**Analysis:** Aside from men, many women would also argue that feminists like Margaret Sanger and Alice Walker disrupted the ‘American lifestyle’. They have increased divorce rates by indoctrinating women with this idea of being independent. Somehow, these feminists have emasculated men and have brought ideas to the public sphere in the name of equality. 37.5% of the sample group said that you can’t change the way men think since thoughts of sex are based on visual stimulation. There were definitely times when women were suppressed by men but now there are laws in place to prevent obscenities. 30% of the women who said feminism has not led to a moral destruction of society would argue that society evolves, and that discrimination and sexism are becoming less acceptable. Perhaps they think that feminism is not the effect of moral destruction but rather the implied cause.

**To my question of:** “To what extent is pornography an expression of male culture through which women are commodified and exploited?”

* 70% said it was
* 12.5% said it was not
* 17.5% said it was to a degree

**Analysis:** 70% of the women who thought pornography to be an expression of male culture to exploit women would perhaps also agree that for all the progress of contemporary social movements, the “world is still structured by patriarchy, white supremacy, and corporate capitalism.” Pornography is degrading to women and fueled by the ideological beliefs that money has greater value than people. The power of violence which is integral to the intimcacy of eroticism in pornogrpahy is violence agaisnt women and perpetuation of the theory of rape.

**Outside Sources**

In a paper entitled “Sex Wars Redux: Agency and Coercion in Feminist Legal Theory”, the author describes how the “sex wars” of the 1980s led to the perpetuation of sex-positive feminism and critique of dominance feminism. This relates to my research in that it offers a nuanced discussion on the systematic oppression under the guise of legal neutrality as accepted by sex-positive feminists. It also talked about how women were pervasively constructed by male aggression.

### Work Cited Page

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