

A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE PORNOGRAPHY DEBATE:
TOWARD A SOCIALIST FEMINIST FRAMEWORK

by

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A Critical Examination of the Pornography Debate:

Toward a Socialist Feminist Framework

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ABSTRACT

This thesis undertakes a critical examination of the current discourse on pornography. It examines the major theoretical perspectives which can be characterized as conservative, liberal, feminist, and marxist/socialist feminist. The thesis also considers the richly textured debate within each of these general perspectives. The main concern of the thesis is to evaluate strengths and weaknesses of these various analyses of pornography. This evaluation is guided by five criteria which arise as central issues from the literature: 1) whether or not a definition of pornography is provided, and the adequacy of the definition; 2) the manner in which sexuality is characterized; 3) the way in which 'harm' is defined; 4) the type and quality of research, if any, which is used to support arguments; and 5) the prescriptions for change which are advanced. This critical examination reveals underlying assumptions of the different theoretical positions on sexuality, the obligations of the individual in society, gender relations, and the role of the State.

This thesis considers a wide range of published and unpublished position and discussion papers including the social scientific research generated by the two important government commissions appointed in the United States (1970) and Canada (1983) to investigate the social implications of pornography.

This thesis looks at works that are widely cited and reprinted, as well as works that are less well known, but aid in the articulation of distinct theoretical positions.

The thesis demonstrates that most analyses of pornography are inadequate. Some of the analyses considered are gender-blind, others do not acknowledge the social construction of sexuality, and most ignore the economic context in which the production of pornography takes place. It is argued that to advance our understanding of pornography these issues must be addressed.

DEDICATION

To Margaret Coates, my friend, my advisor. I thank you for your
patience, interest, and insight.

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INTRODUCTION

To understand pornography from a sociological perspective, it is necessary to place it within a historical and theoretical context. While the production of pornography and changes in content have increased dramatically since World War II, sociology has not developed a systematic body of argument and research to explain this phenomenon. The problem of pornography has reached public recognition in both the United States and Canada resulting in government commissions to investigate the problem. These commissions (U.S. Commission on Obscenity and Pornography (1970) and the Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution (1983) in Canada) were appointed to solve the problem of pornography, instead they added to the controversy. With the growth of the women's movement, questions about pornography became particularly contentious. The significance of pornography has been recognized by a wide range of commentators. Yet, there have been very few attempts to group these commentators and present an overview of their arguments.

This thesis will examine the current debate surrounding pornography. I will be focusing on the conservative, liberal, feminist, and marxist/socialist feminist perspectives on pornography. I will examine these positions on the basis of five important criteria: 1) whether a definition of pornography is provided, and the adequacy of the definition; 2) the manner in which sexuality is characterized; 3) the way in which 'harm' is

defined; 4) the type and quality of research, if any, which is used to support arguments; and 5) an evaluation of the prescriptions for change which are advanced. These five criteria emerge from the literature as central issues. The problem with definition is important because without some degree of consensus as to a definition of pornography serious discussion of the issues is precluded. Further, research which employs different terminology to describe sexual materials used in clinical experiments is difficult to compare and evaluate; whether strong conclusions can be drawn from such problematic research is dubious. The manner in which sexuality is characterized, the values that are or are not attached to it, form the core of each position's perspective on pornography and is the key factor from which their prescriptions flow. The concept of harm is important because, following the principles of John Stuart Mill, harm is put forward by liberals as the ultimate test for whether or not material can be rightfully suppressed. Little agreement exists among the speakers from the various perspectives as to what constitutes harm. Those commentators who produce research on pornography as evidence to support their contentions, e.g. Berger (1977), generally present stronger and more convincing arguments, depending on the quality of the research, than those who rely largely on impassioned rhetoric and religious notions of the sanctity of sexuality within marriage. Last, the prescriptions which are recommended, if adopted, could have far-reaching effects on constitutional guarantees to free speech and on sexual expression

in general.

This thesis will argue that pornography cannot be examined in isolation from the material conditions in which it endures. Pornography does not exist in a vacuum and the imagery and the industry are shaped by the prevailing social and economic context. Also, to provide a satisfactory explanation of pornography, one cannot ignore questions of gender and race. Finally, a convincing treatment of pornography must acknowledge the social construction of sexuality. Ultimately, I will argue that none of the positions taken with regard to pornography are satisfactory. However, the socialist feminist perspective has promise, although it is not without problems. In the final chapter of this thesis I will suggest how pornography and the pornography industry might be examined within a model of sexual politics advanced by Weir (1987) -- a socialist feminist.

As I have stated, the content and availability of pornography has changed significantly since World War II. These changes have caused a great deal of public concern both in Canada and the U.S. In response to such concern, governments have been forced to investigate the possible impact of pornography and the legal measures which should be taken to deal with it. The 1970 President's Commission on Obscenity and Pornography in the United States (hereinafter referred to as the 1970 Pornography Commission) is the most well known government commission. This Commission set out to investigate the connection between pornography and anti-social attitudes and behaviour. The Commission

concluded that pornography was not harmful, recommending a relaxation of controls on pornography.

Seven years after this important Commission reached its conclusion, the pornography industry was estimated to be a four billion dollar a year business -- more profitable than the conventional film and record industries combined (Schipper, 1980) -- and with more established 'adult bookstores' than there are McDonald's restaurants.¹ According to Gloria Leonard, publisher of the soft-core magazine High Society in the United States, there were, as of 1980, 165 heterosexual soft-core magazines available, 12 soft-core homosexual magazines, 200 magazines catering to the hard-core heterosexual market, and 50 hard-core homosexual magazines.²

Combined circulation figures for pornographic magazines like Playboy and Penthouse exceed that of Time and Newsweek.³ Although Canadian domestic production of pornography is small compared to that of the United States, the industry appears to be growing. The estimated annual take is said to be \$300,000,000.⁴ The degree of violence in pornographic magazines has also increased, especially in 'soft-core' magazines like Playboy. (Malamuth and Spinner, 1980). Recent technological innovation has produced video and cable television pornography which enables viewers to watch this type of material in the privacy of their own homes.

Canada's experience with pornography has not paralleled that of the U.S. Canada gets 90% of its pornography from the U.S., very little domestic production is taking place. Therefore,

the Canadian State has relied on Customs regulations and review boards in an attempt to monitor and stem the flood of pornographic material into the country. Eventually, due to pressures from the Canadian public, the Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution was appointed in 1983 to ascertain the situation in Canada with respect to pornography and recommend legal reform. Rather than trying to reach one conclusion about pornography, like the 1970 Pornography Commission, the Fraser Committee generated 49 recommendations for legal reform. The Committee's specific recommendations for a three-tiered system of pornographic material open to prosecution will be discussed in Chapter II.

The growth in the pornography industry in North America, the wider accessibility of pornography, the changes in content (especially coercive themes) have exacerbated an already standing controversy between conservatives and liberals over suppression of pornography. The entrance of feminists into the debate has been a very significant theoretical and political development since 1970. Feminists insist that pornography is about male power not sex.

Even though the pornography controversy has accelerated and has become a high profile social problem, sociology has not developed a systematic body of argument and research to explain this phenomenon. One cannot turn to a sociology of pornography or a sociology of sex with a treatment of pornography for an over-

view of commentary and research.¹ Polsky (1967), writing in the area of the sociology of deviance, acknowledges the absence of a sociology of pornography. He suggests that the phenomena be seen similar to prostitution as a mechanism for "discharging anti-social sex; impersonal and non-marital"(188). Polsky maintains that his brief treatment of the subject is simply to alert the discipline to the "rubbishy sociologizing about pornography"(202) in the observations of literary critics and cultural historians and to suggest a general framework within which pornography might be investigated. Unfortunately, Polsky does not seem to have generated much interest in the topic. The only theoretical perspective within sociology that has considered pornography is marxism. Reich (1945) and Reiche (1968) both discuss pornography but only peripherally to their main concern with sexual repression within capitalism. Later, marxists such as McNall (1983) have looked at pornography as an ideological mechanism used in the subordination of women. I will be considering McNall later in this thesis.

Why sociology has not provided more explanation in this area remains unknown. Several reasons are plausible. First, academics have shied away from sex and pornography as unsavoury subjects or from the fear of social stigma (Polsky, 1967: 251). Second, feminists (e.g. Diamond, 1980) argue that mainstream sociology has tended to ignore women and to investigate social phenomena from a male perspective. Because pornography is

¹The Sociology of Sex (1978), for example, does not include a discussion of pornography.

produced and consumed principally by men, the presence of pornography may have been considered unremarkable. Third, because the concern with pornography has been connected with use and subsequent attitude and behaviour, investigation of the phenomena may have been seen as the province of psychology. If one looks at existing research, many of the researchers are from that discipline. However, the focus of a psychological approach is on the individual, not the individual as part of a collective. What is desperately needed is a sociological explanation which acknowledges the psychological processes which give rise to the desire for pornography.

While sociology has neglected pornography, feminists have not. Feminists began writing on this subject in the early 1970's. Pornography was perceived as a serious impediment to improvement in the status of women. Feminists concerned about pornography include sociologists, like Kathleen Barry, whom I will be considering in this thesis. With little assistance from sociological theories, Barry and other feminists interested in the subject of pornography have relied primarily upon feminist theory and argument to aid them in their analysis.

Feminists have insisted that pornography is not about sex but about power. Pornography is discussed by radical feminists as a script for sexual assault and rape. This charge has stimulated research into the connection between sex and aggression (Donnerstein & Hallan, 1978; Donnerstein, 1980; Malamuth, 1984). Although there exists a wide range of interdisciplinary empirical research on pornography (see Eysenck & Nias, 1978; McCormack,

1978; Wendell & Copp, 1983; Malamuth & Donnerstein, 1984) and a large body of commentary encompassing a number of disciplines (philosophy, psychology, law, women's studies), there have been relatively few attempts to examine the more prominent positions taken with regard to pornography. Such an exercise is warranted because many of these complex explanations rest upon questionable assumptions which need to be articulated and examined. In addition, groups committed to certain perspectives on pornography e.g. Citizens for Decency in Canada (representing a conservative view), the B.C. Civil Liberties Associations (civil libertarian), Women Against Violence Against Women (feminist) influence public opinion and the measures which are taken to regulate pornography. For example, the Citizens for Decency in cooperation with the Toronto police force (Project P) hold slide shows in various communities to convince the public of the horrors of presently available material. Such groups attempt to influence government decision-makers by submitting briefs as the B.C. Civil Liberties Association did here in Canada for the Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution in 1984.

The subject of pornography therefore is significant theoretically, politically, and practically. We must be informed and aware of the full political agenda of the individuals, groups, and perspectives we choose to support. This thesis is written to make a contribution to the kind of full understanding that is required.

Method

The literature on pornography being vast and disparate, poses a serious challenge to categorization and methods of discussing the material. Those who want to discuss pornography must decide upon some method of managing the literature. Wendell and Copp (1983) broke their book into three sections: philosophical work, social scientific research, and important legal cases. McKay & Dolff (1984), in their working paper for the Fraser Committee, also decided upon three categories: the impact of pornography on society, participants, and consumers. As they pointed out in their introduction, they had to manufacture a framework to make coherent a "chaotic literature". Berger (1977) chose to describe and evaluate arguments put forward by antagonists and apologists. This basic method is the one I have adopted and expanded. I will be describing and evaluating the conservative, liberal, feminist, and marxist/socialist feminist positions on pornography. These 'groups' are not homogeneous and there is individual variation and overlapping to some extent. Difficult choices had to be made in grouping individuals. However, this 'grouping' is a useful analytical device which helps to demonstrate the fundamental differences in argument and underlying assumptions between the perspectives.

I have chosen specific speakers to the issues because their work has received a good deal of reaction and comment and has been reprinted several times.⁵ I have chosen some of the commentators, not because their work has received wide attention, but because their particular position allows us to look at the

different angles of argument and the rich texture of the debate. As well, I believe the commentary which will be examined demonstrates that pornography can be a very divisive and troubling issue which can cause individuals to break rank or transgress other firmly held political commitments.

As I have stated, I will be arguing that none of the perspectives on pornography is satisfactory. This criticism does not mean that there are no strengths in the present perspectives. For instance, the liberal desire to protect sexuality and sexual imagery is an improvement over the conservative contention that sex and therefore sexual imagery is potentially dangerous and corrupting. Finally, I will be suggesting that the developing socialist feminist theoretical framework seems promising in terms of providing a useful critical examination of pornography and the pornography industry. But, this perspective is not without problems and there is a great deal of theory formulation and research that needs to be done.

Arguing that a socialist feminist analysis of pornography is the most useful does not necessarily lead to a single prescription for solving the problem of pornography. In this thesis I will suggest that the 'no-censorship at all' stance, which many socialist feminists take, is not entirely convincing. This position does not address adequately the problem of coercive pornography (material depicting involuntary bondage, physical assault, rape, murder or adult/child sex). Even civil libertarians have difficulty with the position of 'absolutely no censorship'. The B.C. Civil Liberties Association for example,

recently recommended that material depicting adult-child sex should be proscribed.⁶ However, I will also argue that using censorship as the method of dealing with pornography will most likely be ineffective and dangerous in its arbitrary suppression of "evil" material e.g. feminist or gay material. We must develop a viable alternative to censorship. One possible avenue would be to develop (non-coercive, non-sexist) sexual imagery to contradict the pornography industry's view of sexuality.

I will introduce each perspective on pornography with a general discussion of the views and arguments promoted by the individuals and groups associated with that perspective. Second, I will carry out an examination of specific commentators to demonstrate the nuances within the perspective. Last, I will provide a critical summary.

Before I begin the evaluation of the conservative, liberal, feminist, and marxist/socialist feminist explanations of pornography, I will discuss the historical changes in content and availability of pornography since World War II in Chapter I. In Chapter II the serious problems surrounding a definition of pornography will be explored. These two preliminary chapters should bring a fuller understanding of the recent history and complexities of the pornography debate and set the stage for a more meaningful discussion of the various perspectives beginning in Chapter III.

1. Joanne Fairhart, "Economics of Pornography", Hysteria, Vol. III, No. 1, Spring 1984, p. 5./See also Dennis Sobin, publisher of The Adult Business Report, put the number of adult bookstores in the U.S. as of June, 1979 at 15,000 - 20,000.
2. She describes soft-core pornography as the type of content found in Playboy magazine. Hard-core pornography she does not define. The term "hard-core" generally refers to material depicting fellatio, cunnilingus, and penetration. See Appendix IV for a partial list of pornographic magazines which can be found in Canada.
3. Fairhart.
4. Jillian Ridington, Freedom from Harm or Freedom of Speech? (Ottawa: National Association of Women and the Law, 1983), p. 25.
5. Fred Berger, "Pornography, Sex and Censorship", in Sue Wendell and David Copp (eds.) Pornography and Censorship, (N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1983), p. 85.
6. John Dixon, B.C. Civil Liberties Association, submission to the Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution, March 1984, p. 30.

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: The changes in availability and content since World War II.

In this chapter I will demonstrate that there have been significant changes in North America in the content and availability of pornography since World War II. These developments account, in part, for the increased public controversy over the ubiquitous display of pornography and the burgeoning feminist concern that pornography impedes the efforts of women to overcome sexual objectification. These changes in content and availability have exacerbated the long-standing censorship controversy.

The increased public concern results from the fact that we have moved beyond simple nudity and difficult access to clinical depictions of genitalia, vaginal and anal intercourse, sadomasochism, fetish material, coercive pornography (involuntary bondage, physical assault, rape, murder, and adult-child) and relatively easy access. I will be looking at the change in content and availability in three areas of pornographic production: magazine, film, and fiction.

I will also discuss the government commissions in the U.S. and Canada which were appointed to investigate pornography. It is appropriate to discuss the commission research in this chapter because the changes in availability and content created public concern and led to the appointment of these commissions. The findings of these commissions affected legislative reform which in turn further exacerbated the censorship controversy. I am

providing a brief description and evaluation of the research carried out for these commissions to provide background and enhance the readers understanding of the problems with the research. The 1970 U.S. Pornography Commission research has proven to be very controversial and needs to be approached with caution. This Commission is important to our discussion because it is "quoted in both textbook and Courtroom as the authority on the subject."¹ As will be made clear throughout this thesis, commentators continuously refer to this body of research. The impact of the Fraser Committee (1983) research and recommendations for law reform is less clear as the government has only responded in part to these recommendations. This is the only body of research available which deals with the specific Canadian experience and the research is much more current than the 1970 Pornography Commission research.

Magazines

The amount of pornographic material available in the early 1950's was minimal, and by today's standards, quite tame. The occasional female nude could be found in sport and photography magazines or in more elegant periodicals like Esquire with its Vargas girls (pin-up drawings of busty women in filmy blouses). But the focus of these magazines was not on the nudes. Other more explicit material, such as photo sets or 'girlie' magazines, usually of European origin, could be obtained with difficulty.

The 'girlie' magazines that were available during this period were not very explicit or accessible. These magazines

carried titles like Wink, Flirt, and Cutie.²

"Those cheap little magazines - the typical title was 'Gals, Gals, Gals' - presented nothing more complicated than a few dozen pictures of girls wearing very little clothing. They were always placed well to the back of the cigar stores. You had to search them out and then, with an embarrassed half-smile, hand your money to the disapproving old proprietor."³

However, the "cheesecake" content of pornographic magazine began to change with the birth of Playboy in 1952 published by Hugh Hefner. The first issue of Playboy, featuring a nude photo of Marilyn Monroe, was an instant success. Playboy circulation steadily climbed to one million in 1956 and would eventually reach seven million copies a month by 1972.⁴

Hefner's magazine was the first periodical to offer quality photographic stills of attractive women with their breasts exposed. These semi-nude women were framed in an expensive, glossy magazine which also paid top dollar for interviews and articles by famous and accomplished people. This fact lent the magazine legitimacy and protected Hefner from being charged with peddling a completely prurient magazine. Pivotal to this legitimacy was the fact that Hefner presented his Playmates as young, beautiful, and sexual, but non-threatening and childlike. The Playmates were not portrayed as cheap, street-wise, experienced women. Hefner enjoyed a long and lucrative place in the pornography market. Even though Playboy spawned numerous imitators, (e.g. Dude, Swank, Gent, Rogue) all trying to capture Hefner's success, none of them every reached Playboy's circulation.

However, in 1968 Hefner's monopoly on the market began to slip with the appearance of Bob Guccione (Penthouse). Hefner and Guccione are largely responsible for changing the content of 'girlie magazines'. These two men entered into a vicious competition for the market in the 1970's. In the trade this competition is referred to as the 'Pubic Wars'. Every issue exposed a little bit more of the female anatomy culminating in a full frontal lay-out in Penthouse in August 1971.⁵

Guccione welcomed the obscenity charges which were laid against him in Britain (he soon moved his operation to the United States) for the notoriety it brought him in the newspapers. Hefner, on the other hand, felt Guccione was promoting "cheap, pornographic crap"⁶ and withdrew Playboy from this contest. However, in 1972 Hefner procured a floundering French magazine which he titled Oui. It was Hefner's intention to use Oui in the fight against Penthouse. In this magazine he did allow the women to be portrayed much like Guccione's "Pets of the Month", that is more street-wise and sleazy. This competition accelerated with every issue to see who could "produce the raunchier magazine".⁷

Judith Reisman, who recently completed an extensive content analysis of Playboy and Penthouse, charges Playboy with laying the groundwork for, what she calls, the whole media sexploitation movement. She claims "Playboy's successive manipulations and distortions of the image of women typifies the pornography-conditioning process"(121). Reisman argues that as a satiation point is reached with simple female nudity, pornographers must include sexier, kinkier, more violent and/or sensational material

to maintain their sales.⁸

Reisman has neglected to bring out Guicciione's very significant role in forcing Hefner to get more explicit. Reisman's charge does seem to have validity in view of the fact that the 'Pubic Wars' encouraged an impressive list of imitators all more revealing and explicit than Playboy. Further, longitudinal content analyses done on Playboy and Penthouse indicate that these two leading magazines have become more violent in pictorial subject matter through time.⁹

In a pictorial format North America in the 1980's has moved way beyond the simple nude and into a specialty market catering to numerous fetishes. One such business is the mail order porn house, Tao Productions in Los Angeles, California. Catalogues can be cheaply and easily obtained, both in the U.S. and Canada, by responding to advertisements found in the back of porn magazines. These coloured brochures advertise magazines and videos catering to a wide range of sexual behaviour. For example, one is invited to purchase the pictorial magazine Bondage Master which boasts that the magazine is "jammed with tight bondage, suspension and whipping of young pretty girls" (see Appendix I). Also, in the Tao collection are magazines of obedience, breast bondage, waterworks (featuring the adventures of 'Enema Man'), and Teenagers in Bondage. Videos, ranging from \$49-\$89 U.S. sport titles like the Millionaire which promises fifty minutes of exciting torture and pain (see Appendix II). I will be discussing videos in more detail in the next section.

Other mail order houses, such as R.B.L. Sales in Los Angeles

(see Appendix III), sell magazines and videos which fetishize certain female body parts or body shapes. For example, one can purchase magazines which display naked pregnant or lactating women for \$6.00 U.S. Also available are magazines which focus on the anus, erect nipples, hanging breasts or huge breasts, chunky bottoms, obesity, or women with shaved genital areas. An interesting feature of these full colour brochures is that there is usually a standard section advertising ethnic girls (Latin, Black, or Oriental) as well as a section which promises pictures of lesbian sex.

Film

In the late 1940's and early 50's 16mm stag films or 'blue' movies were available in which penetration and ejaculation were shown. Usually these films were distributed by travelling salesmen who would arrange 'smokers' to show the films to groups of men for a set fee. This phenomenon gradually began to fade in the 1950's with the advent of 8mm home movie equipment. Sixteen millimetre equipment was expensive and meant that only a few producers could afford the costly equipment. With the availability of home movie equipment many more amateur producers appeared with a subsequent decline in film quality. Customers began to buy the films outright or rent the films for a private showing.¹⁰

Besides the private showing of 'stag films', there were also public theatres playing "sexploitation films" (the commission's term). According to the Traffic & Distribution Panel of the 1970 Pornography Commission, this industry has existed since the

1920's and is a very small segment of the general film industry. For example, of the 14,000 theatres in the U.S. only 500 would exhibit sexploitation films.¹¹ The sexploitation film was shown in a limited number of theatres as a special event. The Panel claimed that in the 1920's these films included total nudity of the participants but no sexual activity. In the 1930's the nudity began to disappear and there was more of an emphasis on story line. In the 1950's the character of this type of film began to revert back to nudity, ("nudie cuties"). During the years 1964-68 sexploitation film content began to significantly diversify. In many of these films plot was abandoned altogether in favour of continuous scenes of nudity. "Roughies" appeared with a sex-violence format. (Some of these "roughies" depicted women as aggressors, others cast women as victims.) "Kinkies", films that explored fetishes, were also available. "Ghoulies", a forerunner to the present horror genre, minimized the nudity and maximized the violence. According to the panel, these films contained full female nudity and the full range of heterosexual conduct stopping short of actual penetration.

The Panel claimed that as of the late 1960's there were fifty to one hundred business firms involved in production of this type of film. Production budgets ranged from \$3,000 - \$100,000. The producers used non-unionized actors and actresses and a limited film crew. Virtually no money was spent by producers on script development. The films usually took one week to shoot (135-200 films were produced in 1969).¹²

One of the tasks of the Panel was to provide data regarding the amount of "adults only" material available. "Adults only" material was described as fiction or film completely concerned with sex. The Panel complained of the difficulty in giving ratings of "R" (restricted) or "X" (X-rated)¹³ to films, books, or periodicals for the amount of sexual content because there was such an overlap with general release films and mass market books and periodicals.¹⁴ The Panel claimed the only difference between X-rated films with a wide distribution like Deep Throat and sex-ploitation films was the marketing pattern (87). These sexploitation films were low budget with limited exhibition.

One phenomenon in the area of film that needs mentioning is the appearance of the "snuff film". Snuff refers to the torture, rape, and murder of women for male sexual gratification. This type of film has caused enormous public outrage.

In 1975 police in New York confiscated film footage they claimed came from South America. These films captured the actual rape and murder of women. Because of the notoriety and press that these films generated the pornography industry seized upon the idea of producing a mock 'snuff film'. In 1976 the movie Snuff was released.

"Advertised as a movie which recorded the real murder of an actress...it attracted hundreds of eager men at X-rated theatres."¹⁵

The story line and events in this film are truly horrible. Suffice it to say that the problem scenes include the murder of a pregnant woman and her unborn baby as well as the dismemberment and disembowelling of another woman. At the end of the film the

man responsible for the disembowelment holds the womans entrails up over his head triumphantly. LaBelle (1980) claims this movie was the final straw for anti-porn feminists because of the blatant misogyny and violence.

From this point forward anti-porn feminists relentlessly attacked the pornography industry, especially retailers. Feminists came out in droves to protest, picket, leaflet, and boycott the theatres showing the film Snuff. They were successful, in most cases, of having the film removed. Police officials, at the same time, were reporting that as a result of this movie, the word on the street was that similar "snuff" films could be procured for a private showing for \$100 - \$500 U.S. a person.¹⁶

In 1980, technological innovation brought us video pornography. Video porn can be rented at local outlets and watched in the privacy of one's home. Because videos have been considered property for home use and therefore exempt from prior screening by censor or film boards, the video market has been less regulated than other types of film. There has been much public concern about the content of pornographic videos and their accessibility to young people. This concern does have a certain basis in fact. Research for the Fraser Committee (1983) in Canada revealed that many videotapes, some of which have violent and/or degrading content, are being smuggled in from the U.S.^[1]

[1]. Canada gets most of its pornography from the U.S. Vancouver, because of its proximity to Los Angeles where a great deal of pornography production takes place, is an ideal location for incoming material.

avoiding custom's inspection and getting on the video outlet shelves illegally.¹⁷

Ridington, the Chairperson of the British Columbia Periodical Review Board, outlines the problems with regulation of videos. Each province in Canada is responsible for administering the criminal justice system. It is the duty of the Attorney General in each province to provide guidelines to police on what material constitutes obscenity. In these guidelines obscene material is defined as that which "depicts sexual acts coupled with acts of violence (including sadism, masochism, and other similar acts)."¹⁸ These guidelines vary from province to province and the public has no input into the content of these regulations. Ridington went through a great deal of difficulty to obtain the guidelines for B.C.¹⁹

Video retailers have complained that they do not really have a clear understanding of what material is obscene and that confiscations and prosecutions seem inconsistent (Kaite, 1983). Most video retailers understand that sexual exploitation is the area of most concern but they also express confusion about what constitutes exploitation(19).

As a result of this confusion as to what material is permissible, coupled with illegal videos appearing on the outlet shelves, there has been a great deal of public concern in Canada. The anger generated by the presence of illegal videos has occasionally erupted into violence. I refer here to action like that directed against Red Hot Video.

Red Hot Video opened an outlet in North Vancouver, British Columbia in 1982. A committee from the North Vancouver Women's Centre visited the video outlet and sampled many of the films available to the public. The delegation from the Centre chose six examples of videotapes which contravened Section 159 of the existing Canadian Criminal Code, that is, material portraying sex in conjunction with violence. They brought these illegal films to the attention of authorities and asked the police to prosecute these videos under present obscenity legislation. The police did pick up five of the films including Prisoners of Paradise. The central male character in this film chains and suspends women from the ceiling and forces them to perform oral sex. Later, these women are chained to a billiard table and raped.²⁰

Red Hot Video was never prosecuted for peddling these films because the local Crown Counsel claimed the acting was so bad that the film could not be taken seriously. At the same time, women in Port Coquitlam, British Columbia, were concerned about films being offered at their Red Hot Video outlet. They brought the attention of authorities to films like Water Power in which women are given forced enemas, among other violent acts. The Crown prosecutor would not act against these films or proprietors.²¹ Eventually the situation erupted when the Wimmin's Fire Brigade bombed three Red Hot Video outlets on November 22, 1982.

Fiction

"Adults only" paperback fiction, at least in the United States, appears to be one of the largest volume areas of pornography production.²² "Adults only" refers to books that are constructed around a series of sex episodes. Don Smith, who has done a content analysis of these books claims paperbacks are the most "visible and accessible manifestations of pornography."²³ His study, done in the U.S., covered the years 1968-1974 and examined four hundred and twenty-eight paperbacks. Smith describes the content of these paperbacks.

"Sixty percent of the sex episodes are characterized by sex for sex sake - sheer physical gratification devoid of any feeling toward the partner as a person (the typical character is young, single, white, attractive, and heterosexual) Indeed, almost one-third of the episodes contain the use of some form of force, e.g. physical, mental, blackmail, almost always administered by the male.."²⁴

His data demonstrates a rise every year in the number of pages in the text devoted to the description of sexual activity. He attributes this rise, in part, to the 1969 Supreme Court decision in the Stanley v. Georgia case. This decision was seen by publishers and distributors in the pornography industry as a signal for a relaxation of controls on pornographic material. In brief, the judgement in this case indicated that an individual cannot be charged with possessing obscenity if the individual has the material on their premises for private use, even though the material in question might contain themes or depictions which would constitute obscenity. The home was being singled out as

some kind of safety zone.

The Traffic and Distribution Panel of the 1970 Pornography Commission concurs with Smith's contention that a series of court cases gave publishers of "adults only" paperbacks indirect permission to expand the sexual content of these books. They point to the trials involving Miller's Tropic of Cancer (1964) and Cleland's Fanny Hill (1966). Both of these books contained numerous descriptions of sexual activity. The Courts declared these books not obscene.

The Panel claims that up until about 1965 these paperbacks had plot and character development with only 50% of the book devoted to describing sexual activity. This sexual activity was confined to descriptions of foreplay or the character's state of mind. There was no description of genitals, penetration, or uncommon sexual acts like group sex. A great deal was left to the reader's imagination. However, by 1969 this format changed. These "adults only" paperbacks became nothing more than a description of continuous sexual activity. The Panel stated that these paperbacks are largely written for the male, heterosexual reader. The sexual acts described in these paperbacks concentrate largely on heterosexual intercourse but other subjects are dealt with such as bestiality, paedophilia, necrophilia, and homosexuality. They stated less than 10% of these books are written for the male homosexual and 5% are produced for those interested in sadomasochism.

THE GOVERNMENT COMMISSIONS

The U.S. Commission on Obscenity and Pornography (1970)

The widespread distribution and availability of pornographic material, the increasing awareness of the easy accessibility of this material to young people, the reports from law enforcement officials regarding pornography's role in crime²⁵, the appearance of magazines like "Hustler" with an arrogant sex/violence format, coupled with the advent of the 'snuff film' finally brought a swelling wave of anti-pornography sentiment both in Canada and the U.S. The respective governments were forced to commission investigations into the charges that pornography can have serious anti-social effects.

The most important commission in the United States was the 1970 Commission on Obscenity and Pornography. This Commission set out to investigate the connection between anti-social attitudes and behaviour. The Commission carried out a wide range of attitude surveys, lab experiments, one longitudinal study, and a few projects were conducted with incarcerated sex offenders. A Traffic and Distribution Panel was appointed to examine production, distribution, and profits.

Fourteen lab experiments were carried out for the Commission largely on male college students - only three studies tried to ascertain the impact of pornography on aggressive behaviour. As Diamond points out, two of these studies lacked a control group. The one study that did have a control group (testing for an increase in aggressive behaviour after exposure

to an "erotic" film) found that participants delivered stronger shocks to confederates after being angered and then viewing an "erotic" film with an audio track conveying aggressive messages. The subjects delivered shocks of greater intensity after viewing a film combining aggression and sex than after viewing neutral films or films depicting aggression in a non-sexual context. The outcome of this research was counterbalanced by the Commission with Mosher's (1970) study which found that subjects were less likely to verbally aggress against a female after viewing pornography. However, verbal aggression increased when seeing further pornographic films was contingent on such behaviour.²⁶

The most controversial research done for the Commission was the longitudinal study done in Denmark. This study was said to have proven the catharsis theory, "the more you see, the less you do." Pornography was legalized in Denmark in the 1960's and data seemed to indicate that sex crimes had consequently decreased (Ben Veniste, 1969).

In Walker's (1970) study, for the Commission, a significant number of convicted sex offenders stated that pornography had influenced their behaviour. The researchers denigrated this outcome arguing that pornography was just being scapegoated. In Propper's (1970) work, males aged 16 to 21 committed to a reformatory, had considerable experience with pornography. Although this fact was acknowledged by the Commission they pointed out that only 3% of the inmates were incarcerated for assault and only 2% for sexual offenses.²⁷ Yet, 62% of these inmates scored very high on a "peer sex behaviour index", agreeing that they

would participate in a gang-bang or would resort to getting a girl drunk to obtain coitus(695). There were several studies done with married couples. These couples viewed pornography together and were then asked for their reaction. Husbands and wives tended to report similar reactions.²⁸

This U.S. Commission stated that on the basis of its research no harmful effects could be said to stem from the use of pornography. They recommended a relaxation of controls on pornography.

This Commission has been criticized (Cline, 1974; McCormack, 1978; Diamond, 1980) for its liberal bias. The Chairperson and members of the Board belonged to the American Civil Liberties Union. Keating, a dissenting member of the Commission, argued that this group made up its collective mind beforehand that the use of pornography does not contribute to anti-social attitudes and behaviour and therefore suppressed or ignored research that implied negative effects from the use of pornography. Although the Commission claimed that pornography has a negligible effect on behaviour, very few studies done for the Commission actually examined the impact of pornography on behaviour. Re-evaluation of the study done in Denmark (Eysenck and Nias, 1978; Diamond, 1980; Ridington, 1983) has demonstrated that although there may have been a decrease in less serious sexual offenses, such as peeping or exhibitionism, there was not a decrease in rape.²⁹ In 1976 Court and Bachy both maintained that since 1969 rape rates in Copenhagen have risen and are much higher than statistics ten years earlier. Also Court's (1984) work in Hawaii indicated that

when controls on pornography are lifted rape rates increase, when controls are reimposed rape rates decline.

Compounding the problems in this body of research with liberal bias, methodological problems, and sloppy use of terminology (erotica, sexually explicit, and pornography get used interchangeably), this research was carried out by male researchers using a preponderance of male subject populations. McCormack (1978) maintains that in the studies done with couples viewing pornography together, the women may very well have been intimidated by a male researcher and the presence of their husbands when asked about their reaction to the pornography. She suggests that the results of these surveys and experiments may have been quite different with female researchers designing and carrying out research or if the subject populations had contained 50% women.

Although this body of research is flawed and problematic it is the largest project to date attempting to examine this phenomenon and provides us with an extensive database. This research is, however, growing quite out-dated.

The Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution (1983)

In Canada, the public controversy surrounding pornography, the difficulties with obscenity law, and the failure of tighter customs and postal regulations to stem the flood of pornographic material from the U.S., produced the appointment of the Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution (referred to as the Fraser Committee after its Chairman). This Committee was ap-

pointed in 1983 to evaluate the situation in Canada with respect to pornography and produce recommendations for legal and social reform. I will focus on the research and recommendations on pornography. I will demonstrate that this Committee relied heavily on non-Canadian data, and the applicability of some of this data to the Canadian experience is questionable.

The Committee, comprised of three men and four women, commissioned empirical research to ascertain the way pornography has been dealt with in other countries, such as the U.S. and Britain. No clinical research was carried out. The Committee undertook the legal research themselves, examining comparative legislation in other countries and weighing the impact of proposed law reform on constitutional guarantees. Finally, the Committee had the responsibility of determining the public's chief concerns regarding pornography; therefore, they conducted nationwide public hearings in twenty-two Canadian cities. The Committee was expected to report to the government on the current situation in Canada with respect to access to pornography and the impact on society.

Unfortunately, the Committee had to look at both the questions of pornography and prostitution simultaneously. This fact limited the time and research that could be devoted to pornography. I say unfortunate because there is so little Canadian data on the subject of pornography. Why it was felt that these two social problems should be investigated concurrently is unclear. Researchers for the Committee (e.g. McKay and Dolff, 1984) complained of the lack of Canadian data on aspects of the

subject, especially the important and controversial questions on the connection between rape and pornography. They also identified a lack of data on (1) the content of pornography, (2) the use of children as participants in production, and (3) marketing, distribution, and consumer patterns in Canada. As a result of the lack of Canadian research, the Committee had to rely on research and legal solutions carried out in other countries, such as the U.S. The relevance for Canada of methods adopted in other countries to deal with pornography, especially the U.S. is unclear. Canada's experience with pornography is dissimilar to that of the U.S. For example, there is very little domestic production of pornography taking place. Canada gets 90% of its pornography from the U.S. The Canadian situation is unique and complex and needs to be investigated in its own right.

McKay and Dolff did an appraisal for the Committee of the existing social scientific research regarding the impact of pornography on society, participants, and consumers. The conclusion of these researchers was that no systematic research is available which demonstrates 'harm' to the public or the consumer(94). The research which does demonstrate negative effects is not, for these authors, persuasive. They admit, however, that the database is not sufficient to support firm conclusions.

With respect to the impact of pornography on society, McKay and Dolff make two claims. First, "there is no systematic research evidence which suggests a causal relationship between pornography and the morality of Canadian society"(93). No explan-

ation is offered regarding what constitutes morality or what is the supposed connection. What they seem to be addressing is the concern of conservatives that widespread availability of pornography contributes to the moral decay of society by encouraging infidelity, promiscuity, venereal disease, and the corruption of youth. The authors state clearly that Canadian data regarding the impact of pornography on the community is missing. What they do look at is research from the U.S. on neighbourhood deterioration as a result of strip joints and adult bookstores opening up in certain communities. But, can a comparison be made in this way? Are there comparable "adult zones" in various communities in Canada?

The second conclusion the researchers reached is that "there is no systematic research evidence available which suggests that increases in deviant behaviour...are causally related to pornography"(93). For the moment this is correct. But, Court's (1984) study in Hawaii demonstrated that the incidence of rape increased when controls on pornography were relaxed and decreased when controls were reintroduced. This study contradicted the earlier findings in Copenhagen. These contradictory findings are not acknowledged by McKay and Dolf.

The conclusions of the researchers regarding consumers were that there was no persuasive evidence that (1) viewing pornography causes harm to an adult or (2) that viewing pornography causes an adult to harm others.³⁰ We cannot weigh the importance of these conclusions unless we know what the researchers consider 'harm', which is a contentious issue, and what they mean by

'persuasive evidence.'

Their first conclusion ignores research such as Zillman & Bryant, (1982) which demonstrates that massive viewing of pornography can harm adults by increasing sex-calloused attitudes towards women and women's issues. In the same study desensitization to rape occurred through massive exposure to pornography. Subjects trivialized rape and demonstrated a subsequent lack of compassion for rape victims. The researchers demonstrated that after massive viewing of pornography subjects thought that uncommon sex practices, for example, group sex or anal intercourse were more common than they actually are. The researchers speculated that a viewer labouring under these misconceptions could therefore be encouraged to experiment with uncommon sex practices unwelcomed by their partner. Also, they suggested that the viewing of these uncommon sex practices could create dissatisfaction with one's sex life or sex partner.

There is some evidence to support these speculations. Russell's (1978) study on sexual abuse in San Francisco revealed that women were reporting disturbing experiences as a result of male viewing of pornography. Ten percent of the women in this study (N=929) recounted episodes of male partners wanting the women to imitate acts which the men had viewed in pornographic magazines or film. These attempts were often accompanied by verbal or physical coercion. The acts demanded included group sex, anal penetration, slapping and hitting, bestiality, objects in the vagina, and urination into the mouth. Because the subject population was a representative one, it was generalized that 10%

of the adult female population in San Francisco would report similar disturbing experiences(224). We also know from earlier research that consumers have stated that one of the likely outcomes of using pornography is to get ideas to try out with one's spouse.³¹ This type of research is not discussed in McKay and Dolff's review of the literature.

On the basis of submissions such as McKay and Dolff's the Committee made recommendations to the government regarding law reform. The Committee generated a series of recommendations outlining the type of material which should incur criminal sanctions. I will be discussing these recommendations in Chapter II because the Committee's three-tiered system of categorizing material ties into the question of a definition of pornography.

In conclusion, the rapid growth in the pornography industry and the changes in content and availability have raised serious concerns regarding pornography's impact on society. In response to these concerns, the governments in Canada and the U.S. have undertaken investigations into the effects of pornography to determine whether pornography is a phenomena to be protected or suppressed.

1. Eysenck & Nias, p. 99.
2. Russell Miller, Bunny: The Real Story of Playboy, (London: Michael Joseph Ltd., 1984), p. 22.
3. Robert Fulford, "Dream World of the Sex Magazines" in Saturday Night 77: March 11, 1962, p. 9-10.
4. Miller, p. 197.
5. Ibid., p. 195.
6. Ibid., p. 190.
7. Ibid., p. 199.
8. Laura Lederer, "An Interview with Judith Bat-Ada", in L. Lederer (ed.) Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography, (N.Y.: Morrow, 1980), p. 121.
9. Neal Malamuth and Barry Spinner, "Longitudinal Content Analysis of Sexual Violence in the Best Selling Erotic Magazines", Journal of Sex Research, 1980, 16, 3, p. 226-237.
10. U.S. Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, Technical Reports, Vol. III, The Marketplace: The Industry 1968-70., p. 190.
11. Ibid., p. 7.
12. Ibid., p. 32-33.
13. A rating of "R" is a film which cannot be shown to a person under 17 unless accompanied by an adult. A film rated "R" can include nudity, brief touching of breast and simulated intercourse. No language restrictions are imposed. An "X" rated film cannot be shown to persons under 17. In this type of film graphic simulated intercourse can be shown along with suggestions and shots of oral-genital contact. No language restrictions are imposed. The line between "R" and "X" is murky and the decision as to rating appears to be made on the basis of the quantity of sexual activity in the film.
14. Ibid., p. 25.
15. Beverly La Belle, "Snuff: The Ultimate in Woman-Hating", in L. Lederer (ed.) Take Back the Night (N.Y.:Morrow, 1980), p. 272.
16. Ibid., p. 275.
17. T.S. Palys, "A Content Analysis of Sexually Explicit Videos in B.C.", Working Paper #15, Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution, (Canada: Department of Justice, 1984) p. 9.

18. Jillian Ridington, Confronting Pornography: A Feminist on the Front Lines, a discussion paper, (Vancouver: 1989), p. 48.
19. Ibid.
20. Jean Laker, Priorities, March 1983, p. 3.
21. Ibid.
22. Donald D. Smith, "The Social Content of Pornography", Journal of Communications, 26, 1976, p. 16-24.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid., p. 22.
25. Mark Hamilton, "Sex Crimes: Police Just Scratching the Surface", The North Shore News, Sept. 5, 1986.
26. D.L. Mosher and H. Katz, "Pornographic Films, Male Verbal Aggression Against Women and Guilt", The 1970 U.S. Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, Technical Reports, Vol. 8, p. 357.
27. Ibid., p. 695.
28. Thelma McCormack, "Machismo in Media Research: A Critical Review of Research on Violence and Pornography", Social Problems, Vol. 25, No. 5, June 1978, p. 549.
29. H. J. Eysenck & D.B. Nias, Sex, Violence, and the Media, (N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1978), p. 121.
30. H.B. McKay and D.J. Dolff, "The Impact of Pornography: An Analysis of Research and Summary of Findings", in Working papers on Pornography and Prostitution, (Ottawa: Dept. of Justice, 1984) p. 94.
31. Harold Nawy, "The San Francisco Erotic Marketplace" (1971), U.S. Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, Technical Reports, Vol. 4, p. 162. (80% of the men involved in a study of patrons of adult movie theatres in San Francisco reported the above outcome as extremely likely).

CHAPTER II

DEFINITION: The On-Going Dilemma

In this chapter I will be exploring the problems and confusion surrounding a definition of pornography. The use of undefined terminology, different terminology being used to refer to the same material within one document, and vague and problematic definitions being put forward are common in the literature on pornography. The problems with terminology and definition appear to derive from carelessness and a serious lack of consensus. This lack of consensus about definition makes useful discussion of the issues difficult. I will demonstrate this point by examining the use of terminology and definition in commentary on the law and legal cases, research, and philosophical discussion.

The increasing dissatisfaction with terminology stems largely from the problems experienced with the term "obscenity". This term has been in use for several hundred years. Obscenity initially characterized material which profaned the sacred but gradually came to encompass the sexual or lewd.¹ "Obscene" is presently used in Canada's Criminal Code. Obscenity comes from the Latin ob cenum, "about filth" and is defined in the Random House Dictionary of the English Language as material which is "offensive to modesty or decency, lewd; causing or intending to cause sexual excitement or lust."² Obscene carries with it a condemnation of sexuality which has come to be increasingly unacceptable in a liberal permissive society. When the

Fraser Committee carried out its public hearings across Canada in 1984 there was a clear consensus from the public that the term obscenity be dropped as it was dated, unclearly and inconsistently defined, and insufficient for embracing the type of material currently available.³

Legal Cases

To discuss the problems involved with defining pornography, I will examine two significant legal cases in Canada. Although precise definitions are crucial to the practice of law, the history of cases brought before the courts on obscenity charges has demonstrated the problem with formulating legal language and tests for such offenses. A good demonstration of the difficulties with interpreting legal language and applying tests for "obscenity" is to review the Canadian case Doug Rankine Company and Act III Video Productions vs. the Crown, tried by Judge Stephen Borins in 1983. The Crown accused Doug Rankine Company and Act III Video Productions, located in Toronto, of distributing obscene publications, (25 video cassette tapes). The Judge had the task of deciding whether the videos in question had violated C.C.C. Section 159 (s) 8. This means the videos would have to contain an undue exploitation of sex or sex in any combination with violence, horror, crime, or cruelty. This notion of "undue exploitation" has become a test to determine if the material in question has exceeded the current Canadian community standards of tolerance. If the material is said to have exceeded these standards then it is considered "obscene".

Two women spoke as expert witnesses for the Crown in the above case. Mrs. Walker, a school teacher, had never been out of Ontario and the Judge felt her attitudes could not be seen as reflecting broader contemporary Canadian standards of tolerance. She viewed all the tapes as obscene. The Judge stated that her views were that of a small minority who hold very strong opinions regarding sexually explicit material. However, the Judge did give weight to the evidence of Mrs. Rowlands because he believed she had more exposure to a wide range of public opinion due to the fact that she was an alderwoman and a member of numerous committees and organizations in Toronto. She believed scenes of explicit sex would be tolerated but scenes of sex with violence or cruelty, adult-child sex, buggery, or degradation, e.g. men ejaculating in women's faces, would not be tolerated.

The defense argued that the videos did not exceed community standards because eight had been approved for distribution by the Quebec Censor Board, considered one of the tougher censor boards, and thirteen had been viewed at Customs and permitted into the country.⁴ This fact posed a dilemma for the Judge. He declared that the viewing of these twenty-five videos was one of the least pleasant duties of his career.⁵ His conclusions are informative. Although lengthy, I will reprint some of his remarks here.

"Although my task does not require a critical review of the films, I am bound to say that for the most part they are insipid, dull and boring. The common denominator of the films is the artless way in which sexual intercourse is treated...most of them reflected very little love or tenderness...The motion pictures depict a wide range of scenes of explicit sex on the part of adults, singly, in pairs and in groups. These scenes include detailed portrayals of sexual intercourse, genitalia, masturbation, cunnilingus, fellatio, and anal intercourse. Standard fare for most of the films is at least one scene of lesbianism and one sex orgy...several of the films have scenes which couple violence and cruelty with sex. These scenes, such as scenes of bondage, frequently involve men perpetrating indignities on women in a sexual context. In my opinion many of the films are exploitive of women, portraying them as passive victims who derive limitless pleasure from inflicted pain... Whether deliberately or otherwise, most of the films portray degradation, humiliation, victimization, and violence in human relationships as normal and acceptable behaviour."⁶

Judge Borins dismissed the charges against fourteen of the films. These films, in his opinion, were concerned only with explicit portrayals of sexual intercourse and would not exceed prevailing community standards of tolerance. The other eleven films he found to be obscene. These films, he claimed, would "violate the community standards of tolerance of Sodom and Gomorrah."⁷ Some of these films, he argued, were completely or partially concerned with the conjunction of sex and violence. The other films, which he did not clearly identify, he believed were "obscene" because they were too explicit. This statement is unclear and confusing. This finding raises the question of how can an explicit film be too explicit?

"...it is the degree of explicitness of the sexual acts which leads me to the conclusion that they exceed community standards. In films of this nature it is impossible to define with any precision where the line is to be drawn. To do so would be to attempt to define what may be indefinable."⁸

Borins' remarks demonstrate that the confusion with definition and tests are as pervasive in the legal sphere as elsewhere.

All of these same problems with definition and tests were manifest in the case of Regina vs. Pink Triangle Press. The first trial was held in 1979 (charges dismissed) and the second trial upon appeal took place in 1983. The State charged Pink Triangle Press with "unlawfully making use of the mails for the purpose of transmitting indecent, immoral, or scurrilous matter."⁹ The matter in question was an issue of The Body Politic, a gay publication. This issue contained one in a series of three articles entitled "Men Loving Boys Loving Men."

The Judge had difficulty with the community standards test even though he had opinions from expert witnesses. He found the conflicting interpretations from these witnesses provided little direction in deciding whether the issue of The Body Politic had exceeded the tolerance of the Canadian community at large. He also found defining indecent, immoral, and scurrilous difficult. He ultimately dismissed the case on the grounds that the material taken as a whole could not be considered indecent, immoral or scurrilous.

In these types of cases the Judge is being asked to determine the contemporary level of community tolerance in Canada for the average man and woman. But when he turns to witnesses from

the community for guidance he often gets conflicting views. The Judge is being asked to be objective about a subject matter which is extremely personal and very difficult to be objective about. Still, the Judge has to make a determination. Needless to say, such determinations have been conflicting. Judges like J.A. Zuber have clearly stated that they think other judges have erred in the way that they have applied the community standards test.¹⁰ Very little consensus exists about how the level of community standards is to be determined.

Philosophical Commentary

If we examine some of the philosophical commentary on the subject of pornography the same problems with terminology and definition occur. I have chosen Fred Berger and Ann Garry's definitions for two reasons. First, their articles on pornography produced a substantial reaction and, second, one commentator is a liberal, the other a feminist.

Berger (1977), a liberal commentator that we will be discussing in Chapter III, defines pornography in the following way.

"...art or literature which explicitly depicts sexual activity or arousal in a manner having little or no artistic or literary value."¹¹

Berger states that this definition is for the purposes of discussion and acknowledges that it would be a disaster in a legal context. But, even if it is only for the purposes of discussion, this definition is still too vague; it does not identify what material is included and what is not. Would Cleland's Fanny Hill fit into this definition? The problem is that there is no

discussion as to what criteria Berger is applying to decide what material has artistic or literary value. If we had some idea of the criteria, and examples were provided, we could feel more confident that we understood Berger's intentions.

Unlike Berger, Ann Garry goes into more detail about what would be included in her definition. She uses the following definition in her article exploring the question of whether or not pornography is morally objectionable.

"I use pornography to label those explicit sexual materials intended to arouse the reader or viewer sexually. I am interested in obvious cases that would be uncontroversially pornographic - the worst, least artistic kind. The pornography I discuss is that which taken as a whole lacks "serious literary, artistic, political or scientific merit".¹²

Garry is correct to consider the intention of the material, but the issue of what constitutes pornography has been nothing but controversial. What is meant by the "worst, least artistic kind"? Does Garry refer to low budget productions and publications with shabby sets, bad lighting, poor plot and character development, or does she refer to material depicting sadomasochism, rape, or physical assault? And to add, as if she is clarifying the matter, that it is pornography which taken as a whole lacks "serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific merit" does not help. The courts have been struggling with this very test for years with conflicting determinations.¹³ This test has produced not only conflicting determinations but, not more than three judges have ever been able to agree at one time on the social or literary value of a publication or film.¹⁴

In an attempt to overcome the problems being generated by

the use of these vague definitions and to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable material, feminists, like Gloria Steinem, have introduced power as the essential feature to be considered in defining pornography, specifically male power over women. Erotica, considered acceptable, is defined as that material which depicts the mutual enjoyment of the participants with no imbalance of power. 'Erotica', Steinem argues, depicts passionate love, sensuality and warmth.¹⁵ Pornography, on the other hand, is concerned with male domination, violence, and conquest.¹⁶

The difficulty with using this dichotomy between erotica and pornography is that the majority of pornographic material presently available fits in neither category. For example, can the content of Playboy magazine be classified as erotica or pornography? The material can not be considered erotica, in Steinem's sense, because Playboy has systematically infantilized women.¹⁷ Hefner is well known for his voluptuous, young, childlike, non-threatening playmates. Adult women with power and autonomy are seen as threatening and distasteful.¹⁸ While Playboy infantilizes women it does not, on the other hand, include a large percentage of violence in comparison to other periodicals like Hustler, although admittedly violent content has increased during the past two decades.¹⁹

Further support for this criticism of the dichotomy of erotica and pornography, is provided by research done for the Fraser Committee. In 1984 Palys conducted a content analysis of 150 sexually explicit videos available in British Columbia. The

coders were given the task of counting the number of sex scenes in the videos that depicted mutual pleasuring with no imbalance of power and those scenes involving sex and aggression.

"During pretesting of the coding scheme it became clear that many sexual depictions existed which fit in neither category. These were depictions in which two (or more) consenting individuals came together and engaged in sex and, while the depiction was not at all coercive, nor was it particularly loving and affectionate.²⁰

Of the 150 videos sampled from the adult and triple xxx categories only 2.6% of the sex scenes in the adult category and 3.2% of the sex scenes in the triple xxx category were considered "erotica" as Steinem would define it. Only 2.6% of the adult and 1.2% of the triple xxx sex scenes were coded as containing the combination of sex and aggression.

The point of this discussion is to explore whether these terms erotica or pornography, defined as Steinem suggests, help to solve or eliminate the problems regarding definition and distinction between materials. In my opinion, erotica is as problematic as the term obscenity. The term 'eros' comes from the Greek and is associated with love and desire. Steinem, in her discussion of what constitutes "erotica", stated that this material depicts "...people making love, really making love."²¹ What does "really making love" mean? As Soble points out, this criteria seems to imply that sexually explicit material, to be acceptable, must portray sex in a loving, committed relationship.²² Gayle Rubin, who has written on the issue of pornography and sexuality, elaborates on Soble's criticism.

"...sex has to occur in a certain way for it to be good. And the only legitimate sex is very limited. It's not focused on orgasm, it's very gentle and it takes place in the context of a long-term, caring relationship. It's the missionary position of the women's movement."²³

Research

In considering the question of a definition of pornography, perhaps the most troubling segment of the literature is the research. Social scientific research is considered the most persuasive evidence one can draw upon to support argument and recommendations about the impact and regulation of pornography. The problems with definition in the area of research have become increasingly apparent through re-evaluation of past research methodology (e.g. McCormack, 1978; Diamond, 1980). A mixture of undefined terminology exists which has caused confusion and made the implications of much research unclear.

Some researchers use the term "erotica" (Mosher, 1971), or "aggressive and non-aggressive erotica" (Malamuth and Donnerstein, 1982), or violent erotica (Mosher, 1980). Other researchers have chosen "sexually explicit" and "obscene" (The 1970 U.S. Pornography Commission) or "pornography" (Malamuth and Spinner, 1982).

Bart and Jozsa (1980) discuss this mixture of terminology in research.

"In much of the research done to date, the terms pornography, erotica, and explicit sexual material are used interchangeably. This is an important variable, as a film showing two people making love is much different from one portraying the rape and murder of women for male sexual stimulation. Distinctions between these terms must be at the basis of any valid work in pornography research."²⁴

Examples of confusing and undefined terminology are not difficult to find, but some authors confound the distinctions more dramatically than others. In an article discussing the value of psychological research to inform legal change, Penrod and Linz (1980) initially use the terms "pornography" and "obscenity" without definition or explanation. Later, in two short pages they manage to use, in a variety of ways, just about every term available. In their discussion of violent trends in the mass media, they talk about the 'brutality chic' of high fashion magazines and record covers. First, they refer to these depictions as "soft-core violent pornographic images".²⁵ In the next sentence they use "aggressive pornography" and "aggressive erotica" interchangeably. The title page of the next chapter reads "Prosecution of Hard-Core Pornography under Existing Law". The inattention to the definition of terms leads to utter confusion.

Even the researchers who appear to have a good grip on the problems associated with defining pornography and the subsequent difficulties in interpreting research go on to make the same mistakes themselves. In their review of the literature on pornography for the Fraser Committee, McKay and Dolff (1984) point out the chaos in the literature regarding definition.

"Pornography seems to attract extremes in definition: so narrow (e.g. operational definitions in specific experiments) as to limit any generalizability to other forms or situations; or, so broad as to render it unusable in everyday practice."²⁶

These authors maintain that one of the goals of scientific inquiry is to arrive at a common definition of terms to avoid continuous confusion regarding the phenomenon under scrutiny. They argue that definitions are fundamental in generating constructs and formulating theory, therefore we need to arrive at a consensus regarding definition so that we are all studying and discussing the same thing. They maintain that "the failure to do so can only result in confusion, erroneous conclusions, and fallacious comparisons."²⁷

This is an intelligent and insightful statement regarding the necessity of developing and providing a definition of pornography. These statements also point to the fact that the academic community bears some responsibility for adding to the confusion in terminology and definition. However, having put these statements forward, McKay and Dolff proceed to use the terms "pornography" and "erotica" interchangeably in their paper, never defining either one.

Diana Russell, who conducted an important survey on sexual abuse in San Francisco, recognizes this problem with definition in research, but maintains there are, in fact, two problems.

"First, distinctions are rarely made between explicit sexual materials...Second, precise descriptions of the films, pictures, or stories used in experiments are usually lacking, so that it is impossible to know whether the findings are relevant to an evaluation of the effects of pornography or not."²⁸ (Russell defines pornography as material which degrades men, women, or children).

Russell suggests that subject populations in research may respond differently to material depicting sexual activity in a non-aggressive context and material depicting the combination of sex and aggression. We need to know the content of the material used in experiments so we can fully evaluate the significance of the findings.

Russell's criticism is levelled against research like that of Howard, Clifford, and Liptzin (1970), and Donald Mosher (1970). Howard studied the effects of pornography on thirty-two white, adult college males from affluent families. They wanted to "evaluate the hypothesis that repeated exposure to pornography causes decreased interest in it, less response to it and no lasting effects from it."²⁹ The experimenters used pornographic movies, stills, and photo magazines in the research. The only descriptive information provided concerned the films. They were said to be standard stimuli with good colour and film quality and the subject matter did not include zoerotic, group, or male homosexual themes.³⁰ The information provided does help to some extent, but it is not sufficient. "Standard stimuli" needs to be explained fully as well as additional information provided regarding the content of the stills and photo magazines. The conclusion of this research was that "extensive exposure to

pornography results in diminished response when exposure to it is enforced, decreased interest in either seeking it or looking at it if it is present, and does not produce any detrimental or even enduring effects...".³¹

Mosher (1970) studied the psychological reactions to two pornographic films of 194 single males and 183 single females, all of whom were college undergraduates. Before viewing the films the males were given a questionnaire measuring sex-calloused attitudes toward women from which the researchers could ascertain which males suffered from a "hypermasculine concern with sexual conquest."³² The women were not given a similar questionnaire regarding their attitudes and behaviour towards men. The expectation was that after viewing the films those men who rated high in terms of sex-callousness (41%) might be triggered into exploitative sexual behaviour because these men also reported using physical aggression and exploitative techniques such as "getting their dates drunk, showing them pornography, or professing love as a means of gaining coitus."³³ As well, an increase in sex-calloused attitudes was anticipated. However, contrary to expectations, there was little increase in reported sexual activity in the twenty-four hours following the films and a decrease in sex-calloused attitudes.

Mosher used two films, Coitus I and Petting II in which a heterosexual couple indulge in oral-genital contact and intercourse. Mosher did provide a description of the films. However, he then went on to admit that he had some concern about the actual representativeness of the films.

"These films were limited to essentially normal heterosexual behaviour between a couple, although some would regard fellatio and cunnilingus deviation. There was no appeals to fetishism, sadomasochism, homosexuality, profaning the sacred, or other such activities. There were fewer closeups and more affection than is typical of much pornography. In my opinion these... films would have more appeal to the sexually experienced, uninhibited adult of both sexes than would most pornography, which is oriented toward a male audience and more "kinky sex."³⁴

This admission calls into question at once the validity of the research because the films were obviously selected carefully for the particular subject group and were not in the author's own view, representative of most pornography.

Mosher and Howard's findings were submitted to the 1970 Pornography Commission which was investigating the link between pornography and anti-social behaviour and attitude. On the basis of such submissions the Commission concluded that "fears about learning such attitudes from the medium were unwarranted."³⁵

The Commission recommended a relaxation of controls on pornography.

The Fraser Committee in Canada never provided a definition of pornography. They did, however, recommend replacing the term obscenity with the term pornography. Megan Ellis of W.A.V.A.W. (Women Against Violence Against Women) claimed the decision not to provide a definition of pornography was fatal.

"...it (the Committee) tried to provide something for everyone (she means here conservatives, liberals, and feminists) and succeeded in creating a tangled mess of legislative proposals ranging from the permissive to the repressive."³⁶

However, the Committee did discuss a distinction between pornographic materials in their summary. They argued there was pornographic material which was simply sexually explicit with no violence or illegal acts portrayed, and material depicting sexual exploitation. They stated when they used the term "pornography" they used it in both senses simultaneously. This is a peculiar way of trying to bring clarity in language, especially in view of the fact that they argue for dropping the term "obscenity" and replacing it with "pornography", pointing out the importance of precision in legal language(10). It also strikes one as quite odd that the Committee would argue for abandoning the term "obscenity" because it is antiquated and then use "lewd" in their definition of explicit sexual conduct. Using pornography in the broad sense for discussion purposes might be acceptable if the author was clear about what material is being included and excluded. However, when one is in the position of recommending definitions for legal purposes then clarity and precision is of the utmost importance. One cannot suggest replacing "obscenity" with "pornography" and then neglect to define the term.

The Fraser Committee did make an effort to be clear about the material which could incur criminal sanction in their proposed three-tiered system of pornographic material. The first tier, and the tier which would invite the most serious penalties, incorporates material which 1) depicts a person under eighteen years of age participating in explicit sexual conduct defined as depictions of vaginal, oral, anal intercourse, masturbation, sexually violent behaviour (sexual assault, physical harm for the

purpose of sexual gratification of a viewer, including murder, bondage and masochism) bestiality, incest, necrophilia, lewd touching of the breasts or genitals, or the lewd exhibition of the genitals: 2) advocates or condones the sexual abuse of children and/or 3) was made or produced in a way that caused actual physical harm to the participants. The second tier, where less serious penalties would apply, includes any material or performance which depicts sexually violent behaviour, bestiality, incest, or necrophilia. The third tier would attract criminal sanctions only if it were displayed or performed without a warning to the public as to its nature or if it were displayed or performed to persons under eighteen. This tier includes visual pornographic material or performances which depict vaginal, oral, and anal intercourse, masturbation, lewd touching or exhibition of the breast and/or genitals.

In the final analysis, the Canadian government has only responded in part to the Fraser Committee recommendations. The government appears to have been influenced largely by the arguments of conservatives who insist that sexual imagery has the potential to be dangerous and corrupting.³⁷ Bill C-114 was introduced in 1986 making sweeping changes to what material would be considered pornographic and therefore open to prosecution. This Bill was tabled as a result of enormous public opposition to the vague wording of the bill. The bill was subsequently reintroduced as Bill C-54. This legislation included five definitions of pornography encompassing a broad range of sexually explicit material.³⁸ This bill has been tabled and has not been

reintroduced.³⁹

Summary

We have seen through this discussion that whether one is involved in law, philosophical and theoretical debate, or research the question of how best to define pornography and what material deserves protection or not is difficult and unclear. What those involved with the issues surrounding pornography have failed to see is that there is no pure, abstract definition of pornography. Every definition is coloured by the prevailing cultural attitudes and values towards sexuality and these attitudes and values do not remain static. Any definition, if codified, will eventually become inadequate for a variety of possible reasons. There is no end to the matter of definition.

Definitions appear to depend largely on the interests and purposes of those developing and using them. It should be clear from the problems I have identified that every author must provide a definition of pornography and researchers must go further, including a description of sexual materials used in experiments. It may be that consensus regarding definition will never be complete but a great deal more effort could be put into trying to effect consensus than has been exerted to date. The problem is that research, debate, and legal definitions which have been carried out or advanced have been inconsistent, vague, confusing, or missing altogether. This fact creates a serious obstacle to useful discussion and research on pornography.

I will make some suggestions as to the measures we might employ to overcome the problems I have been describing. In the first place, terminology like "sexually explicit" can be valuable. The term sexually explicit is morally neutral and can be used to refer to material in the broadest sense which is concerned with nudity and sexual behaviour. Secondly, I suggest that we build upon the term pornography defined more narrowly than sexually explicit (see page 57) and abandon terms like erotica, thanatica, etc. for the sake of consistency. It is not that the term pornography, from the Greek, meaning 'writing about prostitutes and their patrons', is completely unproblematic, but it is the term most widely used at present and has been identified by the public as a more appropriate word than obscenity for the material currently available.⁴⁰ At least the term pornography does not carry with it the connection of sex with dirt, garbage, and filth. If demarcations are necessary, then the use of adjectives could be considered, such as Wendell's "coercive pornography".⁴¹

Demarcations or sub-categories which appear repeatedly in the literature are the terms "soft-core" and "hard-core" pornography. These distinctions could be useful if there were consensus about what material falls into the categories. Unfortunately, these terms too have been used loosely.

Kallan and Brooks (1974) maintain that Playboy magazine escaped censure when it first appeared because it was perceived as "soft-core" pornography.

"It is a genre seemingly common to all popular arts. It is a style, the special genius of which is to at once arouse, evoke, and stir - but never to embarrass the audience. Tamer than Deep Throat but braver than Klute; a Last Tango perhaps."⁴²

"Soft-core" is generally used to describe material which utilizes partial nudity, suggestion, and simulation with no penetration shown. This term is used in contrast to "hard-core" which refers to material depicting graphic, clinical portrayals of genitalia and sexual activity. An example would be a film in which the participants engage in penetration of vagina and/or anus, cunnilingus and fellatio. Usually the category "hard-core" allows for the possibility of violence. We could build on these categories by creating further distinctions such as Wendell's 'coercive pornography.' Coercive pornography would exist at the extreme end of the "hard-core" category. Coercive pornography would include material depicting involuntary bondage, physical assault, rape, or murder in a sexual context or adult-child sex.⁴³

For the purposes of this thesis, that of sociological inquiry, I will be using a broad definition of pornography to facilitate an examination of a wide range of literature and research. I am using a broad definition so I can include all the material that has been referred to by the various commentators as pornography. The commentators considered in this thesis would generally agree that the material I have identified is pornography and that the material I have excluded is not pornography. This definition encompasses the terms that have been used by commentators to describe pornography. I refer to the use of such

terms as "soft-core", "hard-core", "aggressive and non-aggressive erotica", "sexually explicit", "obscene", etc. My broad definition would include both sexist and non-sexist material. This definition would also include, as a subset, coercive pornography. (The use of adjectives to demarcate material when necessary follows from my previous discussion). I will identify the specific material which fits into this subcategory so there will be no confusion about what material is being referred to by the use of the terms coercive pornography. I make this distinction among material because coercive pornography has caused the greatest public concern and is referred to repeatedly in the literature as the most troubling and problematic material. The term pornography has been used (e.g. Steinem) to refer to material which is violent and therefore objectionable. I do not use the term pornography in that sense. I use the terms coercive pornography to refer to violent material. I assume that pornography could be non-coercive and non-sexist. However, at this historical moment, given the economic and social context, i.e. capitalist patriarchy, most pornography is sexist and a small percentage coercive. These are features of contemporary pornography. I assume these features would change given a different historical/cultural context. This working definition is used for analytical and discussion purposes and is not to be construed as a recommendation for a legal category open to censorship. I am defining pornography as follows:

Pornography is material, whether verbal, filmed, or pictorial which is developed for the primary purpose of stimulating

the viewer or reader sexually. Pornography is material which is completely concerned with the depiction or description of nudity, masturbation, vaginal and/or anal intercourse, fellatio and cunnilingus. This definition includes material concerned with urination, defecation, enemas, semen, and specific female body parts, such as the nipples and anus. The term coercive pornography is used to refer to material in which involuntary bondage, physical assault, rape, murder, or adult-child sex is depicted. This definition would not include material which is for the purpose of public education, such as the film Not A Love Story, news coverage or documentaries on pornography or the pornography industry, sex education, medical or self-help, abortion information, contraceptive or family planning.

1. Walter Kendrick, The Secret Museum: Pornography in Modern Culture, (N.Y.: Viking Penquin Ltd., 1987), p. 127.
2. Random House Dictionary of the English Language, The Unabridged Edition, (N.Y.: Random House, 1973), p. 994.
3. Summary Report of the Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution in Canada, (Ottawa: Department of Justice, 1985), p. 10.
4. B. Kaite, "A Survey of Canadian Distributors of Pornographic Material," Working Papers on Pornography and Prostitution, Report #17, (Canada: Department of Justice, 1984), Appendix 3, p. 3.
5. Ibid., Appendix 3, p. 22.
6. Ibid., p. 23-24.
7. Ibid., p. 28.
8. Ibid., p. 29.
9. S. Wendell and D. Copp, Pornography and Censorship, (N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1983), p. 385.
10. Kaite, Appendix 3, p. 12.
11. Fred Berger, "Pornography, Sex, and Censorship", in D. Copp and S. Wendell, (ed.) Pornography and Censorship, (N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1983), p. 84.
12. Ann Garry, "Pornography and Respect for Women", in D. Copp and S. Wendell, (ed.) Pornography and Censorship, (N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1983), p. 62.
13. Paul Bender, "Definition of "Obscene" Under Existing Law", Technical Report of the Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, Vol. 2, 1968-70, p. 13-27. See also K.P. Norwick, "Pornography: The Issues and the Law", Public Affairs Pamphlet, No. 477, 1972, p. 8-9.
14. Lane V. Sunderland, Obscenity: The Court, the Congress, and the President's Commission, (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1974), p. 15-17.
15. Gloria Steinem, "Erotica and Pornography: A Clear and Present Difference", in L. Lederer (ed.) Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography, (N.Y.: Morrow, 1980) p. 37.
16. Ibid.

17. Calvin Tomkins, "Mr. Playboy of the Western World", Saturday Evening Post, 23 April 1966, p. 101.
18. Richard Kallan and Robert Brooks, "The Playmate of the Month: Naked but Nice", in Journal of Popular Culture, 8, 1974, p. 330.
19. Neil Malamuth and Barry Spinner, "A Longitudinal Content Analysis of Sexual Violence in the Best-Selling Magazines" The Journal of Sex Research, Vol. 16, No. 3, Aug 1980.
20. T.S. Palys, "A Content Analysis of Sexually Explicit Videos in B.C.", Working Papers on Pornography and Prostitution, Report #15, (Canada: Department of Justice, 1984) p. 17.
21. Steinem, p. 54.
22. Alan Soble, Pornography: Marxism, Feminism, and the Future Sexuality, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986) p. 180.
23. Gayle Rubin, Diedre English, Amber Hollibaugh, "Talking Sex: A Conversation on Sexuality and Feminism", in Socialist Review, 58, 43-62, 1981, p. 50.
24. P.B. Bart and M. Josza, "Dirty Books, Dirty Films, and Dirty Data", in Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography, (N.Y.: Morrow, 1980), p. 207.
25. H. Fenrod and D. Linz, "Using Psychological Research on Violent Pornography to Inform Legal Change", in N. Malamuth and E. Donnerstein (ed.) Pornography and Sexual Aggression, (Orlando, Fla.: Academic Press, 1984) p. 262.
26. H.B. McKay and D.J. Dolff, "The Impact of Pornography: An Analysis of Research and Summary of Findings", Working Papers on Pornography and Prostitution, Report #13, (Ottawa: Department of Justice, 1984), p. 16.
27. Ibid.
28. Diana Russell, "Pornography and Violence: What Does the New Research Say?" in L. Lederer (ed.) Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography, (N.Y.: Morrow, 1980), p. 219.
29. James L. Howard, Clifford B. Reifler, Myron B. Liptzin, "Effects of Exposure to Pornography", Technical Reports of the U.S. Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, Vol. VIII, 1970, p. 97.
30. Ibid., p. 104.
31. Ibid., p. 127.

32. Donald L. Mosher, "Psychological Reactions to Pornographic Films", Technical Reports of the U.S. Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, Vol. III, 1970, p. 314.
33. Ibid., p. 306.
34. Ibid., p. 255.
35. Report of the Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1970), p. 201.
36. Megan Ellis, "Fraser Committee: A Masterpiece of Compromise", Kinesis, June 1985, p. 6.
37. "Scope of Porn Laws Queried", Vancouver Sun, Wednesday, June 11, 1986, p. A2.
38. Ibid.
39. SFU Soc. Sciences Librarian verified this fact (December 1989) with the Vancouver Courthouse where a docket is kept of pending bills.
40. "Pornography and Prostitution in Canada", Summary Report of the Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution, Ottawa, 1985, p. 10.
41. Susan Wendell, "Pornography and Freedom of Expression", in S. Wendell and D. Copp (ed.) Pornography and Censorship, (N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1983), p. 168.
42. Kallan and Brooks, p. 29.
43. S. Wendell, "Pornography and Freedom of Expression", p. 167.

CHAPTER III

In this chapter I will be examining the conservative and liberal explanations of pornography. I will discuss the main arguments associated with each perspective, demonstrate the individual variation within the perspective, and finally, provide a critical summary. The discussion will be guided by the five criteria outlined in the Introduction. I will be demonstrating that conservative and liberal argument regarding pornography is gender-blind, often overlooks the social construction of sexuality, and ignores the economic context in which the production of pornography takes place.

Conservatives

Conservatives generally characterize pornography as dangerous and corrupting, but their arguments range from the extremely repressive (Keating, 1970) to the moderate (Steiner, 1965). Individuals like Keating argue for total suppression of pornography because it encourages irresponsible behaviour. Berns (1971) also argues for suppression of pornography but not of literature with sexual content (e.g. A Farewell to Arms or Ulysses). Steiner, although critical of the debasement of human beings and sexuality in pornography, maintains that censorship does not work. Conservatives argue that if pornography is not controlled the moral decay which results from it such as promiscuity, infidelity, venereal disease, and corruption of youth will

lead to the downfall of democratic systems of government. Pornography, conservatives believe, leads to socially harmful attitudes and behaviour that undermine the importance in a democratic society of self-restraint. The conservative perspective incorporates the notion that sex itself is dangerous and must be carefully controlled. Sexual promiscuity is seen as wanton self-indulgence which leads to chaos and moral anarchy.

The conservative viewpoint portrays the individual as part of a collective social arrangement in which one has the responsibility to obey the norms and rules of the group. These rules include being a person of 'good character', one who uses self-restraint in matters sexual, and does not indulge in promiscuity, infidelity, and homosexuality. This 'good character' would include such things as hard work, a respect for democratic systems of government, and an obligation to protect the young from moral corruption. Often conservative treatises fall back on religious justifications regarding the natural order of social life. In this natural order God created sex for the purpose of procreation. Procreative sex is to take place within the confines of heterosexual marriage. The use of pornography would be a violation of the individual's obligation to refrain from wantonness and self-indulgence in sexual matters. The mature adult in this scenario does not indulge in promiscuity, infidelity, or the use of pornography as this would signal a regression to an infantile sexuality, an obsession with masturbation, animal activity, and debasement.¹

The State in conservative argument is seen as responsible through legislation and law enforcement to protect society and the individual from the ravages of pornography. Pornography is seen as perpetuating immoral, degrading, even dehumanizing ideas and imagery regarding sexuality.

From the conservative viewpoint the 'harm' that stems from the widespread availability of pornography is sweeping. Pornography undermines and will eventually destroy the very social fabric upon which societies are so dependent for order and stability. The remedy to the dangers posed by pornography is suppression, Steiner is a rare exception to this conservative prescription.

Conservative argument includes the views of individuals like Charles B. Keating, a dissenting member of the 1970 Pornography Commission in the United States. Keating was also the chairperson of an anti-pornography group in Ohio. Keating argues that all pornography should be suppressed because of its damaging effects. These effects, argues Keating, are not confined to the individual user but reach society as a whole. He attacks the liberal recommendations of the 1970 Pornography Commission to relax controls on pornography as advocating moral anarchy and promoting a libertine philosophy. Keating insists God created sexuality to be shared by heterosexual, married couples and leading to the possibility of procreation. In his view recreational sex, which is promoted in pornography, is perverse.

Keating maintains that the U.S. achieved its place of

prominence in the world due to its historical repression of pornographers. This repression he claims explains the creativity and excellence of the U.S. system and society. It is unclear, however, to what historical or legal precedent Keating is referring. The U.S. Customs Act of 1842 which dealt with the influx of foreign pornography, was the only federal legislation that existed. The federal government left the matter largely to the individual States, who showed little interest in suppressing pornography. In 1842 only one state, Vermont, had an obscenity statute. Not until 1973 did all the States have legislation² to control pornography.^[1]

According to Keating the law is essential as a means of dealing with pornography.

"No, the State cannot legislate virtue cannot make moral goodness by merely enacting law; but the State can and does legislate against vices which publicly jeopardize the virtue of people who might prefer to remain virtuous. If it is not the proper function of law to offer citizens such protection, then what is it?"³

Conservatives like Berns (1971) and van den Haag (1963) would argue, like Keating, for suppression of pornography but not of literature with sexual content. Berns and van den Haag have written articles on pornography and censorship and their arguments have been cited on behalf of the State (the prosecution) in

[1] Much of the fight against pornography in the U.S. between 1873 and 1915 was carried out by a self-proclaimed vigilante called Anthony Comstock.

obscenity trials (see Paris Adult Theatre vs. Lewis R. Slaton, 413, U.S. 49 1973).

Berns feels that nothing is gained by a society wallowing in extended displays of public nudity and copulation. He argues that pornography has political consequences that we need to consider. Graphic sexual displays and ubiquitous sexual material encourages shamelessness in the individual, a feeling that anything is permissible. We are told by pornographers to get rid of our sexual hang-ups and feelings of embarrassment and/or shame. Berns maintains these feelings of shame are important and necessary; they protect our need for privacy and intimacy in sexual matters. Voyeurism, Berns claims, is being promoted by pornographers, and that is unnatural and damaging.

"Whereas sexual attraction bring man and woman together seeking a unity that culminates in the living being they create, the voyeur maintains a distance; and because he maintains a distance he looks at, he does not communicate; and because he looks at he objectifies, he makes an object of that which it is natural to join; objectifying, he is incapable of uniting and is therefore incapable of love."⁴

Berns maintains this scenario is bad enough on an individual basis, but if the majority of people in a society are behaving in this way, then an unnatural situation is created which leads to tyranny. Berns is suggesting that if large numbers of people are behaving in a shameless and self-indulgent manner the State will have to take repressive measures to restore order or the society will collapse. Berns argues that early founders of modern

democracies like Rousseau, Washington, and Jefferson were aware that a democracy will not work without citizens of 'good character.' He insists that it is the responsibility of the people in government and those making and adjudicating laws to make an effort to "promote that good character, if only by protecting the effort of other institutions, such as the Church and the family, to nourish and maintain it."⁵ Pornography then is seen as undermining important social institutions such as marriage and the family.

Ernest van den Haag (1967) focuses on the individual user of pornography. Those who would claim that pornography has no effect are, in his opinion, being silly. He maintains that as a society we have no assurance that the effects from the use of pornography will be positive. Although he admits that not all readers of de Sade will engage in sadistic acts, the possibility remains that it could happen, as all of us have the potential to be sadistic.

"...not all readers of Marx become Marxists but some do; some non-readers might have become socialists anyway. Are we to say that Marx has no influence?"⁶

Van den Haag insists that actions are influenced by ideas. Ideas are present in the particular culture, and these ideas are certainly influenced by media. He argues that the need for sexual gratification resides within all of us, but how to satisfy those needs comes from the culture.

Van den Haag goes further than other conservatives when he discusses the specific effects of pornography. He claims the

individual who uses pornography will eventually become dissatisfied with simple nudity ("soft-core" pornography) and will begin to require "hard-core" pornography. And for this reason, van den Haag insists, we must have censorship. If we do not restrict and control pornography we will pay a serious social price. "Our society will become ever more coarse, brutal, anxious, indifferent, deindividualized, hedonistic; at worst its ethos will disintegrate altogether."⁷ Pornography is being charged here with creating a sweeping set of threatening social conditions.

George Steiner (1965), a literary critic, presents a much different line of conservative argument. He does not accuse pornography of creating moral anarchy but of creating contempt for sexuality and humanity. He warns that this historical period, characterized by freedom for the "uncensored erotic imagination" and the total freedom of the sadist may not be a coincidence.

"Both are exercised at the expense
of someone else's humanity, of
someone else's most precious right--
the right to a private life of feeling."⁸

Steiner maintains that pornographers would do our imagining for us in the most mechanical, sometimes brutal way and, as a result, we are ultimately left empty and unfulfilled rather than stimulated and uplifted. Sexual relations, in Steiner's opinion, are one of the "last bastions of privacy in an urban mass-technocracy, and a place where we attempt at total communication and communion with another human being."⁹ This privacy and

intimacy are precious to Steiner and should be protected. The pornographer subverts this last private place and opens it up for public scrutiny.

Steiner does not, however, advocate censorship as most conservatives do. He maintains censorship doesn't work. Censorship fails because, first, the censors are just average people, like ourselves, open to poor judgement and dishonesty. Second, those people who really want access to a book or film can get it one way or another.

None of the writers we have considered here provide a definition of pornography. Although Berns does make a distinction between pornography (never defined) and literature with sexual content such as Ulysses. One could speculate that conservatives mean all sexual imagery by virtue of the fact that they believe sex to be dangerous. But, this is pure speculation. We really do not know with any certainty what these commentators mean when they use the term pornography. Steiner seems to be suggesting that pornography (never defined), no matter what is depicted, is an invasion of privacy and neither pornographers, nor anyone else should be producing material depicting sexual activity. Conservative writers seldom provide any social scientific research to support their claims. They appeal to one's common sense and ultimate sense of decency.

It is difficult not to have some sympathy with the conservative viewpoint. Most of us believe that sexuality is an intimate and private part of our lives. We can understand conservative

concerns about the depersonalization and mechanization of sex which make up much of the actual content of pornography. However, to see pornography as the evil mechanism which brings the downfall of society is to ignore important social and economic conditions which are responsible for its presence. There is very little reference in conservative argument to the capitalist, sexist, consumer-oriented society in which we live - a society that mass markets sex and in which the pornography industry, as a powerful profitable arm of the mass media, can endure. There is little or no discussion of the fact that the principal producers, distributors, and consumers of pornography are men. Although there are fleeting comments made about the treatment of women in pornography, it is given no serious consideration. Finally, the usual prescription recommended by conservatives is suppression. It is unlikely that given the increase in sexual permissiveness and the escalation of explicit sexual content, even in general release films, that blanket suppression will be acceptable by the public. A recent survey of English-speaking Canadians indicated a good deal of tolerance for sexually-explicit materials, 72% of the survey population (N=1000) said they would watch non-violent simulated sex with no genitals shown; 67% said non-violent simulated sex was acceptable for television; almost half said they would watch non-violent sexually explicit material with genital exposure. Therefore, there is very little reason to assume that blanket suppression is feasible.¹⁰

Liberals

The liberal position stands in stark contrast to that of the conservative. Liberals argue generally for maximum freedom for the individual, including sexual freedom, without undue interference from the State, unless the exercise of that freedom impinges on the rights of others. Liberals consider consensual sexual activity and the use of pornography to be a private matter for the individual. Liberals maintain that the use of censorship in controlling pornography cannot be justified due to constitutional protections to free speech. As a result, a great deal of the literature deals with the dangers of censorship (e.g. Goodman, 1970; Hyman, 1970) rather than the content and possible impact of pornography. This preoccupation with censorship is carried over into blaming an increase in pornography depicting fetishism and sadomasochism on sexual repression and censorship. (Kronhausens, 1959; Goodman, 1970).

Liberals often connect censorship with sexual repression which, in their opinion, violates the principles of a democracy to allow individuals to choose what they will or will not read or view. The Kronhausens, for example, argue that the more authoritarian a political system and the more economically restrictive the less sexual freedom is accorded the individual. If North America is a real democracy then we must allow total sexual freedom. This freedom would include the use of pornography.

The liberal position embodies a wide spectrum of individuals. There are those individuals who call themselves sexual

libertines, (e.g. Kronhausens, 1959) who argue that any restriction on sexual freedom and pornography is repressive and damaging and signals a return to the puritanical past. Other liberals, like Goodman, claim that censorship creates the need for sadistic pornography and contributes to a cultural climate where sexuality is connected with embarrassment and shame. Berger (1983) argues that pornography is sexual fantasy and entertainment which does not translate into actual behaviour. He also opposes censorship and is suspicious of regulation. The civil libertarian position, represented by huge organizations such as the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and the American Civil Liberties Union publicly argue for the protection of pornography from censorship. Censorship, they argue, cannot be tolerated because it violates constitutional protections to free speech. However, they recently have qualified this position by publicly stating that material depicting adult-child sex or material in which it could be proven that participants were physically harmed during production should not be protected. This question of harm is very central to liberal argument and more explanation is necessary.

The concept of harm in liberal argument originated in John Stuart Mill's philosophy on liberty, rights, and freedoms. One can only be justifiably prevented from doing something if it can be demonstrated that doing it impedes or infringes on the freedoms or rights of others. What this principle has meant for pornography is that the State has no business intruding into private consensual sexual matters, including the use of pornog-

raphy.

Much of liberal argument, as a reaction to the suppression of sexuality and pornography recommended by conservatives, seeks to vindicate sexuality and pornography by proving that the use of such material is not harmful. This line of argument often rests on the catharsis theory which maintains that pornography serves a positive function by acting as a safety valve, reducing personal and social tension, allowing for the harmless release of anti-social tendencies (e.g. Kronhausen, 1959; Kutchinsky, 1973; Ben-Veniste, 1971; Richards, 1977; Berger, 1977.) Most liberal argument which employs this idea of catharsis refers to men's use of pornography and their subsequent treatment of women. The release of sexual tension and aggression, so the argument goes, occurs in a harmless way; sexual assault or rape are avoided. One piece of research done for the 1970 Pornography Commission, "The Danish Experience", (Ben-Veniste, 1970) is frequently cited by liberals (e.g. Kutchinsky, 1973; Dixon, 1984) as evidence that a relaxation of controls on pornography brings a decline in sex offenses.¹¹ This piece of research has become extremely important because the catharsis theory is said to have been proven as a result of this cultural experiment.

Liberals argue that if there is any harm done it is only to the willing user and that on the whole pornography should be considered fantasy which does not translate into actual behaviour.¹² The harm test has come to mean to liberals that a clear demonstration must be made that the consumption of pornography

directly causes anti-social behaviour. Demonstrating a direct causal relationship between any two variables, especially social phenomena, is, of course, difficult. Such a harm test disarms antagonists of pornography unless they can produce the "right" evidence. What constitutes harm, and the necessary evidence which must be produced, has been hotly debated and contested, especially by feminists. We will explore feminist criticism of the harm principle in the next section.

The liberal characterization of sexuality is a consistently positive one; sex is represented as a healthy human activity to be enjoyed and celebrated. The harm for liberals is the use of censorship as a means of dealing with pornography. Liberal commentators often draw on supportive social scientific research (e.g. Berger, 1983; Dixon, 1984) which generally makes their arguments more persuasive. Prescriptions range from doing away with all controls on sex and pornography, regulating only display and purchase of pornography, and suppression of visual materials depicting adult-child sex or material where it could be proven that participants were physically harmed.

One of the earliest influential books on pornography was written by Eberhard and Phyllis Kronhausen, self-proclaimed sexual libertines. The Kronhausens are psychologists interested in sexuality, sex research, and pornography. They have been credited with being the first modern researchers to support fully the catharsis theory and their research is cited frequently. In their 1959 book, Pornography and the Law: The Psychology of

Erotic Realism and Pornography, they argue for an end to sexual repression (which they blame largely on religion) and for increased tolerance towards pornography.

The Kronhausens do not often use the word pornography in their text, nor define it, although it appears in the title of their book. They spend a great deal of time making a distinction between "erotic realism" in literature, such as Lady Chatterley's Lover and "hard-core obscenity", like the classic Victorian piece The Pearl. They argue that there are differences between sexually-oriented material, some material being more valuable. "Erotic realism" in literature, they maintain, will be obvious to a reader, by virtue of the fact that sex will be dealt with, sometimes in a very graphic, arousing manner, but in the context of a story which examines the human beings' life experiences. The sexuality in "erotic realism" is shown in all its positive and negative manifestations. The Kronhausens argue that this type of material is important and educational because it allows the reader to explore sexuality and to examine the emotional aspects of sex.

"Hard-core obscenity", on the other hand, does not provide the type of benefits described above although it does provide cathartic release. According to the Kronhausens, to be effective "hard-core obscenity" must not distract the reader with plot and character development or philosophical discussion, but provide a steady stream of sexual imagery, usually beginning with partial nudity and innuendo building to sexual frenzy and graphic sexual

detail.¹³

The Kronhausens examine the thematic content of ten pieces of pornographic fiction^[2] to demonstrate the distinction between "erotic realism" and "hard-core obscenity." In this fiction, exhibitionism, voyeurism, and defloration of young virgins were the overriding themes. Other themes were incest, profaning the sacred, and flagellation. Lesser themes dealt with negroes and Asiatics who were portrayed as inferior and animalistic in the scripts.

The Kronhausens never make clear why they spend so much time drawing the distinction between "hard-core obscenity" and "erotic realism". They do not argue for censorship of "hard-core obscenity", although they clearly believe that "erotic realism" is more valuable. Their close examination of the thematic content of "hard-core obscenity" appears to be undertaken to provide evidence of their contention that the use of this material provides cathartic release. For example, they argue that the reason why the theme of incest appears so often is because it is a strong social taboo. Psychoanalysis, they claim, proves that many people have latent incestuous desires. The use of material with an incest theme provides, therefore, a beneficial release for these desires. However, no evidence is provided

[2] One of the pieces of pornography they looked at was produced in the 1700's. A number of the pieces were never dated so their age is unknown but, from the language of the pieces, they are clearly from the period 1700 to 1850. What these dated pieces of pornographic fiction have to do with currently available pornography is unclear.

to prove this point.

The Kronhausens characterize sexuality as a powerful biological force which must be gratified. Sexual repression is unhealthy and curtails a natural sexual curiosity on the part of the individual. The conflict between sex drive and sexual repression creates embarrassment, shame, and guilt.

"Attempts at social control of an instinctual force which has as strong a basis in biology as the sex drive must be in keeping with the realities of human nature if they are not to be harmful to the development of the individual and the progress of society."¹⁴

The Kronhausens condemn conservatives for perpetuating notions of romantic love to justify sexual relations. They argue that the conservative desire to repress sexuality and sexual imagery is wrong and helps to create a climate which connects sex with shame. This climate can have very serious and undesirable consequences.

"Clinical evidence indicates that guilt-based sexual inhibitions, restrictions, and repressions result in perversions of the sexual impulse, general intellectual dulling, sadomasochistic inclinations, unreasonable (paranoid) suspicions..."¹⁵

The Kronhausens state that much of the evidence they use to support their arguments is testimony from therapists' case study material. They admit that there really is not enough evidence regarding effects of sexual materials to speak with authority. However, this does not prevent them from embracing the catharsis theory.

The Kronhausen's analysis is weak in a number of ways. First, they contend that the use of pornographic material with an incest theme provides cathartic release. There is no way that we can be certain that individuals will leave their fascination with incest in the realm of fantasy. Some individuals may well be satisfied with the fantasy, others will act it out.¹⁶ Second, the Kronhausens appear to be suggesting that the "hard-core obscenity" they looked at could be used as a sex educational tool. This is extremely questionable. What is it that young people will learn from reading, for example, The Lascivious Hypocrite, one of the books the Kronhausens examined? This book depicts the rape of a young virgin female with the aid of her mother. The young girl is strapped down and the mother sits on her head so she will have a better view of the defloration.¹⁷ Third, the Kronhausens characterize sexuality as a powerful biological force which must be expressed and gratified or negative consequences will result for the individual and society. This type of explanation suffers from what Rubin would call "sexual essentialism."¹⁸ Here sex is an unchanging, transhistorical feature of the human being; an uncontrollable natural force. There is no recognition of the social construction of sexuality or its changing character through time and specific to culture.

In their analysis, the Kronhausens commented on the different treatment of men and women, brought out by their own content analysis, but they fail to expand on what this implies.

Also, their content analysis demonstrated that people of colour are stereotyped as inferior and animalistic but they do not comment on this outcome.

Goodman, like the Kronhausens, feels all controls on pornography should be relaxed but he goes further in his condemnation of censorship and the social problems, he believes, it creates. Goodman, a literary critic and writer, charges censorship itself with creating the need for what he calls "sadistic pornography". (never defined)

"...what if the censorship itself, part of a general repressive anti-sexuality, causes the evil, creates the need for sadistic pornography sold at criminal profit?"¹⁹

Goodman further argues that censorship perverts the attitudes towards sexuality in the community. He condemns court decisions like the one vindicating Lady Chatterley's Lover (U.S. 1960) as not being permissive in the right way. These judicial decisions do not vindicate sexuality. In Goodman's opinion these decisions are still based on tests as to whether the material displays "a shameful or morbid interest in sex"(45). In this way the court is fostering the notion that sex is something to be embarrassed about.

Goodman argues that the definitions of obscenity which are being applied in the legal sphere condemn sexuality. He is correct in that "obscene", in the Canadian Criminal Code, for example, is defined as a publication, picture, model, phonograph record, or other thing whatsoever which exhibits an "undue

exploitation of sex". That is, the definition of material which can be rightfully suppressed usually includes reference to prurience or the stimulation of lustful thoughts. Goodman argues that this reasoning is wrong and is based on a "miserable social policy" which creates a sense in society that sexual expression is shameful, thereby producing guilt and associating lust with punishment and degradation. In this way the Court unwittingly fosters a climate where sadomasochistic material can flourish.²⁰

Goodman is right that the definitions of objectionable material are unclear and Court rulings inconsistent. The Courts are struggling with antiquated terminology like "obscene and lewd" which are impossible to define, as well as attempting to come to grips with a greater permissiveness in community tolerance. These are real dilemmas which need to be addressed before the confusion is going to be resolved.

Goodman argues that if we could reverse the climate of anti-sexuality and rescind controls on pornography, we might eventually get back to a healthy, more relaxed attitude towards sexuality. This relaxed attitude would help reduce the desire for pornography. Others, like the Kronhausens, have argued that the widespread availability of pornography would eventually produce boredom and a subsequent decline in the demand for such material. According to Judith Bat-Ada, this satiation has not occurred because pornographers, just like advertisers, can hire marketing analysts and other media specialists to find unique ways of promoting the product and creating demand.²¹ Satiation

might occur if it were the same pictures, films, or participants appearing over and over again.²² But, there is endless variation in sexual scenarios and a seemingly vast resource of actors and actresses willing to participate in the production of pornography. The continued growth in the pornography industry since World War II would indicate an increase in desire for pornography not a decrease.

Goodman never provides a definition of pornography, although he does draw a distinction between pornography and sadistic pornography. He never clarifies what type of material falls in either category. It is clear from his line of argument that he believes sexuality to be healthy and good and that society needs to protect the expression of sexuality. The harm that Goodman sees as most dangerous is that done by the Courts with their confusing, erratic, and anxious policy with regards to pornography. Goodman provides no social scientific research to support his contention that censorship creates a need for sadistic pornography. The fact is that if Goodman tried to produce data regarding the prevalence of "sadistic pornography", he would find that 1) very few content analyses have been done and, 2) what has been done indicates that the incidence of sexual aggression themes is low. A recent content analysis of triple xxx and adult videos in British Columbia (Palys, 1984) put the incidence of sexual aggression at 6% (sexual arousal had to be achieved, in part, through aggressive/coercive means to be coded as sexual

aggression).³ And he could not provide supporting research for the contention that a causal connection between censorship and "sadistic pornography" exists.

Goodman ignores alternative explanations for the shame and guilt surrounding sex, one of which would be, in North America at least, a predominantly Judaeo-Christian religious ideology.²³ The impact of religious ideas should not be underestimated. And again, religious ideology perpetuates different notions regarding sex for males and females.

Berger (1977) does not argue that censorship creates the desire for sadistic pornography, but he, like Goodman, does not advocate censorship and claims he cannot support regulation because it usually acts like a form of censorship. Unlike the Kronhausens, Berger demonstrates more sensitivity to the unequal treatment of women within pornography. Berger has written on both the philosophy of John Stuart Mill and on pornography. Unlike the Kronhausens, Berger does provide a definition of pornography which he feels is suitable for discussion purposes (not as a legal definition).

"...art or literature which explicitly depicts sexual activity or arousal in a manner having little or no artistic or literary value."²⁴

Berger attempts to vindicate sexuality and pornography by attacking conservative arguments regarding sexuality and sexual

³The coders were looking for verbal anger, humiliation, bondage, confinement, slapping, hitting, pulling hair, rape, coercion with weapons, sexual harassment, etc(46).

imagery. Berger insists that people's attitudes toward pornography typically hinge on their attitudes toward sex. For example, conservatives believe sex to be potentially dangerous and corrupting, therefore, they find depictions of sex objectionable. Second, Berger maintains that conservatives are simply wrong in believing that pornographic materials can change or alter our attitudes towards one another.

He claims conservatives tend to romanticize sex, describing sex as spiritual communion within the confines of marriage. Berger maintains that this is an idealized view of what really happens in people's lives.

"The fact is that most sex is routinized, dull, unfulfilling. A source of neurosis, governed by the restraints the conservatives insist on."²⁵

Berger takes issue with conservative arguments about sexuality and the use of pornography. He claims Steiner's concern regarding the pornographers' invasion of our sexual privacy is untrue. Pornography doesn't violate our privacy unless we want it to. Pornography is used, Berger maintains, to enhance the sexual situation, to allow greater freedom in learning about our sexuality, and to discover other ways of experiencing sex. Berger criticizes conservatives, like Kristol (1971), who insist that pornography encourages autoerotic stimulation. Berger states that this is really a condemnation of masturbation itself. Berger argues that the suppression of pornography will not stop the incidence of masturbation. In his opinion, individuals can

enjoy pornography and intercourse without giving up either. In contradiction to earlier remarks about routinized, boring sex he maintains no one would prefer pornography and masturbation over a "mature" sexual love, but he never tells us exactly what is a mature sexual love.

Berger insists that pornography has been beneficial when used by therapists in the treatment of couples experiencing sexual problems. These couples have subsequently reported "happier, healthier relations" with their partners.²⁶ Berger concludes that pornography has limited appeal, short range effects, and is basically recreational sexual entertainment which is not taken seriously by anyone.

Berger draws on reports from therapists, survey material done with sex offenders, and other commentary on pornography to support his claims. In this regard, his argument is stronger than, for example, conservative argument which is based almost solely on intuition and a particular view of what constitutes moral behaviour.

Berger makes no recommendations regarding pornography except that it cannot be justifiably suppressed due to the fact that other media, e.g. television, are equally or more responsible for perpetuating or influencing anti-social attitudes and behaviour.

His conclusion is not particularly satisfying or convincing, especially when it is clear that he has certain reservations himself about the treatment of women within pornography.

"In so far as it arises (i.e. pornography) in a social context entirely infused with male sexism, much of it reflects the worst aspects of our society's approved conceptions of sexual relations. Too often, the scenes depicted involve male violence and aggression toward women, male dominance over women and females as sexual servants."²⁷

The question here is why has Berger ignored the possible impact on the status of women from allowing sexist and/or coercive pornography to be widely disseminated within society.

There are further limitations in Berger's treatise. First, he does provide a definition of pornography, which is important. However, as we discussed in Chapter 2 the definition is too vague. We do not know with any certainty what material Berger means to include in his definition. Second, Berger contends that conservatives should not romanticize sex because most sex is routinized, dull and unfulfilling. Berger does not provide any evidence to support this generalization and this condemnation hardly seems an appropriate way of vindicating sexuality.

Berger's contention that pornographic material can be used by therapists to treat couples experiencing sexual problems needs clarification. Berger never explains what type of material is being used in this therapy. It is difficult to imagine a couple becoming healthier and happier after viewing pornography depicting rape or adult-child sex. Also, the general sexism of the material does not seem very likely to help women toward a happier sex life.

Finally, Berger's suggestion that pornography is a good sex educational tool is questionable. Most pornography presents a very poor view of sexual relations, it is often sexist, sometimes racist, and possibly coercive.

Civil libertarians have the same concerns for sexual freedom and freedom of expression, as Berger, but with more qualifications. In contrast to Berger's discussion, however, the civil libertarian position appears gender-blind.

The civil libertarian position has been expressed well by John Dixon in his submission to the Fraser Committee in March 1984. Dixon, a philosophy professor, is president of the B.C. Civil Liberties Association, which attempts to influence both public opinion and government policy. He has taken part in public debate on the question of pornography (most notably in opposition to feminists like Jillian Ridington).

Drawing on Rousseau and Mill, Dixon argues for the importance of protecting speech. A society which allows for the maximum freedom for the individual, freedom of speech being an important component, will be the best and happiest society. This society must be committed to non-interference from the State in the actions of the individual unless the actions in question cause or threaten harm to others.²⁸ This harm must be weighed against the harm of proscribing the action in question.

Dixon argues that thinking, imagining, and fantasy are important expressions of our liberty. Speech and imagery which flow from our imagination and fantasy, even disgusting or objec-

tionable speech or imagery, must be protected because society needs a public forum for both bad and good ideas.

Dixon maintains that pornography cannot be considered 'hate literature', as feminists like Clark (1983) have suggested, because most pornography does not attempt to incite men to criminal acts. And for Dixon, the only way one could justify suppressing pornography would be if it could be demonstrated that pornography caused direct physical harm. And in his opinion, this has never been proven.^[4] The type of 'harm' which must be demonstrated is an extremely important facet of the civil libertarian position because the harm test stimulated feminist and clinical researchers to attempt to prove a causal connection between sexual violence against women and the use of pornography. Dixon criticizes this family of research as inconclusive and problematic. He refers specifically to the research of Malamuth and Donnerstein (1984). When angered by a female confederate in an experiment, then shown a piece of coercive pornography, and last given an opportunity to aggress, the men in the experiment administered more and greater electric shocks to the women who angered them. Those men placed in the same situation who were shown a pornographic film without coercive content and then given an opportunity to aggress did not respond like the other group.

Dixon maintains that what takes place in a clinical setting and what action would take place in reality are two different

[4]Dixon acknowledges the fact that 'copy-cat' crimes have taken place but, in his opinion, they are too incidental.

things. Second, he argues that the violence in the material appears to be the problem, not the sexual content. He claims that very similar research utilizing pornographic material without coercive content actually inhibited aggression against women, therefore establishing the benefits of such material.

Dixon proceeds characteristically to draw upon the "Danish Experience", a piece of research we have already discussed. He draws on this research to argue that the availability of pornography helps to reduce sex crimes, for example, child molestation. He adds that other serious sex crimes such as rape slightly decreased. Yet, as others have pointed out, this is false. Rape, in fact, increased over the period of the study, i.e. 23 reported cases in 1967, 28 in 1968, 27 in 1969, and 31 in 1970.²⁹

Dixon's prescriptions for change include 1) repealing the Criminal Code restrictions on pornography, and 2) providing sex education for the young. He argues for repeal because, in his opinion, we have a responsibility to protect pornographers and the people who choose to view pornography. However, we can meet and counter the pornography industry's view of human sexuality, in Dixon's opinion, by providing thorough sex education in our schools.

Dixon's desire to protect sexual expression is admirable but his analysis is inadequate for several reasons. First, he never provides a definition of pornography. He does draw a distinction between 'snuff' films and other pornography, but we never know

just what he includes in the latter. Second, he argues that we must tolerate pornography because society needs a forum for both bad and good ideas. Of course, for a democracy this is an important ideal. The reality, however, is that there has not been any alternative imagery to the pornography industry's view of sexuality and male-female relations. So, this supposed forum for contrasting ideas does not exist. If this forum existed we might not have to be so concerned about the content of pornography.

Following Dixon's logic pornography depicting adult-child sex should be allowed to proliferate because it would help to decrease direct harm against children. However, he does not argue this point. He concedes that visual imagery of adult-child sex should be proscribed.

Dixon admits that the present state of the research on the use of pornography and subsequent behaviour is problematic.

"In general, we take the view that very deep methodological and theoretical difficulties bedevil the experimental work in this area and it would be unwise to frame social policy on the basis of such barely suggestive results as can be wrung from it." (106)

But he is not even-handed in his assessment of research. He dismisses experimental work which demonstrates negative effects but is persuaded by experiments which show positive effects. In response to Malamuth and Donnerstein's experiment, Dixon misunderstands the importance of their exploration of the fusion of sex and aggression. The researchers postulate that constant

cultural messages pairing sex with aggression, eroticize aggression, a situation which could be potentially dangerous.

"First, the coupling of sex and aggression in these portrayals may result in conditioning processes whereby aggressive acts become associated with sexual arousal, a powerful unconditioned stimulus and reinforcer. In fact, current treatment for sex offenders (e.g. Abel, Blanchard, and Becker, 1978)... are based on the premise that conditioning may occur by associating fantasies of socially sanctioned arousal and behaviour."³⁰

It is not the sexual activity that is being singled out, as Dixon claims, but the fusion of sex and aggression. I would agree with Dixon though that the present state of experimental work is inconclusive but, unlike him, I do not believe this condition therefore means we can confidently embrace research demonstrating positive outcomes. Most of the experimental research, whether demonstrating positive or negative effects, has methodological problems and limitations in terms of generalizability.

Dixon argues that a cultural experiment like the "Danish Experience" is more persuasive. He maintains that this experiment demonstrated that the proliferation of pornography in that country brought a reduction in sex crimes. Yet, he also argues that no direct causal relationship exists between the use of pornography and subsequent behaviour. How then can he argue that the use of pornography would cause a change or reduction in some kinds of behaviour? As with other liberals taking this view, he does not take note of this contradiction.

Many liberals draw on "The Danish Experience" because this piece of research, as I mentioned earlier, is widely cited as scientific proof that the availability of pornography brings a reduction in sex crimes against women. However, when the data used in "The Danish Experience" (Ben-Veniste, 1970) was evaluated by others (like Eysenck and Nias, 1978; McCormack, 1978; Diamond, 1980; and Riddington, 1983), they pointed out that the decrease in sex offenses purported by Ben-Veniste were due to 1) decriminalization of certain offenses e.g. homosexual prostitution which was no longer being included in the statistics, and 2) a more permissive attitude toward offenses such as exhibitionism with a concomitant reduction in reporting. The more serious sexual crimes such as rape increased.³¹ To contrast this study, Court's (1984) research in Hawaii indicates that when controls on pornography fluctuate, so does the incidence of rape. Between 1960-74 rape rates increased 900%, then dropped when controls on pornography were introduced, then rose again when controls were lifted.³² Ben-Veniste's work has been soundly criticized and its conclusions disputed; however, it is still cited by liberals like Dixon (1984), as an argument for relaxation of controls on pornography.

Last, Dixon recommends thorough sex education for the young, but there is little or no discussion regarding what, a "thorough-going sex education for the young" might look like. Would this education teach positive sexual attitudes for both men and women, or would it still embody the old sex stereotypes of the male as

active sexual agent and the female as a passive recipient of male sexuality?

In concluding this chapter, I would like to critically examine two important aspects of liberal argument: the idea of consent and the notion of catharsis. Consent is a central feature of liberal argument and, as has been demonstrated, many liberal commentators employ the notion of catharsis to convince their reader of the benefits of pornography.

Clark (1983), in her critique of liberal theory, claims that the theory promotes a distinction between public and private spheres, maintaining that sexuality and the use of pornography take place in the private sphere. The State is said not to have any right to interfere in these private matters between consenting adults. Clark reminds us that women have historically been considered the property of men in this private sphere and abuses and coercion take place which women have not been able to redress. She asks what sense can be made of the idea of "consenting adults" when one person in the dyad has no right to say no. Liberals are unwilling to support feminists in their struggle against pornography, according to Clark, because of the commitment to privacy and the unwillingness of men to give up certain privileges regarding their right to sexual access and to the use of coercion in obtaining access. Pornography, she claims, supports and encourages male power over women and their right to control and exploit female sexuality.

A second major problem with liberal argument is the use of

the catharsis theory. This theory is based on several unproven assumptions, for example, that men have difficulty controlling the sexually violent behaviour natural to their sex,³³ or that sexuality has a fixed, naturally given shape.³⁴ The catharsis theory has been attacked by feminists like Griffin (1981) as embodying a veiled threat to women -- that if men cannot have access to pornography more rape and sexual assault will occur. There is no clear evidence that the availability of pornography decreases rape but this fact does not seem to deter liberals from employing the catharsis argument.

In conclusion, the greatest difficulty with both the conservative and liberal explanations is that pornography is de-contextualized and discussed as though it exists in a vacuum rather than as a product of the economic and social relations which organize and produce it.³⁵

The conservative and liberal arguments are very polarized, one defining sexuality and pornography as corrupting and dangerous and recommending suppression, while the other embraces sexuality and pornography and argues for the right of the individual to look at whatever material they might choose. The underlying assumption of both the conservative and liberal position, however, is that pornography is about sex, not power. They neglect to deal with the implications of the sexism that is present in most pornography and they ignore or trivialize the coercion which is depicted in a smaller percentage of the material. These arguments do not examine the role of pornography

in relation to our present economic or sex/gender arrangements, which might help us to explain why men are the principal producers, distributors, and consumers of pornography, and women the principal objects (Winick, 1970; Nawy, 1973; Don Smith, 1976).

In relation to and as a reaction to the limitations and gender-blindness of these previous approaches, feminists began to develop a different analysis. During the past two decades these counter arguments have been elaborated, both in relation to conservative and liberal arguments, and in relation to one another.

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14. Ibid., p. 152.
15. Kronhausens, p. 267.
16. Clark, p. 57. She refers here to Kraft-Ebbing and Freud.
17. Kronhausens, p. 195.

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CHAPTER IV

FEMINISTS

In this chapter we will explore liberal and radical feminist positions on pornography. Liberal feminists have written the most extensively on the negative and derogatory images of women in the mass media, while radical feminists have focused on pornography. Socialist feminists have only recently entered the pornography debate apparently as a reaction to the increasing emphasis being placed on pornography by radical feminists and the diversion of valuable resources to fight pornography. Socialist feminists have argued that this emphasis on pornography ignores other more important social and economic conditions which perpetuate sexism. The socialist feminist perspective on pornography will be discussed in Chapter V.

In this discussion I will be examining the quality of the arguments and the underlying assumptions which are advanced by liberal and radical feminists to explain pornography. As in Chapter III, the discussion will be guided by the five criteria outlined in the Introduction. I will be demonstrating that liberal and radical feminist critique is not gender-blind, but both perspectives tend to ignore or argue away the implications of the fact that pornography is produced within a capitalist economic framework. However, liberal feminists pay more attention to economic context than do radical feminists. Liberal and radical feminists acknowledge the social construction of sexuality although in radical feminist critique (e.g. Dworkin)

there is often an underlying suggestion that male sexuality is inherently aggressive and sadistic.

The Entrance of the Feminists

During the 1960's the availability and content of pornography was changing. Hugh Hefner of Playboy and Bob Guccione of Penthouse were battling one another over who could reveal more of the female anatomy in the "Pubic Wars" and general release films were dealing more frequently and more explicitly with sexual themes¹. In 1970 the U.S. Pornography Commission recommended relaxation of controls on pornography, and important Court cases like Roth vs. U.S. (1957) gave pornographers the green light for greater explicitness and exploration of taboo themes.

In 1970 the women's movement began to see pornography as an important issue for women. The springboard for this concern appears to have been Kate Millet's book Sexual Politics (1970). Millet was one of the first modern feminists to link sexuality and cruelty to the maintenance of patriarchy. Millet focused on male power and violence against women depicted in the work of men like Henry Miller and Norman Mailer. She discusses this literature as conquest-oriented, demonstrating the male's notion of his right to sexual domination of the female.

In 1975 Susan Brownmiller published Against Our Will, a systematic look at the evolution of rape. In this book she argues that pornography is the propaganda and rape the practice. Brownmiller was the first feminist to demand censorship of

pornography, contending that pornography is the "undiluted essence of anti-female propaganda" (394). She attacks the liberal position on pornography, claiming that the sexual expression liberals are seeking to protect and the rights they are concerned about are not those of women. Brownmiller set feminist argument outside of liberal explanation, insisting that it does not serve the interests of women.

From 1975 forward feminist debate and political action regarding pornography accelerated. Feminists have written extensively on the subject of pornography, especially radical feminists. Boycotting, picketing of video outlets and adult bookstores, and public appearances by feminists on television and in public forums became standard fare. There have even been bombings of video outlets by women's action groups.²

Although all feminists argue that women suffer from sexual objectification in North America, there is no consensus among them on the question of pornography. Pornography has proven to be a very divisive issue for the women's movement. Due to the differences in explanation among feminists regarding the nature and origins of women's oppression, there is no agreement among them regarding the role and function of pornography or how to deal with it.

Liberal Feminists

Much of what we have already discussed regarding liberal philosophy in general applies here as well, except that liberal

feminists seek to extend equal rights and equal opportunities to women. Although the foundation for liberal feminism originated in liberal philosophy, liberal feminists have insisted that liberal ideals be pushed to their logical conclusion -- often challenging liberal principles in the process.³

Liberal feminists are critical of the male-dominated family and male-dominated institutions which discriminate against women. They argue that if women were provided with the same education and work opportunities as men, the status of women would be substantially altered. Liberal feminists have directed their efforts at public consciousness-raising concerning sexism, negative stereotyping of women in the media and textbook, women's differential treatment in educational systems, affirmative action programs to promote the hiring and promotion of more women, and more recently they have begun to seek legal alternatives for enforcing equality.⁴ The Liberal feminist perspective embodies the notion that the State is a proper arbiter of social inequalities and that it can be harnessed to work in the interests of women. However, most liberal feminists recognize that the State cannot always be relied on to act in the interests of women due to the underrepresentation of women in positions of authority.

Liberal feminists argue that sexuality is an important function for the human being and freedom of choice about one's sexual behaviour should be extended fully to women as well as to men. Friedan (1963), one of the most influential liberal

feminists, insists that the conventional woman is "other-directed", serving men and children, therefore she is alienated from her body and sexuality. The college educated, married woman has greater self-esteem and reports higher levels of sexual fulfillment (Maslow, 1939). Friedan argues there is a definite connection between self-actualization and sexual fulfillment. One more reason why women must have the same education and work opportunities as men.

Liberal feminism is the largest stream in the women's movement and includes conservative liberal feminists, if such a term can be used in description of a feminist, such as Friedan, who demands that discrimination and impediments to personal accomplishment and upward mobility for women be removed. Other liberal feminists (e.g. Ridington)^[1] will not only argue for an end to sexism but for some restructuring or redistribution in the economy to facilitate equality. However, the target of liberal feminist critique is generally patriarchy, not capitalist patriarchy.

Jaggar maintains that pornography presents a "special dilemma for liberal feminists because they recognize the derogatory way in which women are depicted in much pornography, but because of their commitment to liberal notions of 'moral neutrality' and 'freedom of speech' they have no political grounds for opposing pornography unless they can demonstrate that

[1] Ridington describes herself as a social democrat (personal communication).

it directly violates women's rights."⁵ One way of demonstrating this violation would be to argue that pornography constitutes 'hate literature' directed against women. Another method would be to demonstrate that there is a direct causal link between the use of pornography and subsequent violence to women. If 'harm' could be established, then pornography could be justifiably suppressed. Ridington, who will be considered in this chapter, argues both these points.

A conservative liberal feminist, as I have described, would be characterized Betty Friedan's position. In an early work, Friedan discusses sexuality in more depth than pornography. She maintains that women "feel debased in sex" because of their unequal position with men in the family, in the sex act, and in society. Friedan argues that the dehumanization of sexuality and male machismo depicted in the media are caused by the unequal treatment of women in society. When women have attained full equality then sexual liberation can take place.⁶

Friedan argues in The Feminine Mystique that the isolated, unfulfilled housewife who has not been allowed to realize her full potential as a human being appears to be hungry for sex and sexual fantasy as a method of escape. This desire for escape manifests itself in a growing market for romance novels and women's magazines with increased sexual content. In fact, she argues the whole of American society has become more permissive and preoccupied with sex.

"The so-called men's magazines not only reached new excesses in their preoccupation with specific female sex organs, but a rash of magazines blossomed frankly geared to homosexuality. The most striking sexual phenomenon however, was the increased and evidently insatiable lasciviousness of best-selling novels and periodical fiction, whose audience is primarily women."⁷

She argues that if women received the same education, encouragement, and opportunities as men women would not have to escape their empty, unfulfilled lives by reading sexy romance novels. She argues that the government must make fundamental changes in the education of women. Indeed, the entire image of women in the media and textbook must change to improve the status of women.

No explanation is provided by Friedan as to the growing interest in or changing content of pornography for men. And her remarks about the growth of magazines catering to the homosexual seem condemning. For Friedan the 'harm' is gender socialization into rigid sex roles and the negative stereotyping of women in the entire mass media. She is also concerned about the differential education received by women which prevents the majority of them from finding an "identity and creative, satisfying work" outside the home.

In Second Stage, Friedan claims there is a connection between rigid sex roles, sexual repression, and an increase in sexual violence and sadomasochistic pornography (never defined). She argues that forcing men and women into rigid sex roles causes excessive dependence, frustration, deep resentment, and the failure of individuals (especially women) to realize their full

human potential. Societies where sexual repression takes place, Friedan continues, are societies where people are not getting their basic human need for intimacy met. These societies will exhibit an excessive preoccupation with sexuality, an increase and prevalence of sexual violence, and sadomasochistic pornography. North American society, she claims, is exhibiting all these symptoms.

Friedan predicts that as the sex-role revolution continues into its "second stage", we in North America will overcome the dysfunctions described above. Buried in the "last vestiges of the old sex-role order", Friedan claims, is the beginning of a new human sexual revolution.

"If excesses of sexual violence and pornography are the pathological end result of sex-role polarization, this fact demonstrates enormous creative energy to be released in the service of life once the situation is reversed."⁸

In this later work, there is some discussion of capitalist exploitation of sexual repression and frustration (which she claims further increases alienation and sexual violence). However, Friedan argues that changes in the family and increasing equality for women will bring greater respect and fulfillment for men and women. In her opinion, there will be far less sexual frustration for the capitalists to exploit in the future(313).

Friedan makes no specific recommendations for dealing with sadomasochistic pornography because, in her view, once patriarchy is dismantled and women achieve full equality, objectionable

pornography will disappear.

Finally, Friedan argues that we must employ the capitalist system to meet the new needs of women and the family.

"...capitalism surely has enough flexibility to retool itself to meet the new hierarchy of needs, to its own profit"(323).

Friedan's perspective is unique and demonstrates succinctly the difference in the politics of liberal feminists and socialist feminists. I will return to this point in Chapter V.

In Friedan's explanation gender socialization of young boys and girls into rigid sex roles creates adult men and women who are incapable of realizing their full human potential. The male-dominated family is characterized as oppressive for both men and women. This oppressive institution results in frustrated, resentful individuals who cannot achieve sexual fulfillment. Therefore, women escape their isolation and loneliness in sexy, romance novels and men escape into pornography. Friedan insists once women have achieved equality with the concomitant changes in the family, real sexual liberation can take place. When men and women find sexual fulfillment with one another there will no longer be a market of sexual frustrated people to exploit. Friedan argues that sadomasochistic pornography will disappear along with the cultural preoccupation with sex.

Friedan provides no evidence to support this theory. Her entire argument rests on the belief that women are and will attain full equality. No comment is made about the growth in the pornography industry although the implication is that the desire

for pornography increases with the continual demand of women for equal status in society. Unlike marxists, who argue that a change in the economic system will cause the demise of pornography, Friedan argues that the collapse of patriarchy will cause the demise of pornography. In this analysis, capitalist pornographers are just opportunists, taking advantage of the sexual frustration and resentment caused by patriarchy. Clearly, neither view is sufficient. These two systems of oppression support and reinforce one another.

Ridington, mentioned earlier, does not claim that objectionable pornography is a result of the women's movement. She is critical of the industry, the commodification of female sexuality, and she acknowledges the impact of the pornography industry's view of male and female sexual relations on the status and safety of women. Ridington, who has written at length on the pornography controversy, chairs the B.C. Periodical Review Board.^[2]

Ridington advances a legal definition of pornography which is meant to include only depictions of (1) violence in a sexual context or (2) the sexual exploitation of children, but not sex itself.⁹ She approves of Longino's (1980) definition of pornography which excludes sexually explicit material that is not

[2] This Board examines all material coming into the Province under the heading of "Adult Sophisticate". This material is evaluated for violations of community standards and possible violations to Section 159 of the Criminal Code.

degrading or abusive. Ridington calls non-degrading acceptable material 'erotica'. Ridington suggests that we abandon the term "obscenity", substituting it with pornography. She prefers the term pornography because it includes the notion of prostitution which, in her opinion, recognizes the commoditization of female sexuality which is involved in pornographic production and sale.

Ridington discusses the concept of harm at some length. She believes that there is a causal link between the use of pornography and sexual violence against women. She relies on reports from transition houses where women have maintained that they were forced to perform acts that men had seen in pornography.¹⁰ She also refers to Russell (1978) who interviewed 933 women, eighteen years or older, living in San Francisco to determine the prevalence of sexual assault. One of the questions participants were asked was whether they had ever been upset by anyone trying to get them to re-enact behaviour seen in a pornographic picture, film, or book. Ten percent of the women interviewed reported at least one such experience. Last, Ridington draws on recent clinical research which indicates a male will more readily aggress against a female target when both angered and then shown an "aggressive-pornographic" video.¹¹

Ridington's prescriptions are ultimately legal ones although this legal approach would only apply to coercive pornography. Ridington also suggests coercive pornography could be considered 'hate literature' in that this material promotes sexual aggression against a specific group. She recommends that feminists

consider working with those groups attempting to amend the section of the Criminal Code dealing with 'hate literature' in an effort to have gender included as an identifiable group. She suggests that while we are waiting for the law to be changed and legislators to deliver, boycotting, picketing, and direct action against retailers of magazines and video outlets can be carried out. Ridington argues for legal remedies but she acknowledges that relying on the State can be disappointing and risky.

There are several problems with Ridington's critique. First, she approves of a legal definition of pornography which which describes the offending material as degrading or abusive. Acceptable material is that which is not degrading or abusive and she refers to this material as 'erotica'. But, the term degrading can be problematic because there are those who would define nudity in a sexual context as degrading. Also, should 'erotica' be defined simply as material which is devoid of degradation and abuse? More important, nothing is being said here about the overall sexism prevalent in pornography. Ridington's critique appears to give material which is not coercive a clean bill of health. It may be that she did not intend for this conclusion to be drawn. If this is the case, it should be clearly stated. Second, there is very little attention paid to material conditions although there is some reference to the industry and the commoditization of female sexuality. Third, Ridington's emphasis on a causal link between coercive pornography and violence against women is controversial and what evidence we do

have is problematic. Socialist feminists argue that an illusion is created by this type of explanation -- if coercive pornography is suppressed male violence in a sexual context will disappear (Diamond, 1985:49). Finally, in view of recent proposed legislation (Bill C-52) the government is not bringing forward legislation which uses Ridington's narrow definition of pornography, but a definition which includes almost all depictions of sexual activity.¹²

Ridington and Lynn King, a feminist lawyer, both state that much pornography is abhorrent. They discuss pornography as a symptom of a patriarchal system. King claims that legal reform in the areas of equal pay legislation or family law can be beneficial to women but, unlike Ridington, King believes law reform regarding pornography is a dead end. In her opinion, the legal definitions are extremely problematic, and even if one is careful, terms like 'degrading' will be interpreted by the State (censor boards, police, and judges) who are not working from a feminist agenda.

"The vast and complex body of the State is not neutral, but works along clearly patriarchal lines. It is therefore irrational to expect that same State to adopt feminist principles when dealing with sexual representation."¹³

This is a reasonable statement. However, the State has not been completely impervious to the arguments of feminists. This fact is reflected in the rationales handed down by various judges (see C.C.J. Borins, *The Queen vs. Doug Rankine Co. Ltd.* and Act III

Video Productions, 1983). Support has also come from law enforcement officials who agree with feminists, like Ridington, that there is a causal link between sexual violence and pornography.¹⁴

King does not provide a definition of pornography because in her opinion it is a futile exercise. She does not explicitly discuss her view of sexuality, but in light of her remarks regarding the harassment of gay men and women and her criticism of the Ontario Censor Board's cuts of simply sexually explicit material, it is clear that she feels State intervention into individual sexual practice and the use of pornography is unwarranted and dangerous. The harm then for King is the harm of censorship itself a familiar liberal stance. King's arguments regarding the folly of censorship are quite persuasive in that she analyzes the actual activities of the Ontario Censor Board. She discusses both films and books which have been cut or banned by this Censor board. She also discusses actual Canadian obscenity trials such as the one involving The Body Politic, a Toronto gay journal, which we discussed in Chapter II. King claims that the law is being used in these instances to harass gay people.

Characteristically in King's discussion there is a lack of recognition as to how a capitalist economy creates a framework within which the commoditization of sex can flourish. In King's analysis the diagnosis is that pornography is a result of patriarchy, not a result of capitalist patriarchy. Finally, King

has put forward no prescriptions for change except to suggest that we look for other alternatives to legal reform.

The major problem with liberal feminist analysis is its focus on just patriarchy instead of capitalist patriarchy. Can liberal feminists explain what purpose pornography serves to a capitalist patriarchal state? They can cogently discuss the impact on women of patriarchal ideology such as the negative stereotyping of women in the media, including the way women are depicted in pornography, but one cannot discuss pornography in isolation from either the nature of the economic framework in which it endures, or the obvious sexism and racism that is reflected and therefore perpetuated in that media. Finally, there is division among liberal feminists as to whether law reform and censorship can be an effective method of dealing with pornography without posing other dangers.

Radical Feminists

Radical feminists agree with the liberal feminist emphasis on patriarchy, but they take the discussion of patriarchy and its implications much further. Human reproduction and sexuality are very central issues for radical feminism. These areas are considered the locus of women's oppression. Radical feminism is responsible for insisting that these areas are political. Catherine MacKinnon, a professor of law, who writes and speaks extensively on pornography, claims "sexuality is the linchpin of gender inequality".¹⁵ Therefore, radical feminists have con-

centrated their efforts at transformation in these areas because they believe this is how the liberation of women will occur.

Radical feminists encourage women to build a woman's counter culture. The State cannot be relied on to effect change because the positions of authority are occupied by men who will discriminate against women. Therefore, women have to start their own businesses, create their own organizations to assist one another in the struggle against patriarchy. Lesbianism has been promoted as the most radical threat to enforced heterosexuality through marriage. By becoming lesbians, women could reject male control of women's sexuality. Having identified the area of sexuality as one of the central aspects of women's oppression, it is not surprising that radical feminists have focused on pornography and have channelled enormous resources into fighting it.

Radical feminists have written more extensively than other feminists on the subject of pornography. They insist that pornography is male propaganda designed to encourage male control of female sexuality. This control often involves coercion and rape. They see pornography as the ultimate in misogynist ideology. Radical feminist argument is the most homogenous of the feminist critiques. The various commentators differ only in the depth of the argument. For example, Griffin (1981) discusses the psychological processes which give rise to the desire for pornography while Dworkin ignores the underlying psychological processes.

Dworkin (1979) has written a controversial book on pornog-

raphy and travels throughout North America speaking on pornography and other issues. She has been involved in drafting important new municipal legislation regarding pornography in the United States. Dworkin attempts to describe the system of male domination in which pornography can endure.

"Male sexual domination is a system with an ideology and a metaphysics. The sexual colonization of women's bodies is a material reality: men control the sexual and reproductive uses of women's bodies. The institutions of control include law, marriage, prostitution, and pornography, along with health care, the economy, religion, and systematized physical aggression against women, e.g. incest, rape, and battery."¹⁶

According to Dworkin, sexuality in a male dominated society involves danger and violence for women. Pornography as a manifestation of male power in a sexual context preaches male domination and conquest of women. Therefore, for radical feminists pornography and sexual violence are linked to keep women in a state of subordination. In this way, pornography does constitute a real threat to women and should be suppressed.

Dworkin argues that pornography is the propaganda of the male sexual system. This system of power is based on the domination of women and is backed up by the threat or actual use of force. And this power and coercion extends to the area of sexuality and sexual imagery. Dworkin maintains that all pornography is degrading to women. (This characterization appears to be her definition of pornography although she does not specifically state this.) The term 'erotica' is silly to Dworkin because

all that 'erotica' means is a better class of pornography, pornography that is better conceived and produced, i.e. using expensive sets, lighting, costumes, and attractive female participants.

"As with the call girl and the streetwalker one is turned out better but both are produced by the same system of sexual values and both perform the same sexual service."¹⁷

Pornography is the correct term, Dworkin argues, to describe material currently available. Porne were, in Greek society, the most worthless women. In status she was below a slave, she was a sexual slave. Graphos means writing or drawing about these porne. Dworkin, using language meant to be inflammatory, states that put in a more contemporary way, pornography is the graphic depiction of whores or sluts, sexual cattle, or cunts.¹⁸ Dworkin insists that even the term whore or slut only has meaning within the male sexual system.

"Men have created the group, the type, the concept, the epithet, the insult, the industry, the trade, the commodity, the reality of woman as whore."¹⁹

Dworkin describes male sexuality as cruel, aggressive, and exploitative. Pornography, she insists, reinforces the idea that sexual pleasure for men is to be gotten by humiliating women. Women are the victims of male sexuality in her account. Dworkin maintains that pornography is considered bad or dirty because female sexuality, which is its focus, is considered to be dirty, especially female genitals.

The 'harm' of pornography for Dworkin includes its very

presence, its message, and its actual impact on men and women. Dworkin charges that men come to pornography as believers of the lie about women and female sexuality but go away missionaries.²⁰ Pornography, in this view, encourages men to view women as whores, who as worthless beings, can be coerced and violated.

Dworkin argues that as more and more pornography floods the market, and the improvements in print and film technology advance, pornography can become a slicker, multi-media product, widely distributed and easily available. In this way more men are reached daily with pornography's message, that is, that women are passive sexual objects who enjoy pain and humiliation with sex.

Dworkin does not marshal any social scientific evidence to support her claims, instead, she examines pornographic photographs and fiction, as well as pieces of literature with pornographic content. She uses this existing material to demonstrate her point regarding male dominated sexual themes and the way that women are depicted in pornography. Dworkin is very selective in what she brings forth as evidence, choosing the most reprehensible material. I am not suggesting that we ignore the serious implications of this kind of material, but the bulk of pornography is not coercive, although it is often sexist.³ Dworkin's discussion is often gripping, especially when she is

³ By sexist I mean sexual scenarios which are male-initiated and male-controlled focused on fellatio, intercourse and ejaculation.

exposing the misogyny in magazines like Hustler. She points to such features as the pictorial lay-out "Beaver Hunters". This is a photograph of two white male hunters sitting in a jeep with a naked, white woman tied spread-eagled to the hood. Her crotch is displayed prominently in the center of the photograph. The caption underneath is a disturbing demonstration of male power and contempt for women.

"Western Sportsmen report beaver hunting was particularly good throughout the Rocky Mountain region during the past season. These two hunters easily bagged their limit...They told Hustler that they stuffed and mounted their trophy as soon as they got her home."²¹

It is difficult not to be infuriated by such material. And Dworkin uses this rage to demand blanket suppression of pornography. The illusion which she creates is that pornography causes male violence against women and until it disappears women will not be safe. She argues that men are arrogant, cruel, and convinced that their power over women, in this case sexual power, is justified because women are passive and masochistic.

"The boys are betting on our compliance, our ignorance, our fear. The boys are betting that we cannot face the horror of their sexual system and survive. The boys are betting that their penises and fists and knives and fucks and rapes will turn us into what they say we are - ...the masochistic sluts who resist because we really want more."²²

In Dworkin's description women are victims in a desolate and dangerous landscape inhabited by cruel, exploitative males who are by nature sexually violent. Dworkin's description of male

sexuality is disheartening and distorted. Dworkin ignores the fact that men are also part of the pornographic scenarios. The way men are depicted is not always flattering either. It is true that men and male sexuality are presented differently from women and female sexuality. Men are most often depicted in a position of control and power. These facts are characteristics of pornography, not of all men and male sexuality. Dworkin also does not acknowledge that not all men use pornography. Some men are repulsed and upset by pornography, as many women are. Not all men enjoy slapping women around for sexual pleasure, just as women are not masochists by nature. The truly upsetting aspect of Dworkin's argument is that it quickly slides into a biological accusation regarding male sexuality, i.e. men are violent by nature. Dworkin demonstrates no recognition of the social construction of sexuality. Her presentation of patriarchy is ahistorical and universal. There is no discussion of material conditions and a disturbing lack of attention to the possible social and psychological processes which give rise to the desire for and use of pornography.

Most recently, along with Catherine MacKinnon, Dworkin has designed the first civil approach to dealing with pornography, i.e. "The Minneapolis Ordinance." This landmark ordinance was passed into law, and many other cities are considering similar civil approaches. This ordinance allows a woman to bring suit for damages and suppression of the material against any maker, distributor, seller, or exhibitor of pornography if the plaintiff

can demonstrate that they have been 1) coerced or fraudulently induced into performing in pornography; or, 2) have had pornography forced upon them in any public place or in the home; or, 3) have been assaulted or attacked as a result of pornography. This is the first time in history an individual has ever been given civil recourse against producers, distributors, or retailers of pornography. Cole (1989) argues that this type of civil approach should be instituted in Canada because any fines levied do not go into the State coffer but to the woman who has been injured as a result of pornography. As well, this type of legislation would empower women, not put more power into the hands of the police or Courts. However, the Minneapolis Ordinance was passed by the City Council in 1983 and vetoed by the Mayor. A version of this ordinance did pass into law in 1984 in Indianapolis. The law was immediately challenged in Court and struck down as a violation of the constitutional right to free speech. This law is now on appeal to the Supreme Court.²³

Another radical feminist who is often cited in the literature on pornography is Susan Griffin (1981). Griffin has written a powerful and moving book entitled Pornography and Silence: Culture's Revenge Against Nature. Dworkin and Griffin are often cited (e.g. Soble, 1988) because their arguments and explanations regarding the presence of pornography have been very controversial.

Unlike Dworkin, Griffin does demonstrate an understanding of the psychological and social processes which create tension

and conflict for men. Pornography, Griffin suggests, plays a role in the construction of gender by reinforcing stereotypes of female passivity and masochism and male aggression and sadism. Griffin takes us back to the primary connection that infant males have with their mother: their first caregiver and love object upon whom they are totally dependent. They cannot at first distinguish themselves from her, they are part of her. But as boys grow older they become aware through messages disseminated in the culture, including pornography's message, that a man, to be a man, must reject all things feminine including the mother. These messages depict women as weak, inferior, emotional, and dependent. The rejection of the feminine by the male puts him into a basic conflict with himself. In his struggle to suppress or kill this part of himself, he directs and deflects his rage upon women. He needs to overcome, dominate, and conquer them to be a man. Griffin sees pornography as a reflection of this desire to dominate and subjugate. She warns that in this struggle, which can never be successful, the need to punish could end in sexual abuse and possible murder. She points to the appearance of the 'snuff film' as evidence of her contention.

She discusses our participation in the collective "pornographic mind", although men and women play different parts. This mind is sexist, racist, and afraid of knowing and exploring real human erotic feeling and desire. Pornography is not, in her opinion, an indication of growing sexual freedom but of the need to silence eroticism in mechanical, coarse, brutal sexual ac-

tivity devoid of feeling, affection and joy. She refers to pornography as the "poetry of oppression."²⁴ She attacks pornographers who claim they are champions of sexual liberation. She insists that if one looks at pornography one will see that the messages are not about liberation, but domination.

Griffin, like Dworkin, believes women are a colonized group, alienated from their own experience by a foreign culture, the one imposed by men. This male sexual culture does not include women's experience. Female sexuality is represented in pornography as men would like it to be, not as it actually is.

The sexuality that Griffin discusses is male sexuality which she characterizes as violent and abusive. However, unlike Dworkin, Griffin does not fall back on a biological explanation. Griffin agrees that male sexuality is shaped by the individual's experience in the culture. This experience, in her opinion, is influenced by messages disseminated in the various media, including the message of pornographers. The pornographers depiction of sexuality is categorically bad, that is, abusive, coercive and exploitative. Not only does the pornographer debase male and female sexuality, their lies about female passivity and masochism is dangerous for women. Therefore, the 'harm' once again is the presence of pornography. Pornographic imagery does not stay in the realm of fantasy for Griffin. It can always be translated into actual behaviour. Griffin argues that "whether or not pornography causes sadistic acts, pornography itself is a sadistic act."(111)

Griffin, like Dworkin, uses excerpts from fiction and discusses certain pictorial pornography to support her contentions. She insists that pornography reflects and reinforces the racism, sexism, and sadism of the 'pornographic mind'. She draws on films like Slaves of Love, which is advertised with a still of two naked black women in chains. A white male with a whip is their keeper. Griffin claims themes of domination and conquest infuse pornography. Nazi memorabilia is often used to create this theme. She refers to films like Golden Boys of the SS, Ilse the She-Wolf of the SS, and Leiben Camp, a pornographic film which eroticizes concentration camp atrocities. She insists that if we look closely at the depictions of people of colour done by racists, or the imagery of the Jew done by anti-semitics, or the depiction of women by the pornographer, we will see that these "fantasized characters resemble one another."²⁵ They are all a product of this "pornographic mind."

"...a mind which projects all its fears
in itself onto another; a mind which
defines itself by what it hates."²⁶

Griffin never explicitly demands suppression of pornography nor does she make any recommendations for change. This lack of a conclusion is anti-climactic and disappointing.

Griffin never provides a definition of pornography, but, in her discussion, she characterizes all pornography as degrading, sadistic, and coercive. I am assuming this is her definition.

"The actual images of pornography degrade women. This degradation is the essential experience of pornography...The whole value, the thrill of a "peep show" or a centrefold depends on a woman's degradation...For she is literally for sale. Her image, printed on a newspaper, is reproduced countless times, and lies flat under a plastic screen to be had for twenty-five or fifty-cents by any passing man."²⁷

It is unclear exactly what Griffin is arguing here. Is it degrading to be nude, and/or involved in sexual activity; or to have someone take a picture of you while you are nude and/or involved in sexual activity; or to sell the picture of a nude woman involved in sexual activity? There are also a great many nude men indulging in sexual activity in pornography; is it also degrading for them?

Griffin deals in universals. (1) Male sexuality is aggressive and coercive due to infantile rage. (2) Women are victims of male sexual aggression. (3) All pornography is sadistic and exploitative with heavy sexist and racist overtones.

First, not all men are aggressive, nor do they all exhibit an aggressive sexuality. Yet, this is a generalization regarding male sexuality seen repeatedly in radical feminist critique. Something is rotten in pornography, according to radical feminists, and that rotten thing is male sexuality. Pornography is discussed as instruction in how to deploy male sexuality, the penis is characterized as the weapon. Women, on the other hand, are just 'victims.' Griffin does not provide any evidence to

substantiate her claim that male sexuality is aggressive and coercive due to infantile rage. Some women experience violence by men in a sexual context. But, many women do not. We must recognize that women are not always victims and some women do have satisfying sexual relationships with men. Griffin's desolate landscape denies women's pleasure in sex.

Griffin characterizes all pornography as sadistic and coercive. The facts are that not all pornography is coercive. If we look to actual content analyses which have been done, researchers tell us that in the case of video, coercive themes only comprise 6% of the material they looked at (Paly's 1984:61-63). What I am suggesting here is that, as Paly argues, if we are concerned about violence and/or sexual violence, we may be looking in the wrong place. He claims the horror/scifi genre has a much greater incidence of violence towards women. It is true that films like The Toolbox Murders or Bloodsucking Freaks depict women being mutilated and murdered, sometimes with sexual overtones. For example, in the Toolbox Murders just prior to the central character being murdered by a man with a nail gun, she removes her clothing and takes a long, sensual bath. This movie is not rated adult or triple xxx. One does not have to go to a special video outlet to procure it. It can be rented at any local video store. I am not suggesting that we ignore coercive pornography, simply that we maintain perspective and be aware of the facts. There is certainly more support for Griffin's contention regarding the sexist and racist overtones of pornography (Smith, 1976). Finally

and characteristically there is no discussion by Griffin of the economic framework within which the pornography industry endures and how that industry might be shaped by the social relations and processes of an advanced capitalist, consumer-oriented system. Griffin appears to be arguing that we are experiencing the commoditization of sexuality because of the needs of male sexuality.

Griffin's characterization of pornography as the ideology of cultural sadism is picked up and expanded upon by Barry (1984). Barry, a sociologist, has investigated the kidnapping of women and forced prostitution internationally. She subsequently published her research findings in a book entitled Female Sexual Slavery. In this book Barry discusses pornography and its connection to sexual violence against women. Here pornography is definitely the propaganda and rape the practice.

Any discussion in North American culture of sex or the sex drive, according to Barry, means male sex drive. Women are alienated from their own sexuality through socialization and male control. Women live in a masculinist culture in which whatever sexual expression is allowed is an expression of male sexuality, not female sexuality. Women are taught from a young age that their sexuality is 'different and subtle' (255). Male sexuality is characterized as explosive and difficult to control. Permission is given only to boys to experiment sexually. If girls choose to ignore sanctions against sexual expression, they will pay a social price, i.e. become 'soiled goods'. Therefore, Barry argues, adolescent boys learn early on that they have a stronger

sex drive which must be satisfied and they have a right to take from the more passive sex what it is they need.

"Learned, impulsive, uncontrollable adolescent male sex drive has become for many men the mode of their adult sex behaviour. It is arrested sexual development...It explains the self-centred, exploitative, and bullying behaviour that characterizes pimps, procurers, rapists, and wife beaters."²⁸

For Barry, sadism which is the overriding message of pornography, is a manifestation of arrested male sexual development. She agrees that pornography is an appeal to fantasy and a mode of entertainment for men, but in its distortions of reality it has political intentions.

"...an attempt to create an image of women that is consistent with the way men want to see and use them."²⁹

This sadistic message to men regarding the nature of their sexual relationships with women is accomplished, according to Barry, in three ways. 1) Women are depicted as enjoying pain and humiliation; 2) sadism (male) and masochism (female) is presented as a part of human nature, and last 3) although sadism involves coercion, lacerations, and bruises, pornographers are careful not to show any marks or cuts on the skin which might upset the viewer or interrupt the sexual excitement by calling into question the humanity of the act. Barry points to the common practice in video pornography of averting the camera away from the face if discomfort or pain is registered.

"For the sexual sadist it is the best of both worlds...while the victim becomes invisible, the consumer enjoys the brutality of sadism guilt-free, as he never has to see the consequences of it."³⁰

The 'harm' for Barry is that pornography reinforces the ideology of male sexual power, teaches methods of sexual conquest, and worse, shows women enjoying this conquest. She argues that the arrested sexual development of males and the ideology of pornography create a very dangerous situation for women. She discusses the growing incidence of incest, rape, and abuse. For Barry, there is no question as to the connection between the ideology of pornography and sexual violence against women.

Barry argues that it is not just in slavery brothels, one of the subjects of her research, that coercion takes place. She maintains pornography brings sexual slavery and sadistic sex right into our homes.

"The most prevalent theme in pornography is one of utter contempt for women. In movie after movie women are raped, ejaculated on, urinated on, anally penetrated, beaten, and with the advent of 'snuff films', murdered in an orgy of sexual pleasure."³¹

Pornography, she states, no longer depicts what a man can do with a prostitute, but what he can do with his wife, lover, even daughter (205). Here pornography is described as the script for coercion and domination of women.

Although Barry draws on the work of respected sexologists like Kinsey (1953) and Ellis (1942) to support her arguments regarding the construction of male (aggressive) and female

(passive) sexuality, she provides no social scientific evidence to support her contention that there is a direct causal relationship between the use of pornography and subsequent coercive behaviour. She admits that male use of pornography does not account for all acts of sexual abuse, but, like Brownmiller, she argues that pornography contributes to an overall cultural climate which denigrates women and tolerates images of their sexual degradation.

Barry claims part of the reason why pornography has not been taken more seriously is due to the 1970 Pornography Commission's findings. Barry criticizes the Commission research for its liberal bias and subsequent lack of objectivity. She claims this predisposition to apologize for pornography meant distortions of the facts would have to follow. She maintains that the methodology in some of the influential experiments was highly suspect especially those involving sex offenders. For example, in Goldstein's (1970) work he attempted to explore the link between rape and pornography. Sex offenders and a control group were surveyed for their exposure to pornography. The control group could not have any history of sexual deviation and was matched with the sex offenders for age, sex, and education. The first problem, according to Barry, is that the FBI had confirmed that probably only one in ten rapes is reported. There is therefore a significant number of rapists at large in the so-called 'normal population.' So, the control group could very well have contained rapists. The second problem was with the interpretation of the

data. The researchers made these claims.

"These data show that as compared with non-sex offenders, sex offenders and sexual deviants have comparatively little experience with 'erotica' during their adolescence."³²

They made this statement even though 62% of the rapists reported exposure to pornography. This is hardly "little experience" with pornography. Barry goes on in this fashion attacking the research methodology and interpretation of data until she has dispelled any doubt about the bias of the 1970 Commission. She clearly demonstrates the obvious suppression or distortion of negative effects from the use of pornography which took place. She commands the research data well and is most convincing when she is dealing with the scientific facts.

Barry's prescriptions for change involve a re-consideration of the present values of North American society and the generation of new values based on equality and respect. One place to begin, according to Barry, is with the valueless individualism⁴ promoted by liberals. She argues that as a result of this valueless individualism we have pornography which promotes hatred against women. She attacks liberal commitment to abstract ideals even when it is clear we are suffering from an overextension of these ideals, promoting a philosophy that it is O.K. for people to get their sexual kicks in any way they choose. Barry insists

⁴ Barry describes this valueless individualism as asserting that there is no right or wrong and pursuing one's own needs above all else.

that hidden in liberal argument is the desire to protect the freedom and sexual expression of men at women's expense. She also attacks conservatives for creating confusion in values. She insists that conservatives will tolerate marital rape and wife battery far more than homosexuality. Barry claims the liberals, reacting to conservative traditional morality, have gone too far in the other direction, taking us from false values to total valuelessness. Liberals are basically promoting a philosophy that states "it is wrong to determine right or wrong"(264). She insists we need to decide and define new values based on what celebrates and enhances human beings over and against what is demeaning and degrading. Once having made those initial decisions, Barry argues, there is no question that pornography must be done away with, as it blatantly promotes hatred and domination of one group by another. However, no recommendations are made as to how pornography can be done away with.

Barry's analysis does acknowledge the social construction of sexuality through gender socialization. Barry argues that the male (sadist) and female (masochist) archetypes in pornography reinforce already existing gender stereotypes and notions of male superiority and female inferiority. Men, who use pornography, are being described here as sexual sadists.

Like so many others, Barry provides no definition of pornography. The term pornography, Barry claims, suits her work well because she is concerned with forced prostitution. Much like Ridington, Barry approves of the term because its origins in

Latin mean writing about whores. But, unlike Ridington, Barry describes all pornography as violent. Therefore, I assume, this is her definition.

Barry's analysis cannot explain why some men do not exhibit an immature, aggressive sexuality. In this account, once again, women become the victims of male sexuality; exactly what they have been told by the culture that they are. Women are not described as having choice or agency. In Barry's analysis, women are not depicted as understanding and struggling against their oppression, they are just 'victims.' The fact is that women participate in patriarchy and they are often the socializers of young children. Therefore, women must assume responsibility for their own part in perpetuating notions of female inferiority and sexual passivity.

Radical feminist critique has been very important to the pornography controversy. The radical analysis made the presence of pornography a very serious political issue. Their claims regarding the connection between pornography and violence to women spawned a new wave of clinical research and a new body of commentary. Radical feminist critique is limited in its presentation of patriarchy as ahistorical and universal, its portrayal of women as "just victims", the lack of attention paid to material conditions, and when, in certain instances, (e.g. Dworkin), male sexuality is discussed as inherently violent and aggressive. Although radical feminist critique suffers from these limitations, it has been a very influential body of commentary.

1. U.S. Commission on Obscenity & Pornography (1970) Part III, Reports of the Panels, I. Traffic & Distribution of Sexually Oriented Materials in the U.S., p. 93.
2. Alison Hearn, The Feminist Debate About Pornography in Canada, M.A. Thesis, Communications, Simon Fraser University, 1986, p. 31.
3. Alison Jaggar, Feminist Politics and Human Nature, (Sussex: England: Rowman & Allanheld, 1983), p. 28.
4. Ibid., p. 182.
5. Ibid., p. 180.
6. Betty Friedan, "Sex, Society, and The Female Dilemma", in Saturday Review 2: 1--14+ June 14, 1975.
7. Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique, (N.Y.: Dell Publishing, 1963) p. 251.
8. Betty Friedan, The Second Stage, (N.Y.: Summit Books, 1981), p. 310
9. "Pornography is a presentation, whether live, simulated, verbal, pictorial, filmed or videotaped, or otherwise represented of sexual behaviour in which one or more participants are coerced overtly or implicitly, into participation, or are injured or abused physically or psychologically; or in which an imbalance of power is obvious, or implied by virtue of the immature age of any participant or by contextual aspects of the representation, and in which such behaviour can be taken to be advocated or endorsed.
10. Jillian Ridington, Freedom from Harm or Freedom of Speech?, (Ottawa: National Association of Women and the Law, 1983), p. 21.
11. Ibid.
12. Graham Fraser, "MP's See Porn Law Stifling Film-making, Cloaking Art Works", The Globe and Mail, Tues., December 1, 1987, A10.
13. Lynn King, "Censorship and law Reform: Will Changing the Laws mean a Change for the Better?" in Varda Burstyn (ed.) Women Against Censorship (Vancouver, B.C.: Douglas & McIntyre Ltd., 1985) p. 84.

14. Mark Hamilton, "Police Just Scratching the Surface", North Shore News, September 5, 1986.
15. Jaggar, p. 105
16. Andrea Dworkin, Pornography: Men Possessing Women, (N.Y.: G.P. Putnam & Sons, 1979) p. 203.
17. Ibid., preface.
18. Ibid., p. 200.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid., p. 202.
21. Ibid., p. 26.
22. Ibid., p. 224.
23. Donna Turley, "The Feminist Debate on Pornography: An Unorthodox Interpretation", Socialist Review, Vol. 16, 1986, p. 83-84.
24. Susan Griffin, Pornography and Silence: Culture's Revenge Against Nature, (N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1981), p. 2.
25. Ibid., p. 160.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Kathleen Barry, Female Sexual Slavery, (N.Y.: New York University Press, 1979), p. 258.
29. Ibid., p. 209.
30. Ibid., p. 210.
31. Ibid., p. 206.
32. Ibid., p. 237.

CHAPTER V

In this chapter I will discuss the marxist and socialist feminist perspectives on pornography. This discussion will be guided by the five criteria outlined in the Introduction. I will be demonstrating that in contrast to conservative, liberal and most feminist analyses, marxist and socialist feminists, who analyze pornography, stress the importance of material conditions. They are critical of a capitalist, consumer-oriented society which exploits human beings and sexuality for profit. Both perspectives acknowledge the social construction of sexuality but the purpose that construction is said to serve is described differently by the two perspectives. Gender is a component of both marxist and socialist feminist analyses although the treatment of gender by marxists can be problematic. I will argue that the socialist feminist perspective appears to provide us with a useful theoretical framework within which to examine pornography and the pornography industry.

Although there is agreement between marxists and socialist feminists regarding the importance of material conditions when examining pornography, there is considerable debate among them regarding not only the significance of pornography, but whether class relations or gender relations are more appropriate for examining and explaining the prevalence of pornography. Marxists insist on the primacy of class relations in explaining pornography. Marxists have considered pornography to be a result of the

psychologically destructive effects of capitalism, which they believed would wither away in a communist state.¹ Soble (1986), who will be considered in this chapter, claims he wrote on the subject of pornography because, as he states, marxists have largely dismissed pornography.² Soble maintains that capitalism damages male sexuality as a result of the atomistic, repetitive work men are required to do in the workforce and this damage has negative consequences for women (sexual objectification). This objectification manifests itself, in part, through pornography. Soble argues in communism there will be no sexist, coercive pornography. Stewart (1977) argues that capitalism created pornography and the phenomenon will not disappear until the economic system is transformed. McNall (1983) sees pornography as an ideological mechanism used to maintain patriarchy. The subordination of women serves the interests of capitalism.

Marxists

Marxists believe that personality traits and character structure are socially constructed (Reiche, 1968). Whatever shape this construction may take in any particular society can be traced to the requirements of the prevailing mode of production. In our time, capitalism, a specific type of economic system, requires workers with a certain temperament. This temperament has been described as "submissive and irrational".³ The repression of sexuality is described as the mechanism by which these character traits are developed (W. Reich, 1945). Sexual repres-

sion serves capitalism by producing a worker who is more easily controlled and does not recognize his class interests, and a consumer who, due to sexual frustration and a lack of sexual fulfilment within monogamous marriage, is a target for pornography and advertising with sexual overtones. In the marxian model, pornography in capitalism is mass-produced by economically coerced wage labour.

There are a great many assumptions underlying these claims that are not clearly expressed. 1) The economic system requires the repression of sexuality; 2) institutions, such as the Church, assist in this repression; 3) the repression of sexuality creates a certain kind of temperament and this temperament is the same for everyone, e.g. men and women; 4) all individuals are sexually unfulfilled in monogamous marriage; 5) individuals do not struggle against sexual repression.

In contrast to the need of a capitalist society to repress sexuality, a communist society would not require the repression of sexuality. Therefore people would be allowed a "natural" free sexuality. Pornography, as Soble points out, has been considered by marxists as an unhealthy symptom of a damaged society.⁴ It has been argued that in a communist society pornography would not exist (W. Reich, 1945). So, rather than offering prescriptions for dealing with pornography the ultimate prescription in the marxist view is to overthrow capitalism and then pornography will disappear, or as Soble argues, be replaced with acceptable imagery which is not produced by economic coercion.

Marxists have generally not considered pornography an important area for political analysis. Sex and procreation have been seen as a relatively unchanging phenomena confined to the sphere of the family, which is based on a 'natural' sexual division of labour.⁵ This area was not considered a place where analysis and action could lead to significant social change.⁶ This fact stands in stark contrast to the position of radical feminists who believe sex and procreation are the central areas for political analysis and action.

Soble, who has written an important book on pornography, tries to present a coherent and embracing marxist explanation. He takes exception with aspects of the preceding marxian explanation, which derives largely from the writing of Wilhelm Reich, but generally agrees that capitalism is responsible for the type of sexuality and pornography we are presently experiencing. The difference in Soble's argument is that he believes acceptable pornography, i.e. non-sexist, non-coercive material, could exist in a sex-positive communist society.

Soble argues that the term 'pornography' is the most useful term and he provides this definition of pornography.

"Pornography refers to any literature or film (or other art technological form) that describes or depicts sexual organs, preludes to sexual activity, or sexual activity (or related organs and activities) in such a way as to produce sexual arousal in the viewer, and this effect in the viewer is either the effect intended by both producer and consumer or a very likely effect in the absence of direct intentions."⁷

Soble also discusses the utility of the term "erotica" as advanced by feminists. He argues that the term "erotica" just makes for more confusion and conjures up the notion that sex must be presented in the context of a loving, meaningful relationship to be acceptable.

Soble's argument regarding pornography rests on his description of male and female sexuality within capitalism, which he claims are atomistic and holistic respectively. Male sexuality is characterized as visual, genital, objectifying, and dismembering, with an emphasis on the separation of affection and love, exhibiting a preoccupation with sex for sex's sake.⁸ Women have a holistic sexuality because they are involved in work in the reproductive sector, i.e. childbearing and childrearing. Female sexuality is characterized as tactile, affectionate, and non-objectifying. These different sexualities are a result of the sexual division of labour.

Soble charges capitalism with the desensitization and desensualization of males which results in penile hypersensitivity (a preoccupation with erection and ejaculation rather than affection and sensuality). This desensualization is due to the

atomistic, boring, repetitive work men are required to do in the productive sector. Soble argues that women suffer from alienation/ dismemberment syndrome as a result of male sexuality within capitalism.

The 'harm' for Soble is the harm done to male sexuality within capitalism. The needs of male sexuality produce negative consequences for women. As a result of this damage to male sexuality, objectionable pornography will continue to flourish in contemporary society as a way for men to recoup power in a fantasy realm. He seems to support the catharsis theory when he states that given the present situation, if men don't have access to pornography, they might try to recover lost power by actually physically coercing women. One could point out that men have access to a wider range of pornography presently than ever before and rape statistics continue to increase. It would be more theoretically consistent for him to argue for suppression of pornography in that suppression would remove an outlet for frustration, which might then lead to a venting of this anger toward the economic system.

Soble refers to social scientific research like that of Wiggins et al (1968) where he claims there is partial confirmation of men's preference for fragmentation of the female body, e.g. "tit-men," or "leg-men". Soble discusses how men's experience in the workforce, with an emphasis on performance, shapes male sexuality(70) but, there is very little hard evidence produced to support his contentions. Soble refers to research,

like that of Gagnon & Simon (1973), which calls into question the notion that men completely separate affection from sex as Soble claims. Gagnon & Simon argue that due to the fact that most sex occurs within marriage, men do seem to be able to attain both sex and affection to some degree. Soble dismisses this suggestion, claiming that men grow bored with their wives sexually and need pornography and prostitutes. He suggests that the very existence of pornography is evidence of men's visual, objectifying, genital sexuality. For the most part, Soble relies on a wide range of philosophical commentary, especially feminist commentary. However, much of the literature Soble draws on is selectively chosen to support his contentions.

Soble, pursuing his argument regarding the connection among capitalism-male sexuality-pornography, maintains that pornography serves as both a stabilizing and de-stabilizing phenomena. Pornography serves the economic system as a commodity which is highly marketable, as an industry which creates jobs and brings in tax revenue, and as entertainment for men which acts as a diversion to relieve the frustration of alienating work and monogamous marriage. On the other hand, with pornography's emphasis on recreational sex, group sex, homosexuality, etc., it undermines the present social order based on heterosexual, monogamous marriage.⁹ But what Soble overlooks is that while male homosexual material is available, produced by gay men for other gay men, the majority of the material available is heterosexual.¹⁰ Scenes of lesbian sexuality do occur in heterosexual

pornography, but are generally a male construction of what lesbian sex is actually like. (Smith, 1976; Bunch, 1980; Valverde & Weir, 1985).

Soble suggests that given the present content of pornography it is "pernicious enough to warrant some restrictions, even censorship,"(2) but he does not explain what material should be restricted and which censored. Soble's ultimate thesis is that once capitalism is replaced with communism, pornography will be produced, consumed, and enjoyed under different social and economic conditions. These conditions will not coerce individuals into participating in production, and people will not consume pornography out of frustration and repression.

Soble's emphasis on material conditions is an improvement over previous perspectives that ignore the economic context. But, there are numerous problems with Soble's analysis. First, his definition of pornography is problematic and vague. Material that describes or depicts sexual organs could be self-help or sex educational material. And what exactly is meant by "preludes to sexual activity" -- that could mean material that depicts kissing?

Soble argues that male sexuality is damaged in capitalism due to men's experience in the workforce. Women, who are at home, exhibit a nurturing, tactile, non-objectionable sexuality. Soble ignores the fact that over half of all married women are in the workforce¹¹ and that women are more subject than men to repetitive, boring, low status and poorly paid work. Following

Soble's argument, these women should exhibit sexual objectification of men. Soble is aware of this problem but claims that although many women are in the workforce, they are still nurturers of children and men and therefore their sexuality remains holistic. Also, he claims that if women are in the workforce their jobs are usually of a nurturing kind so their experience is really different than men's. He insists that as more women flood into the labour market in non-traditional jobs we should expect to see female sexuality exhibit the same properties as male sexuality. He claims there are already signs that this is happening, but provides no evidence.

I have stated that Soble draws on a great deal of philosophical commentary to support his contentions. He refers to and is critical of feminist argument. Much of his criticism seems contrived. For example, he claims that pornography does not transmit political ideology as some feminists claim.

"It is rarely political speech; it is manufactured to induce sexual arousal, not philosophically intellectual activity."¹²

This is difficult to accept if one has looked at much pornography. Pornography can be used to transmit messages regarding male power and domination of women. I refer here to films such as Young and Abused (available at Red Hot Video). In this video a young couple run out of gas in a deserted area and the man goes for help. Two men, who come upon the young woman, abduct her and take her to a shed. They strip her and force her to engage in

oral sex. Then they rape her while bellowing "all girls want to be raped." The men ignore the woman's crying and discomfort, instead mocking her. The woman is then dragged to her knees and anally raped while one man beats her across the buttocks. The woman is screaming so the other man forces his penis into her mouth and eventually pulls out and ejaculates in her face. This type of scenario eroticizes violence and humiliation and it is no accident that men are the aggressors in the scenario and a woman the victim. Soble's remarks about the lack of political intention in pornography seems a contradiction of earlier discussion in which he claims pornography is about recouping male power.

Soble seems to anticipate this kind of criticism when he quickly adds that fantasizing about raping someone and actually raping someone are two different things. Soble ignores the fact that there are real women being abused in this type of film to provide the voyeur with sexual pleasure. As well, even though the viewer may feel confident that the women in the film or pictorial are "just acting", we have first hand accounts from porn actresses, like Linda Lovelace, that she was often coerced at gun point into the sexual acts she performed in big box office hits like Deep Throat. How can we be sure when we are viewing a video like the one described above that what we are seeing is consensual activity?

Soble maintains that pornography is a destabilizing influence undermining heterosexual, monogamous marriage by promoting recreational and homosexual sex. Contrary to what

Soble suggests, pornography does not undermine sexism, a feature of our present economic and social system. Pornography most often reinforces sexism (Smith, 1976; Malamuth and Spinner, 1980). As Soble admits pornography is a medium largely for the expression of male sexual power.

The way Soble describes the impact of capitalism on male sexuality and the subsequent consequences of that sexuality for women is problematic. Children learn about their sexuality, what is and is not appropriate, in what ways sexual desire may be satisfied, long before they enter the workforce. Soble appears to argue that adult male sexuality is shaped by the male's experience in the workforce and female sexuality by women's experience in the home. It is far more plausible to argue that socialization by family, peer group, church, school, and media, all of which are affected by the prevailing mode of production, shape sexuality. However, this shape is not fixed and predictable in every individual or by gender as Soble would have us believe.

Soble does try to explain, in very concrete terms, why he thinks pornography will exist in communism and how it will be different. He also undertakes a discussion of how the pornography industry serves our present economic system. Soble's treatise is not gender blind but in his explanation women become "just victims." Again, they do not struggle against sexual repression.

Unlike Soble, Stewart (1977) devotes his entire paper to demonstrating the importance for a marxist explanation of the distinction between obscenity and pornography. According to

Stewart, a capitalist economic system is responsible for the creation of the phenomenon pornography. Stewart describes pornography as a recent historical phenomenon concerned with performance and fragmentation. Obscenity, on the other hand, is material which has always existed. He defines obscenity as the desire to represent sexuality in a very public way, especially in the theatre, where such a display or expression would be considered a violation of community standards of the time. He describes obscenity as parody and satire exhibiting a kind of "unideological anarchy"(395). Obscenity, in his opinion, expresses not contempt for sexuality but amusement. Obscenity, for Stewart, represents sex as natural and makes no attempt to analyze or understand its mechanisms. Pornography, unlike obscenity, is contrived.

"...Sex (in pornography) is neither... natural nor is the drive self-explanatory, but is a learned and highly skilled activity..."¹³

Stewart argues that with the advent of Cleland's Fanny Hill (London, 1749) a definite change took place in literature with sexual content. It was at this time that Stewart claims pornography was born. This material was different than previously available material in that it strung sexual scenarios together for the sole purpose of sexual arousal and orgasm.

Sex, for Stewart, is basically a natural good that should be left to its own devices. Pornography is disgusting to Stewart because the producers try to force sexuality into a pre-packaged,

formula-ridden set of impersonal sexual machinations, all very sterile and predictable. Pornography, according to Stewart, is a product which the consumer can rely on to produce a certain state of mind conducive to orgasm. He calls this relationship the "industrial" concept of sex in pornography.¹⁴ Pornography is totally caught up with performance and achievement, which clearly reflects the values of the capitalist system.

"Modern capitalism has produced not just pornography, but "pornographic man," a creature only too ready to judge himself and others on the standard of "longitudinal" prowess, by telling him that all his other life functions are so judged in the marketplace so how could he be exempt on this scale of values and validity as well?"¹⁵

Further, Stewart argues that the language of the pieces he considers is different than earlier material clearly indicating how capitalism began to shape the content of pornography. The characters in Fanny Hill discuss the value of their bodies and sexual skills in the marketplace and the contracts they may enter into with their clients. Stewart insists that pornographic material presenting people as performers or the sum of their sexual organs was not possible before the Industrial Revolution.

"...the modern flood of pornography... tells us less about the problems of our sexuality...than it tells us about the deep lesions in our soul created by the effects of the... "free market" economy in areas no one ever wanted to admit are economically conditioned."¹⁶

Like Soble, "harm" for Stewart, is the capitalist system. Capitalism has created this objectionable material and neither

the industry nor the material will change until the system changes.

Stewart's discussion regarding obscenity and pornography is confusing. Obscenity he claims existed largely in the past, mostly in the form of theatre. Sex was presented as a natural, humorous part of life. After the Industrial Revolution and the advent of capitalism, pornography is born. Pornography is described as a contrived media preoccupied with mechanical sex and performance. There is certainly validity to Stewart's description of modern pornography, but to say that no pornography existed before the Industrial Revolution is to ignore material like The Lascivious Hypocrite, a piece discussed by the Kronhausens. This piece was written in the 1700's. The story is completely concerned with mechanical sex, makes no attempt to explore sexuality or emotion in a serious or humorous way, and was certainly constructed for one purpose only, i.e. sexual arousal. The scenario includes the defloration of a young virgin female with the assistance of the young woman's mother. Also, to claim that only the "obscenity" of the past can be humorous fails to take into account a whole segment of contemporary pornographic material, especially film, which is quite consciously produced as parody of general release films. For example, a distributor will produce a film like Pink Lagoon which is a satire of Blue Lagoon the famous Brooke Shield's film. The whole piece is a sexually explicit satire. This criticism simply does not hold.

Stewart insists that the content of pornography produced

within the capitalist system reflects the values of performance and achievement. It is not difficult to accept Stewart's claim that the content and language of modern pornography could be shaped by the prevailing economic system or that the nature of sexual representation has changed through time. However, he ignores the sexist and racist dimensions in pornography. These are also features of our present economic and social arrangements.

Stewart presents almost no evidence to support his position except for reference to material he claims demonstrates the existence of obscenity on the one hand, and pornography on the other. And he neglects to put forward any suggestions for action or change. The implicit conclusion is that only the 'revolution' can bring the required changes. This position makes it impossible for anything to be done about pornography right now.

A marxist who does not take the position that we must 'wait for the revolution' is McNall (1983). McNall, an educator and sociologist, defines pornography as material "whether visual or graphic, that degrades women through the fact of their sex". Pornography presents women as inferior and may portray implicit or explicit violence against them.¹⁷ 'Erotica', which McNall feels is an important distinction to make, is about "equality of erotic experience"(195).

For McNall, pornography is an ideological mechanism which helps to reproduce certain social relations of production, in this instance, female subservience. The message of pornography,

McNall claims, is that sex is under male control and that the woman as an active sexual agent is threatening. The woman must be dominated and her sexual pleasure subordinated. McNall also argues that the "free market" idea in a capitalist society means that workers are seen as selling their labour power freely without coercion. This lack of coercion means, for those involved in the pornography industry, that any woman who suffers harm or humiliation as a result of her involvement in pornographic production, should not elicit compassion, as it was her choice to participate. In this way, the consumer is absolved of any responsibility toward the persons in the pornography they purchase.

McNall sees women as a class discriminated against because of their biology. A form of this discrimination is pornography which depicts women as out-of-control, passive and inferior. Pornography helps to contribute to female sexual alienation and increases the male consumers' sense of power, control, and superiority.

McNall maintains that in modern society men have been allowed to express their sexuality and women have not. Because sex is under male control, domination and coercion are constant themes in pornography. For McNall, the 'harm' from pornography is that it is "part of the process of mystification whereby people come to internalize modes of domination and subordination."¹⁸ The harm is the presentation of women as non-people. He argues, like Soble, that pornography is concerned with

fragmentation presenting women as the sum of a series of body parts rather than active, thinking, feeling sexual participants with needs and desires of their own.

McNall presents anthropological data from primitive cultures to demonstrate how an ideological system supports and perpetuates male dominance and female subordination. For example, he discusses the Mbum Kpau society of Africa. Men control female reproductive capacity through "exogamy, patrilineal descent and a system of exchange"(187). Fines for pregnancy before marriage and bridewealth at the time of marriage are paid to a particular patrilineage in cash or livestock. Women become a commodity equated with money or food. Women are socialized not to want to eat "chicken" because they are like the "chicken", i.e. domesticated animals who have no control over their reproductive capacity and have their "eggs" taken from them by men who then can produce wealth as each child brings a payment from the woman's family. To McNall, the fact that women do not eat "chicken" and are equated with the "chicken" demonstrates symbolic subordination. Modern pornography for McNall is a symbolic demonstration of the same male control. Pornography is part of a patriarchal ideological system which develops to mediate contradictions (real or perceived loss of power) and to perpetuate the status quo, that is, capitalist patriarchy. In this area, McNall makes an interesting case for the power of superstructural elements in constraining or shaping thought and behaviour.

McNall recommends that we expose pornography's sexism

through public education. He feels that in doing this we will be challenging a whole range of practices and attitudes towards women.

"For us, to challenge pornography as a system of symbolic domination is to challenge our society's oppression of women in all its forms."¹⁹

McNall's analysis is powerful but there are difficulties with it. We have already explored the problems with defining pornography as degrading. McNall defines pornography as material which degrades women through the fact of their sex. But what is meant by 'degrading through the fact of their sex'? This statement is confusing and could mean that it is degrading to show women naked and involved in sexual activity. McNall's definition of 'erotica' is also left unexplained. What does "equality of erotic experience" mean? These terms need elaboration.

Second, although McNall discusses how pornography serves capitalism by reinforcing male dominance, the focus is on patriarchy and not on the industry - and there is no explicit class argument being made, unless one is willing to accept the notion that women are a class exploited by men as a class. There is a good deal of controversy about using 'class' in this manner, thereby suggesting that, for example, working class women have more in common with middle and upper class women than with working class males.

Finally, McNall's recommendation that we expose the sexism in pornography through public education is important but, a good

deal more will have to be done to change a ten billion dollar a year industry.

The marxist emphasis on material conditions in understanding pornography is important and there is usually some acknowledgment of the differential treatment of men and women in pornography, even if that treatment is problematic. The overriding problem with marxist analysis is the claim that pornography will either disappear in communism or be unobjectionable, because it will be produced under different social and economic conditions. The problem is that we have no way of testing this hypothetical vision. If patriarchal relations are ignored or trivialized, and the subsequent consequences for women left unaddressed, it cannot be assumed that a communist society will be sexually egalitarian or that sexist imagery and ideology will not be present. Further, communist states, such as China, have not succeeded in establishing a sexually egalitarian society (although important inroads have been made) nor have they eradicated pornography.²⁰

Marxist argument has expanded our understanding of pornography, by placing pornography in its economic context and insisting that we explore the implications of that context. They have examined content and discussed the power dimensions displayed in this media. McNall insists that pornography is patriarchal ideology used to mediate contradictions and protect the status quo. Marxists insist that within capitalism, sex is exploited as any other marketable commodity. Nevertheless, there

is no specific class argument being made. Soble comes closest, criticizing capitalism for the desensitization and desensualization of males in the workforce, which distorts their sexuality and produces negative consequences for women. None of these commentators takes wealthy industry moguls like Hugh Hefner or Bob Guccione and demonstrates how they exploit the working class, male and female. Surveys tell us that the largest purchasers of books and magazines in adult bookstores are white, middle-class, married, educated, white collar males²¹. Data collected during the research for the 1970 Pornography Commission suggested that models for pictorial magazines were often middle class, single, female college students not members of the working class poor. A woman college student turned porn model, when interviewed, claimed women participate in production generally because it is "easy work" and pays well. This particular model stated she was involved because of an artistic interest.²² A common myth seems to be that prostitutes make up a large percentage of the models for pornography, yet the same researcher stated that prostitutes were not very likely to be models because they could make more money elsewhere. So, there is some doubt as to whether an explicit class argument can be made on the basis of the available data. We simply do not have a sufficient or contemporary database from which to make these arguments. Weir (1987) argues that certain struggles do not lend themselves to a simple class reductionist argument. Pornography appears to be one of these struggles.

Socialist Feminists

Socialist feminists argue that classism, sexism, and racism are all interrelated systems of oppression in capitalist society. None of these systems is more fundamental or determining than another. Women's oppression can be traced to both the area of production and reproduction. In the area of production women have provided a cheap reserve army of labour. Within the home, the area of reproduction, women have been responsible for 1) reproducing a labour force, i.e. childbearing and childrearing; 2) consuming; 3) providing specific needs for males. These specific needs have been identified by Jaggar (1983) as emotional and physical comfort (including recreational sex) and support to counterbalance the frustrations of a competitive workplace.

Socialist feminists reject the liberal view that sex is a private matter for the individual, arguing instead that we have a collective interest in sexual freedom, the regulation of sex, and the use of sexual materials. They also reject the traditional marxist view that sex and procreation are not arenas for human development.²³ Socialist feminists argue that procreative and sexual activity are socially constructed, therefore alterable, and that transforming the organization of these human activities could bring about significant change in society in general.

Socialist feminists have only recently entered the pornography debate. Most socialist feminists, who have written on this topic, are found in what is referred to as the anti-censorship camp. They oppose State regulation of pornography. They believe

supporting the use of censorship is ultimately dangerous for feminists, as the same State censorship could be used to suppress feminist and gay publications or presentations. They also are deeply concerned with the alliances that are being made by feminists with conservatives and "New Right" groups. These "New Right" groups have joined the anti-pornography campaign for very different reasons, they believe sex is potentially dangerous and corrupting. Burstyn (1985) argues that valuable resources are being used to fight pornography when these resources would be more effectively spent improving the economic and social conditions of women. She argues that censorship is dangerous because it puts more power into the hands of the State. Diamond (1985) also opposes censorship because, in her opinion, we need freedom to explore our sexuality. Diamond argues for alternative non-sexist, non-coercive imagery. Rubin (1984) argues for a relaxation of all controls on sexuality and pornography. Rubin's concern is with sexual repression especially sexual harassment of homosexuals. She believes a radical theory of sexuality needs to be developed to examine sexual behaviour and sexual variation cross-culturally.

Socialist feminists, like Varda Burstyn (1985), insist that the central focus for the women's movement should not be pornography but sexism. Burstyn edited a very controversial book advancing the anti-censorship feminist position. She also agreed to an interview in Forum magazine (September, 1985) published by Bob Guccione of Penthouse. Forum is a magazine in which readers

write in about their own sexual experiences. In this article, Burstyn elaborated her anti-censorship views. Her appearance in this magazine infuriated many members of the women's community.

Burstyn contends that the anti-pornography movement, aimed at eliminating pornography through censorship, is a waste of feminist energy and resources. She argues that "sexist pornography is a product of the economic and social conditions of our society..."²⁴ and that is what must be addressed. These conditions then are what must be changed before sexist pornography will disappear.

"...Sexist pornography will go away when women no longer need to sell their sexuality and men no longer need or want to look to sexist pictures to find out about sex, to learn what they are suppose to be and want as men, and to support their need to feel superior to women."²⁵

Burstyn demands that we exercise extreme caution in using the "punitive, top-down structure of the State" in controlling sexuality and pornography. What we need to do, in her opinion, is to use public resources to teach young people sexual responsibility. But, at the same time, if women are not allowed and encouraged to become self-supporting, autonomous individuals, none of the problems women are presently experiencing, including ubiquitous sexist pornography, will change or improve.

Burstyn does not provide a definition of pornography. It can be gleaned from her discussion that she is describing most pornography as "loaded with sexist values." (17) But, she also makes reference to acceptable, non-sexist material. She describes

non-sexist material as imagery which depicts sex as fun, outside of marriage and not necessarily heterosexual. She points out that these are the characteristics of pornography that conservatives find so threatening. She makes a distinction between sexist and non-sexist pornography, but does not fully describe or provide examples of either.

Burstyn argues that sexuality is State and male-controlled. She points out how established religion has maintained authority and influence in this area. She reminds us that patriarchal Judaeo-Christian ideas about sex are important to consider. She asks us to consider the notions that are promoted by the Church, e.g. the Catholic Church, with regard to sexuality, women's place in society, the use of contraception, access to abortion, etc.

"Codified in the patriarchal civilization of Jerusalem and Rome, these ideas reflect a profound rejection and fear of women's autonomy and a consequent degradation of women's sexuality."²⁶

Burstyn insists that we must build and contribute to a new sexual culture fused with feminist, non-sexist, non-coercive images. She argues for creating alternative sexual imagery which portrays sexual activity in a positive and egalitarian light, free of coercion. It is impossible, in Burstyn's opinion, to rehabilitate the existing pornography industry, but possible to counter its negative and sexist message. "We must work to effect change in the very forms of culture that organize and transmit information about sexuality. We have to reclaim our right to a sexual culture, shaped by us, for us."²⁷ Burstyn continuously

speaks on behalf of sexual plurality and the need to encourage not only mutual respect between men and women, but mutual respect between heterosexuals and homosexuals.

For Burstyn using censorship as a means of dealing with pornography is harmful. She suggests that making pornography rather than sexism the focus for the women's movement is dangerous and divisive. She argues that we must work for "economic and institutional change."²⁸

Burstyn supports her contentions regarding the dangers of censorship by presenting a historical discussion of the growth of feminist struggle and the way that censorship has been used to control feminist dissent and dissent in general. She demonstrates how conservative groups and individuals, like Mary Brown, Chairperson of the Ontario Film and Review Board, use existing regulation to suppress gay and feminist material as well as sexually explicit material they consider corrupting. This Board has tried to remove books they consider inappropriate from libraries and to block the use of these books in the classroom, e.g. Margaret Laurence's The Diviners. Burstyn's historical discussion demonstrates the possible danger in current alliances between feminists and conservatives. These coalitions align feminists with individuals and groups who do not share feminist goals against other feminists. As Hearn (1987) suggests, these events could be serious, causing division and cooptation. The pornography controversy is only one battleground of the fight between the growing "New Right" and liberal, feminist and

socialist forces.

"...we have a major current of conservative forces, symbolized...in Canada by the politically ambitious Mary Brown...For these people, the censorship/legal reform/social control strategy is comfortable, traditional and necessary....Representative of their increasing strength in Canada is the recent series of attacks on liberal and profeminist artists; relentless prosecutions of gay publications..."²⁹

Burstyn insists that we must continue to fight against sexism on every level, to resist using pornography as a focal point, and abandon censorship as a way of dealing with pornography.

Burstyn's treatise is powerful in that it has historical depth, at least as far as censorship is concerned, and she does place pornography within a capitalist patriarchal framework. She argues for economic and institutional change, but spends very little time developing that recommendation. Although socialist feminists claim to be committed to an examination of class, gender and race, there is no discussion in Burstyn's treatise of the racism depicted in pornography. In this regard, radical feminist critique is stronger. Both Dworkin and Griffin discuss the racism prevalent in pornography. Burstyn's discussion of sexuality overcomes the problems in radical feminist analysis by demonstrating a concern with female sexual pleasure as well as danger. This concern is certainly novel in discussions about pornography. However, she spends so much time describing the dangers of censorship that she really does not discuss

pornography in any depth. As Cole (1989) argues, most of the contributors in Burstyn's book discuss censorship, not pornography.³⁰ Cole points out that Burstyn's appearance in Forum is more dangerous than the possible alliances of anti-porn feminists. Burstyn, in Cole's opinion, is being openly coopted by the pornographers(167).

Sara Diamond is an exception to Cole's criticism regarding the trivialization of pornography in these anti-censorship treatises, because she does discuss pornography. Diamond is an artist who speaks and writes on alternative sexual imagery. Diamond insists that pornography is a complex phenomenon with a number of dimensions.

"...it is a product to be sold by a multimillion dollar industry; a set of coded messages about sex and male and female roles in this culture; and a specific form of sexual and cultural activity."³¹

Diamond asks that we think about pornography as a form of advertising for male power, as a form of information about sex, and as a method of having a self-sexual experience. Here Diamond is arguing that pornography is about both sex and power. She feels the industry is selling men a version of what male sexual fulfillment entails. Often the industry view is domination and control of women. Diamond argues that other cultures have produced interesting and arousing sexual imagery which is not about power or control. Her point is important and would be much more persuasive with evidence and examples.

Diamond never defines her use of the term 'pornography'. She does discuss the fact that not all pornography is violent and that most pornography is sexist, but she provides no definition. Her main focus is arguing against censorship and for alternative sexual imagery.

Diamond believes sex to be a human good. Pornography, she claims, however objectionable, does depict women as sexual beings. She argues that women need to reclaim their sexuality and initiate dialogue regarding sex and sexual imagery both within the women's movement and without.

"...we must work to repossess our sexuality, through sex education and the production of sex-positive imagery, and through changing the economic and social position of women and men - steps that will undermine the demand for sexist imagery."³²

Diamond also believes that non-sexist, non-coercive pornography could be an acceptable adjunct to sexual life.

The 'harm' for Diamond is in using censorship as a way of controlling or suppressing pornography. Because we need freedom to explore and express our sexuality we must not put more power into the hands of the State. This increased power will only lead, in Diamond's opinion, to harassment and repression by social control agencies heavily influenced by the conservative view. Diamond does not approve of sexist and/or violent pornography, but she believes that pornography only reflects as much sexism as is in the culture. Pornography, she claims, reflects already existing prejudice and discrimination and is used by men

to overcome their fears and insecurities.

Diamond maintains that pornography is a men's issue which men should be dealing with, as they are largely the producers, distributors, and consumers. Porn is about male sexual fantasy, not female sexual fantasy, and women do not buy much pornography. When you examine the content of pornography it is not difficult to understand why women do not buy much pornography. The emphasis is on male sexual arousal and orgasm not on exploring areas of possible sexual arousal for women. And, women are often depicted in objectionable ways. For example, in the film Hot Pink, a woman performs fellatio on one man while being vaginally penetrated by another. These acts take place with the woman kneeling on a curved, wooden park bench. It is clear the woman is uncomfortable and experiencing pain. The camera is quickly averted if too much discomfort is registered, and the sound track is overdubbed with Muzak. The video ends with both men ejaculating in the woman's face simultaneously while she grimaces disgustedly.

"For women, watching porn can draw us into a complex knot of pleasure and discomfort. While we may be aroused by the sexual activities depicted, most of us cannot avoid identification with the woman...Whatever pleasure we experience is often mixed with anxiety about our own sexuality being so different from that shown and anger at being forced into a role that does not represent who we are and what we need sexually."³³

Diamond does not use much research to support her arguments, but rather relies on common sense regarding the schism between

image and actual behaviour. She ignores the problem that real women are used, and sometimes harmed, in the production of film and pictorial pornography. Her argument that pornography is "merely imagery" isn't very persuasive.

Diamond's strength is her description of pornography as a complex phenomenon. Rather than arguing for censorship and repression, she stresses the need for freedom in exploring sexuality. Even if there are objectionable images of women available in our society now these can be offset and challenged by feminist images. Diamond ultimately argues that the resources of the women's movement would be better spent gaining access to the media (she suggests a woman-controlled television station). Once this access is accomplished, the media could be used to disseminate alternative feminist ideas and imagery. In this way, the sexist and sometimes violent message of pornography could be contradicted.

Finally Diamond, like Burstyn, argues that what is required for real change in our society is political and economic reorganization but, she does not expand on this statement. Diamond's prescriptions are: 1) public dialogue and education on sex and pornography, and 2) the production of feminist alternative imagery.

Diamond's argument attempts to transcend the stagnated censorship dilemma and explore other issues and alternatives. She also places pornography in its economic and social context and asks us to consider the implications of its presence, arguing

that it is a complex phenomenon which is concerned with both sex and power. However, Diamond's analysis is not without flaws. In the first place, she never provides a definition of pornography, although it is clear from her discussion that she recognizes that much pornography is sexist and a limited amount coercive. Second, Diamond argues that pornography only reflects as much sexism as is present in the culture. In her view, pornography does not have a trajectory of its own. This is difficult to accept. The enormous growth in the industry since World War II is evidence that the industry is creating a market for pornography which did not previously exist. The fact is that pornography fills a need for sexual experience and information which cannot be filled elsewhere. This leaves the average individual, especially young people, open to the pornography industry's view of sexuality, male and female sexual relations, sexual practice, etc. The pornography industry can mystify sexual relations by depicting male sexual aggression, for example, as normal³⁴ and/or making rather uncommon sexual practices, e.g. group sex, appear commonplace (Zillman and Bryant, 1982). Pornography is not just a reflection of cultural attitudes and beliefs, it is an active agent in perpetuating a wide range of ideas about sex and sexual relations.

Finally, Diamond's recommendation that feminists gain access to the media is important but, just as Burstyn has clearly demonstrated, prevailing Censor Boards (e.g. the Ontario Film Review Board) are likely to go after feminist productions.

Gaining access to the media and being able to fund serious alternative projects will be very difficult. These difficulties do not mean that we should abandon the project, but making alternative imagery a reality and as widely accessible as pornography will be an enormous task.

Of all the articles appearing in Burstyn's book, Diamond's is the most satisfying analysis. However, both Burstyn and Diamond spend a good deal of time warning against the dangers of censorship. Criminal sanction, Customs regulation, and Censor Boards have been the methods employed by the State to deal with pornography. These methods are likely to be utilized whether we approve of them or not. We can continue to warn against the dangers of censorship, but the chances are that this method will continue and socialist feminists will have no input into proposed legislation or the language of proposed legislation, leaving input from the women's movement open to other streams of feminism, such as radical feminism. I question the wisdom of this stance.

An interesting sub-group of the anti-censorship camp is what Hearn (1987) refers to as the pro-sex camp. Feminists from this sub-group, most notably Gayle Rubin, argue for an autonomous theory of sexuality. In Rubin's earlier work, such as The Traffic in Women, she developed the concept of a sex-gender system and argued for its fundamental and determining influence on the individual, a position which is consistent with the socialist feminist theoretical framework. But she argues that

neither marxism nor Feminism are adequate theories to deal with sexuality.

Rubin argues that sexuality is a realm imbued with conflict and political significance. She insists that in some historical periods sex has been more politicized than in others. She points to the 19th century social movements aimed at eliminating "vice."³⁵ These morality crusades against masturbation, prostitution, obscene literature and abortion have left scars and uncomfortable, anxious attitudes about sexuality. Rubin reminds us that in the not so distant past, i.e. the 1950's, this morality crusade centred on homosexual panic. During this time the label of "sex offender" was created, with a concomitant burst of new legislation to protect the public. These new laws gave psychiatrists and police more power over sex variants.

Rubin maintains that beginning in the late 1970's we began to enter another period characterized by attacks on sexual behaviour by conservatives and religious fundamentalists. She argues that there has been an increased crackdown on prostitution and obscenity. Public panics are created around issues such as "child pornography" followed by restrictive legislation. She claims as a result of a scare around homosexual recruitment of the young in 1977 some States have brought back laws against both nudity and sexual activity, especially if it involves the young. These laws actually make pictures of nude children in anthropology texts or educational films illegal. As well, instructors could be technically charged for showing the films to any one

under eighteen. Rubin warns that much of the legislation that is produced as a result of these moral panics is "ill-conceived and misdirected"(272). As well as undermining or removing sexual freedoms, these laws will have far-reaching effects on sexual freedom in the future. She claims that the "New Right" is now involved in the struggle around sexual freedom, including the use of pornography. The "New Right" has a frightening political agenda. The Right will attack organizations, like Planned Parenthood, and try to remove funding, because they believe these organizations are part of a communist conspiracy to undermine the family and the moral fabric of North American life.³⁶ The Right has discovered that issues like pornography can mobilize huge numbers of individuals. She refers to the growth of the Moral Majority in the United States and the Citizens for Decency in Canada. These organizations have large memberships and extensive financial resources. They can use these resources to influence public opinion and/or public officials, lobby congress for legislative change, and block passage of bills like the ERA, to which they are opposed.

"Periods such as the 1880's in England and the 1950's in the U.S. recodify the relations of sexuality. The struggles that were fought leave a residue in the forms of laws, social practices, and ideologies which then affect the way in which sexuality is experienced long after the immediate conflicts have faded."³⁷

Rubin realizes that it is very difficult to make informed decisions about sexuality and pornography when there is such a

lack of developed radical thought in this area. She, like many others, complains that a theory of sexuality has not been developed and integrated into existing theoretical perspectives. According to Rubin, political analysis of sexuality has been marginalized, overlooked completely, or denigrated in existing social theories. She criticizes liberal theory, marxism and mainstream feminism for their lack of attention to this area.

Rubin recommends a model for a three-part definition of pornography, legal, historical, and sociological. First, she claims, pornography is illegal, that is, pornography is being described in legal definitions as sexually explicit material whose sole purpose is to arouse sexual desire. The point she is making is that in North America, material with a clear sexual aim is not considered legitimate and will not be extended constitutional protection as speech, (e.g. Roth vs. U.S. (1957)). The historical segment of the definition would attempt to contrast current pornographic material with past forms, for instance, rather than nude paintings collected by wealthy individuals for private showing, we now have mass-produced, commercial sex in the form of the "cheap, dirty book",³⁸ film, video, and periodical. Last, pornographic production takes place within an established industry utilizing a specialized group of sex workers producing a specific kind of product with recognizable conventions, sold in certain places in particular kinds of shops, etc. Rubin insists that pornography can be described in concrete sociological terms.

Rubin criticizes groups who define pornography as violent.

That way they avoid having to answer the empirical question of how much pornography really is violent.

"...if you walk into an adult bookstore, ninety percent of the material you will see is frontal nudity, intercourse, and oral sex with no hint of violence or coercion."³⁹

Rubin's position on and characterization of sexuality is complex. She calls for a re-evaluation of sexual hierarchy in North America. According to Rubin, this sexual hierarchy is one we are all knowingly or unknowingly perpetuating. She refers here to the hierarchy that puts good, normal sexuality at the top, i.e. heterosexual, married, monogamous, procreative sexuality (she adds here the couple also does not use pornography). From this ideal sexuality there is a gradual downslide starting with heterosexual unmarried couples; heterosexual, promiscuous individuals; monogamous, homosexual couples; and eventually into the "outer limits" of bad, abnormal, sexuality where promiscuous homosexuals, transvestites, sadomasochists, etc. reside.

This sexual hierarchy is reinforced by other institutions in North American society. Some religions hold procreative marriage to be the single ideal form of sexuality. Psychology, Rubin argues, promotes heterosexuality. She also maintains that social theory such as feminism or marxism does not challenge this single ideal sexuality. She calls for increased anthropological work in this area to create understanding regarding sexual variation. Rubin insists our culture treats sex with suspicion, sexual

variation with panic, and appears to need an excuse (marriage, romantic love, or procreation) to indulge in sex.

The 'harm' for Rubin is multiple. Harm stems from our rigid, anxious sexual attitudes which cause sexual panic and persecution of homosexuals. Groups or individuals infused with this panic often initiate or promote ill-conceived and dangerous legislation. There is also harm in the feminist anti-pornography movement, especially when they argue that if we get rid of pornography we will get rid of violence against women.

Rubin, unlike almost any other commentator, focuses on sex research (e.g. Kinsey, 1953; Weeks, 1977) and the budding scholarship on sex, (e.g. Foucault, 1978). According to Rubin, this is the type of research we need to be doing. She insists that we must escape from "sexual essentialism", (sex as a transhistorical, unchanging, natural force) and work toward a description of sexuality, not as the demonic, uncontrollable force of libido, but as a social construction which can change through time and with context.

Rubin's prescriptions are myriad. She argues that the existence of pornography at least creates some area of sexual freedom, even if the material itself is sexist. She calls for a relaxation of all controls on sexual behaviour, including age of consent laws, and all controls on pornography. She calls for increased tolerance for sex variants and a commitment to sexual pluralism. Rubin supports efforts to create alternative non-sexist imagery, sex education, and more public dialogue from

women about what they want and need sexually. But, she maintains, these constructive measures are not the ones being promoted by anti-pornography feminists.

In Rubin's opinion, pornography should be about sexual freedom, variation, and experimentation and if it does not challenge sexism, racism, or homophobia, then it is not the liberating force it claims to be. And, Rubin insists, if it is violence we are concerned about we are looking in the wrong place. Rubin insists that we can not just focus on the pornography industry, we have to look at the way the entire mass media functions to reproduce sexism. The novel element in Rubin's analysis is her emphasis on the development of radical sexual theory. She suggests, in very concrete terms, which researchers and theorists might be drawn upon to lay the conceptual groundwork, develop critical language, and provide historical depth. Rubin argues that feminism cannot continue to confuse sex with gender. She asks us to remember that just as marxism cannot properly explain and address gender inequality, because it was not designed to do so, neither can feminism answer properly questions regarding sexuality.

Rubin's historical discussion of sexual repression and moral panic are illuminating. And, her warnings regarding the activities of the "New Right" are important. Although Rubin provides a model to use in developing a satisfactory definition of pornography, she does not make it clear what purpose this type of definition would be serving. Would it be a definition for legal

purposes, for discussion, for research? It is difficult to evaluate the usefulness of a definition if one does not know what purpose it is meant to serve. And she has not made it clear what type of material she would include in the category "pornography". Finally, her claim that pornography is illegal is perplexing. Pornography is widely available, not illegal. Her meaning and intent is entirely unclear.

Rubin's call for a relaxation of controls on consent laws is disturbing. It appears that Rubin is condoning adult-child sex. Rubin also argues that we can not just focus on pornography, we have to understand the way the entire mass media reproduces sexism. The problem with this approach is that pornography gets trivialized.⁴⁰ How sexism functions in the mass media is important to the women's movement, but that does not make a critical examination of pornography pointless. Last, Rubin argues that neither marxism nor feminism as a theory can adequately address sexuality. It is unclear how sexuality could be looked at adequately without examining it within the economic and social context of the particular historical time frame in which it is being considered. It may be that socialist feminism is not in a position, as Weir (1987) argues, to get involved with sex research, but an analysis of sexual politics can be provided. However, socialist feminists have not yet fully integrated sexual politics into the existing theoretical framework.

The developing socialist feminist analysis is important and promises to advance and broaden our understanding of pornography.

Also, because of socialist feminist commitment to examining the relationship between class, gender, and race, this perspective could overcome the limitations of radical feminist and some marxist analyses, which have concentrated on either gender or class, rather than a consideration of all three. Also, because they oppose state regulation of sexuality and pornography, socialist feminists' analysis is not attempting to marshal facts or produce evidence to further exacerbate the censorship conflict. Further, they are committed to both exploring female sexual pleasure, and contributing to the creation of female sexual culture, and exposing the exploitation of women in contemporary pornographic imagery and production. But, however promising and challenging the developing socialist feminist critique is, it is not without shortcomings and there is more to be done.

First, socialist feminists get caught up in warning against the dangers of censorship and neglect to explore pornography. And, although they are concerned with material conditions, a full analysis of the industry has not been done. We need to understand the political economy of pornography before we can develop strategies for change. As Currie (1989) suggests the censorship debate has diverted socialist feminists from developing a critique of production. Last, their "no-censorship" at all stance is not entirely convincing with regard to coercive pornography (involuntary bondage, physical assault, rape, murder, and adult/child sex). They have not sufficiently dealt with the

serious question of the continued proliferation of this material.

Socialist feminists have only recently entered the controversy surrounding pornography. They, as a group, have been making significant contributions to the areas of women's labour, the reproduction of mothering, and the development of a feminist psychoanalysis. One underdeveloped area has been that of sexuality and pornography. This neglect has left them unprepared to deal with the serious implications of the anti-pornography movement. Therefore, they have been drawn into the debate as a reaction to explanations and prescriptions generated by radical feminists, rather than in a position of leadership.⁴¹ This underdevelopment has left the terms of the debate and strategies for change open to others, such as the radical feminists.

It is hard to distinguish socialist feminists from liberal feminists in the anti-censorship rhetoric. Socialist feminists appear to be involved here as generic feminists.⁴² They have made alliances with liberal feminists and civil libertarians as a tactic to mount a successful response to prescriptions of conservatives and radical feminists. However important these alliances may be at the public level, it should not prevent us at the analytical level from developing a critique of the pornography industry as a capitalist, patriarchal institution with certain aims and vested interests. As Valverde states "we have to understand what pornography is, how it came to be developed, when, where, and why, and what purposes it serves in the larger social scheme...then we will be in a better position to criticize

pornography...and lay the foundation for its abolition and replacement".⁴³

I will draw on Weir's model of sexual politics in Chapter VI to suggest how we might incorporate a critical examination of pornography and the pornography industry into a theory of sexual politics.

1. Alan Soble, Pornography: Marxism, Feminism, and the Future of Sexuality, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986) p. 57.
2. Ibid., p. 2.
3. Soble, p. 12.
4. Ibid., p. 10.
5. Alison Jaggar, Feminist Politics and Human Nature, (Sussex: Rowman & Allanheld, 1983) p. 64.
6. Jaggar, p. 74-79; Dany Lacombe, Ideology and Public Policy: The Case Against Pornography, (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1988), p. 22.
7. Soble, p. 8-9.
8. Ibid., p. 58.
9. Ibid., p. 105.
10. Harold Nawy, "The Erotic Marketplace", Technical Reports of the U.S. Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, The Marketplace: Empirical Studies, Vol. 4, 1968-70, p. 163. In San Francisco Nawy identified 47 retail outlets for 'adult' sexually-oriented material. Only three stores catered to the male homosexual. However, apart from nine stores which carried no homosexual material the other stores had a line of male nude magazines.
11. Margrit Eichler, "Women, Families and the State" in Joan Turner and Lois Emery (eds.) Perspectives on Women in the 1980's, (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1983) p. 113.
12. Soble, p. 86.
13. Douglas Stewart, "Pornography, Obscenity, and Capitalism" in The Antioch Review 35 (Fall, 1977) p. 398.
14. Ibid., p. 398.
15. Ibid., p. 396.
16. Ibid., p. 398.
17. Scott McNall, "The Structure of Domination and the Mode of Reproduction" in Current Perspectives in Social Theory, Vol. 4, 1983, p. 195.

18. Ibid., p. 182.
19. Ibid., p. 200.
20. "War Declared on Obscene Materials", Beijing Review 31, August 5, 1985, 28, p. 8-9.
21. H. Nawy, p. 172; Morris E. Massey, "A Marketing Analysis of Sex-Oriented Materials in Denver, Aug. 1969", U.S. Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, Vol. IV, 1969, p. 87.
22. Nawy, p. 180-81.
23. Jaggar, p. 306.
24. Varda Burstyn, "Political Precedents and Moral Crusades: Women, Sex and the State", in Varda Burstyn (ed.) Women Against Censorship, (Vancouver, B.C.: Douglas & McIntyre Ltd., 1985) p. 24.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid., p. 21.
27. Ibid., p. 162.
28. Ibid., p. 30.
29. Ibid., p. 16.
30. Susan Cole, Pornography and the Sex Crisis, (Toronto: Amanita Enterprises, 1989) p. 159.
31. Sara Diamond, "Pornography: Image and Reality" in Varda Burstyn (ed.) Women Against Censorship (Vancouver, B.C.: Douglas & McIntyre Ltd., 1985) p. 41.
32. Ibid., p. 40.
33. Ibid., p. 49.
34. Ibid., p. 42.
35. Gayle Rubin, "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality" in Carole Vance (ed.) Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality, (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984) p. 268.
36. Ibid., p. 273-274.
37. Ibid., p. 274.

38. Gayle Rubin, Diedre English, Amber Hollingbaugh, "Talking Sex: A Conversation on Sexuality and Feminism" in Socialist Review 58, 1981, p. 56.
39. Rubin, "Talking Sex..." p. 57.
40. Cole, p. 145.
41. Lorna Weir, "Socialist Feminism and the Politics of Sexuality", in Meg Luxton and Heather Maroney, Feminism and Political Economy, (Ontario: Metheun Publications, 1987), p. 77.
42. Ibid.
43. Mariana Valverde, "Pornography", in C. Guberman and M. Wolfe (eds.) No Safe Place, (Toronto: Women's Press, 1985), p. 135.

CHAPTER VI

In this chapter I will be discussing the outcome of our critical examination of the conservative, liberal, feminist, and marxist/socialist feminist perspectives on pornography. I will reiterate the results of our discussion of definition and then proceed with a brief summary of the manner in which each perspective deals with the matter of definition, the characterization of sex, the way in which harm is defined, the evidence which is produced to support contentions, and the prescriptions for change. I will argue that none of the explanations is satisfactory, but that the socialist feminist theoretical framework appears useful for examining pornography and the pornography industry if, as Weir argues, a sexual politics is integrated into socialist feminist theory. I will suggest how a critical examination of pornography might be incorporated into this model.

Definition

It is clear, after a consideration of the use of definition and terminology by the commentators from the different perspectives, that the problem of a definition of pornography and the indiscriminate use of different terminology make useful discussion of the issues difficult and the implications of much research unclear. The problems with terminology and definition appear to derive from carelessness and a serious lack of consensus. There does appear to be agreement that the term

'obscenity' is obsolete and should be abandoned. The term pornography has been identified as the more appropriate term for material currently available. The speakers we have considered seem divided as to the usefulness of the term 'erotica.' I have suggested we build on the term 'pornography' using demarcations, like coercive pornography, when necessary.

Summary of the Perspectives

The conservatives characterize both sex and pornography as potentially dangerous and therefore in need of control. Sex is described as an uncontrollable natural force. The conservatives we have considered do not provide a definition of pornography therefore we do not know what material is included or excluded in their use of the term. The harm for conservatives is the anti-social behaviour and attitudes which result from the widespread availability of pornography. Conservatives provide very little social scientific evidence to support their claims, but rely on impassioned rhetoric often couched in religious notions of the sanctity of sex within marriage. Conservatives do not examine pornography in its economic context, and the arguments are both gender and race blind. Conservatives generally argue for blanket suppression of pornography.

Liberals, in an attempt to overcome the condemning attitude of conservatives toward sexuality and pornography, argue that sexuality and sexual expression are important and must be protected. However, sex is often characterized as a powerful,

natural force which must be expressed or serious social consequences will result for the individual and society (e.g. Kronhausens). Only one of the liberals we considered provided a vague definition of pornography. The harm for liberals is censorship of pornography because it violates constitutional guarantees to free speech. They argue that censorship can also endanger other materials. Liberals often provide social scientific research to support their claims which makes their overall position persuasive. Although liberals oppose censorship, some liberals (e.g. Dixon) do condone suppression of adult-child pornography or visual material in which it could be proven that participants were physically harmed. The liberal perspective is an improvement over that of the conservative. Still, liberal analyses are often gender and race-blind and they ignore material conditions.

Conservative and liberal perspectives discuss pornography as concerned with sex, not power, and they do not deal with the implications of the sexism prevalent in pornography. Liberals often get caught up in discussing the evils of censorship, even arguing that censorship creates the desire for "sadistic" pornography (Goodman, 1970). Very little is said in conservative and liberal analyses regarding the commodification of sex and/or the pornography industry.

As a reaction to the limitations of conservative and liberal argument, feminists began to develop a different analysis. Liberal feminists argue that pornography, because it perpetuates

the sexual objectification of women, impedes the progress of women to improve their status in society. Some liberal feminists (e.g. Ridington) argue that there is a connection between coercive pornography and violence against women. Liberal feminists believe sex and sexual expression to be an important human good, but they argue that freedom in sexual behaviour and sexual expression has not been extended to women. Liberal feminists are divided on whether or not censorship is an appropriate method of dealing with pornography. Liberal feminists' desire to expose the sexism prevalent in pornography and the implications for women of the continued presence of pornography, is an improvement over liberal argument. But, liberal feminists neglect material conditions and the racist dimensions in pornography.

Radical feminists insist that pornography is the propaganda and rape the practice. For them, pornography is misogynist ideology used by men to keep women in a state of subordination. Pornography is said to teach men how to dominate and coerce women. In this way, pornography poses a real threat to women's safety and should be suppressed. All pornography is characterized as violent, no definitions are provided by the radical feminists, and women are portrayed as the victims of male sexuality. Male sexuality is characterized as inherently aggressive and sadistic. In the radical feminist view, women's pleasure in sex is denied. The radical feminists discussed in this thesis, examine actual pieces of pornography to support their claims, occasionally drawing on social scientific research.

Much of the pornography they discuss is selectively chosen to support their arguments. Both Dworkin and Griffin discuss the racist overtones in pornography. Last, radical feminists ignore material conditions and discuss patriarchy as if it is ahistorical and universal.

Marxists, like Soble, argue that capitalism shapes male sexuality and that shape (objectifying and genital) has negative consequences for women. Soble argues for sexual freedom, but believes that a "natural, free sexuality" will not occur in capitalism. Only in communism could non-objectionable pornography be generated because it would not be produced by economically coerced wage labour. Most of the marxists dealt with in this thesis did provide definitions of pornography albeit problematic ones. The harms for marxists are the economic system and its damaging effects on the human being. Marxists generally do not recommend censorship, although Soble states that some material (never specified) might warrant suppression. Marxists do not recommend censorship because they are suspicious of the State, which is often characterized as an arm of the dominant class. Marxists do not examine the pornography industry, sex workers, or the economics of pornography as one might expect. Marxists do consider gender in their critiques, but the racist dimensions in pornography are ignored.

Socialist feminists discuss pornography in its social and economic framework. They deal with material conditions, gender, and race. However, only Diamond explicitly acknowledges racist

dimensions in pornography. Because of socialist feminist commitment to examining the relationship among class, gender, and race, this perspective could overcome the limitations of radical feminist and some marxist analyses which have concentrated on either gender or class. However, the areas of sexuality and pornography are underdeveloped in socialist feminist theory. It is only recently that socialist feminists have entered the "sex debates" and the pornography controversy. Socialist feminists argue that sexuality is socially constructed and therefore alterable. They maintain that sexuality and sexual expression are important and all individuals, whether homosexual or heterosexual, should be extended tolerance and freedom in this area. Pornography is seen as a manifestation of the sexism already prevalent in society. Socialist feminists argue that the focus for the women's movement should not be on pornography, but on changing the social conditions which produce sexism. However objectionable pornography is, they argue, it still depicts women as being sexual. They suggest that alternative feminist imagery can be generated to contradict the negative view of male-female sexual relations depicted in much pornography. None of the socialist feminists discussed in this thesis provides a definition of pornography. Rubin suggested a model for a definition, but not a definition. Because socialist feminists have focused on censorship and sexual repression, they provide historical data and analysis to substantiate their contentions regarding the dangers of repression. Due to this preoccupation with censorship

they tend to neglect an examination of pornography. The harm for socialist feminists considered in this thesis is using State intervention as a way of dealing with pornography. They insist that censorship will only be used to suppress gay and feminist material as well as other material deemed undesirable by police and censor boards, e.g. The Diviners.

Although a good historical case can be made for the folly of censorship, the socialist feminist "no-censorship at all" stance is troubling with regard to coercive pornography. Their arguments tend to ignore our social obligation to prevent harm. If we are striving to be a non-violent, egalitarian society, valuing choice and consensuality, it is difficult to justify allowing this material to proliferate. By allowing coercive pornography to be distributed, we appear to condone the actions depicted. These acts are illegal and we prosecute individuals for committing them. The claim could be made that the violent acts depicted are simulated or that the participants agreed to the treatment. If people (often women) in videos, for example, are being pushed down, slapped, and forcibly penetrated, this is not simulation. The question for us, as a society, is do we allow this material to be circulated because the person, for whatever reason, agreed to the abuse. Wendell (1983) and Dixon (1984) recommend that if participants can prove that they were harmed during production of pornography, the material can be suppressed. Wendell has suggested that if the public is concerned about certain pornographic material, the producers and distributors

certain pornographic material, the producers and distributors should have to prove that the depictions in question were simulated and/or that participants were of legal age. If these producers could not provide these assurances, then the material should be suppressed. Another way to protect sex workers would be to help organize them into guilds. These organizations could warn members of potential danger, boycott producers who are generating coercive material, or help workers to lay charges if they have been harmed. Last, there is no discussion in socialist feminist critique regarding pornography that depicts adult/child sex. These depictions are the graphic portrayal of child sexual abuse. It seems irresponsible to ignore "kiddie porn". How can we generate alternative imagery to contradict the message of "kiddie porn"?

Finally, socialist feminists have the necessary theoretical framework to examine pornography, but they have yet to provide a comprehensive analysis. Weir claims this fact is due to a lack of integration of sexual politics into socialist feminist theory.

Weir, a lesbian, is acutely aware of socialist feminist reluctance to deal with lesbianism and sexuality in general, the fear being that identification with lesbianism will lead to marginalization. Socialist feminism has seen its responsibility as elucidating the connection between class relations and gender relations. As a result of this preoccupation with women's labour in and out of the workforce, a sexual politic has not been articulated and has largely been left to liberal and, especially,

radical feminists. It is only since 1982, Weir claims, that socialist feminists have entered the "sex debates" and the pornography controversy, largely in reaction to the analysis and recommendations put forward by radical feminists. In these debates and in discussions surrounding pornography, socialist feminists argue like generic feminists. In the area of pornography socialist feminists were looking for alliances with liberals and civil libertarians to block anti-pornography forces. Therefore, socialist feminists suppress their socialist agenda so as not to be avoided by possible allies on "anti-socialist grounds" (77).

Weir argues that the time has come for socialist feminists to claim sexual politics for socialist feminism and provide direction for the women's movement in debates on pornography and sex regulation and help an "ailing lesbian feminism" (83).

Interestingly, Weir argues that socialist feminism must be able to accommodate both class and non-class issues, or what she calls "popular democratic struggles", i.e. those not directly controlled by capital. She believes being involved in these struggles produces cross-class alliances which strengthen the women's movement, politicize, and broaden socialist feminist reach and effectiveness. She refers to struggles around reproductive rights, daycare, sexual harassment, etc.

Weir maintains that an explanation of sexual politics should include a consideration of five important areas: 1) sexual representation (sexual art, women's romances, soap operas, and

pornography; 2) sexual violence against women (rape, incest, sexual harassment, international trafficking in women's bodies; 3) sexual pleasure; 4) service trades (prostitution, pornography production, phone sex); 5) sexual minorities. She states that all of these areas need development. Weir's suggestions give us a place to begin conceptualizing how we should approach research and analysis. But, that is all it does; provide us with a sketch.

Building on Weir's model, I suggest that in areas (1) and (4) a critical examination of pornography could be integrated. In the area of sexual representation we could provide a history of pornography, data on cross-cultural variation, and content analyses, which are desperately lacking in all spheres, i.e. fiction, film and periodical. In the area of sexual representation we could continue to (1) explore pornography as patriarchal ideology and the various ways that its sexist message can be contradicted; and (2) the contention that coercive pornography is connected to sexual abuse (e.g. Russell's work). Area (4) could incorporate a political economy of pornography: production, distribution, and consumption. There is data produced by the Traffic and Distribution Panel for the 1970 Pornography Commission in the U.S., which attempts to describe segments of the industry (e.g. sexploitation film production) and the costs and profits of this segment. An evaluation of this data would be an excellent place to begin. However, this data may accurately describe the status of the industry in 1970, but twenty years later there could be substantial changes; examining the shifts

and changes might tell us a great deal. The pornography industry is made up of discrete segments which have different needs and requirements (see Figure 1). For example, in the area of film and video production, the producer must have technicians, costumes, lighting, sets, sex workers, etc. These needs would not be the same in the area of pornographic paperback fiction. Further, the marketing and distribution of films or periodicals are different.

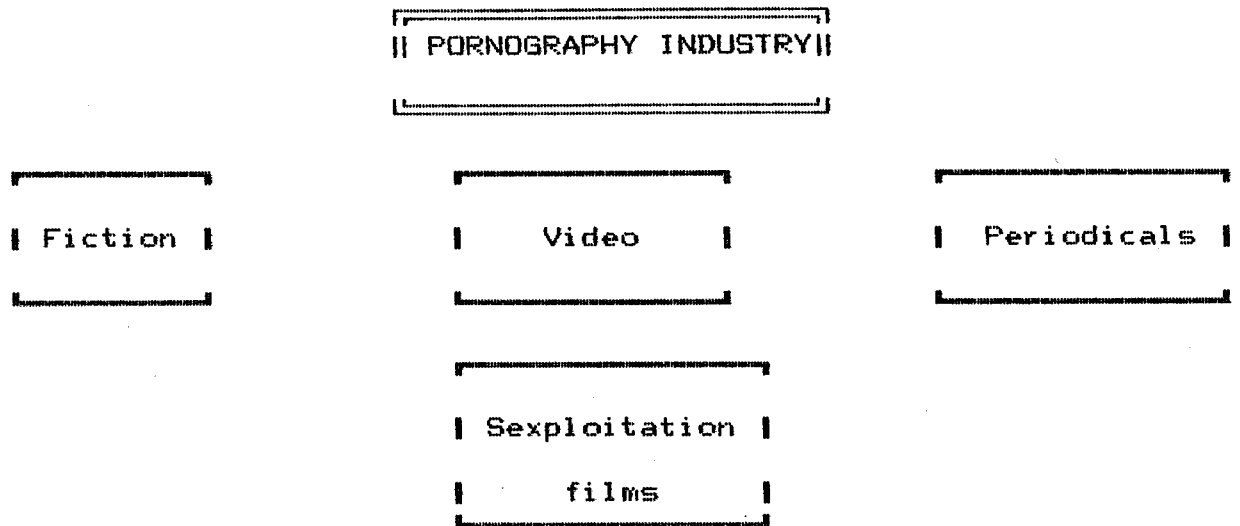


Figure 1.

Within each segment, production, distribution, sales, and the status and treatment of sex workers would have to be considered to produce a comprehensive analysis. Second, very little is known about sex workers; who are they, how are they recruited, what is their experience in this labour market, and what are the economics involved? We need more and contemporary information about consumers; who are they, what are they buying and why, and

what is the composition of this group (e.g. class, gender, race, age), and is this composition changing through time? The most important of these recommendations for socialist feminists is the development of a political economy of pornography which has not been done. Because they have focused theory and analysis on the relations of production, socialist feminists seem well suited to this task. We need to initiate and stimulate dialogue on this project.

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