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by

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**From Reel to Virtual: The U.S. Adult Film Industry, Production,
and Changes in Women's Labor Opportunity (1957-2005)**

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This dissertation is dedicated to my parents –
Janet Lynn Tibbals and Edwin Lyon Charles Tibbals, III

“I’m so glad I was the chosen one.”

- Zakk Wylde, *Pride & Glory*, 1999

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**From Reel to Virtual: The U.S. Adult Film Industry, Production,
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The University of Texas at Austin, 2010

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Women work in the adult film industry in a variety of behind-the-scenes occupations and executive roles. Moreover, women can often negotiate the terms of their employment, pay scales have been standardized, and protecting women's health is conventional practice. As would be expected, women were not always integrated into every level of the adult film industry workplace. This process occurred over time, as it occurred over time in myriad other workplaces; however, unlike many other workplaces, neither advocacy from an external social movement nor activism from workers within the industry itself initiated this integration. With the magnitude of the adult film industry, the apparent integration of women workers, rhetorical assumptions, and scholarly oversights in mind, two core questions are posed in this research. First, have women's incorporation and opportunities for participation in the United States' adult film industry changed since the 1950s? Second, has the content of adult films changed since the 1950s?

Evidence suggests that women's labor rights and opportunities have been expanded internally, from the top-down. Company owners, film producers, and powerful industry leaders began expanding women's rights in response to legal and cultural

pressures from regulators and industry-wide structural changes occurring during the late 1970s and early 1980s. In this study, I explore the processes responsible for these developments. The central argument is that the historical development of the adult film industry has been shaped by dynamic multidimensional tensions existing between producers, consumers, and regulators. These tensions are partially reflected in the content of key adult films. The historical development of the adult film industry has led to the emergence of a closely interconnected occupational network. This network and what I call “industry protective practices” –endeavors initiated by adult film industry business leaders, owners, and producers that protect both the welfare of workers and the industry itself— operate synergistically and are responsible for the top-down expansion of women workers’ labor rights and opportunities over time. Industry protective practices, including mandatory and centralized HIV/STI testing and the development of a production code itemizing sex depictions to be avoided, tell us much about strategic rights expansion from the top down.

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is about changes over time. It is also about the processes that have shaped those changes. The primary question driving this project concerns the processes that have affected women's experiences in the workplace. The analysis centers on the development of the highly stigmatized adult film industry, the wider socio-cultural interests that have affected it, and the strategic tactics industry insiders have used to navigate and negotiate those interests. Insights emerge from explorations of workers in the United States' adult film industry, a culturally significant and understudied branch of sex work.

The United States' adult entertainment industry, or "porn business," is massive and diverse, providing a variety of goods and services. These goods and services include all cable, satellite, and pay-per-view entities that provide adult content; all web-based sites and services that provide adult content; phone sex services; sex toy sales; and magazines (Rich 2001). As a whole, the adult entertainment industry generated an estimated 10 billion to 14 billion dollars worth of revenue in 1998 (Rich 2001), and the demand for its services and products has not diminished since. According to the industry's foremost trade publication *Adult Video News* (hereafter *AVN*), the US adult entertainment industry generated 12.9 billion dollars worth of revenue in 2006 (*AVN* March, 2007). In comparison, the Hollywood film industry generated 9.62 billion dollars worth of revenue in 2007.¹

Adult film production is a significant and prolific component of the adult entertainment industry. An estimated 200 adult film production companies employ 6000 workers in Los Angeles County alone (CDC 9/23/05).² The rental and sales of adult films account for 4 billion of the total 15 billion dollars worth of annual revenue generated by the adult entertainment industry (Miller 2005). According to *AVN*, video/DVD sales and rentals continue to be in high demand in spite of competition from web-based media forms. In 2006, video/DVD sales and rentals accounted for 28 percent

of all adult entertainment industry revenue generated (*AVN* March, 2007). With film production commanding such a large percentage of its revenue, it is not surprising that the adult film industry produces a substantial number of films. Consider this illustrative comparison: while Hollywood filmmakers produce approximately 400 films per year, adult industry filmmakers produce over 11,000 (Miller 2005; Paul 2004). According to *AVN*, exactly 12,971 hardcore adult film titles were produced in 2006 (*AVN* March, 2007). An industry of this magnitude obviously touches the lives of vast numbers of women and men.

Scholars generally explain the process of rights expansion as occurring from the “bottom-up,” with pressures from wider social movements and on-the-ground organizing considered necessary spearheads of liberalization. The wider US women’s movement and worker organizing, for example, are often credited with initiating the liberalization of US women’s labor rights and opportunities including equal access to employment, equal pay, equal opportunity for occupational advancement, and physical and emotional safety (Evans 2003; Renzetti and Curran 2003). Exploration of and advocacy for the rights of women sex workers, however, have often been overlooked by feminist scholars and activists. This includes the rights of women working in the adult film industry. These women’s rights have never been the focus of labor activists’ efforts, nor have these workers ever organized for rights expansion within their industry.

A wealth of scholarship documenting the exploitative and oppressive nature of sex work, which includes but is not limited to exotic dancing/stripping, all levels of prostitution, phone sex operation, figure modeling, and pornography production, exists. As a sub-field of sex work, the adult film industry is commonly regarded as exploitative and oppressive as well, and the image of suitcase pimps forcing vulnerable runaways to work in an unregulated and dangerous trade fraught with disease, drug abuse, and botched surgeries has captured the popular imagination. In actuality, however, women talent are often supervised by other women and receive standardized compensation for a pre-determined series of sex depictions that occur in safe settings. It may be true that the

adult film industry or segments therein are intensely problematic; however, this work is not about exploitation, nor is it about whether the industry is “good” or “bad.” As no rigorous scholarly analysis informed by the inner-workings of the adult film industry has ever been conducted, this work explores changes that have occurred inside the adult film industry over time.

It may be that, in referring to the adult film industry as exploitative and oppressive, it is actually being suggested that the *content* of the adult film industry’s *products* (pornographic film texts), not the inner-workings of the industry itself, are exploitative and oppressive; however, no rigorous analysis of the historical development and/or the polysemic meanings embedded in adult film content has ever been conducted. Furthermore, there has never been any consideration of adult films as a reflection of the symbiotic relationship existing between the adult film industry and wider society.

In spite of inattention from the wider US women’s movement and feminist scholarship and a reputation for being exploitative and oppressive, evidence suggests that incorporation and opportunities for participation for women working in the adult film industry have expanded since the 1950s. Although stereotyped mystique may suggest the adult film industry is run by lone “skeevy guy[s] in gold neck chains” or is somehow sustained by a mass of sexually perverse men workers, MSNBC recently reported that “...from the owner of the small adult store near you, to video directors, to promoters, to online porn purveyors, women have *quietly* become integral to the world of adult entertainment in ways that have nothing to do with wearing stripper heels and a big smile,” (Alexander 2008, emphasis added). Some of the leading industry production companies are lead by women executives – Samantha Lewis of Digital Playground, Marcie Hirsch of Vivid Entertainment, and Joy King of Wicked Pictures are only some examples. Women like Sharon Mitchell (Adult Industry Medical) and Diane Duke (Free Speech Coalition) work in high-profile occupations to protect various aspects of the adult industry welfare. *Adult Video News*’ annual *Adult Industry Directory* lists contact information for women graphic artists, photographers, public relations and marketing

consultants, hair and make-up artists, accountants, attorneys, and caterers (among myriad other occupations).

Women work in the adult film industry in a variety of behind-the-scenes occupations and executive roles. Moreover, women can often negotiate the terms of their employment, pay scales have been standardized, and protecting women's health is conventional practice. As would be expected, women were not always integrated into every level of the adult film industry workplace. This process occurred over time, as it occurred over time in myriad other workplaces; however, unlike many other workplaces, neither advocacy from an external social movement nor activism from workers within the industry itself initiated this integration. With the magnitude of the adult film industry, the apparent integration of women workers, rhetorical assumptions, and scholarly oversights in mind, two core questions are posed in this research. First, have women's incorporation and opportunities for participation in the United States' adult film industry changed since the 1950s? Second, has the content of adult films changed since the 1950s?

These questions are tightly interconnected. A multi-dimensional relationship exists between the producers, consumers, and regulators of any good or service; therefore, it stands to reason that each party's interests will influence and be somewhat reflected in the manifestation of said goods and services. Therefore, as the adult film industry develops, as interests shift, and as what women can do in the workplace in terms of incorporation and opportunities for participation changes over time, it is reasonable to expect the content of adult films will reflect some of these developments, influences, and changes.

Women's incorporation into the adult film industry is gauged, in part, by assessments of changes in women's workplace rights. The concept of worker rights used in this study is derived from employment law, a body of federal and state statutory regulations that shape employer-employee relationships.³ Issues such as protection from discrimination and inequality and standards for health/safety, working hours, and compensation are all addressed in employment law. In spite of the legal articulation, the

concept of worker rights is somewhat tenuous. For example, one could argue that, in spite of employment law and perceived employee rights (ie the right to time off, paid or unpaid), workers in the US actually have no rights at all – no right to free speech, free association, job security, career ladders, living wages, benefits, or union representation. In a context where workers have no legal rights (the US), one is left to wonder what constitutes women’s labor rights and opportunities in any industry.

This is an extremely relevant and intriguing query; however, this dissertation considers changes that have occurred over time regarding what women can do in a workplace. It is about the ways in which a workplace and its products have shifted. It considers the processes that have shaped these changes and why. It also points to the symbiotic relationship existing between a stigmatized industry/subculture and wider society. I use the concept of rights, as defined US Employment Law as it is written in 2010, as a gauge to evaluate changes in what women can do in the workplace over time. I use the contemporary articulation of Employment Law throughout the eras of adult film production Reel, Video, and Digital/Virtual in order to establish a baseline against which changes are to be assessed. Although somewhat problematic, this conceptualization of rights and the use of contemporary Employment Law is the most effective way I could figure to call attention to and assess these types of changes over time. This work is not a case study of rights – it does not explore the presence or absence of rights, nor does it explore questions of workplace in/equality between industries or between women and men.

The evidence suggests that women’s labor incorporation and opportunities for participation have been expanded internally, from the top-down. Company owners, film producers, and powerful industry leaders began expanding women’s rights, and thus, partially, their incorporation into the workplace, in response to legal and cultural pressures from regulators and industry-wide structural changes occurring during the late 1970s and early 1980s. By “rights,” I am referring to the series of practices guaranteed by US Employment Law, and by “opportunities” I am referring to advantageous chances

and favorable conditions in the workplace. In this study, I explore the processes responsible for these developments. The central argument is that the historical development of the adult film industry has been shaped by dynamic multidimensional tensions existing between producers, consumers, and regulators. These tensions are partially reflected in the content of key adult films. The historical development of the adult film industry has led to the emergence of a closely interconnected occupational network. This network and what I call “industry protective practices” –endeavors initiated by adult film industry business leaders, owners, and producers that protect both the welfare of workers and the industry itself— operate synergistically and are responsible for the top-down expansion of women workers’ labor rights and opportunities over time. Industry leaders and business owners employ industry protective practices as strategic measures to avoid regulation and scrutiny from entities outside the adult film industry. By products of industry protective practices include increased incorporation and opportunities for participation in the US adult film industry. Industry protective practices, including for example mandatory and centralized HIV/STI testing and the development of a production code itemizing sex depictions to be avoided, tell us much about strategic rights expansion from the top down

Theoretical Contribution

This study will address two significant theoretical issues. First, the process of rights liberalization occurring within the industry challenges conventional conceptualizations and models explaining the ways in which women gain rights and opportunities. Second, this study’s emphasis on production (rather than reception) brings the experiences of women insiders into the conversation and adds a new dimension to adult film industry scholarship.

Rights Expansion from the Top-Down

As was previously mentioned, explanations of rights expansion rarely deviate from the “bottom-up” model. For example, Nancy F. Cott’s (2000) edited collection highlights the impact women’s everyday activism has played in the expansion of US women’s rights, and Sara M. Evans (2003) discusses the “waves” of the US women’s movement preceding waves of women’s rights liberalization. The bottom-up model sufficiently describes the expansion of women’s rights in these works; however, this model does not explain women’s rights expansion in the adult film industry.

Since the bottom-up model does not apply in this case, conceivably a lateral explanation of rights expansion might. Some scholars suggest that the status of women in the US, including women’s status as workers, has improved as a component of wider social transformations and evolutions. For example, Robert Max Jackson suggests that “gender inequality has been fated for extinction since the emergence of modern economic and political organization,” (1998: 241). Here Jackson suggests that the structures of modern political and economic life hold no place for gender inequality and, thus, the improvement of women’s status in one arena of social life will necessarily improve their status in another. Jackson’s assertions, however, are highly debatable. Simply given the underrepresentation of women holding state, local, and federal political offices and the female/male wage gap of 75.7% in 2001,⁴ it is clear that gender inequality continues to characterize modern economic and political organizations. This includes the “modern”⁵ adult film industry. Although a lateral explanation may shed some light on the general process of rights expansion, it does not adequately explicate the actual process of women’s rights expansion as it has occurred in the US adult film industry.

Recently, scholars have explored “reforms from above” and top-down policies as major processes impacting individual rights. In *States and Women’s Rights* (2001), Mounira M. Charrad discusses rights liberalization from the “top-down.” Specifically, Charrad shows how and why the postcolonial Tunisian state liberalized family law in the absence of pressures from community activism or a social movement during the 1950s.

According to Charrad, family law reform was seen as integral to the development of a modern nation state. The top-down process of liberalization discussed by Charrad is not, however, unique to post-colonial Maghribi states. In *Sex and the State* (2003), Mala Htun discusses liberalization from the top-down occurring in Latin America, explaining how and why the non-democratic Brazilian state liberalized women's rights during the final third of the twentieth century. According to Htun, women's rights were liberalized in order to promote modernization and strengthen the state. Htun's work further develops the top-down model while illustrating the broad occurrence of rights expansion in the absence of pressures from below.

Both Charrad's (2001) and Htun's (2003) work show instances wherein women's rights were liberalized from the top down in order to benefit state development; however, the top down model has explanatory power beyond the level of the nation state. It more closely describes the process of worker rights liberalization in the adult film industry than either the bottom-up or lateral explanations. This study builds on Charrad's and Htun's insights, exploring similar top-down processes occurring in a subculture of Western workers. The adult film industry "state" has initiated rights liberalization beneficial to both workers and the development and protection of the industry through a similar top down process. Consequently, this study adds to the growing body of scholarship developing new theoretical models explaining the process of rights expansion.

Production Analysis and the Consideration of Representative Content

Existing scholarship on pornography is commonly informed by non-representative fringe elements of the adult film industry. For example, niche films that are rarely produced or near jurisprudential obscenity markers are often used to represent the entire adult film industry. Case in point: anti-pornography scholars Robert Jensen and Gail Dines (chapter 4 in Dines, Jensen, and Russo 1998) discuss the "content of mass-marketed pornography;" however, twelve of the fifteen genres they discuss are actually niche.⁶ In another example, many of the critical essays in Linda Williams' collection *Porn Studies* (2004) engage "taboo" niche genres including gay and "dyke"

porn, drawn pornography, and celebrity sex tapes. Although interesting, uncommonly produced fringe content is not representative of the majority of adult film productions. Works such as these speak to pornographic “exceptions,” rather than rules.

Existing scholarship on pornography is also commonly informed by analyses of “average persons’” reactions to the adult industry and adult material (reception analyses). For example, David Loftus (2002) explores the themes men viewers self-report enjoying and not enjoying in adult films. Although also interesting, consumers’ reception practices are not the only processes shaping the adult film industry and the content it produces.

In addition to an emphasis on fringe content and consumer reception data, the experiences of adult industry insiders are rarely heard in scholarly projects. When insiders’ voices are considered, persons currently or formerly satisfactorily involved in the adult industry or persons who have worked in the industry in some capacity other than “talent” (performers in graphic sex depictions on film) are often left out of the conversation. For example, Wendy McElroy (1995) interviewed six “women in porn.” Four of these women worked as talent at the time of the interviews; the remaining two had worked as talent at one time and were now working on niche genre projects. Although interesting, McElroy’s “women in porn” tell us little about women’s experiences other than working as talent.

Reliance on data from fringe elements of the industry and average persons’ reactions to adult content coupled with occasional insight from current or former talent has contributed to a largely misinformed cultural understanding of pornography in general and the adult film industry specifically. In addition to furthering scholarship on changes over time and the processes of rights expansion, this research adds to the understanding of pornography by considering representative components shaping the adult film industry from the inside. Specifically, I explore the experiences of persons working in capacities other than talent; key adult films that were widely viewed by the general public during their respective years of production; and development of a major

film production studio within the adult film industry. By considering more representative components of the industry, this study provides a fresh and contemporary feminist perspective to the scholarly analysis of pornography. It emphasizes the production of (rather than reception to) the adult industry and incorporates the perspectives of current subcultural insiders, providing a venue for the voices of a culturally significant and influential population that has been ignored. It also highlights the symbiotic relationship between the adult film industry and wider society and the ways in which this relationship has shaped adult film content. Consequently, this study contributes to ongoing conversations amongst feminist scholars and scholars considering issues surrounding gender, labor, culture and subculture, and power.

Looking Ahead

This study seeks to expand understanding of the processes of worker incorporation through rights liberalization from the top-down and to begin filling in significant theoretical gaps and empirical misconceptions about the adult film industry. It is laid out as follows: Part One situates this work within wider sociological and feminist scholarship. In Chapter 1, I review relevant literature; and in Chapter 2, I outline the research design and the methodologies I employ. In Part Two, I offer an account of the US adult film industry's development, including content analyses of key adult films, across three comparable eras. I consider the Reel era (1957-1974) in Chapter 3, the Video era (1975-1994) in Chapter 4, and the Digital/Virtual era (1995-2005) in Chapter 5. Part Two points to women's workplace rights and opportunity expansion from above via industry protective practices. The evolving development of the adult film industry network further contributes to rights expansion from above.

In Part Three, I go inside the contemporary adult film industry via ethnographic observations and informal interviewing conducted at a typical adult film production company I call Fascination Films. In Chapter 6, I map the structure and development of the organization; and in Chapter 7, I consider Fascination Films' women workers'

experiences in depth. Part Three allows us to see a contemporary manifestation of rights expansion from above through industry protective practices and the adult film industry network, while providing a more nuanced understanding of some women's experiences. Specifically, Part Three shows industry protective practices and the adult film industry network operating in the lives of everyday women office workers and contract talent.

PART ONE

Literature Review and Methods

In Part One, I lay out the theoretical foundation for this study and explain my methodological approach in detail. In Chapter 1, I review the relevant literature. This review includes a discussion of the “pornography debate” in feminist scholarship and sociological considerations of gender and work. I also discuss empirical work on sex worker rights activism and the adult film industry in general. In Chapter 2, I outline the three-part methodological approach I used to complete this work: historical analysis, ethnographic observations and informal interviewing, and film content analysis.

CHAPTER 1: REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE – *Feminist Perspectives, Sociological Scholarship, and Popular Work*

As was previously mentioned, explanations of women’s rights expansion rarely deviate from the “bottom-up” model; however, this model does not sufficiently explain women’s rights expansion in the adult film industry. Some scholars have explained the liberalization of women’s rights in terms of “reforms from above” and top-down processes, a model which more closely describes the process of liberalization in the US adult film industry. In addition to this literature, feminist scholarship on “pornography,” sociological considerations of gender, work, and organizations, empirical findings, and popular texts inform my work. The following discussion of those literatures further situates this project.

The Pornography Debate in Feminist Scholarship

Debates over sex, sexuality, and sex work have divided US feminists for decades. Lynn Chancer (1998) discusses some of the topics most divisive amongst feminists, including the “anti-sex”/“pro-censorship” and “pro-sex”/“anti-censorship” perspectives present within feminist discussions of “pornography.” These perspectives are also referred to, respectively, as the radical and the libertarian (Chapkis 1997).

According to the radical feminist perspective, pornography highlights roles of domination and submission between men and women in the context of sex. Consequently, pornography’s tendency to represent gender inequality as sexually desirable is inherently harmful to women (Berger et al 1991). One of the most well-known radical anti-pornography feminists, the late Andrea Dworkin, claimed contemporary pornography functions as the “graphic depiction of vile whores” via photography, film, and video (Dworkin 1989: 200). Because pornography shows women as “vile whores” in conjunction with representations of (presumably) desirable sex behavior, it functions to demean and degrade women (Dworkin 1989). The radical

feminist perspective maintains that this demeaning, degrading quality warrants the legal limitation of pornography (Chapkis 1997). This perspective does not however focus on the repressive effects of censorship, nor does it consider the individual's right to sexual expression (Chancer 1998). Other examples of radical "anti-sex"/"procensorship" scholarship include works by Dines, Jensen, and Russo (1998), Laura Lederer (1980), Catharine Mackinnon (1993), and Pamela Paul (2006).

According to the libertarian feminist perspective, pornography functions to attenuate the sexual repression of women and sexual minorities by reconceptualizing the essential function of sexual activity to be physical, genital pleasure rather than emotional intimacy. Consequently, pornography in all forms is regarded as a progressive, or at least destabilizing, social force (Berger et al 1991: 40-47). Pro-sex academic, Camille Paglia,⁷ claims the pornographic actor is a powerful and victorious entity actualizing the libertarian feminist reconceptualization of the essential function of sex. "Far from poisoning the mind, pornography shows the deepest truth about sexuality stripped of romantic veneer...Porn dreams of eternal fires of desire, without fatigue, incapacity, aging or death" (Paglia 1994: 66). Pornography thus (presumably) illustrates individuals' most primal desires for sexual expression, regardless of how un/popular, ab/normal, or politically in/correct they may be. The libertarian feminist perspective emphasizes sexual freedom, individual rights to self expression and sexual pleasure, and the diversity and ambiguity of desire (Chapkis 1997). This perspective does not however focus on the large numbers of women who feel uncomfortable with or alienated by pornography (Chancer 1998). Other examples of libertarian "pro-sex"/"anticensorship" scholarship include works by Laura Kipnis (1999), Nadine Strossen (1995), and Linda Williams (1989).

According to Lynn Chancer (1998), feminist scholarship and emergent debates that describe pornography as either liberating (pro-sex/anticensorship) or oppressive (anti-sex/procensorship) for women are both inaccurate and reductive. Rather than taking an either/or approach to pornography, Chancer asserts that adult material in general

should be considered to be both oppressive and liberating. Consideration of a multiplicity of pornographic genres and analysis of their subsequent meanings is necessary. Consideration of intersections between race, class, gender, and sexuality and persons' experiences producing and consuming adult film content are also necessary. For example, Patricia Hill Collins (2002) asserts that meanings embedded in pornographic imagery contribute to black women's marginalization in ways that are markedly different from the ways in which it contributes to the marginalization of white women and other women of color.

Alan Soble (2002) critiques feminist scholarship on pornography, and although he does not make an explicit distinction between "pro-sex" and "anti-sex" feminist scholarship, he clearly is referring to "anti-sex" work in his discussions. According to Soble, feminist critiques of pornography presuppose established values for human beings and their experiences and assume monolithic, universal conceptualizations regarding sex and sex behaviors. Moreover, he claims that feminist researchers are often unfamiliar with the pornographic film genre and commonly make presumptuous conclusions on the basis of reception studies and literal readings of filmic texts. Many of Soble's critiques can be extended to "pro-sex" feminist scholarship on pornography, which also neglects the perspectives of adult film industry insiders and assumes particular sets of meanings and conceptualizations surrounding sex and sex behaviors.

Consideration of Chancer's (1998) discussion of the pornography debate within feminism and the inherently limiting quality of either/or scholarship and Soble's (2002) critique of textual- and reception-based feminist scholarship is both revealing and constructive. Feminist scholars have tended to focus on specific aspects of pornography, rather than the multiplicative quality of the industry, its products, its workers, and the changes that have occurred over time. Moreover, feminist scholars have tended to rely on reception data and/or what often amounts to uncritical content analysis data. Although both sides of the pornography debate point to interesting and potentially problematic issues, neither side considers changes in women's workplace experiences over time.

Moreover, neither side has observed the inner workings of the adult film industry. These tendencies have resulted in the generation of a body of work that is often dichotomous and reductive and have contributed to a wider cultural notion that pornography is exploitative to women. To begin filling in these gaps, rigorous exploration of various aspects of the adult film industry including workplaces, the experiences of insiders, and the content of more representative adult films is necessary. Consideration of the multiplicative meanings that may emerge from any and all of these components is also necessary

Sociological Considerations of Gender and Work

Scholars have been exploring gender stratification and inequality in the United States for decades (Williams et al 2004). Rather than considering gender as a monolithic and ubiquitous experience shared by all persons, feminist sociologists and scholars have recently begun to consider the social processes affecting gender inequality. Scholars are now focusing on the individual, structural, and cultural forces that function to reproduce differences in women and men. These forces cannot be fully understood without simultaneous consideration of race and social class (Williams et al 2004). Explorations and considerations of gender inequality have clearly become more nuanced and complex. This includes consideration of gender inequality in the workplace.

Joan Acker (1990) demonstrates the ways in which gender and sexuality in organizations have been obscured through discourses of gender-neutrality and asexuality. Acker explains that work organizations are themselves gendered, which effects both organizations' expectations of workers and workers' experiences within workplace settings. Building from Acker's insights, feminist sociologists have found that this also includes workers' dealings with exhibitions of sexuality at work. Specific workplace norms affect individuals' definitions of pleasurable, acceptable, and intolerable behaviors at work (Dellinger 2002). For example, Kirsten Dellinger and Christine Williams (2002) found that workers define particular behaviors as sexually harassing in one setting and as

pleasurable workplace socializing in another. The difference in experience has to do with organizational norms and the work setting itself.

Further, Joan Acker (2004) articulates ways in which gender (and class, race, and sexuality) inequalities are reproduced within work organizations and develops tools that can be used to map changes in these inequalities through consideration of inequality regimes. According to Acker (2004: 443), inequality regimes are loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions, and meanings that both produce and reproduce gender, class, and racial inequalities within the workplace. There are several components to inequality regimes that vary, both within individual work organizations and over time. These include race, class, and gender dynamics; the shape and degree of inequalities within the organization; organizational processes and practices; the visibility and legitimacy of inequalities; and the maintenance of organizational power and worker compliance. Consideration of these components within the context of a particular organization, job, or occupation can be used to map inequality and any changes that may have occurred over time.

Relevant Empirical Studies on Related Issues

Rights liberalization has been one of the predominant projects feminist activists have engaged in throughout the history of the US women's movement. Demands for just compensation, equal access to job opportunity, health and child care benefits, and protection from sexual harassment have all been addressed as part of the endeavor towards rights liberalization. However, one sector of the labor market has often been overlooked by US feminists: sex work. Sex work, which includes but is not limited to prostitution, exotic dancing, phone sex operation, "figure modeling" (posing for sexually explicit pictorials), and adult film performance, has not been incorporated into the system of institutionalized labor equality.

Despite this oversight by feminist labor activists, some sex workers have attempted to gain worker rights. For example, in 1973 the group COYOTE ("Call off

Your Old Tired Ethics”) was formed in an attempt to normalize and decriminalize prostitution (Weitzer 1991). Exotic dancers at San Francisco’s “Lusty Lady” peep show house successfully organized and were subsequently represented by the Service Employees International Union in 1997 (Chapkis 2000). In spite of these instances of sex worker labor organizing, there have been no similar grass-roots organizational efforts occurring within the adult film industry. Moreover, there have been no attempts for even somewhat labor organized prostitutes and exotic dancers to build collaborative bridges with adult film performers. Speculation as to why such collaborative efforts have not materialized is beyond the scope of this project; however, it may be that adult film performers are an isolated and negatively stigmatized group, even within the context of sex work.

There is some scholarship that considers the production of sex work, or sex work from the perspective of the sex workers themselves. For example, Wendy Chapkis (2000) has explored some of the ways in which women prostitutes and exotic dancers implement and are subject to power and control in the workplace. Additional examples of scholarly studies that incorporate the voices of women sex workers include Alexa Albert’s (2001) analysis of Nevada brothel prostitutes; Bernadette Barton’s (2006) consideration of the experiences of women exotic dancers; Elizabeth Bernstein’s (2007) exploration of the economic, cultural, and libidinal realms of global sexual commerce; Wendy Chapkis’ (1997) international analysis of prostitution; and Amy Flowers’ (1998) exploration of Los Angeles phone sex operators.

Of this pool of “production” literature, some studies consider the perspectives of women working in the adult film industry. For example, Wendy McElroy (1995) emphasizes the rhetoric of choice and the decisions made by several women talent and former talent. Susan Faludi (1999) writes about the unequal opportunities women and men adult film performers have in the industry. According to Sharon A. Abbott (2000), women and men enter the adult film industry in pursuit of money, fame, independence, career opportunities, and sexual exploration. Furthermore, she claims that women and

men remain in the adult film industry in pursuit of internal career opportunities and with the hopes of cultivating fame. Although each of these studies provides interesting insights, contemporary scholarship that incorporates a wider variety of adult industry insiders' perspectives, including those of industry leaders and women and men who do not work as talent, is still needed.

Popular Relevance

Even though little scholarly work is situated from the “production” standpoint, incorporating the perspectives of adult film industry insiders exists, an extraordinary amount of popular works about the adult film industry do. For example, current and former adult performers Linda Lovelace (1980, 1986), Jerry Butler (1990), Traci Lords (2003), Christy Canyon (2004), Jenna Jameson (2005), Ron Jeremy (2007), and Tera Patrick (2010) have written auto-biographical accounts of their careers in the adult film industry. Carly Milne (2005) edited a collection of accounts written by women employed in various capacities of the adult film industry. “Legs” McNeil and Jennifer Osborne (2005) compiled archival data and portions of testimonials from women and men industry insiders to formulate a quasi-narrative oral history of the industry. Moreover, some popular works, such as those by Ariel Levy (2006) and Pamela Paul (2006), discuss the adult film industry without incorporating insiders' perspectives at all. These works provide little to no critical analysis of the adult film industry, however they do provide fodder for discussion of women working in the adult film industry's relevance in popular culture.

The legend-like mystique surrounding some women working in the adult film industry speaks to the popular culture relevance of this study. Consider former talent Linda Lovelace and Traci Lords and more contemporary talent Jenna Jameson. Linda Lovelace starred in the film *Deep Throat*, an adult comedy that has generated millions of dollars in revenue since its release in 1972 (Lewis 2000). In spite of her role in *Deep Throat*, Lovelace may actually be better known for the abuse she suffered at the hands of

her husband/manager and her affiliation with anti-pornography feminist and conservative activist groups during the 1980s. (See autobiographical work by Linda Lovelace (1980; 1986) and additional work by Luke Ford (1999), McNeil and Osborne (2005), and Gloria Steinem (1995) for further information and perspectives on Lovelace's impact on the adult film industry)

After using a borrowed birth certificate to obtain a California driver's license that "proved" she was legally an adult, Nora Kuzma began working in the adult entertainment industry as "Traci Lords" when she was fifteen years old. Lords' identification as underage practically coincided with the 1980's Meese Commission and subsequent government sanctioned obscenity crackdowns on the adult film industry. Even though no members of the adult industry were ever accused of knowingly working with underage talent, the Lords case is still mentioned in anti-sex discussions about the industry. Moreover, although she has worked with varying degrees of success in the mainstream Hollywood film, television, and music industries for the past twenty years, Lords is still best known for her underage foray into the adult film industry. The only adult film she made over the age of eighteen, *Traci, I Love You* (1987), continues to be in high demand (Adult DVD Empire). (See autobiographical work by Traci Elizabeth Lords (2003) and additional work by Christy Canyon (2004), Luke Ford (1999), and McNeil and Osborne (2005) for further information and perspectives on Lords' impact on the adult film industry)

Jenna Jameson is considered to be the most successful adult-to-mainstream crossover personality to date. Starting as an exotic dancer in Las Vegas, Jameson has worked in a myriad of capacities in the adult entertainment industry, including talent, writer, director, and producer of adult films. Despite her normatively stigmatizing past, she has still managed to cultivate a mainstream following. To date, Jameson is considered to be an exceptionally savvy business person (Miller 2005); she has written a bestselling autobiography (Jameson 2005), has appeared in mainstream movies, and has worked with various other mainstream media outlets (Grigoriadis 2004). (See

autobiographical work by Jenna Jameson (2005) and additional work by Vanessa Grigoriadis (2004), McNeil and Osborne (2005), and Matthew Miller (2005) for further information and perspectives on Jameson's impact on the adult film industry)

Although these women cannot be considered representative of all, or even most, women's experiences in the adult film industry, these brief biographical sketches reveal much about the popular relevance of the adult film industry. Women working in the industry are points of interest and fascination for industry outsiders and their stories are told repeatedly over time. Additionally, these works provide some perspective on women's experiences in the adult film industry and point to a complex relationship existing between adult film industry insiders and consumers.

In summary, based upon the previously considered bodies of literature, it can be stated that 1) most scholarly studies on the adult industry do not consider the voices of insiders whereas the popular, for-profit literature often does; 2) neither the perspectives of women working as adult film industry talent nor the perspectives of women working in labor positions other than that of talent within the adult film industry have been sufficiently considered in scholarly work; and 3) members of the wider US culture are both aware of and interested in the adult film industry and the women working in it.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

I explored my research questions (1) *Have women's incorporation and opportunities for participation in the United States' adult film industry changed since the 1950s? If so, how have they changed? What are the wider socio-cultural interests that have contributed to such changes?* and (2) *Has the content of adult films changed since the 1950s? If so, how has it changed? What are the wider socio-cultural interests that have contributed to such changes?* with a mixed-methodological approach that combines historical sociology, ethnographic observations and informal interviewing, and film content analysis. This mixed-methodological approach places an emphasis on historical depth, provided a venue for women's and men's voices, and facilitated consideration of interactions between subculture and culture and structure and agency as they have manifested over time in the adult film industry.

Rather than being mutually exclusive, these research questions are closely interconnected. The content of adult films reflect the symbiotic relationship existing between adult film producers, consumers, and regulators and some ways in which this relationship varies over time. Each party (producers, consumers, and regulators) contributes to the content of these films, thus the films themselves point to negotiations happening between these parties. Analysis of these changing negotiations informs an overall consideration of adult film industry development. As I will show, industry development is closely connected to the expansion of women adult film worker's incorporation and opportunities for participation, the puzzle posed in question one.

In order to address my first research question exploring women's labor incorporation and opportunities for participation in the United States' adult film industry since the 1950s, I conducted a historical analysis of the three eras of US adult film production and distribution. Film content analysis data was used to inform the historical analysis. Additionally, over 250 hours of ethnographic observation and informal interview data have been used to develop a case study of a contemporary adult film

production company I call Fascination Films. Case study data works in concert with the historical and content analyses, lending a more nuanced, contemporary perspective to my historical consideration of the industry. In order to explore my second research question, which examines the content of adult films since the 1950s, I conducted a thematic content analysis of key adult films, films that were both high renters/sellers at the time of their production/release and positively reviewed by the adult film industry.

In the remainder of this chapter, I explain each method in turn. This includes an explanation of why I have chosen to explore my research questions in the manner outlined above, emphasizing the ways in which each component plays an integral part in understanding women's labor opportunity in the adult film industry. I also provide more in-depth details of each component of this project's design.

Method #1: Historical Analysis

I began exploring the academic and popular literature on the adult film industry in late 2004. By the spring of 2006, some of the problematic oversights and tendencies I have already mentioned were becoming clear to me. It did not seem possible that a body of dichotomous literature primarily built on the over-emphasis of haphazardly sampled film content accurately described processes shaping an entire industry and its workers. A way to (potentially) reconcile these oversights, however, was not.

During the same semester (spring, 2006), I completed a seminar course on comparative-historical research methodologies at UT Austin. I was intrigued by comparative historical sociologists' commitment to contextualized consideration of social processes over time. Although most comparative historical work is conducted at the macro level of the nation state, it occurred to me that these methodologies may help add more breadth and depth to considerations of the adult film industry. Almost serendipitously, I found a potential, partial solution to the methodological problems that had shaped many considerations of the adult film industry in comparative historical

sociology. This section of my methodological design is born of that synergistic realization.

At its most nascent point, my methodological design was influenced by the work of comparative historical sociologists and their attention to changes in social processes over time, and the first half of Theda Skocpol's *States and Social Revolutions* (1979) was integral in the initial development of my methodological design. Skocpol uses John Stuart Mill's comparative historical Method of Agreement to frame her discussion of three comparable cases that experienced a similar outcome. Similarly, in order to partially address my first research question —*Have women's incorporation and opportunities for participation in the United States' adult film industry changed since the 1950s?*—, I consider three comparable cases (the US adult film industry's Reel, Video, and Digital/Virtual eras) that experienced a similar outcome (the expansion of women's labor rights and opportunity). Because my cases are closely related (successive eras marking the development of one industry), my engagement of Mill's Method of Agreement is not perfect – this historical analysis was merely inspired by Mill's framework (as used by Skocpol).

The concept of critical historical moments helped me to frame the eras of adult film production. Critical historical moments are occurrences that significantly alter a state, an organization, a culture, or even an individual (Charrad 2001). Several such moments have revolutionized the adult film industry. They are the *Roth v United States* decision in 1957, the advent of videocassette technology in 1975, and the identification of the internet as a marketing and distribution tool in 1995. These moments have shaped three broad eras of US adult film production: the Reel Era (1957-1974), the Video Era (1975-1994), and the Digital/Virtual Era (1995-present). Although the Digital/Virtual era is currently ongoing, this research only considers material through December, 2005.

In this work, rather than comparing discrete cases, I consider the US adult film industry across three historical periods. Other scholars have used comparative-historical methodology to compare historical periods in a similar manner. For example, Mounira

M. Charrad (1997) compares across eras to explore the Tunisian state's expansion of women's rights in one period and support of traditional women's roles in another. The eras of US adult film production as I conceptualize them are clearly comparable – they occur within the same culture (US) and describe the same industry (adult film production).

In order to compare changes occurring in women's labor opportunity, I considered three key dimensions⁸ and their specific effects on the expansion of women's labor incorporation and opportunities for participation in the adult film industry during each of these three eras. These key dimensions are 1) organizing and activism in and around the US adult film industry, 2) obscenity jurisprudence, and 3) film production and distribution technologies. Each of these dimensions is variably influential in the development of the adult film industry throughout the production eras Reel, Video, and Digital/Virtual. Organizing and activism from the bottom-up is often responsible for the initiation of rights expansion, however organizing takes on a different form within the adult film industry. Obscenity and obscenity-related jurisprudence is the most significant way in which regulators shape the adult film industry. Available technology shapes the production, distribution, and consumption of adult film content. Each era was impacted differently by each of these dimensions that, nevertheless, resulted in a similar social outcome in each of the three eras— the expansion of women's labor opportunity in the adult film industry. I used secondary source material; primary source material including but not limited to newspaper and trade publication articles, published memoirs, and published collections of accounts; and observation and informal interview data obtained during my observations at Fascination Films to inform my analysis.

Comparative historical sociologists' insights and tools, from Theda Skocpol (1979) to Mounira M. Charrad (2001) to Mala Htun (2004) and beyond, are not commonly employed in sociological considerations of gender, work, and sex work. In fact, these theoretical works and the empirical area in which I am employing them often seem to “live” in completely different corners of the discipline. I, however, have found

the work of comparative historical sociologists to be very useful. They have provided me with a conceptual framework, on which I have built my methodological design, and several tools for rigorous analysis. Specifically, the comparative historical Method of Agreement informs the framework of this analysis, with the comparative historical tools critical historical moments, key dimensions, and comparatively informed exploration of a single typical case (see discussion in the next section) contributing to its rigor. Rather than being wholly disconnected, I find that comparative historical sociology has laid the groundwork needed to consider the adult film industry in a fresh new way.

Method #2: Ethnographic Observations and Informal Interviewing

I conducted ethnographic observations at a typical contemporary adult film production company I call Fascination Films. Fascination Films is the second largest producer of the most commonly produced genres of adult films; moreover, only one other adult film production company has a longer history than Fascination Films. My observations inform discussion of my first research question exploring women's incorporation and opportunities for participation in the United States' adult film industry changed since the 1950s. During the course of my observations, I was able to conduct informal interviews with women and men currently working within the adult film industry. Informal interview data helps provide a venue for the voices of adult film industry insiders.

This study is informed by over 250 hours of ethnographic observations, which include informal interviewing. I received IRB approval from the University of Texas at Austin to conduct this research (IRB protocol #2007-04-0107). The name "Fascination Films" is a pseudonym (as is "Smith.com," a potential observation site I also considered before settling on Fascination Films), as are the names of all the company's employees and affiliated talent discussed in this work.

These data are integral to this study for several specific reasons. First, ethnographic data provides a venue for the voices of women (and men) working in the

adult film industry. I observed and spoke with many persons currently working in the adult film industry in a variety of occupations including (but not limited to) sales, public relations, and general office work, and their personal experiences directly inform this work. Second, I observed a very complex picture of many persons' day-to-day experiences by being present in the workplace. This facilitated development of a more complex picture and a more nuanced analysis of adult film industry workers' lives. Finally, this data complements my comparative-informed historical analysis by further augmenting its historical depth and broadening its potential for considerations of intersections occurring between subculture and culture and structure and agency.

Site and Access: The chain of events that led to this exploration of the adult film industry is long and winding and it began, ultimately, with my father. Born and raised in Los Angeles, my father worked as a commercial-industrial insulator throughout his 20s. Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) work in high-rise commercial buildings is intense, physically demanding, and dangerous. To hear him talk, my dad knew the labor side of the industry was not for him on day one, and he and my mother eventually opened a company of their own – So-Cal Insulation.

Two patterns emerged in my family's workplace almost immediately. First, the vast majority of So-Cal's employees were, both literally and figuratively, family. My mother's brothers, her brother-in-law and his brother, and an array of cousins worked for So-Cal. Eventually, both of my younger brothers would too. Friends of my father's from back when he was insulating worked for So-Cal, as did men who mentored him when he was an apprentice. Over the years, my mother's best girlfriend's husband and several of my younger brothers' friends also worked for the company. Although I didn't always understand it in these terms, the majority of my immediate family, my family's wider kin network, and a significant amount of my fictive kin all worked for So-Cal.

In addition to employing kin, another significant pattern emerged: there always seemed to be something fun going on at "the shop" (which is what we call the building

out of which So-Cal operates, my second home growing up). For example, every month or so, all the insulators would get an “early quit” Friday. Construction hours for union trade workers in Los Angeles are from 6 AM to 2:30 PM; but, on these early quit days, workers would get a paid afternoon off starting at noon. What is more, there was always a barbeque, some basketball, and a whole lot of carousing happening at the shop on these days – insulators would come by to hang out and socialize on their afternoon off. Twice annually, my father would plan a weekend-long ocean fishing trip for everyone to enjoy. And each December, So-Cal’s Christmas party was *the* time for employees to drink, dance, and collect sizable bonus checks.

I did not realize it when I was young, but all this fun and the overwhelming presence of kin was no accident. My father seemingly used these tactics (kin and strategic barbeques) with the intention of building camaraderie and a core of loyal, hard-working, interconnected employees. He seemed to know that workers who felt appreciated, like they were an integral part of the So-Cal “family,” would put forth superior effort. Having barbeques and hiring kin were strategies to protect my family’s business, and it seems to have been effective. In times of crisis –from mandatory double shifts due to high work volume to market-induced layoffs, from on-the-job accidents to contentious union politics— this core of workers has generally remained loyal to the company for the past twenty-five years. So-Cal has grown considerably since I was a child, and I still have about 20 or so “uncles” working there. To this day, there is an early quit barbeque every four to six weeks. My youngest younger brother, who now handles the majority of So-Cal’s sales, is generally responsible for organizing them.

As I said, my father was born and raised in Los Angeles, and so was I. The adult film industry migrated from New York to San Francisco and Los Angeles during the 1970s (Ford 1999; O’Toole 1999), and the LA-area San Fernando Valley is now considered its contemporary epicenter. I completed my Master’s degree during my early 20s at Cal State Northridge (CSUN), a university located in the heart of the Valley. I recall being dimly aware of the Valley’s reputation as the *other* Hollywood when I began

attending CSUN in 2000, but that reputation held no relevance for me as I directed my energies toward my graduate work. Over the course of many long hours and late nights working, studying, and socializing, however, the adult film industry would reveal itself in subtle ways. Sometimes it was in the form of delivery trucks with production companies' names emblazoned on the side, sometimes in the form of talent standing in line at the local Starbucks. I became intrigued – who were these people working in this morally reprehensible industry, degrading women and warping people's ideas about sex while drinking lattes near my school?! (such were the stereotypes informing my thoughts at the time). I found it odd that no one else around me seemed to notice or care.

The apparently harmonious, albeit often unacknowledged, existence between “regular” people and “porn people” fascinated me, particularly given the adult film industry's wholly negative reputation. I became very interested in the industry lurking just below the surface in “Porn Valley” and began to do a little reconnaissance work. I learned that most of the world's porn was produced by a large cluster of companies operating not five miles from CSUN! It was as if this industry was concentrated into some sort of bubble that enabled them to live, work, and contribute to wider society while simultaneously isolating them from it. I was curious about this mysterious dynamic and eager to explore the processes that had contributed to its creation.

Throughout the course of my Master's program, I had begun to delve into more nuanced areas of feminist sociological scholarship. I realized that sex work –particularly sex work in porn production— had a significant, contentious history in both academic and activist worlds. I learned about the polarizing “porn wars” amongst feminists and activists. And, in spite of the worker organizing and/or extra-industry advocacy work that occurred in and around other branches of sex work, I could find no evidence of worker organizing occurring in the adult film industry and only very little evidence of external advocacy. This history coupled with what then felt like significant insider-knowledge (retrospectively, I have to smile at my naïveté and the idea that where I lived and studied granted me knowledge that was in some way “significant” or “insider”)

captivated me, and I felt compelled to explore what appeared to be an almost schizophrenic desire for and rejection of porn in US culture. I eventually moved on to a doctoral program in Sociology at the University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin) in 2004 and immediately began researching anti-pornography activism occurring in the United States for a history seminar course that fall. I was hooked, and I proceeded to spend approximately one year doing background research on the industry. I learned much during that time; however, an intriguing puzzle had yet to emerge.

Then, during the spring semester of 2006, I learned about women's rights expansion from above in the Middle East (Charrad 2001) and Latin America (Htun 2003). I began to think about my kin and my dad's strategic barbeques; about the state-sanctioned processes of women's rights liberalization in Tunisia (Charrad 2001) and Brazil (Htun 2003); about the apparent absence of worker organizing in the adult film industry; and about those "porn people" who seemed to be both isolated from and a significant part of the wider social world. If nation states and small business owners could further and protect their own interests through the strategic manipulation of rights, the allocation of privileges, and the development of kin networks, it did not seem inconceivable to me that similar processes may be operating in the adult film industry. I had found my puzzle.

I knew the San Fernando Valley was an obvious choice for my research site, but it had become clear to me that the "bubble" around the adult film industry was tightly closed. Accessing it for future research would be difficult. Since I had no connection to the industry, I began working towards developing contacts. Using information and insights from my background research, I identified four persons I thought might develop into points of entrée. Each person had worked in the industry for over twenty years and was directly connected to either a production company specializing in the most commonly produced genres of adult films or a service-provision business with industry-only clientele. I sent each person a letter introducing myself and expressing my interest in meeting with them. I followed up with emails and phone calls when appropriate, and

all four persons were subsequently willing to speak with me. After an initial phone conversation, one person declined to talk with me further and the remaining three agreed to meet in person.

During mid-March, 2006, I made appointments to meet each person in their place of business to discuss my interests and the potential future directions of my work.⁹ Although one meeting did not occur, I was able to meet with representatives from Fascination Films and Smith.com¹⁰ during this trip. I recall my meeting with Fascination Films' CEO Dean Ryan and executive Melissa Park vividly as it marked my first ever face-to-face interaction with "porn people." Armed with the background research I had done and wrestling with every negative feminist- and culturally-informed stereotype one can imagine, I arrived at Fascination Films' main office a nervous wreck. I paused for a long moment after parking my car in front of the most innocuous looking commercial building imaginable and wondered: Was I about to be morally corrupted? Kidnapped?! Coerced into something "deviant"? Would these "pornographers" be able to see how nervous (and, truthfully, frightened) I was, how I actually knew absolutely nothing about their industry or their lives? Moreover, was I about to offend working people with my proposal to study "them"?

After what felt like an eternity of self-reflection, I entered the building. I was greeted by a young pleasant reception person and offered a seat in the thoroughly "normal" waiting room. I felt a little disoriented and a little dizzy – I cannot really articulate what I was expecting, but it certainly wasn't a cheerful pretty secretary in a dentist's office-looking reception area. After a few moments of waiting, I was led to a plush corporate meeting room decorated with larger-than-life photos of glamorous women in lingerie (I later learned these were promotional posters of current and former contract talent for use at events and trade shows) and a massive case housing a large number of gold and Lucite Oscar-looking statuettes (I later learned these were only some of the company's industry trade awards). There I met Dean, a sharp, intense man in his early 40s, and Melissa, a smiling and friendly woman also in her early 40s. Our

subsequent hour-long conversation, I feel, marked the actual beginning of my learning about the realities of the adult film industry. Needless to say, my later meeting at Smith.com was less stressful. There I met the daughter of Smith.com's founder, who is also a well known industry photographer. My conversation with this woman, who was in the process of assuming the highest managerial position in her mother's company and was only a few months younger than I, left me feeling almost exactly like I had when I left Fascination Films – I knew very little about this world, and I wanted to learn more.

I then spent six weeks during the summer months of 2006 in Los Angeles forming additional connections and strengthening rapport with persons in the industry. The majority of these contacts snowballed from my initial contacts at Fascination Films and Smith.com. By the end of that six week period, I had networked with women and men who worked in a myriad of capacities at various industry trade, service, and production companies and had developed many strong contacts. I fully disclosed my identity as a researcher to every person I spoke with.

Fieldwork: At the time of my dissertation proposal defense on May 11, 2007, I planned to explore my research questions with a mixed-methodological approach combining comparative historical-informed sociology, intensive interviews, and content analysis. My research planned changed, however, once I was actually in the field.

I arrived to the San Fernando Valley in the beginning of June, 2007 and immediately set up my first interview with one of my strongest contacts, Melissa Park, the woman vice-president of Fascination Films. After some pre-interview conversations wherein I updated her on my research, she became inspired with an unheard of opportunity. She offered me an “internship” in the company's public relations department. I was to assist Fascination Films' woman public relations representative with mailings, media archival updating, and other similar projects as necessary for approximately twenty hours a week. In exchange for my work, I would be able to observe the inner-workings of the company, interact with Fascination Films' employees

on a daily basis, and attend any events, shows, etc. occurring during my time there. After some consideration and an email consultation with my advisor, Professor Mounira M. Charrad, I accepted this offer.

I then proceeded to conduct 253 hours of observations over a span of nine weeks (from June 4, 2007 – August 1, 2007). Observations were conducted in the Fascination Films main office, at one major adult industry convention, at one product trade show, and on one film set. I took notes during and after the end of each work day or event, and I elaborated on them later. Insights from grounded theory¹¹ guided my analysis of these notes. In December, 2007, I had a final “fact checking” interview with Melissa Park. I double-checked the basic demographic information I had compiled for each woman employed by Fascination Films during my observation times with her. This included clarification of information such as approximate duration of employment and any occupational position changes within the company.

In-depth Exploration of a Single Case: In order to explore a contemporary manifestation of phenomena emerging from the historical analysis, I conducted an in-depth exploration of a single case. Methodologically, Julia Adams’ work *The Familial State* (2005) informs this component my project. Adams’ work is a comparatively informed, in-depth exploration of a single exemplar case—the Golden Age of the Dutch state—with implications for understanding other cases (Charrad 2006). Other scholars have conducted in-depth studies of a single case to formulate conclusions about gender and work and sex work. For example, Arlie Russell Hochschild (1997) studied the fortune-500 company “Amerco” to shed light on workers’ reversed worlds, the time bind, and the ever increasing prevalence of the “third shift.” Alexa Albert (2001) lived for extended periods in the in/famous Mustang Ranch, Nevada’s best known and most profitable legal brothel, to reveal complex issues of gender, class, work, family, race, and politics in a socially stigmatized microcosm. Logic employed by Adams, Hochschild, and Albert

informed my methodological design and decision to focus on the single case of Fascination Films.

Fascination Films is currently the second largest producer of the most commonly produced genres of adult films¹² and, consequently, may be considered a typical contemporary adult film production company. Moreover, because Fascination Films' products are representative of the most commonly produced and consumed adult films, exploration of the company is consistent with the foundational provisions of this project. Specifically, consideration of Fascination Films helps this study provide a fresh and contemporary feminist perspective to the scholarly analysis of "pornography" via 1) the consideration of normative elements of adult film industry, 2) an emphasis on "production" (rather than reception), and 3) the incorporation of current subcultural insiders' experiences.

Fascination Films is a typical and expository case in several significant ways – it is representative of the most common, "mainstream," and legitimate segments of the industry, it is considered a major player in adult film business, and its products represent the most commonly produced and consumed genres of adult films. The adult film industry, however, is both sizable and diverse, and the vast majority of adult film production companies are not Fascination Films-caliber organizations. To my knowledge, there is no data available describing the size, amount of revenue, or percentage of the marketplace controlled by specific adult film production companies. Moreover, no other scholarly analyses of the inner working of the adult film industry have ever been done. Consequently, aside from the previously mentioned dimensions, I do not know how representative Fascination Films *actually* is.

Moreover, although Fascination Films appears to be legally legitimate, the adult film industry itself is rooted historically in clandestine, illegal activity. For example, organized crime syndicates were significant in the production and distribution of porn, particularly during the 1970s and prior to California State's legalization of production in 1988. Consequently, it would be unreasonable to suggest that Fascination Films or its

history and development represent the industry in its entirety. This case is only intended to be reflective of its contemporary, more “mainstream” components, and it cannot be assumed that all aspects of the adult film industry are as “sanitized” as those I discuss here.

At least three additional benefits came from conducting these ethnographic observations at Fascination Films though. First, because many men work at Fascination Films, the experiences of men are incorporated into this study. Although I continue to focus on the experiences of women and map the changes for women that have occurred in the workplace, the presence of men in the data adds to the complexity of my analysis. Second, consideration of Fascination Films informs this work’s historical component in a significant way. Unlike almost every other adult film production company open today, Fascination Films’ history spans two adult film industry eras, the Video and the Digital/Virtual.¹³ My close consideration of Fascination Films augments the historical component of this study and facilitates a more nuanced understanding of changes occurring across eras. Finally, Fascination Films is a powerful force in the adult film industry, and its productions reflect the most commonly made and most commonly purchased genres of adult films. Because the company exhibits such predominating elements of the industry, this work speaks to the majority of the adult film industry. Consequently, this analysis could be used to develop well-informed inter-industry comparisons.

Method #3: Film Content Analysis

“Pornography as a genre wants to be about sex. On close inspection, however, it always proves to be more about gender.” –Linda Williams (1989: 267)

In her book *Hard Core* (1989), Linda Williams asserts that, rather than having inherent meanings, the images found in adult films are components of a developmental system of gendered representations. This implies that both the reception and the

production of adult films are shaped in part by gender relations occurring in wider society. Further, Williams maintains that additional textual, historical, and sociological analyses are necessary in order to more completely understand how these representations, and conceivably gendered social relations, have changed over time. With Williams' work in mind, I conducted a thematic content analysis of a sampling of key adult films from each of the eras Reel, Video, and Digital/Virtual in order to identify consistent and/or predominant elements that characterize the adult film genre and the presentation and involvement of women during each time period.

For the purposes of this analysis, I conceptualize "key adult films" as adult film productions that are *both* top sellers and/or rentals (thus presumably more commonly viewed than other adult films) and well-regarded by adult film industry insiders. Rather than randomly selecting readily available or currently "popular" films, I used industry-generated film reviews in conjunction with rental and sales charts to develop my film sample.¹⁴ Consequently, my sample is made up of benchmark films that were popular at a particular historical moment.

Prior to starting this stage of my work, I had conducted a preliminary analysis of a widely-viewed and well-regarded adult feature film comedy, *Camp Cuddly Pines Powertool Massacre* (2005).¹⁵ Using insights from both grounded theory¹⁶ and this preliminary project, I was able to narrow my focus to some significant areas and themes and develop a useful coding instrument. Codes were developed for sex depictions and talent aesthetics, and each sex scene in each film was analyzed and coded. In addition to coding for specifics, general details for each film such as form, plot, and genre were recorded. Additional codes were added as they emerged.

I then explored, coded, and analyzed the 26 films included in this sample. An undergraduate research assistant coded approximately half the films a second time. I considered each era's respective sampling of films and identified common generic elements present in those films. Thus, rather than starting with an assumption of what content constitutes "pornography," I identified generic elements within texts and within

eras.¹⁷ This approach allowed me to illustrate changes in adult film content over time. For each film, I considered both the women talent and women actors playing non-sex roles. I paid particular attention to the apparent race/ethnicity, approximate age, and aesthetic characteristics (stature, hair color, etc) of each woman. I also considered the films themselves and their plot lines, which illustrate the “types” of films that were both produced by the industry and widely viewed by the public.

A content analysis of key adult films is integral to this study for several reasons. First and foremost, while many other studies exploring adult film industry content focus on audience/consumer reception, niche film productions, and/or small fringe companies, this study takes a different approach by exploring predominant, benchmark film content. When considering this content, it is important to note that as the industry has evolved and expanded, so has its product. Patterns and themes emerging from one era’s films may seem problematic, progressive, neither, or both when considered on their own. It is necessary to show these films within a historical context in order to adequately consider consistencies and/or changes that may have occurred across eras. Because this sample in comprised of popular, high renting and selling films that were well-regarded by industry insiders at discrete historical moments, the contents provide clarification of “pornographic” representations and themes normative at given times. Consequently, the contents of this sample also point to changes and consistencies in what actually constitutes “pornographic” over time.

Additionally, the content of these films is a partial product of a symbiotic relationship existing between the adult film industry and wider society wherein the state of this relationship is reflected in the content. Issues internal to the industry itself may shape content; content may also vary with tensions existing between the industry and the wider society. Therefore, the contents of this sample demonstrate ways in which tensions between the industry and the mainstream and within the industry itself shape what constitutes “pornographic” over time. This consideration speaks to Jason Mittell’s (2004) position that what elements constitute categorization within a particular genre change

over time, in conjunction with changes in the culture. In other words, what constitutes “pornography” changes symbiotically as changes occur in what a society/culture considers pornographic.

Clearly, an analysis of key adult film content development facilitates a critical understanding of adult film industry development. Additionally, a more nuanced picture of women’s general experiences within the industry emerges from consideration of the filmic representations their work helped produce. Rather than attempting to untangle these representations’ complex gendered meanings, I focused on the ways in which these gendered representations have changed. This involved consideration of both women’s changing roles in generating these representations and the consumer’s (audience’s) changing preferences for representation. This facilitates further understanding of the relationships existing between women working in the adult film industry, their labor, and the wider social world.

Finally, it is important to note that, regardless of rigor or scope, most existing considerations of adult film content lack a detailed discussion of their sampling methodology – there is no explanation of how and why the films analyzed were selected. Due directly to this common omission, I will now discuss the content of each respective era’s film sample in detail. Because I maintain that each film informing this work represents a unique and symbiotic historical moment between the adult film industry and consumers, consideration of exactly what films were included and excluded is necessary.

Video and Digital/Virtual Era Film Samples: In the early 1980s, Paul Fishbein began *Adult Video News (AVN)*, a small newsletter-type publication focused on reviewing and rating adult film releases. *AVN* has since developed into the adult industry’s most respected trade publication (Ford 1999; Rich 2001). According to Frank Rich (2001), *AVN* reviews approximately 400 adult films per month. In 2005, *AVN* editors Mike Ramone and Tim Connelly produced *The AVN Guide to the 500 Greatest Adult Films of All Time* (hereafter: *AVNG*). Included with the reviews of 500 adult films are myriad

lists, including lists itemizing the “Top Renting Release of the Year” and the “Top Selling Release of the Year” annually, from 1987 through 2004. I developed the Video and Digital/Virtual content analysis samples from these lists.¹⁸

I began by including all the films on both lists in my sample; however, some films did not meet my sampling criteria and had to be removed. First, I removed films that were affiliated with media scandal or celebrity.¹⁹ Celebrity sex tapes, such as “1 Night in Paris (2004),” are not generally industry-generated films. Moreover, media scandal and/or celebrity affiliation may significantly affect a film’s sales. Next, I winnowed the remaining films by confirming that a detailed review of each film could be found in the *AVNG*. Films that were not both high-grossing (listed on one of the two previously mentioned lists and consequently popular within the market), *and* reviewed in the *AVNG* did not meet the sampling criteria of being “key adult films.” These films were thus removed. Two films, *Scoundrels* (1983) and *The Nicole Stanton Story* (1989), were unavailable on both DVD and VOD and thus removed from the sample.

Because the *AVNG* lists only covered 1987 through 2004, I developed a proxy sample to stand in for the missing data in each era (1975 – 1986 for Video; 2005 for Digital/Virtual). I used the “*AVN* Top101 Adult Films of All Time” list to add films to the Video era sample, incorporating films produced between 1975 and 1986 that were ranked within the top twenty. As would be expected, each of these films was reviewed in the *AVNG*. In order to complete the Digital/Virtual sample, I used information obtained from Adult DVD Empire’s²⁰ “Top Sellers of All Time” list to add the film *Pirates* (2005) to the sample. Although *Pirates* is too new a film to be included in the *AVNG*, it is the fourth top-selling adult film of all time according to Adult DVD Empire and was very positively reviewed by *AVN*.²¹

Based upon the sampling methods described, the following films constitute the Video and Digital/Virtual era samples.

Video Era Sample

Debbie Does Dallas (1978)
Insatiable (1980)
Café Flesh (1982)
New Wave Hookers (1985)
The Devil in Miss Jones 3 & 4 (1986)
Miami Spice II (1988)
The Devil in Mr. Holmes (1988)
House of Dreams (1990)
New Wave Hookers 2 (1991)
The Masseuse (1991)
Chameleons (1992)
Hidden Obsessions (1993)

Digital/Virtual Era Sample

Latex (1995)
Shock (1996)
Zazel (1997)
New Wave Hookers 5 (1997)
The Devil in Miss Jones 6 (1999)
Dream Quest (2000)
Island Fever (2001)
The Fashionistas (2003)
Pirates (2005)

Reel Era Film Sample: There were many adult “loops” (short films) and full-length films made from 1957 through the early 1970s; however, there were no ticket-sales tracking systems in place during these years. Although I was able to find occasional mention of Reel era loops and films in various contexts, it is difficult to determine exactly how “widely viewed” any of these projects were. The series of ambiguities surrounding most Reel era loops and films complicated my sampling frame such that I chose to limit my analysis to late Reel era “porno chic” films only.

Late Reel era “porno chic” films – *Deep Throat*, (1972), *Behind the Green Door* (1972), and *The Devil in Miss Jones* (1973) – were wildly popular with the general public (Ford 1999; Lewis 2000; O’Toole 1999). Many have speculated about the amount of money these films made during the early 1970s, and it has been estimated that each

earned revenues comparable to mainstream film “blockbusters” of the day, including *The Godfather* (1972) (Lewis 2000; O’Toole 1999). Moreover, each of these films is favorably reviewed in the *AVNG*.

Often considered the best adult film ever made (Ford 1999; O’Toole 1999), *The Opening of Misty Beethoven* (1975) is favorably reviewed in the *AVNG*, listed eighth on the “*AVN* Top101 Adult Films of All Time” list, and ranked number eighty-seven on Adult DVD Empire’s “Top Sellers of All Time” list. In addition to being a key adult film, *Misty Beethoven* occupies an anomalous and complex space between the Reel and Video eras. The film was released the same year as the advent of the videocassette recorder; however, the film itself was produced during the Reel Era with reel era technology. Although this film “technically” belongs in the Video Era, it was added to the Reel Era sample because of its production roots therein.

Although these four films constitute the Reel era sample, they should not be considered representative of all Reel era filmic projects. *Deep Throat* (1972), *Behind the Green Door* (1972), *The Devil in Miss Jones* (1973), and *The Opening of Misty Beethoven* (1975) represent films from the early 1970s, or the late-Reel era, only.

Additional Considerations: I shared the final version of my film sample with Melissa Park at Fascination Film’s during the summer months of 2007. Melissa has over twenty years experience working behind the scenes in the adult film industry, and I thought her feedback would be invaluable. Upon initial inspection of my list, she was a little taken aback and immediately said that the list did not represent what she would cite as the industry’s best work. When I explained further how I had developed the sample, she changed her mind however and reacted favorably. She even helped me to secure copies of about half the films I needed at cost.

In further discussion, Melissa pointed out that, oftentimes, films that sell/rent well initially do not represent what she would consider the industry’s best work or most popular work *overall*. I believe this is why she reacted negatively to the sample contents

at first. She made the interesting point that films that become top-sellers over time and films that sell well immediately (read: during their release year) are often not one in the same. She cited the film *Flashpoint* (1997), an adult feature film about a woman firefighter, as an example. *Flashpoint* was not listed as an annual top renter or top seller on either list in the *AVNG*, thus it was not included in my sample. According to Melissa, however, *Flashpoint* was the best-selling adult film of all time. I later confirmed this fact with Adult DVD Empire's "Top Sellers of All Time" list. I found it interesting that neither of the films included in my sample from 1997 –*New Wave Hookers 5* and *Zazel*– were listed as "Top Sellers of All Time." Thus, what is most popular at one specific moment may not be most popular overall.

The final sampling of films considered in this study are in no way intended to be reflective of all films produced by the adult film industry during any given year, era, or overall. Because of the sampling criteria of being both widely viewed by the public and well-reviewed by the industry, myriad niche film genres and several calendar years are not represented at all. This sampling of films does however attempt to capture a series of unique moments wherein wider society's viewing public and an isolated, stigmatized subculture were on the same page. Melissa's feedback affirms this.

* * * * *

Each methodological component of this study is thus integral to the exploration of my research questions, and the previously outlined methodological plan has contributed to the accomplishment of several goals. First, I consider the development of women's rights and workplace opportunities in the adult film industry over time rather than simply considering a "snapshot" of what was going on at one particular time or in one specific era. Second, rather than leaving women's voices out of the conversation or using only a few select persons' experiences to characterize an industry, I provide a venue for an array of women's voices, experiences, and perspectives. Finally, I explore connections existing between wider society, the structure of the adult film industry, and the women working within it.

PART TWO

Adult Film Industry Development

In Part Two, I explore the expansion of women's labor incorporation and opportunities for participation via an account of the US adult film industry's development. At present, no other comprehensive, rigorous account of the industry's development exists, yet consideration of the adult film industry's development is imperative to understanding the expansion of women's labor incorporation and opportunities for participation. Due in part to industry stigmatization, a tightly interconnected occupational network built on both work-related/public and personal/private connections developed as the industry evolved. This network and what I call industry protective practices (endeavors initiated by adult film industry business leaders, owners, and producers that protect both the welfare of workers and the industry itself) operate synergistically to expand women worker's incorporation and opportunities for participation rights from above in the absence of worker and/or advocate organizing and activism.

In Chapter 3, I explore the Reel Era (1957 – 1974); in Chapter 4, the Video Era (1975-1994); and in Chapter 5, the Digital/Virtual Era (1995 – 2005). I consider three key dimensions and explore their effects on the expansion of women's labor incorporation and opportunities for participation within the industry during each era. These three key dimensions 1) organizing and activism from those inside and outside the adult film industry, 2) jurisprudential regulations of obscenity, and 3) technology development were integral to industry development. Specifically, I found that

jurisprudential decisions and developing technology worked in concert to facilitate industry development. Throughout the course of the industry's development, industry leaders organized around issues unique to adult film production. These industry protective practices also functioned to expand women's workplace incorporation and opportunities for participation.

I also consider key adult films produced during each era. As Linda Williams (1989) sagaciously asserted over twenty years ago, the images found in adult films are components of a developmental system of complex and interconnected gendered representations. They cannot be taken at face value, nor can they be considered out of comparative context. The sampling of films considered in this analysis is comprised of popular films that resonated positively at discrete historical moments. From these films' content, I identify consistent and/or predominant elements that appear to characterize the adult film genre and the presentation and involvement of women during each time period. These elements point to two significant patterns concerning 1) content consistency across eras and 2) a decrease in some forms of "extreme" content over time. Specifically, some generic elements of adult films have remained consistent across eras and some "extreme" depictions seen in earlier films are not present in later films (indicating a decrease in extreme content). This provides clarification of "pornographic"²² representations and themes normative to particular eras and over time.

Close consideration of key adult film content contributes significantly to this analysis of changes occurring in the US adult film industry in at least three specific ways. First, collective consideration of these films mandates an analysis with both historical depth and comparative contextualization, facilitating more nuanced understandings of adult film content. Second, as the industry has evolved and expanded, so has its product. For example, production of adult film series began during the 1980s, which corresponds with the emergence of larger and more prolific production studios. Thus, consideration of key adult film content development informs consideration of adult film industry development, which is relevant to the overall argument concerning top-down expansion

of women workers' rights. Third, the content of adult films is a partial product of a symbiotic relationship existing between the adult film producers, consumers, and regulators. Adult film content mirrors the states of these relationships and changes that have occurred over time.

I conclude Part Two by comparing the broad changes that have occurred within the adult film industry with respect to the three key dimensions (organizing and activism, jurisprudential regulations of obscenity, and developing technology) and in adult film content over the three eras Reel, Video, and Digital/Virtual. Taken as a whole, Part Two 1) reveals the importance of industry protective practices in expanding women's workplace incorporation and opportunities for participation from above; 2) suggests the operational and protective significance of the adult film industry network; and 3) points to the impact that the symbiotic relationship between the adult film industry, wider society, and the content of adult films has on cultural conceptualizations of "pornography."

CHAPTER 3: The Reel Era (1957 – 1974)

The adult film industry was at its most nascent point of development during the Reel era (1957 – 1974). Throughout the early part of the era, adult film production was shaped by legal ambiguity, fragmentation, and stigma. As the years passed, clarifications to the legal constitution of obscenity set the stage for adult industry development, while technology limited its growth. Due directly to a handful of late era key adult films, the consumption of sexually explicit content went from being furtive and stigmatized to visibly “porno chic.” By the end of the era, a proper industry was in the beginning stages of coalescence.

In this chapter, I discuss the beginning stages of adult film industry development including an exploration of sexually graphic moving imagery production pre-1957; the evolution of the legal definition of obscenity; the production- and consumption-limiting role of technology; the content of key adult films produced during this era, including discussion of this content’s cultural significance during the Reel era and as it relates to the two other production eras Video and Digital/Virtual; and the absence of worker organizing, activism, and advocacy.

Before the Reel Era Began...

The history of sexually graphic moving imagery is both extensive and rich. Production of stag films –silent, single-reel films with minimal narrative arch, featuring nudity and varying degrees of sexually explicit content— can be traced back to the early 1900s in Europe and Latin America (Holliday 1999; Lewis 2000; Williams 1989). The Kinsey Institute has dated production of the earliest known US-made stag film, *A Grass Sandwich*, between 1917 and 1919 (O’Toole 1999; Williams 1989). In these early years, all texts (including stag films) were subject to the Comstock Law’s (1873) vaguely-worded definition of “smut” as any “obscene, lewd, or lascivious... article or thing intended or adapted for any indecent or immoral use or nature.” This ambiguous

conceptualization of what constitutes obscenity relegated early production, presentation, and reception of stag films to the private social sphere, making them the “private preserve of private individuals” (Williams 1989: 85-86).

This ambiguity shifted slightly, however, as obscenity became more clearly defined in 1930. Judge Woolsey ruled that James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1914-1921; first US edition 1933) was not obscene as the text did not contain representations or discussions of sex that constituted “dirt for dirt’s sake,” (Williams 1989: 87). Although it is likely that the content of most stag films would have been considered “dirt for dirt’s sake,” Woolsey’s ruling established an anchoring point by which “explicit” texts could be evaluated, which opened the door to the public sphere ever so slightly for stag films.

Another “explicit” film genre emerged in the US around the time of stag: the 1920s exploitation film (Schaefer 2004). Under the auspices of imparting educational or moral lessons on eager audiences, classic “sexploitation” films often featured depictions unheard of in mainstream movies. “Sexploitation” films included footage from nudist camps, graphic depictions of the effects of venereal disease, stripteases, and more, giving viewers a glimpse of footage they would never see in feature films. Sexploitation films went unchecked by obscenity standards due to the presence of the ever-present “square up” –a brief educational statement and disclaimer outlining the film’s moral high purpose. When the Hollywood film industry’s studio system collapsed in the 1950s and its self-imposed internal regulation standards went by the wayside, “Nudie Cuties” emerged. Taking sexploitation narratives and content in a new direction, Nudie Cuties featured sexualized content, nudity, and occasional simulated sex without even the auspices of an educational or moral purpose (Schaefer 2004).

Although the Nudie Cuties’ racy content was able to fly beneath the vague radar of obscenity, stag films’ content were not, and these depictions of sexual activity were risky to produce and sell. In 1957, however, the US Supreme Court’s decision in *Roth v. United States* (354 U.S. 476) revolutionized film production at all levels, stag, Nudie Cutie, and mainstream alike. The *Roth* decision overtly stated that “obscenity [was] not

within the area of constitutionally protected freedom of speech or press” under the United States’ first and fourteenth amendments. It functioned to liberalize the definition of obscenity, however, by placing its identification in the hands of “average person[s]” applying “contemporary community standards.” The clandestine activities of stag film production and distribution thus became slightly less illegal within the confines of their respective contemporary communities, and the US adult film industry was born (Elias et al 1999; Ford 1999; Lane III 2000; McNeil and Osborne 2005; O’Toole 1999; Williams 1989).

In the remainder of this chapter, I consider significant jurisprudential regulations of obscenity, developing technology, the content of late Reel era key adult films, and labor organizing and activism occurring during 1957-1974.

Jurisprudential Regulations of Obscenity

In 1957, the *Roth* decision articulated a legal definition of obscenity that both liberalized and continued to limit production of sexually explicit content throughout most of the Reel era. Then, in 1973, the *Miller v California* decision further clarified the legal definition of obscenity, creating a stable legal groundwork for the production of adult films and the developing adult film industry. In this section, I discuss key cases leading up to the *Miller* decision and the specifics of the decision itself.

According to the *Roth v United States* (354 US 476; 1957) decision, obscene texts are not constitutionally protected as free speech or press, and “the standard for judging obscenity, adequate to withstand the charge of constitutional infirmity, is whether, to the average person, applying contemporary community standards, the dominant theme of the material, taken as a whole, appeals to prurient interests.” Further, *Roth* states that materials appealing to prurient interest are those that “[have] a tendency to excite lustful thoughts.” While the *Roth* decision did offer a standard for obscenity and, consequently, a jurisprudential foothold for persons working with adult content, its inherently vague nature required repeated clarification during the Reel era.

The *A Book Named "John Cleland's Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure" v Attorney General of Massachusetts* (383 US 413; 1966) decision elaborates on the definition of obscenity set forth in *Roth*. According to *Roth*, it must be shown that a text appeals to persons' prurient interests, offends contemporary community standards, and is "utterly without redeeming social value" before that text can be held as obscene. In the case of *A Book Named "John Cleland's Memoirs..."*, an assertion of obscenity was reversed as the text had been deemed obscene without demonstration of its utter lack redeeming social value. This decision reveals some of the nuance and loopholes embedded within *Roth*'s articulation of obscenity.

While cases such as *A Book Named "John Cleland's Memoirs..."* highlighted vagaries in identifying obscene texts, other cases touched on private individuals' rights and culpability when dealing with obscene materials. For example, the *Smith v California* (361 US 147; 1959) decision found that persons (in this case, a bookstore proprietor) could not be held liable for obscenity violations if they had no knowledge that items in their possession were deemed to be obscene. The *Marcus v Search Warrant of Property at 104 East Tenth* (367 US 717; 1961) decision found that persons' constitutional rights for due process could not be violated in instances where obscenity is suspected, or even a possibility. And in the *Stanley v Georgia* (394 US 557; 1969) decision, it was found that simply possessing obscene material was not a violation of obscenity law.

Although these and many other cases worked to clarify obscenity, *Roth*'s ambiguities came to a head when Marvin Miller was convicted by the state of California for distributing unsolicited, sexually explicit materials via the US mail. The subsequent *Miller v California* (413 US 15; 1973) decision overturned Miller's conviction and clarified the obscenity standards articulated by *Roth*. The resulting three-pronged "Miller test" for obscenity requires an assessment of (1) whether the average person, applying contemporary community standards would find that the work, taken as a whole, appeals to prurient interests, (2) whether the work depicts or describes, in a patently offensive

way, sexual conduct specifically defined by the applicable state law, *and* (3) whether the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value (*Miller v California* 1973). The measure “utterly without redeeming social value” was left out of the text of the Miller test.

As these cases show, what constituted obscenity and what constituted a violation of obscenity law went from being ambiguous at best to relatively defined during the Reel era. The *Miller* decision clarified the legal definition of obscenity and created a stable legal groundwork for the production of adult films. This enabled a fragmented collection of persons to begin building an industry.

The (limiting) Role of Technology

By establishing a legal groundwork for the identification of obscenity, the *Roth* decision marked the beginning of the US adult film industry’s Reel era. Under the protection of the ambiguous “community” and given the difficulty in demonstrating a polysemic a text to be “utterly” without any redeeming social value, underground stag films evolved into brief “loops” and full-length sexually-oriented feature films over the course of the Reel era.

The actual consumption of adult film content during these years, however, required reel projection technology, which itself required considerable space and pricey equipment. This had a limiting effect on both the production and consumption of adult films (O’Toole 1999). Wealthier persons may have had access to in-home theatres, by which they may have viewed adult content. For example, Linda Lovelace discusses viewing adult films in the home of Playboy entrepreneur Hugh Hefner (Lovelace 1980). The vast majority of adult film content, however, had to be viewed in public venues. Consequently, adult movie theaters and peep show houses were often located in red-light district areas where community standards were less conservative (Ford 1999; Holliday 1999; Lane III 2000; McNeil and Osborne 2005; O’Toole 1999; Williams 1989).

The key dimensions of obscenity jurisprudence and technology both point to a nebulous, industry-in-the-making bubbling just beneath the surface throughout the adult film industry's Reel era. An industry situated around adult content, including adult film production, was steadily developing, but the influence of these key dimensions, in part, limited independent entities from becoming a cohesive industry throughout the Reel era. In spite of the stigmatized and clandestine nature of this "industry," adult film production itself was changing shape. Films evolved from silent stags to feature length narratives (Williams 1989). Some of the feature length adult films produced during the late portion of the Reel era pierced the mainstream consciousness in a way that adult industry workers and proprietors themselves could not. I will now discuss the content of key adult films produced during the later years of the Reel era.

Content of Late Reel Era Key Adult Films

The content of early Reel era adult film loops and stags generally include elements of striptease and voyeurism, showing hard- and soft-core sex depictions with little to no narrative arch (Williams 1989). Given the ambiguities surrounding obscenity, these films were dangerous to produce, distribute, purchase, and view (O'Toole 1999). During the late 1960s and early 1970s, stags and loops began to give way to actual movies containing both narratives and adult content (O'Toole 1999). It was during this time that the adult film industry made its first significant appearance in the mainstream. Extremely profitable and popular adult films such as *Deep Throat* (1972) rivaled mainstream Hollywood films' ticket sales (Lewis 2000; O'Toole 1999) and fueled the cultural phenomenon of "porno chic" (McNeil and Osborne 2005; O'Toole 1999). The popularity of these films functioned to both attenuate the stigma of adult content in popular culture and draw attention to its presence in general during the early 1970s (Ford 1999; Holliday 1999; Lane III 2000; McNeil and Osborne 2005; O'Toole 1999).

I explored the content of four key adult films from the late Reel era, *Deep Throat* (1972), *Behind the Green Door* (1972), *The Devil in Miss Jones* (1973), and *The Opening*

of *Misty Beethoven* (1975). Although each of these titles is ostensibly a feature film, the content and quality of the narratives vary considerably. These films range, respectively, from a somewhat outlandish and difficult to follow comedy (*Deep Throat*) to an exploration of sexual taboos (*Behind the Green Door*); from a tale of eternal physical and psychological torment (*The Devil in Miss Jones*) to a Pygmalion-like rendition of sexual capital and its effects on social class (*The Opening of Misty Beethoven*). In spite of their substantive variations, each of these films contain elements commonly found in the adult film genre and represent the initial manifestations of two significant patterns concerning content consistency across eras and a decrease in some forms of “extreme” content over time. These films also reflect the symbiotic relationship existing between adult film producers and adult film consumers during the late Reel era.

Each of the four films contains multiple hard core sex depictions, which are presumably the “highlights” of each film. Sex, however, is also woven in to each film’s developing narrative in a variety of additional ways. Sex can be a major component of the plotline. For example, achieving sexual pleasure is the lead woman character’s primary objective in *Deep Throat*, motivating her actions throughout the film. Sex can also function as a backdrop to the narrative, almost like another prop on the set. For example, sex in various forms is occurring all over the plane as the lead man character calmly reads a newspaper during a transatlantic flight in *The Opening of Misty Beethoven*. As subsequent discussions of the Video and Digital/Virtual eras will show, the ubiquitous presence of sex in the Reel era is quite different from the discrete contained sex depictions found in later eras’ films.

None of these films came out of what would constitute a production studio today, although the same man (Gerard Damiano) wrote and directed both *Deep Throat* and *The Devil in Miss Jones*. No visibly apparent STI prevention and/or contraceptive methods were used in any capacity in these films. Individual sex scenes are brief and they often blend into one another (no discrete beginning or end). Each film contains instances of

oral sex, sex amongst multiple partners, and scene-culminating pop shots (visible ejaculation).

Collectively, women talent from this era appear to be somewhat representative of the era's "every woman." A wide range of apparent ages and body types are featured. Women talent are presented (hair, make-up, wardrobe, etc) in a manner that appears consistent with early 1970s mainstream styles. There is no overt evidence of surgical alteration and only one apparent example of pubic hair manicuring. The overwhelming majority of women talent are white.

In addition to containing era-specific generic elements, each film also contains some very unique elements, including some "extreme" sex depictions. These elements are unique and extreme both for the early 1970s and within the context of this film sample. I therefore consider the particularities of each film in greater detail for two specific reasons. First, these films are extremely culturally relevant in the context of "porno chic," a time when adult film content was relatively out in the open. The content of these four films reveal a unique reflection of the relationship existing between adult film producers and consumers during the early 1970s. Second, the content contained in these films operates as a baseline or starting point from which other key adult film content evolves. I argue that, relative to the content of these late Reel era key adult films, "extreme" content in key adult film production has decreased over time. For the sake of simplicity, I now consider the content of *Deep Throat* (1972), *Behind the Green Door* (1972), *The Devil in Miss Jones* (1973), and *The Opening of Misty Beethoven* (1975) in chronological order.

***Deep Throat* (1972):** *Deep Throat* is an outlandish comedy about a woman dissatisfied with sex because she cannot experience orgasm. A doctor's examination reveals that her clitoris is mysteriously located in her throat. Consequently, the doctor's advice is for the woman to perform oral sex on men in order to achieve orgasm. Several sex depictions ensue, and the film culminates with "dams bursting" and "bells ringing" as the woman lead achieves her desired orgasm.

Although this film contains all the generic elements of adult films from the Reel era, *Deep Throat* is itself rather unique. The film functions predominantly as a platform highlighting the lead female talent's capacity to perform fellatio. Boundaries distinguishing the fictitious narrative from the identity of the woman lead are further muddled by the film's opening credits that proclaim Linda Lovelace (the lead woman talent) is starring in the film as "herself." Although it is presumably understood that *Deep Throat* is not a biographical or documentary film, the blurriness existing between Lovelace and her character and the fact that "deep throating" is a rarely seen sex depiction both during the Reel era and within the context of this sample overall render this film rather unique.

Behind the Green Door (1972): Although *Behind the Green Door* is ostensibly a feature film, I categorize it as a "feature-vignette."²³ Feature-vignettes have very thin plot lines couching myriad conceptually-linked sex scenes. In *Behind the Green Door*, a young woman is kidnapped and held captive for the purpose of performing in a live sex show. After she is ministered to by an experienced woman mentor, the main woman character engages in a three-act stage performance in front of an audience of approximately twenty persons. The majority of the film's run time is taken up by the stage performance and the audience's reactionary orgy. The performance ends when the exhausted young woman is carried off stage at the end of the performance by a man in the audience. It is implied that this man, who was present in the beginning of the film, was one of her kidnapers. The film ends with a romantically-depicted sex scene between the young woman and her kidnapper/rescuer/lover.

Although *Behind the Green Door* epitomizes Reel era generic content in a somewhat unique form, there are elements within the overall sex show performance that distinguish it from other films in this era. Specifically, in the second scenario the main woman character has sex with an African American man performer while being held down by several robed women attendants. This specific scenario is unique within the context of the era and within the context of this sample. Men of color are very rarely

featured as talent. Moreover, shown walking onstage with a lurching, stalking gait while costumed in “tribal” face paint and a necklace made of bone/teeth, the feral black man’s tryst with the young white woman is clearly presented as a taboo.

The Devil in Miss Jones (1973): *The Devil in Miss Jones* is loosely based upon Jean Paul Sartre’s play “No Exit” (1944). In the film, unhappy and sexually inexperienced spinster Justine Jones commits suicide. She is subsequently informed that, because she was an anomalous good person in life that must nonetheless now suffer eternal damnation, she will be given the opportunity to engage some behaviors she refrained from while living. Justine chooses to explore her sexuality, and seven discrete sex scenes ensue. At the end of the film, she finds herself in purgatory, transformed. Having engaged in myriad sex acts previously unknown to her, she is now consumed with the need for sexual satisfaction. The irony is that she is forever confined to a room with a man who is completely uninterested both in sex and in her.

Although this film epitomizes generic adult film elements from this era, it contains several unique and significant elements that are important to mention. First, the content of *The Devil in Miss Jones* differentiates it significantly from the rest of the films in the entire sample. The film is a rather gothic exploration of the individual psyche and social, spiritual, and sexual norms that simply happens to couch hard core sex depictions within that project. Even when directly compared to other relatively dramatic films adult films (ie *Café Flesh*, *Chameleons*, *The Fashionistas*) or to other installments of the series (ie *The Devil in Miss Jones 3&4*, *DMJ6*), the gothic horror drama of *The Devil in Miss Jones* stands out as incredibly unique.

The film is also unique because of the sex depictions themselves. *The Devil in Miss Jones* epitomizes the Reel era in generic content, but it also contains additional depictions that are chronological “firsts” in the context of the film sample and others that are unique within the context of the sample. The most significant “firsts” involve an obvious depiction of anal sex and a depiction of vaginal-anal double penetration. Graphic depictions of both acts become fairly common within adult films over time;

however, the first time either act is clearly shown (verses an implied depiction of anal sex in *Deep Throat*, for example) is in *The Devil in Miss Jones*.

The Opening of Misty Beethoven (1975): Like *The Devil in Miss Jones*, *The Opening of Misty Beethoven* is an adult adaptation of a well-known literary work, in this case George Bernard Shaw's "Pygmalion" (1913). Suave Dr. Love endeavors to transform the jaded and passionless "sexual civil service worker" Misty Beethoven into an elite, sexual "it girl." By the end of the film however, the tables have turned. Misty has become the trainer, and Dr. Love has become her subservient. This dynamic seems to only play out in their work relationship, as the final sex scene between Misty and Dr. Love depicts their relationship as (hetero)normatively passionate and romantic.

Generally, the sex depictions in *Misty Beethoven* epitomize content of the Reel era, however the film does contain one depiction that is both extreme for the era and extreme within the context of the entire sample – a depiction of "pegging." During the film's third sex scene, the woman lead character is shown penetrating a man character's anus with a strap-on prosthetic while he penetrates a second woman's vagina. Although three-way sex depictions involving a man and two women are fairly standard fare in the adult films informing this discussion, no other scene in this sample contains depictions similar to those in this scene. This particular depiction destabilizes both adult film sex depiction scripts and presumptions about heteronormative sex behaviors, while simultaneously shoring them up with its uniqueness.

Each late Reel era film (*Deep Throat*, *Behind the Green Door*, *The Devil in Miss Jones*, and *The Opening of Misty Beethoven*) contains elements that are very unique (such as deep throating, pegging, and gothic horror) and very common (such as visible pop shots and the over-presence of white women talent) in the adult film genre. These elements constitute the initial manifestations of two significant patterns concerning 1) content consistency across eras and 2) a decrease in some forms of "extreme" content over time. These films also reflect the symbiotic relationship occurring between adult film producers and adult film consumers during the late Reel era. These patterns,

including the balance between producers and consumers of adult films, will be explored further in Video and Digital/Virtual era films.

Organizing and Activism

On the basis of film content analysis alone, it appears that women were working in adult film production during the Reel era. The production of adult films, however, did not yet occur in a cohesive industry. During the Reel era, adult film production was shaped by a handful of private individuals. Persons like Gerard Damiano and brothers Jim and Artie Mitchell were responsible for producing the era's and industry's most well-known films (Damiano's *Deep Throat* and *The Devil in Miss Jones*; the Mitchells' *Behind the Green Door*). Reels, loops, sexploitation films, and "porno chic" blockbusters were predominantly produced in coastal cities - New York and Miami to the east and San Francisco and Los Angeles to the west (Ford 1999; Holliday 1999; McNeil and Osborne 2005; O'Toole 1999).

Although semblances of production studios were already in the early stages of development and operation, small-scale Reel era producers were fragmented by geography, legality, and stigma. Moreover, as a proper "industry" had yet to take shape, no sizable collective or concentration of adult film industry workers existed during the Reel era. There are no recorded instances of any collective labor negotiations or activism occurring amongst and between adult film producers and/or talent during these years, although certainly persons negotiated various aspects of their creative roles in individual film productions.

* * * * *

The adult film industry was at its most nascent point of development in the Reel era. After decades of clandestine activity, the production of graphic sexual images was given a legal foothold with the *Roth* decision. Regardless of *Roth*, adult film production

was shaped by legal ambiguity, fragmentation, and stigma throughout most of this era. Things changed, however, during the early 1970s.

The *Miller* decision's Miller Test (1973) clarified obscenity and set the stage for adult industry development by providing the legal groundwork for adult film production. Moreover, due directly to a handful of late era key adult films, the consumption of sexually explicit content went from being furtive and stigmatized to visibly "porno chic." The Miller Test and porno chic fostered nascent growth and development; however, limiting factors were still present. Technology continued to limit private access to adult content, and thus the industry's growth. Moreover, the "industry" was still very small at the end of the Reel era, with only a handful of isolated persons involved in adult film production. There is no evidence of these persons organizing around labor at this point, nor is there any evidence of organizing occurring on the behalf of persons working in adult film production. Given the industry's fragmented and overwhelmingly clandestine nature, this is not surprising.

Regardless, adult film production and key adult films pierced the consciousness of the mainstream during the Reel era, and a cohesive industry was in the beginning stages of coalescence by the early 1970s. In the next chapter, I discuss the Video era of adult film production. This era marks massive change, for both the industry and its workers and for wider US society.

CHAPTER 4: The Video Era (1975 – 1994)

During the Video era, the fragmented adult film production of the Reel era coalesced and developed into a cohesive industry. Due in part to both the stigma and the start-up nature of adult film production during this era, a closely knit occupational network developed as the industry grew. Moreover, a series of industry protective practices enacted during this era contributed to the growth and viability of the industry.

In this chapter, I consider the impact that developing technology, jurisprudential regulation, organizing and activism, and the content of key adult films had on the growth of the industry and the expansion of women's workplace incorporation and opportunities for participation. Specifically, the advent of videocassette recorder technology created an unprecedented demand for adult content, while jurisprudential decisions concentrated the industry geographically and further clarified the limits of legal adult film content. The industry did not, however, experience an era of unchecked growth. Opposition from some feminist and conservative political activists attempted to contain, and even eradicate, the developing industry. These attacks, in part, prompted industry insiders to enact a series of industry protective practices as defensive bulwarks.

I also consider the content from a sampling of key adult films produced during the Video era. Industry developments that reflect the dynamic symbiotic relationship between adult film producers and adult film consumers and regulators are revealed in the content of these films. Additionally, film content from the Reel era marked the beginning of two significant patterns concerning 1) content consistency across eras and 2) a decrease in some forms of "extreme" content over time, and the content of Video era key adult films further extends these patterns.

Developing Technology

In 1975, Sony's videocassette recorder technology revolutionized the industry and marked the beginning of the Video era. Rather than engender requisite visits to public

venues where adult reels were shown, it was now possible for relatively “average persons” to view adult films in the privacy of their own homes.

As is the case with any new technology, some years had to pass before the market became saturated. According to Frederick S. Lane III, less than one percent of “all Americans” owned a VCR in 1979 but 87 percent did just one decade later (Lane III 2000: 33). The general population needed time to become aware of and familiar with the VCR, and its initially prohibitively high price needed to decrease. It was during wider society’s process of familiarization with and acquisition of VCR technology during the late 1970s that the “Golden Age” (1975-1983) of adult film production occurred. Coming off the mainstream acceptance high of the “porno chic” phenomenon, adult film *filmmaking* began. According to Jim Holliday (1999), seventy percent of the best adult films ever made were produced during the Golden Age. Big budget, thought-provoking films such as *The Opening of Misty Beethoven* (1976) and *Café Flesh* (1982) reflected the “grit of the east coast.”

While Golden Age films and filmmakers were exploring various themes and genres on the East Coast, the steadily less-expensive VCR was working its way into the homes of truly “average persons.” The demands of these consumers were being met by relatively low budget and quickly produced filler “fluff” from the west coast (Holliday 1999). Films like *New Wave Hookers* (1985) and *Miami Spice II* (1988) couched adult content in mainstream cultural elements, and demand soared. Production and distribution companies opened -and sometimes closed- rapidly as the days of the thoughtful, artistic, and erotic “Golden Age” hard core film waned. VCR technology and the culture’s eventual saturation in it opened the proverbial floodgates for adult film production – there was money to be made in light of this new technology, and several key jurisprudential findings facilitated the emergence of cohesive industry in the West.

Jurisprudential Regulations, Geographic Concentration, and Further Refinement of Obscenity

Jurisprudential regulations had a significant impact on the development of the adult film industry during the Video era. Specifically, the *California v Freeman* decision facilitated the geographic concentration of the adult film industry in Southern California's San Fernando Valley, and a series of decisions established the illegality of all graphic sexual content featuring children under the age of eighteen as talent. In this section, I trace the legal path to these decisions and discuss their impact on adult film industry development.

As the Reel era passed and the adult film production entered its "Golden Age" (1975-1983) (Holliday 1999), the fragmented industry began to concentrate steadily in the west. People currently working in the adult industry and people looking to get started—all persons looking to capitalize on the steadily increasing demand for adult content—eventually headed to Los Angeles, specifically to Los Angeles' San Fernando Valley. Once an endless sea of orange groves, many people have speculated as to why the San Fernando Valley became the absolute epicenter of adult film production during the 1980s. The liberal nature of Los Angeles itself; the Valley's proximity to Hollywood and the mainstream film and music industries; the weather; and the availability of endless, seemingly banal commercial-industrial office spaces have all been tossed around. I contend that these factors, and certainly many others, were auxiliary supports to one key factor in concentrating and developing an adult film industry in the San Fernando Valley: California was the first place in the United States to legalize adult film production.

Although notions of community standards characterized determinations of obscenity, would-be members of corresponding communities often did not agree on what constituted obscenity or its place in the public community sphere. For example, the *Paris Adult Theatre I v Slaton* (413 US 49; 1973) decision found that the exhibition of obscene material in places of public accommodation is not protected by any constitutional doctrine of privacy. In the *City of Renton v Playtime Theatres, Inc* (475 US 41; 1986)

decision, a city ordinance prohibiting theaters showing adult films from locating within 1000 feet of a residential zone, church, park, or school was upheld by the federal court. These exhibition and zoning regulations established fairly straightforward community boundaries for the adult industry, but pandering (solicitation of paid sexual services) laws continued to limit adult film production itself.

In 1983, adult film director and producer Harold Freeman hired five women talent to perform in one of his films. Freeman, who was based in the San Fernando Valley, was then arrested, charged with, and convicted for five counts of pandering. Freeman however had paid these talent for their performances in his film, not for the purpose of his own sexual arousal or gratification. When the court read Freeman's routine appeal, it was evident that the conviction was less about upholding relevant laws and more about limiting porn production (O'Toole 1999). Consequently, the state of California's request for a stay of enforcement was denied by *California v Freeman* (488 US 1311; 1989), reversing Freeman's conviction and effectively "legalizing" adult film production in California. The *Freeman* decision set the stage for unprecedented legal growth and development of an industry centered on that product.

From automobiles to foodstuffs to cosmetics, quality and safety standards monitor the products produced by any industry. During the 1980s, the Miller test for obscenity continued to be the effective quality and safety standards monitor for the developing adult entertainment industry. Further articulation of obscenity and the general legal standards for adult content was necessary, however, in light of an emerging problem: the presence of underage persons as talent in various forms of adult content.

It had been determined by the *Stanley v Georgia* (394 US 557; 1969) decision that simply possessing obscene material was not in of itself illegal. The *New York v Ferber* (458 US 747; 1982) decision, however, refined the *Stanley v Georgia* decision. Paul Ferber, an adult bookstore proprietor, was convicted of violating New York state obscenity laws when he sold material containing graphic sexual images of boys under the age of sixteen. Largely because of the findings in *Stanley v Georgia*, this decision was

appealed and eventually was heard by the US Supreme Court. The court found that material containing graphic sexual images of children under the age of sixteen could be banned without first determining obscenity or violation of obscenity law because 1) it is in the best interest of the state to protect children from sexual exploitation; 2) distribution of graphic sexual images of children constitutes sexual exploitation; 3) the possibility of selling such content provides an economic motive for producing such images; 4) any artistic value that could possibly be found in such depictions is negligible; and 5) because a content-based classification of speech may be accepted (or rejected) on the basis of appropriate generalization that within the confines of the given classification (458 US 747; 1982). Thus, all graphic sexual images of children under the age of sixteen are illegal regardless of obscenity as outlined by the Miller test.

The US Supreme Court thus held the New York court's decision, however it rearticulated the basis for Ferber's conviction – it became about the sexual exploitation of children, rather than obscenity. This decision was significant in that it closed a gaping loophole in the Miller test by which it was possible to feature graphic sexual images of children. Subsequently passed US Code 2251, the Child Protection and Obscenity Enforcement Act (Title 18, Section 2251), formally states that any person involved in the direct or indirect sexual exploitation of children via the production of visual images is committing a punishable offense. US Code 2257 (Title 18, Section 2257) outlines proof of age record keeping requirements, colloquially known as the 2257 Regulations, intended to aid in enforcement of the 2251 Act. Further, it was held in *Osborne v Ohio* (495 US 103; 1990) that a state “may constitutionally proscribe the possession and viewing of child pornography” in spite of obscenity and any possible first amendment protections.

One final clarification tied to the production of “child pornography” and the culpability of adult persons involved therein emerged as a direct result of the case of Nora Kuzma, an underage girl who became one of the adult film industry's most popular performers during the 1980s. With a borrowed birth certificate and a subsequently

acquired legal California identification card “proving” she was twenty-two year old Kristie Nussman, Nora Kuzma became a nude figure model at age fifteen. By sixteen, Kuzma had become one of the most recognized and sought after women talent in the adult film industry – Traci Lords. Kuzma’s true identity and age were revealed in May of 1986, just days after her eighteenth birthday (Ford 1999; Lords 2003; McNeil and Osborne 2005).

According to Kuzma’s autobiography, which she authored under the legally-adopted moniker Traci Elizabeth Lords, authorities had been aware of her case for three years – essentially the entire time she had been working in the adult entertainment industry (Lords 2003). Industry insiders reported being shown photographic documentation of Kuzma’s earliest adult work taken by investigators during courses of questioning (McNeil and Osborne 2005). Authorities were apparently long aware of Kuzma’s deception; however, members of the industry reportedly were not. Upon learning her true age and identity, many members of the adult film industry reported feeling extremely guilty and foolish that they had not made the connection earlier (Canyon 2004; Ford 1999; McNeil and Osborne 2005). A Polaroid photo serendipitously snapped by prolific industry photographer Suze Randall showing Kuzma with her Nussman identification was one of the only pieces of evidence that prevented the industry’s immediate shutdown (McNeil and Osborne 2005).

Regardless of the industry’s misinformation about Kuzma’s age, countless units of what was now known illegal child pornography had to be pulled from producers’ warehouses and destroyed and most persons immediately ceased any dealings in her products. Undercover investigators were able to find one person, Rubin “Ruby” Gottesman of X-Citement Video, who had learned of Kuzma’s true age and would still be willing to sell her films. Gottesman was subsequently convicted of knowingly trafficking child pornography to Hawaii in 1987. His conviction was appealed on the grounds of vague and overbroad wording in present in the Protection of Children Against Sexual Exploitation Act of 1977 (US Code, Title 18, Section 2252). The original conviction was

held by the *United States v X-Citement Video* (513 US 64; 1994) decision, which found that neither the statute used to convict Gottesman nor the statement that under age eighteen (rather than sixteen) constituted underage personage were overbroad and/or unconstitutional (Elias et al 1999).

With the exception of Gottesman's trafficking conviction, not one member of the adult industry was convicted of producing, possessing, or trafficking child pornography in light of the Kuzma/Lords case. In spite of the efforts of the Meese commission-sanctioned child pornography "witch hunts" that occurred in the late 1980s (and the occasional, federally sanctioned and unannounced 2257 records audits that occur today), only one other underage performer has been featured in US adult film industry films. Like Kuzma, Canadian immigrant Alexandra Quinn misrepresented her age with falsified identification (Ford 1999; Melissa Park – interview data). And like Kuzma's films, Quinn's were destroyed immediately upon identification.

The *United States v X-Citement Video* decision's further clarification of what constitutes "child pornography" is significant, and it is important to note that the production of such content does not occur in the US adult film industry (Klein 2006). This does not mean that child pornography does not exist in contemporary culture; it does and, it is a steadily-intensifying problem. According to Marty Klein (2006: 128): "the [US] porn industry neither makes nor distributes erotic material featuring underage performers. The underage material available today is either (1) amateur stuff made by individuals and distributed surreptitiously, or (2) made by foreign producers in Russia, Eastern Europe, and Asia, with no affiliation with [US] businesses." Discussion of the production, consumption, and implications of this type of illegal content is beyond the scope of this project.

In spite of its *uninvolvement* with the production of illegal child pornography, the adult film industry has taken its own steps to identify and prevent the sexual exploitation of children via the production of visual imagery. In 1996, the US adult film industry established the non-profit Association of Cites Advocating for Child Protection

(ASACP), an organization eliminating child pornography and preventing underage persons from viewing adult content online. This organization is funded by many of the most influential production companies in the industry and frequently produces public service announcements featuring some of the industry's most popular talent. Although the ASACP technically began during the Digital/Virtual era, it exemplifies the sort of industry unity and protective practices that began to develop during the Video era.

By the late 1980s, adult film production was legal in the state of California and the permissible limits of adult film content were clearly defined. The industry did not, however, experience unchecked growth. This was due, in part, to emerging tensions between the adult film industry and some feminist and conservative activists, scholars, and politicians. I will now discuss labor organizing and activism occurring in and around the adult film industry during the mid-1980s, around the time of the Kuzma/Lords case. Much of the activism that occurred during the Video era came in the form of conservative and feminist work done in opposition of the industry. Labor organizing, however, began to emerge in the form of industry protective practices initiated by adult film industry business leaders, owners, and producers.

Anti-Pornography Activism and Industry Protective Practices

Fueled by cumulative effects of increasing consumer demand, the protective standards of the Miller test, the increasing ubiquity of videocassette recorder technology, and the legality of porn production in California, a cohesive adult film industry began to develop and flourish during the 1980s. The industry did not, however, experience unchecked growth. An unexpected alliance between radical feminist activists and scholars, political conservatives, and notorious ex-talent Linda Lovelace assembled and rallied against the developing adult film industry, while a collection of industry protective practices initiated by adult film industry business leaders, owners, and producers were developing.

Feminist and Conservative Anti-Pornography Activism

A Most Unlikely Poster-Girl: Linda Susan Boreman was born in New York on January 10, 1949. She would eventually come to be known as Linda Lovelace, star of the in/famous Reel era porno chic film *Deep Throat* (1972). Accounts of her life during the late 1960s and early 1970s are almost universally engaged by anti-pornography activists and scholars.

In 1969, Boreman was recuperating from a near-fatal car accident when she met Chuck Traynor. They married soon after, and Traynor very quickly became Boreman's "suitcase pimp." The derisive industry euphemism "suitcase pimp" refers to a husband or boyfriend acting as a woman talent's assistant, manager, companion, and supervisor. These men usually have little (if any) connection to adult film production and are therefore attempting to cultivate some involvement in the industry by "pimping" their woman partner. Traynor, a brutally aggressive man and textbook suitcase pimp, would proceed to subject Boreman to years of violent sexual servitude. This included forced performance in sexually graphic and extreme loops and reels including "*Dogorama*" (1969; also titled "*Dog Fucker*"), "*Piss Orgy*" (197X, exact date unknown), "*The Fist*" (1972), and "*The Foot*" (1972). Traynor eventually dubbed Boreman "Linda Lovelace" for her role in Gerard Damiano's film *Deep Throat* (1972). This film and Boreman's public image would come to epitomize "porno chic" during the 1970s (Ford 1999; Jameson 2004; Lovelace 1980; Lovelace 1986; McNeil and Osborne 2005; O'Toole 1998; Steinem 1980).

Linda Boreman eventually managed to escape Chuck Traynor, who had become her vigilant and violent captor/manager/husband, in 1973. She went into hiding for several months, but eventually emerged and attempted to cultivate a career in the mainstream film industry. She was offered very little work, none of artistic merit or quality, all requiring some degree of simulated sex and/or nudity. Boreman refused most of these roles. Broke and extremely stigmatized, she eventually married her childhood friend Larry Marchiano and published her own account of her life as Linda Lovelace,

Ordeal (1980) and a follow up *Out of Bondage* (1986). In an effort to garner attention for *Ordeal*, Boreman made a promotional appearance on the Phil Donahue show in 1980. This appearance facilitated her connection with Gloria Steinem and an emerging legion of feminist anti-pornography activists (Lovelace 1980; Lovelace 1986; Steinem 1980).

While Linda Boreman was working to rebuild her life during the mid to late 1970s, many feminist activists and scholars were critiquing sexist and violent imagery found in US culture and media; this included imagery found in some adult content (Strossen 1995). These critiques came in many forms, including writings, on-the-ground activism, and proposed legal changes. For example, notable activists and scholars wrote polemical essays against pornography, highlighting the significant harmful effects they felt it had on women. One such collection of essays, Laura Lederer's edited *Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography* (1980), includes contributions from notables Alice Walker, Andrea Dworkin, Gloria Steinem, Charlotte Bunch, and Audre Lorde, among many others. In another example, the activist/protest collective Women Against Pornography (WAP) was formed in New York in 1979 (Strossen 1995). Linda Boreman became very active with WAP and a prominent spokesperson for the organization via her connection with WAP-supporter Gloria Steinem (Lovelace 1986; Steinem 1980).

The pursuit of pro-censorship, anti-pornography jurisprudential measures became another critical endeavor for many feminist activists and scholars. Attorney Catharine MacKinnon and activist Andrea Dworkin coauthored a city ordinance which stated the existence of pornographic materials violated the civil rights of all women in Minneapolis, Minnesota.²⁴ Public hearings wherein testimony was heard on behalf of the proposed legislation were held, and members of Women Against Pornography, including Linda Boreman, were invited to testify. In December of 1983, Boreman related much of the same information she had published several years earlier in *Ordeal* before the Minneapolis City Council (Edwards 1992; Lovelace 1986; Proceedings of the City Council of the City of Minneapolis 1983: pages 45-58). Much of Boreman's testimony from the Minneapolis Proceedings would reappear a few years later, this time as key

testimony in the *Final Report of the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography* (1986).

Political Conservatives and Feminists Allied against Pornography: Throughout history, there have been instances wherein the goals of feminists have appeared to coincide with the goals of the conservative right. For example, from October, 1975 through January, 1981, residents of Leeds and Bradford in the North of England were terrorized by the Yorkshire Ripper, later identified as Peter Sutcliffe (Walkowitz 1992). Prior to Sutcliffe's apprehension, similar types of social action and demands for reformation came from feminists and conservatives. Feminist activists rallied against pornography, claiming it contributed to the normalization of men's violent sexual behaviors against women. Sexual violence would, in turn, further steer the male psyche toward committing violent acts against women. Conservatives also fingered pornography, stating that the lack of morality and the sexual permissiveness facilitated by adult content were directly responsible for the serial murders. Although their rationales were very different, both groups identified the same culprit (pornography, not the Yorkshire Ripper/Sutcliffe), and both groups demanded its stringent regulation (Walkowitz 1992). Something very similar occurred in the United States with the Meese Commission.

Conservative US President Ronald Reagan announced his intention to study the effects of pornography on society in 1984. It has been speculated that Reagan's true intent was to overturn the findings of 1970's Presidential Commission on Pornography, the findings of which stated that there was no link between sexually explicit material and criminal and/or violent behavior (Califia 1986; Edwards 1992). Attorney General Edwin Meese's assembled an eleven member pornography information task-force in May 1985. Members of the "Meese Commission" were given one year and approximately half a million dollars to evaluate pornography and its effects in the US. Their findings were published in the *Final Report of the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography* (1986; hereafter, *Final Report*).

The Commission's determinations and recommendations relied heavily upon victim and expert written and oral testimony. Individuals who believed that they or someone they knew closely had been physically or psychologically harmed by pornography were invited to testify or submit a written statement recounting their experiences. Excerpts from these data, including testimony from Linda Boreman and Andrea Dworkin, are reprinted in the *Final Report* (1986). The Commission states in the introduction to these testimonies that there is no way to conclusively determine whether or not pornography was responsible for survivors' duress beyond public records. Consequently, only some testimony could be verified; unverifiable testimonies, however, were treated in the same manner as those with records. Thirty total testimonies were heard by the committee over the course of twelve public hearings from June, 1985 through January, 1986 in Washington DC, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, and New York²⁵ (*Final Report* 1986).

In spite of the involvement of many notable persons, the clear ringer of the entire Meese Commission process was the starlet of the new pornographic age, Linda Lovelace (Strossen 1995). By using Boreman's graphic, tragic, and extreme account of a life (*supposedly*) leveled by pornography, radical feminists and conservative politicians were able to have a flesh and bone example of how destructive adult content and its production (*supposedly*) actually were. Reliance on this one example, however, is perilous at best. Boreman's case as it is related in her autobiographical texts and testimony is an undeniably horrific example of extreme physical, mental, and sexual abuse at the hands of one's partner. Details of her personal life notwithstanding, according to Nadine Strossen (1995) the case of Linda Boreman is not representative of the developing adult film industry—not of the Reel era during which it occurred, nor of the Video era during which it was engaged—for the following two reasons. First, by her own account, Boreman was in no way abused or coerced by members of the adult film industry. This was done by her husband, Chuck Traynor. Second, Boreman's account speaks to her experiences in the adult industry only. Assuming she had been abused or coerced by

members of the industry (which she, by her own word, was not), one person's story cannot be used to characterize an entire segment of society. The use of her life story by feminists and conservatives as an exemplar during the Meese Commission was inappropriate, overbroad, manipulative, and exploitative. It is interesting, however, to consider the degree to which each group attempted to capitalize on the celebrity and tragedy of Linda Boreman in order to further their respective causes.

Through an attempt to reframe the boundaries of sexual acceptability, the Meese Commission actually intended to reassert a dominant and archaic, conservative yet somehow pro-feminist, standard of morality on US culture during the 1980s. The dangers that the Commission and the *Final Report* posed to the freedoms of speech and expression were quickly identified. One public statement of those concerns was captured in *The Meese Commission Exposed* (1986). This collective effort of feminists, authors, artists, and activists attempted to articulate the manner in which the pro-censorship commission was actually dangerous to US society. Actor Colleen Dewhurst, speaking on behalf of the Actor's Equity Association, pointed out the commission's lack of testimony from the artistic community, a group notoriously subject to censorship. Author Kurt Vonnegut sarcastically indicated the culture's need to censor literary radicals responsible for impregnating society with conservatively questionable ideas. Well-known feminist activist Betty Friedan articulated the manner in which the report was "a dangerous attempt to use a feminist smokescreen...[as] a weapon against sex discrimination" (*The Meese Commission Exposed* 1986: page 42).

Although the Nora Kuzma/Traci Lords "child pornography" case was not used as evidence in the Meese Commission, her case and Linda Boreman's were invoked regularly in anti-pornography activism. Presumably, women are systematically tortured and abused and children are sexually exploited in the adult film industry. These cases exemplify why conservative and feminist work done in opposition of the industry during the 1980s failed to shut down or even limit it: women were not being systematically abused by the industry, and the industry was not exploiting children. Although

unquestionably tragic, both Boreman's and Kuzma's/Lords' cases point to the wider social problems of partner and child abuse, child neglect, and interpersonal manipulation. These issues are not the "fault" of the adult film industry; they are not actively perpetuated by it nor are they its sole responsibility to repair.

Unfortunately, this type of finger-pointing still occurs. Pamela Paul (2006) claims the "culture of pornography," in which child pornography is included, catapults persons into unbridled sexual compulsivity. Influential feminist author Naomi Wolfe states "pornography – and now internet pornography— [lowers women's] sense of their own value and their actual sexual value" (2003). Rather than developing a more nuanced understanding or analysis of pornography as a product of (Stoller 1991) or participant (along with society, media, individual social actors, etc) in social and cultural shifts towards sexual ambivalence or desensitization, many people continue to simply and uncritically blame porn.

As I have shown, a considerable amount of activism occurring during the Video era came in the form of conservative and feminist work done in opposition to the industry. In this oppositional climate, internal-industry labor organizing began to emerge in the form of what I refer to as industry protective practices initiated by adult film industry business leaders, owners, and producers. In the absence of worker activism, three specific industry protective practices occurring during the Video era mark the beginnings of wage standardization, free speech protection, and health care provisions for industry employees.

Industry Protective Practices and Internal Industry Labor Organizing

The first, most visible, and only national sex workers' rights organization in the United States, COYOTE (Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics), was established in the early 1970s as a prostitutes advocacy group.²⁶ The organization expanded its political scope to include the rights of all sex workers soon after (McElroy 1995; Weitzer 1991).²⁷ COYOTE is currently based in San Francisco, with branches around the United States

operating at varying degrees of in/activity, and has many US and international affiliates (Jenness 1990; McElroy 1995; Prostitutes' Education Network 2008; Weitzer 1991). In spite of its mission to "[work] for the rights of *all sex workers*: strippers, phone operators, prostitutes, and porn actresses of all genders and persuasions... [support] programs to assist sex workers in their choice to change their occupation, [work] to prevent the scapegoating of sex workers for AIDS and other STDs, and [educate] sex workers, their clients and the general public about safe sex,"²⁸ Wendy McElroy (1995) found that not one member or affiliate of COYOTE reported working as adult film talent.²⁹

McElroy offers several insightful speculations as to why adult film talent and COYOTE did not appear to have coincident goals at the end of the Video era. She suggests that because, unlike prostitution, adult film production is legal, women working in the adult film industry do not feel the same urgent need to assert their rights (McElroy 1995: 216). McElroy herself acknowledges the weakness of this explanation, as many women working in other legal sex work occupations, such as exotic dancing, are involved with COYOTE. McElroy also suggests that politically-minded women working within the adult industry may be absorbed by trade organizations, such as the industry's Free Speech Coalition (FSC). Although this may be the case in some instances, it is unlikely that a (then) emerging organization focusing on First and Fourth Amendment rights protection like the FSC could absorb all women with activist inclinations working in the industry (McElroy 1995). Although insightful, McElroy's speculations do not explain a most curious phenomenon: through the Video era, women working in the adult film industry were not participating in collective action with other sex workers (inter-organizing between sex workers of different occupations), nor were they organizing within the adult film industry (intra-organizing amongst adult film industry sex workers).

This does not mean that members of the adult film industry were not beginning to work to protect their rights and improve conditions in the developing workplace during these years. Activism developed differently, and organizations like the Free Speech Coalition exemplify what I call industry protective practices: endeavors initiated by adult

film industry business leaders, owners, and producers that protect both the welfare of workers and the industry itself. I will now discuss three significant industry protective practices developed during the Video era: the evolution of Vivid Entertainment's "Vivid Girl" (studio contract talent); the establishment of an industry trade and lobbying organization, the Free Speech Coalition (FSC); and the foundation of the first adult industry health and welfare service organization, Protecting Adult Welfare (PAW).

"Vivid Girls" and the Beginnings of Labor Standardization: In the late 1970s, porn salesman Fred Hirsch started his own family business – Adult Video Corp, an adult video distribution company. After spending years packaging films with his family, adult content had lost much of its titillating intrigue for Hirsch's son Steve. The younger Hirsch soon began developing ideas to better market and destigmatize Adult Video Corp's product (Keegan 2003).

In 1984, Steve Hirsch left the family business to begin his own endeavor – Vivid Entertainment. Banking on an assumption that the wider social world was ready and willing for greater access to adult content, particularly if it appeared to be less unseemly, Hirsch had two unique ideas for Vivid. First, he glamorized and mainstreamed Vivid's marketing and product packaging, pulling his company's content out of the ubiquitously surreptitious brown wrapper packaging and eventually placing it firmly on the shelves of mainstream retail outlets. Second, he approached the most popular woman talent of the mid-1980s, Ginger Lynn Allen, and offered her an exclusive employment contract with Vivid. In exchange for agreeing to perform solely in Vivid films, Allen was guaranteed six-figure income, script input, and the final say on her onscreen partners. Allen accepted, and her status as the first "Vivid Girl" marked the beginning of porn's adoption of the old Hollywood contract system (Keegan 2003).

Today, Vivid Entertainment is the industry frontrunner in terms of marketing and mainstreaming. The Vivid brand reaches well beyond adult film content with Vivid condoms, snowboards, "how-to" and comic books, and apparel (Keegan 2003; Pulley 2005). Hirsch's studio system continues to characterize Vivid's organizational structure,

employing a baker's dozen of exclusive women talent at any given time.³⁰ Vivid contract talent make anywhere from \$80,000 to \$750,000 annually. Vivid also hires four to five women and men noncontract talent per film (Pulley 2005). Most adult film companies of Vivid's stature and production class operate with this same organizational structure (O'Toole 1999; Pulley 2005), including "Fascination Films."

According to Melissa Park of Fascination Films,³¹ persons under contract are paid via salary installments for their performance in a predetermined number of sex scenes and public appearances at mainstream and industry events. Women talents' contracts usually require performance in (approximately) two out of six scenes in six films annually. In other words, Fascination Films contract talent usually perform in twelve scenes over the course of a year-long contract. These numbers (amount of scenes and wages) would increase in proportion with increased contract duration (ie one year versus two). Wages are also contingent on the popularity of the particular talent. For example, in terms of Fascination Films' employees, reigning porn queen Candace Carmichael's contract commands a much higher salary than does rising starlet Madison Leigh's. The exact nature of the sex depictions women talent will engage in over the course of their contract is also predetermined. For example, Fascination Films' contract talent Tessa Blue will perform anal sex in her scenes, while Candace Carmichael will not. Cassidy Rae will only work with other women talent and one selected man partner: her husband. Talent may book their own supplementary PR and dance events as long as there is no conflict of interest in terms of scheduling, marketing strategy, etc.

Women and men talent who do not have contracts are hired and paid on a per scene basis, according to Park. Standard rates for women talent to perform in a girl-girl scene are \$600-\$800 and \$1000 for a boy-girl. Rates for women talent vary as sex depictions vary. Rates for women talent can also vary, according to Park, on the basis of four specific factors: 1) talent popularity: if the specific woman talent has a significant fan base and her films sell well on the basis of her presence, she can command a higher rate; 2) talent aesthetic: a woman talent's perceived "hotness" and perceived

appropriateness for a particular role will also allow her to command a higher rate; 3) film genre: talent will be paid more for performance in a currently popular genre; and 4) time and complexity: the more time and acting skill that is required for a scene (ie dialogue), the greater the rate. Men talent generally make \$600-\$800 per scene, with far less rate variability and negotiating power. According to Park, all Fascination Films-comparable companies operate in this fairly standardized manner, including Vivid Entertainment.

Steve Hirsch's Vivid-adoption of the Hollywood studio contract system and the predominant industry's subsequent emulation of it exemplify the idea of industry protective practice. First and foremost, the studio contract model provided an organizational structure that other adult film companies could –and did— emulate. This facilitated a measure of organizational unity and industry cohesion amongst adult film production companies. This “safety in numbers” unity contributes to the industry's bulwark against mainstream attacks, a clear industry protective practice. On a more subtle level, adoption of the studio contract model itself may have also offered a level of protection to the industry. Mainstream persons could recognize the organizational structure and perhaps see that *business* was occurring around adult film production. Moreover, although there is a fair amount of variability on a contract to contract basis, the general way in which the adult film industry negotiates contract employment is quite similar to the ways in which other contract-based industries determine compensation.

Equally significant is the direct emergence of wage standardization for adult film industry talent. As more and more companies came to operate under the studio system, business practices became standardized. This functions to protect talent from some measure of exploitation and even provide some persons with a measure of bargaining power. This “right” did not come from worker demand, but from industry leaders.

The Free Speech Coalition: Adult content producers and distributors began rallying around the issue of free speech in the late 1960s and started the first adult trade organization, the Adult Film Association of America (AFAA), in 1970 (Elias et al 1999; McElroy 1995; Schaefer 2004). The AFAA, which awarded creative and artistic awards

for performance and production from 1976 – 1985, also doubled as the industry’s critical trade organization during these days (Elias et al 1999). Although not directly linked, the Free Speech Coalition took up the AFAA’s initiative to protect industry members’ constitutional rights in 1990.

Through the late 1980s, the US Federal government’s conservative administration attacked the adult film industry, targeting both producers and distributors (Confessore 2002). The success of these attacks varied. As I have already discussed, the Reagan administration’s Meese Commission had little appreciable impact, whereas the Bush (senior) administration’s Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS) succeeded in driving seven of the largest adult video distributors out of business (Confessore 2002). In response to these attacks, industry leaders formed the Free Speech Legal Defense Fund (FSLDF) in 1990 to protect the rights of members in all areas of adult entertainment. After legal defense stayed attacks from the Bush administration, the FSLDF decided to select a name more reflective of its broadened role in the adult community. The Free Speech Coalition (FSC) thus was born.³²

The FSC spent most of the liberal Clinton administration developing its organizational structure and even began lobbying the California state legislature in 1997. The uneventful 1990s soon gave way to the FSC’s most significant contribution to protecting free speech: the *Ashcroft v Free Speech Coalition* (535 US 234, 2002) decision of 2002. As is I have already discussed, jurisprudential regulations held that producing, trafficking, and possessing graphic sexual depictions of children under the age of eighteen were prohibited, regardless of demonstrated obscenity, by 1994 (*Stanley v Georgia* 394 US 557, 1969; *New York v Ferber* 458 US 747, 1982; *Osborne v Ohio* 495 US 103, 1990; *United States v X-Citement Video* 513 US 64, 1994). In 1996, the Child Pornography Prevention Act (CPPA) expanded this articulation to include what is commonly referred to as “virtual child pornography.” In addition to prohibiting the involvement of actual children, the CPPA added prohibitions against 1) any visual depictions that are or appear to be of minors engaging in sexually explicit conduct and 2)

sexually explicit content that is advertised or promoted in such a manner that it conveys the impression that children are engaging in sexually explicit conduct (*Ashcroft v Free Speech Coalition* 535 US 234, 2002). In other words, computer-generated and/or graphically-rendered images that depict “virtual children” engaged in sex behavior and/or advertisements for content featuring youthful looking adults (also, “virtual children”) would be prohibited under the CPPA.

When the George W. Bush administration, armed with the provisions of CPPA, fixed its gaze on porn and obscenity, the FSC filed suit. With the *Ashcroft v Free Speech Coalition* (535 US 234) decision of 2002, the Act’s provisions against virtual child pornography were held as overbroad by the US Supreme Court, and prohibitive child pornography standards returned to pre-CPPA standards. As a direct result of the FSC’s efforts, many forms of speech—from Shakespeare’s “Romeo and Juliet” and the academy award winning film “American Beauty” (1999) to Vivid’s “Teen Angel” (2002) and Devil’s Films’ “Teen Tryouts” series—were protected in by what the American Civil Liberties Union described as “the most important victory for the First Amendment in decades.”³³

Industry leaders’ formation of the Free Speech Coalition, its development as an organization, and the serious nature of the work it does exemplify the idea of industry protective practice. The organization has become the adult film industry’s main defense against jurisprudential and legislative targets from the mainstream regulators. In protecting the adult film industry’s rights, the FSC simultaneously protects individual workers’ rights and welfare. At all levels and stages of development, the FSC protects persons’ rights to be directly or indirectly/secondarily involved with adult film production, distribution, and consumption, while simultaneously upholding existing obscenity laws and child pornography prohibitions. In other words, the Free Speech Coalition is partially responsible for protecting the individual rights of Evil Angel proprietor John “Buttman” Stagliano and his wife/partner/former talent Karen Stagliano/“Tricia Deveraux.”³⁴ By protecting their rights, the FSC both protects the

industry and contributes to the protection of all US citizens' first and fourth amendment rights.

Bearson Stubbs and the Beginnings of Adult Industry Health and Welfare:

Although US culture became aware of HIV/AIDS during the mid-1980s, individual members of the developing adult film industry did not seem to alter their sex practices to include STI prevention in any significant or unified way (McNeil and Osborne 2005). As the specter of HIV loomed, stigmatized members of the adult industry had no place they could go to get health and welfare services that met their unique needs, needs that were becoming steadily more apparent as the industry grew.

Bill Margold has worked in adult film production in myriad capacities, both in front of and behind the camera, since 1969 (Meyer 5/12/04). According to Robert Stoller, Margold "can bring [an outsider] closer to the way porn is created than most anyone you will ever meet," (Stoller 1991: 29). Margold founded Protecting Adult Welfare (PAW), a not-for-profit organization that "employed" volunteers only, in the early 1990s (McNeil and Osborne 2005).³⁵ PAW's teddy bear mascot Bearson Stubbs articulates the organizations' commitment to "serve the big picture of improving [the adult film] industry and the quality of the life of the very special people who comprise adult entertainment."³⁶ PAW was the industry's first attempt at providing a central location for adult film industry talent to obtain counseling and outreach services and emergency funding (Meyer 5/12/04). PAW also began providing routine HIV and STI testing as early as 1993 (McNeil and Osborne 2005). Although its health services were absorbed by another internal-adult organization in 1998, PAW and Margold continue to provide counseling and financial services to members of the adult industry.

According to industry insiders, "there are countless people whose lives were transformed, or even literally saved, by the commitment and experiences of the extraordinary people who make up PAW," (Elias et al 1999: 592). PAW is further significant in that its establishment was initiated by a prominent and powerful member of the adult film industry, Bill Margold. Margold's actions, although certainly motivated by

benevolence and concern for talent health and welfare, cannot be considered purely humanitarian from a critical standpoint. Given the real threat of HIV and STIs, talents' level of exposure to modes of sexually transmitted infection, and the public scrutiny felt by the adult film industry, an organization that protected the health and well-being of talent also protected industry viability. Consequently, adult film industry sex workers' first "rights" to healthcare came from above.

The Video era was clearly a time of great development for the adult film industry in terms of technology, jurisprudential articulations, and internal industry activism. As I have discussed, technological developments and obscenity articulations in the early half of the Video era coupled with consumer demand facilitated the growth and development of the adult film industry in Southern California. During this era, we also see the first stages of wage standardization, protected creative freedom, and healthcare for adult film industry workers. Acquisition of these "rights," however, is not a product of worker or community activism. These workplace rights were actually initiated by industry leaders, both for the benefit of workers and as industry protective practices. I will now consider the content of key adult films produced during this era, which adds further dimension to these developments by reflecting the changing symbiotic relationship between adult film industry producers and adult film industry consumers over time. I will now explore this changing symbiotic relationship further through consideration of content from Video era key adult films.

Content of Video Era Key Adult Films

Two significant patterns concerning 1) content consistency and 2) a decrease in some forms of "extreme" content began to emerge in late Reel era key adult films. The content of Video era key adult films reveal similar patterns, showing content consistency across two eras and a decrease in extreme content. The content of these films also reflects the dynamic symbiotic relationship between adult film producers and adult film consumers. Many industry developments and happenings and many demands from

consumers and regulators are reflected in these films' content. I considered the content of thirteen key adult films from the Video era to inform this section:

Debbie Does Dallas (1978)
Insatiable (1980)
Café Flesh (1982)
New Wave Hookers (1985)
The Devil in Miss Jones 3 & 4 (1986) – two part film released simultaneously
Miami Spice II (1988)
The Devil in Mr. Holmes (1988)
House of Dreams (1990)
New Wave Hookers 2 (1991)
The Masseuse (1991)
Chameleons (1992)
Hidden Obsessions (1993)

As was the case in the Reel era, the content of Video era film narratives varies considerably. In this era, we also see some variability in the film format. One film is a typical vignette (*House of Dreams*); two are hybridized feature-vignettes (*Insatiable* and *Hidden Obsessions*); and the remaining ten films are features. The feature film narratives range from sensitive dramas (*The Masseuse*) to raunchy comedies (*Debbie Does Dallas*), from insightful social commentaries on gender and sex in a post-apocalyptic world (*Café Flesh*) to sexist manipulations of gender and sex behaviors (*New Wave Hookers*, *New Wave Hookers 2*).

In addition to presenting a variety of narrative content, video era films also reflect the wide-scale transitions that occurred in the industry during the 1980s and early 1990s. While early Video era films share many commonalities with late Reel era films, dramatic changes in adult film content and production beginning in the mid-1980s through the early 1990s are further evidence of changes that were occurring in the industry as a whole. Significant developments that occurred over the course of the Video era include the emergence of studio productions and changes (and consistencies) in the content depicted and talent featured in the films themselves.

Studio-produced adult films first appear in this sample during the mid-1980s. Starting in 1985, ten of the thirteen films from the Video era sample were produced by

five different adult film production studios. Some studios were clearly more prolific and/or popular than others. For example, the studio VCA produced five of the ten studio films from this era. VCA is followed by Caballero, a company that released two of the ten studio productions. Studio production of adult films is a marked change from the relatively “independent” methods popular during the Reel era and during the first half of the Video era and clearly reflects structural changes occurring in the industry during the 1980s.

No visibly apparent STI prevention and/or contraceptive methods were used in any capacity in these films. Relative to Reel era depictions, Video era sex scenes became longer and often had a discrete beginning and end, particularly towards the later-half of the era. With the exception of the uniquely sensitive and dramatic film *The Masseuse*, each film from this era contains oral sex, anal sex, sex amongst multiple partners, and scene-culminating pop shots. In addition to these generic consistencies, use of sex toys, original music scores, and visual special effects become more common during this era. In some respects, the content of Video era films are less extreme than some of those produced during the Reel era. For example, certain sex depictions (pegging in *The Opening of Misty Beethoven*), types of props (the snake in *The Devil in Miss Jones*), and themes (kidnapping and gang rape in *Behind the Green Door*) are not seen during the Video era.

Women talent’s appearance norms undergo some changes during the Video era. In the early part of the era, women talent’s appearance norms are similar to those present during the late Reel era. A wide range of apparent ages and body types are featured. Woman talent are presented (hair, make-up, wardrobe, etc) in a manner consistent with then-mainstream and fashionable styles. There is no overt evidence of surgical alteration and only one apparent example of pubic hair manicuring. Again, the overwhelming majority of women talent are white.

These appearance norms began to change during the mid-1980s though. The range of ages and body types featured becomes narrower; relatively young and relatively

thin women talent are featured predominantly by the end of the era. Women talent begin to appear more glamorous (hair, make-up, wardrobe, etc) than one might expect to see in daily life. By the end of the era, approximately half the women talent appear to have had breast augmentation surgery, and every women has visibly manicured pubic hair. Women of color are occasionally featured as talent, appearing in approximately half the films made after 1985.

As was seen in the late Reel era films, problematic depictions of women and men of color can be found in Video era films. For example, one scene in *The Devil in Miss Jones 4* depicts “hell” for a white man and a white woman who were racist in life. The man is “damned” to eternal sex with two women of color (one black and one Asian). The woman performs a double-penetration scene with two black men dressed in stereotypically “native” costumes. There are, however, other scenes that are simply straightforward adult film sex depictions featuring women of color as talent without the (overtly) problematic tropes or narratives. For example, in *Debbie Does Dallas*, an Asian woman is featured in a three-way depiction with a white woman and a white man. In *Hidden Obsessions*, a black woman has sex with a white man. Problematic depictions of persons of color mark a consistency between the Reel and Video eras, however the increased presence of women of color as talent mark a change.

In addition to illustrating transitions occurring in adult films’ generic elements, Video era films also shed some light on changes occurring within the adult film industry as a whole. Two new phenomena appearing in the Video era films – the “condensing” of sex and the adoption of many elements of mainstream media forms and productions— are evidence of the industry’s transition from relatively independent small businesses to more organized and institutionalized businesses operating within a larger industry.

Condensing of Sex: As was the case in the Reel era, Video era films each contain multiple hard core sex depictions. The form of these scenes, however, is very different in Video era films. Whereas the sex was relatively ubiquitous in the Reel era –present as a

predominant narrative point, as backdrop or prop, and as a film “highlight”—, sex and sex behaviors begin to become more contained within and confined to “sex scenes” themselves during the Video era. This is exemplified in three specific ways.

First, although sex is still a common focal point of the narratives, it is no longer the only one. For example, the plot of *Miami Spice 2* centers around two women investigators’ endeavors to apprehend a criminal. In *The Masseuse*, a lonely and socially awkward young man becomes preoccupied with a woman masseuse. This is not to suggest that sex-driven narratives are absent—or even underrepresented, in the Video era sample; many films with purely sex-driven plots are also present. For example, *Miami Spice 2* and *The Masseuse* can be juxtaposed with *The Devil in Mr. Holmes*, a film about a gauche man who bargains with the devil for suavity and sexual prowess. Sex and sex-related issues are clearly the predominant driving components of this narrative.

As was stated in the previous section, it was quite common to see sex and sex behaviors seemingly superfluous to the narrative’s overt advancement occurring anywhere and everywhere in the film’s *mise en scène* during the late Reel era, however sex as a backdrop or prop element becomes more occasional in the Video era. This marks the second significant way in which sex depictions are more contained during the Video era. For example, there are no sex depictions and little to no nudity outside the discrete sex scenes in *Debbie Does Dallas*, *Miami Spice 2*, and *The Masseuse*. Sex is seen only during the moments within the film specifically set aside for the sex depiction. This is not to suggest that sex as a prop or background element disappears in the Video era; it is just not as prevalent as it once was. *The Devil in Miss Jones 3* and *4* both contain prop and background sex, as does *Chameleons*. Sex still happens in the background while the main characters are talking, lurking, and doing other non-sexual things that propel the film’s overall narrative.

Finally, the sex scenes in Video era films themselves become more discrete, with a clear beginning and end. This is very different from films in the Reel era. Whereas the sex depictions in Reel era films are closely interwoven with the narrative and its plot

advancement, sex depictions begin to have clear boundaries within the film as a whole. The emerging pattern of narrative-sex-narrative-sex and so on, particularly in the era's later films, functions to further confine and contain sex depictions. It is very clear when sex will be depicted and when plot advancement will occur in, for example, *The Masseuse* and *Chameleons*. Moreover, vignette films that rely strictly on the discrete sex scene begin to emerge during this era. *House of Dreams* is one example.

These three points illustrate a Video era evolution in key adult films' sex scenes. Adult films went from being predominantly driven by ubiquitous sex in various forms to having narratives that were somewhat less sex-driven couching discrete sex scenes. Sex became more contained and confined over the course of the Video era. This effective condensing of sexual content is a clear precursor to the Digital/Virtual era's more clinical and formulaic sex depictions and parallels wider industry development – the industry was concentrating, developing an internal structure, and presumably figuring out its market.

Adoption of Mainstream Media Forms: Adult films begin to adopt many elements of mainstream media forms and productions. Specifically, adult films began to 1) emblemize serial formatting seen in mainstream films and 2) emulate mainstream film and television narratives and scripts.

First, adult film serial productions begin to appear during the Video era. Iterative installments of films with thematic, character, and/or plot similarities can be likened to Hollywood film franchise serials such as Lucasfilm's *Star Wars* and *Indian Jones*. Two examples that emerge in the Video era sample are VCA's *The Devil in Miss Jones* and *New Wave Hookers* series. Each installment of *The Devil in Miss Jones* involves a woman lead's exploration of sexual taboos, most often during a posthumous stay in some version of purgatory. Although this series began in the Reel era, successive installments do not appear until early in the Video era with *The Devil in Miss Jones 2* (1982), a film not contained in this sample. By 1986, this series has become both popular and well-received as evidenced by the simultaneously released two part opus *The Devil in Miss*

Jones 3 & 4. The *New Wave Hookers* series consistently involves a man or men orchestrating women's sexual behaviors via the utilization of hypnotic, new wave music. The first installment of this series appears in 1985, and a successful second installment was released six years later.

Second, adult versions of mainstream film and television scripts and narratives begin to be produced during the Video era. For example, *Miami Spice 2* is a clear take on the popular 1980's television series "Miami Vice" and "Magnum, P.I." There are likely numerous additional films outside the parameters of this sample that exemplify either or both these phenomena. These examples are simply the ones that met the criteria for inclusion into this particular sample.

The content of Video era key adult films points to a complex, multidirectional relationship wherein producers, consumers, and regulators shape the content of adult films. Because each of these films were popular with consumers, it stands to reason that the shift toward culturally recognizable media forms and the changing presentations of women talent and sex depictions may have occurred, in part, in response to market demands. At the same time, producers may have been pirating wider cultural norms in an attempt to tantalize consumers and increase profits. It was likely a little of both. The decrease in "extreme" sex depictions (relative to the Reel era) may have been a tactic by producers to avoid additional regulations or anti-industry activism. Or, this may have also been a response to market demands. Regardless these patterns and women talent's changing appearance norms reveal much about the symbiotic relationship between the adult film industry and consumers and regulators.

* * * * *

The groundwork for a cohesive adult film industry was laid during the first half of the Video era. The advent of videocassette recorder technology in 1975 initiated a significant shift in adult film consumption, from the public to the private sphere, and

demand soared as the era progressed. As videocassette recorder technology saturated the US marketplace, relatively independent “Golden Age” erotic filmmakers were replaced with new “start-up”-type adult film production companies that scrambled to meet consumer demand for quick, glitzy, and familiar adult content. An industry was booming in the San Fernando Valley. Meanwhile, adult film producers continued to find themselves negotiating the legal boundaries of obscenity. The findings of several key Supreme Court cases further refined the Miller Test and, consequently, further clarified the legal space for the production of adult content.

These early Video era developments in technology and jurisprudential articulations around obscenity in conjunction with the legalization of adult film production in California in the late 1980s facilitated the beginnings of adult film industry development during the second half of the Video era. Although legal and social activism from a variety of high-profile entities sought to squelch production and consumption of adult material during the 1980s, these efforts were no match for the adult industry juggernaut growing in Southern California’s San Fernando Valley. Anti-pornography activism did, however, exacerbate the mainstream stigma already attached to adult film sex work, sharpening tensions existing between persons working in adult film production and wider society. Collectively, these patterns of development and tensions helped concentrate and isolate the industry further while highlighting a steadily increasing need for internal-industry alliance and defense. These alliances and defenses manifest as industry protective practices during the Video era. To varying degrees, these practices functioned to stabilize and protect the industry and its workers from occupational hazards and the variably hostile mainstream. Thus, various circumstances shaping the industry’s development eventually necessitated the enactment of industry protective practices. Industry protective practices are one mode by which women’s workplaces incorporation and opportunities for participation are expanded from above.

These shifts are reflected in the content and production of Video era key adult films. Independent film producers crafted exploratory and artistic films containing

graphic depictions of sex during the “Golden Age.” As the adult film industry began to develop and concentrate during the late Video era, emerging production houses produced progressively more formulaic films centered on discrete depictions of sex that often bore significant parallels to mainstream film content and themes. Moreover, the characteristics of sex depictions in key adult films are fairly consistent across Reel and Video eras; and, in some respects, sex depictions become somewhat less extreme in the Video era. There are at least two possible explanations for these patterns. First, they may have something to do with obscenity law and the ever-clarifying line between acceptable and prosecutable content. Adult film producers, whose livelihoods were tied to the business of adult film production, may have avoided extreme content present in the Reel era simply to avoid potential prosecution. Second, these patterns may have something to do with meeting market demands. The quality of adult films declined from relatively artist and thoughtful to quickly produced “killer and filler” money makers during this era (McNeil and Osborne 2005). Adult film producers may have simply refined the path of least resistance to money making in an open, booming market during the late Video era.

In Chapter 5, I discuss these patterns further as adult film industry development moves in to the Digital/Virtual age.

CHAPTER 5: The Digital/Virtual Era (1995 – 2005)

In this chapter, I consider developing technology, significant jurisprudential regulations of obscenity, and organizing and activism during the Digital/Virtual era (1995-ongoing). Although the Digital/Virtual era is currently ongoing, I truncated my analysis at 2005 in order to garner a measure of historical distance between key dimension developments and this analysis.

Technology, which once limited the adult film industry significantly, opened up virtually limitless production and distribution possibilities via the internet during the mid-1990s. Although no changes occurred around obscenity law, key jurisprudential decisions illustrate the ways in which developments in internet technology have made legal definitions of obscenity very ambiguous. Further developments in industry protective practices around healthcare and an informal industry production code helped to further safeguard the industry from the possibilities of prosecution and/or external regulation. As in the Video era, industry protective practices also function to improve workplace conditions.

I also consider the content from a sampling of Video/Digital era key adult films produced between 1995-2005. Two significant patterns concerning 1) content consistency and 2) a decrease in some forms of “extreme” content present in the Reel and Video eras continue into the Digital/Virtual era. Additionally, industry developments that reflect the dynamic symbiotic relationship between adult film producers and adult film consumers are revealed in the content of these films.

The (Virtually Limitless) Role of Technology

Computer technology has been around since the end of World War II, eventually evolving into the first vestiges of a decentralized defense internet emerged during the Cold War era (Klein 2006). During the 1980s, a series of technological advancements began to impart everyday-use practicality on the system. The “World Wide Web project”

was announced in 1991, and three years later Netscape released its first browser (Klein 2006). What is commonly understood as the internet today was thus born, and soon after adult entertainer Danni Ashe sparked the third Digital/Virtual era of adult film production.

During the early/mid-1990s, Ashe, a former exotic dancer turned figure model and softcore talent, participated regularly in internet newsgroups. She soon began to see the internet's potential for marketing and distributing adult content. Encouraged by her online friends and fans, Ashe hired a series of different programmers to build a website designed to market and distribute her products. After a series of unsatisfactory attempts, the "very computer literate" Ashe bought a book about the HTML basics. She proceeded to teach herself website construction and programming while on vacation in the Bahamas and began "Danni's Hard Drive," a softcore collection of model biographies, FAQs, and various other "fun features" centered on a picture-enhanced model- and adult-website directory, soon after. Ashe's website grossed over 2.5 million dollars in 1997 and 6.5 million in 2001 (Lane III 2000; PBS 2002).

"Danni's Hard Drive" was the first website of its kind, and Ashe is commonly credited with presenting consumers an even more private way to access adult material. The subsequent of adult content into the virtual world has caused some concern around issues of obscenity and sexuality. Because the stipulations of Miller Test (1973) still stand and what constitutes an online "community" is somewhat vague, obscenity is even more difficult to identify. Moreover, Zabet Patterson (2004) discusses anxieties surrounding the sexual space of "cyberporn" and computer corporeality, or "liveness," wherein the "body" of the computer replaces the body of another person. Regardless of these anxieties, the internet is now one of the predominant modes by which persons access adult material. Every successful and up-and-coming company and talent currently has a presence on the internet.

Jurisprudential Regulations of Obscenity

In 1995, “Danni’s Hard Drive” provided the adult industry with a model by which internet technology could be used to situate the distribution and consumption of adult content in a virtual space. This complicated the three-part Miller Test’s “community standards” component – what constituted a “community” and that increasingly amorphous community’s subsequent identification of obscenity became much more difficult. Regardless of Digital/Virtual complications, no changes have been made to the legal guidelines for obscenity developed during the Reel era and set forth by the Miller test. Moreover, as I have discussed, aside from adjustments to the age minimum (*United States v X-Citement Video* 513 US 64, 1994), efforts to further extend child pornography restrictions have failed (for example, the *Ashcroft v Free Speech Coalition* 535 US 234, 2002 decision).

Two notable clarifications regarding obscenity occurred during the Digital/Virtual era however. First, the *Denver Area Educational Telecommunications Consortium, Inc., et al v Federal Communications Commission et al.* (518 US 727, 1996) decision held that “patently offensive” programming cannot be shown on public access television channels. Second, the *Reno v. American Civil Liberties Union* (521 U.S. 844, 1997) decision limited overbroad and vague provisions of “anti-indecency” included in 1996’s Communications Decency Act (CDA). Put simply, expression that is indecent, but not obscene, is protected under the First Amendment. Although both these decisions endeavor to clarify obscenity in specific instances, it is clear that obscenity has become increasingly amorphous and complex in the Digital/Virtual era, and much of the ambiguity surrounding obscenity centers on language and notions of community. Various manifestations of the complexity of obscenity in the Digital/Virtual era are illustrated by the following cases involving adult film producers Adam Glasser of Seymore, Inc. and Rob Zicari and Janet Romano of Extreme Associates.

Adam Glasser is an adult film producer known also by the pseudonym “Seymore Butts.” In 1999, Glasser’s production company, Seymore Inc, produced a gonzo film

entitled “Tampa Tushy Fest, Part 1.” In the film’s final scene, two women talent engage in a graphic sex depiction that involves vaginal fisting, anal fisting, double vaginal fisting, and double penetrative (anal/vaginal) fisting.³⁷ Apparently aware of the potentially controversial nature of this film, Glasser cut and released two versions of “Tampa Tushy Fest,” one with the fisting scene included and one without. Not surprisingly, Glasser immediately began receiving criticism from industry insiders believing the extreme scene would draw negative attention to the industry, putting everyone at risk for obscenity investigation. *AVN* even refused to review the film due to concerns over the fisting scene (Kernes 2002). Regardless, the questionable scene won the AVN award for Best All-Girl Sex Scene – Video in 2000. (*AVNG* 2005; Breslin 2001; PBS 2002)

On March 16, 2001, Glasser and his mother Lila, then employed as the secretary of Seymore, Inc., were charged with two counts of obscenity by the state of California (Breslin 2001; PBS 2002). According to criminal defense attorney and ACLU Southern California Board of Directors member Jeffrey Douglas, the charges against “Tampa Tushy Fest” were potential indicators of an emerging campaign to “crack down” on porn production (Breslin 2001). According to Douglas, through targeting more extreme content, prosecutors and LAPD vice presumably hoped to develop an obscenity precedent that would allow them to target more prolific and visible adult production companies (Breslin 2001; PBS 2002). Because of California and online consumer communities (Breslin 2001), the impending witch-hunt speculated by Douglas did not materialized. All charges against Glasser, his mother, and Seymore, Inc. were dismissed in March of 2002, rendering “Tampa Tushy Fest” essentially “bust-proof” in California and on the internet (Kernes 2002).

In February 7, 2002, PBS aired a Frontline investigation entitled “American Porn,” which took an in-depth look at some of the US adult film industry and at some amateur US porn production. A small fringe production company, Extreme Associates, and its owner/operators Rob Zicari (also known as “Rob Black”) and Janet Romano (also

known as “Lizzie Borden”) were featured prominently. Janet was shown filming some non-sexually explicit scenes for the Extreme Associates’ film “Forced Entry,” which she based on Los Angeles’ “Nightstalker” serial mutilations and murders. The scenes were so disturbing to the PBS film crew that they filmed themselves leaving in hasty disgust (Gray 2003; PBS 2002).

Although it would later be revealed that Extreme Associates had already been under obscenity investigation for a minimum of one year, footage from PBS included in “American Porn” appeared to be the final straw (Gray 2003). A federal grand jury indicted Zicari and Romano on ten obscenity-related counts against five Extreme Associates’ films, including “Forced Entry,” in August, 2003. Other films included in the indictment contained scenes involving consumption of “cocktails” consisting of semen from multiple men, fictional fathers having sex with fictional teenaged daughters, and scenes that incorporated Catholic imagery and a depiction of Osama Bin Ladin (Gray 2003). The charges presented in the *United States v Extreme Associates, Inc., Robert Zicari, and Janet Romano* (criminal no. 03-0203) were however dismissed on January 20, 2005. This dismissal decision was subsequently reversed in appeal during December, 2005 due to the notion that the privacy-protected zone of the home (the grounds by which the charges were initially dropped) could not be extended into a “virtual” internet-based zone. Although Zicari and Romano eventually pleaded guilty to all charges before their case had been heard again in March, 2009³⁸ (Kernes 2009), the impossibility of determining obscenity is made clear by the oscillations in the Extreme Associates-related legal proceedings.

Both the Glasser/Seymore, Inc. and Zicari and Romano/Extreme Associates indictments illustrate the complexity of obscenity in the Digital/Virtual era. In Glasser’s case, the relevance of reshaped and redefined “community standards” is significant. Although graphic depiction fisting behavior is uncommon in US adult film production, it was shown that a (virtual) community was seeking this content. People were buying this

film. Consequently, it was determined very quickly that “Tampa Tushy Fest” was not obscene by the standards of the Miller Test.

Glasser’s case was far more straightforward than the Zicari/Romano case. The Extreme Associates films in question showed graphic depictions of extreme sex behavior couched in US cultural hot buttons and taboos including religion, incest, terrorism, and rape. This combination –extreme sex coupled with cultural taboos— clearly placed Extreme Associates’ content in a different category than “Tampa Tushy Fest.” In the end, however, both cases point to the complexity of obscenity under existing law in the Digital/Virtual era. These cases also point to the emergence of an industry protective practice, the informal production code colloquially known as the “Cambria List.”

Industry Protective Practices and the Absence of Labor Organizing and Activism

As was the case in the Reel and Video eras, we seen an absence of worker activism in the adult film industry. Moreover, as was the case in the Video era, we see several examples of leader-initiated industry protective practices that function to protect both workers and the industry itself to varying degrees. In this section, I discuss the ways in which worker rights’ are further protected by industry protective practices surrounding occupational health and welfare services and informal production codes. I also discuss a new dimension: the predominant modes by which women workers enter the adult film industry. I assert that two predominant modes of entry, the traditional talent route and the adult industry network, contribute significantly to the absence of adult industry worker activism.

Industry Protective Practices

As was the case in the Video era, adult film industry leaders developed industry protective practices as need presented. In this section I discuss the two major industry protective practices the developed during the Digital/Virtual era: the foundation of the first centralized occupational health care provider, Adult Industry Medical (AIM); and

the development of the industry's informal production code, colloquially known as the "Cambria List."

AIM for Occupational Health: As early as 1993, industry insiders began working to protect talent from the threat of STI and HIV infection through Protecting Adult Welfare (PAW). Although the industry was aware of the threat sexually transmitted infections posed to talent and presenting current proof of STI/HIV status was becoming relatively routine, an organization dealing with sexual health issues as they manifested for adult industry talent specifically did not exist. Then, in 1998, veteran man performer Marc Wallace falsified test results stating he was HIV-negative and performed condomless in several sex scenes. Several women talent who had worked with Wallace were later determined to be HIV-positive. As a result, the Free Speech Coalition (FSC) initiated establishment of the non-profit health care organization Adult Industry Medical (AIM) (Elias et al 1999; Kernes 2007; McNeil and Osborne 2005; Strauss 2008; Tannen 2004).

Initially, AIM functioned as a HIV/STI testing reminder service for adult industry talent; however, talents' unique physical, social, and psychological needs quickly initiated a proliferation of services. AIM soon offered in-house HIV and STI testing, the cost for which is split by talent and producers (Tannen 2004); counseling services; psychiatric assessment; drug and alcohol abuse intervention; reproductive health services; and various educational workshops (Elias et al 1999; Tannen 2004). Currently, AIM's mission includes the provision of care services for the "physical and emotional needs of sex workers and the people who work in the adult entertainment industry... [providing] health care for the body, mind, emotion, and spirit."³⁹

In addition to providing myriad services for adult film industry talent, AIM also maintains a database that allows producers to confirm talent compliance with the industry's HIV/STI testing regime, which mandates documentation of negative STI and HIV status every twenty-eight days (Elias et al 1999). According to AIM's executive director Sharon Mitchell, herself former adult film talent and a recovering heroin addict,

there is a 98% compliance rate with this mandate amongst current industry talent (Tannen 2004). Put simply, talent cannot –and do not— work in the adult film industry without documentation of negative HIV/STI status from AIM.

AIM’s testing protocols, which include providing test results within 24 hours, have been acknowledged by the Center for Disease Control (Elias et al 1999) and lauded by HIV/AIDS-related public health organizations in Los Angeles (Tannen 2004) for good reason – they are extremely effective. For example, when man talent Darren James tested positive for HIV in 2004, AIM was able to quarantine all other talent who had worked with him during the virus’s undetectable period. Although three women were infected with HIV, these women had all been put on quarantine by AIM (Tannen 2004). The potential outbreak did not spread past James’ initial undetectable period due directly to the foundation’s industry-mandated testing protocol.

AIM epitomizes an industry protective practice as the organization, which was started by industry leaders, contributes to the sustained viability of both talent and the adult film industry as a whole. It provides particular services in a manner perfectly tailored for its target population. Moreover, the diversity of services provided in convenient centralized locations (AIM has two facilities, both located in the San Fernando Valley) encourage compliance and help prevent test results falsification. While the institutionalization of these services clearly benefit talent, they also minimize potential public health mandates or scrutiny. AIM’s internal health regulation helps prevent external-industry involvement, which clearly benefits the industry itself.

The Adult Film Industry’s (Informal) Production Code – The Cambria List: First amendment attorney Paul J. Cambria has argued several cases before the US Supreme Court and has represented many controversial public figures including musicians DMX and Marilyn Manson and Hustler magazine mogul/publisher Larry Flynt. According to Larry Flynt, Cambria is “probably the best obscenity lawyer in America,” (Calvert and Richards 2004). As I have previously discussed, the adult film industry was under intense scrutiny during the early 2000s’ George W. Bush administration. Proposed

unconstitutional acts and obscenity indictments put members of the industry on high alert, particularly those with high occupational stakes in the business and their legal counsel.

During this period of high anxiety, industry leaders from VCA, Vivid Entertainment, Hustler, and Video Team caucused with Paul Cambria to discuss strategies for dealing with the conservative political and social climate. One tactic was the generation of a list production and marketing guidelines. Based on Cambria's experience and industry leaders' input, the twenty-five "Box Cover and Movie Production Guidelines" itemizes depictions most commonly used in obscenity indictments. Made public in January of 2001, this informal production code became colloquially known throughout the adult industry as the "Cambria List" (Calvert and Richards 2004; Cromer 2001). Among other acts, the Cambria List suggests producers avoid sex depictions involving fisting, bi-sex, wax dripping, male/male penetration, transsexuals, incest topics, forced sex and rape, and depictions involving black men and white women. Moreover, the Cambria List encourages producers to avoid using still photos that "depict any unhappiness or pain" (Calvert and Richards 2004).

On the basis of this sampling of acts-to-be-avoided alone, it is obvious that obscenity is a problematic and subjective attribution that is closely connected to deep-seeded racism, ideas of sexual normativity, and heterosexism in US culture. Presumably, one way for porn producers to avoid legal trouble is to avoid sex depictions involving historically marginalized queer and black persons, interracial sex couplings, and depictions of sexual abnormativity. Although the Cambria List was greeted with varying degrees of gratitude and skepticism (Cromer 2001), it is very interesting to note that the previously discussed Glasser/Seymore, Inc. and Zicari and Romano/Extreme Associates cases both involved depictions included in the Cambria List.

The Cambria List is clearly an example of an industry protective practice. It was initiated by industry leaders and obviously contributes to their sustained occupational viability. Moreover, similar to the Free Speech Coalition, the Cambria List protects

individual workers' rights by functioning as a bulwark against regulators. Regardless of the degree to which producers adhered to the Cambria List, its existence offers a measure of (symbolic) industry standardization and unity. This strengthens the industry's social network, which I will now discuss as a contributing factor in the absence of worker activism.

Working in the Adult Film Industry Network and the Absence of Worker Activism

Regardless of intent, industry protective practices facilitate some occupational rights for adult film industry workers. Industry protective such as those I have discussed are not present in other sex work occupations, much less in those sex work occupations where some labor organizing has occurred.⁴⁰ It stands to reason then that the presence and results of industry protective practices may be at least partially responsible for the lack of labor organizing and activism present in the adult film industry. I propose that the adult film industry's tightly integrated social network is also partially responsible for the lack of labor organizing. In this section, I discuss the two predominant routes by which women enter the adult film industry workforce—the talent route and the network route—and the effects these modes of entry have on the industry's network.

New Industry, New Jobs: As I have already discussed, most women worked in front of the camera and production was largely controlled by men during the days of porno chic and the Golden Age. The 1980s marked a significant change in adult film production, however, including women's work therein. The demand for adult content was high as producers began to settle in Southern California during the 1980s and a cohesive industry began to develop.

As small businesses proliferated, women found new opportunity for work within the developing industry. Case in point: review of the production credits and IMDB listings for each of the key adult films in the Reel era show women working in make-up, music, and costume design.⁴¹ Production credits and IMDB listings for Video era films reveal women working in make-up, music, and costume design and as script-writers,

producers, co-owners, and directors. By the Digital/Virtual era, women work as predominant producers and CEOs, as well as at all other occupational levels showing women's steady saturation of behind the scenes occupations in adult film production.

In any developing industry, occupational opportunity becomes available as jobs become available. As the adult film industry emerged in the 1980s, two relatively unique modes of entry developed starting: via the film industry network and as talent. Although it is unreasonable to suggest that women only enter/ed the industry as new talent or through social networking, these routes appear to be the predominant modes by which they do. These modes of entry contribute to the industry's tight social network and lack of labor organizing.

Mode of Entry – Network: Network entry into the adult film industry refers to persons who either obtain their position through a personal connection or are currently in the industry and use their connections to change occupations. Lila Glasser of Seymore, Inc. epitomizes this mode of entry, as does Marci Hirsch of Vivid Entertainment. Glasser, as I have discussed, works for her son Adam. Hirsch, sister of the previously mentioned Steve Hirsch, is the Vice President of Production at Vivid Entertainment. During my time observing at "Fascination Films" (see Part III), seven out of twelve women office staff self-reported network route entry into the industry.

Additionally, some women who had once worked in front of the camera moved behind the scenes, picking up various new occupations within the industry via their network connections. Sharon Mitchell of AIM is an example of one such woman, as is Evil Angel's Karen Stagliano/"Tricia Deveraux." Former talent Stacy Valentine and talent turned industry make-up artist Shelby Stevens opened Exotic Star Models with production veteran September Dawn in 2004 (*AVN* 8/31/04). Fascination Films' woman contract talent Candace Carmichael was making a successful transition to writing and directing during my observations.

Women already connected to the adult film industry network are in a unique position - the industry and persons of power are already connected to them. Steve

Hirsch, for example, is already invested in protecting the rights of Vivid's Vice President of Production as she is his own sister. As my discussion of Fascination Films in Part Three will show, close connections such as these exist at every level of the adult film production industry. Protecting connected women's occupational rights is both an investment in the industry and an investment in the kin network-type structure that has developed since the 1980s. In turn, this built in protection may contribute to women's refrain from organizing.

Mode of Entry – Talent: As the industry boomed in the 1980s, the demand for women (and men) talent grew as well. Adult industry "talent agencies" began opening in the 1980s to facilitate connections between production companies and new talent (CITE). Entering the adult film industry as talent does not seem to offer the same longevity or stability entering the career via the network does. For example, according to Sharon Mitchell, women talent usually work for six months to three years and then leave the industry (Calvert and Richards 2006). During my time observing at "Fascination Films" (see Part III), none of the women office or warehouse workers had entered the industry as talent.

Today, the talent route is still the predominant mode of entry for all persons, women and men, not otherwise connected to the industry's social network. According to the *XBiz* "Directory" (January, 2007), there are sixty-two talent agencies currently operating in Southern California's San Fernando Valley. Women talent are in particularly high demand. Of these sixty-two agencies, none represent men only and those that represent women and men overwhelmingly feature women. For example, the agency LA Direct Models represented one hundred and ten women and only twenty-two men in March, 2007.⁴²

Although many women who enter the industry as talent only may eventually make network connections that contribute to career longevity such as Shelby Stevens and Candace Carmichael have, most do not. Most women talent work as independent contract employees throughout the brief time they have in the industry. The brevity and

disconnected, incongruous nature of these women's occupational positions may contribute to their refrain from organizing.

Clearly the Digital/Virtual Era was a time of intense development of the adult film industry. In spite of intense scrutiny from segments of wider society, evidence of large scale worker dissatisfaction is absent while evidence of top-down industry and worker rights' protections are. The very structure of the industry itself has contributed significantly to this. I will now consider the content of key adult films produced during this era, which adds further dimension to these developments.

Content of Digital/Virtual Era Key Adult Films

In this section, I consider the content from a sampling of Video/Digital era key adult films produced between 1995-2005. Two significant patterns concerning 1) content consistency and 2) a decrease in some forms of "extreme" content present in the Reel and Video eras continue into the Digital/Virtual era. Additionally, the dynamic symbiotic relationship between adult film producers and adult film consumers surrounding condom use in adult films and continued mainstreaming are revealed in the content of these films. I considered the content of nine key adult films from this era:

Latex (1995)
Shock (1996)
Zazel (1997)
New Wave Hookers 5 (1997)
The Devil in Miss Jones 6 (1999)
Dream Quest (2000)
Island Fever (2001)
The Fashionistas (2003)
Pirates (2005)

As was the case in both the Reel and Video eras, the content of Digital/Virtual era film narratives varies considerably. Two of the Digital/Virtual era films are standard vignettes (*Zazel* and *Island Fever*), and the remaining seven are features. The feature film narratives range from campy tales of good pirates battling bad pirates on the high seas

(*Pirates*) and fantasy quests to reclaim passion and romance for the “real” world (*Dream Quest*) to complex explorations of erotic tensions and power differentials existing between and amongst women and men (*The Fashionistas*).

There were no dramatic shifts in the form of key adult film from the Video to the Digital/Virtual era. The overwhelming majority of films are features, and the sex scenes remain discrete and confined to the now seemingly standard narrative-sex-narrative-sex-etc pattern. In addition to vaginal penetrative sex, oral sex, anal sex, sex amongst multiple partners, and scene-culminating pop shots are common. The use of sex toys, original music scores, and visual special effects are also common in Digital/Virtual era films. Sex scenes in the Digital/Virtual era do become somewhat formulaic in that most scenes contain depictions of commonly seen sex acts. Studio produced films prevail, and some film serials from the Reel and Video eras have installments in the Digital/Virtual era as well.

Women talent’s appearance norms undergo an intensification of the changes that occurred during the second half of the Video era. Young, thin women talent who have been elaborately costumed and made-up predominate. The overwhelming majority of the women talent have had breast augmentation surgery, and every women has visibly manicured pubic hair.

Women of color are commonly featured as talent during this era. For example, both *Shock* and *Dream Quest* feature Asian women in supporting roles. Latina women play major and supporting roles in *Pirates*. An Asian woman is featured as the predominant star in the vignette film *Island Fever*. Although all but one film from this era (*DMJ6*) features persons of color in straightforward adult film sex depictions without (overtly) problematic tropes or narratives, problematic depictions of persons of color are still present. Such depictions mark a consistency amongst the three eras.

For example, in *New Wave Hookers 5* a “mad scientist”-type character has a device he can use to project images of fantasy/imagined scenarios. At one point, the scientist is imagining a scenario that is clearly intended to upset his two women

assistants: the two women are involved in a tryst with a black man costumed in stereotypically “native” garb. The women featured in this imagine scene are watching the scientist’s projection alongside him and are clearly upset by it. One woman even attempts to destroy the device in her anger. Similar to previous discussions of scenes from *Behind the Green Door* and *The Devil in Miss Jones 4*, black men’s sexuality is presented as both dangerous and savage. Moreover, sex between black men and white women is presented as taboo and, in this case, demeaning and upsetting to white women.

The Digital/Virtual era films also reflect some changes occurring in both the industry and in wider society during the mid-1990s through the early 2000s. Significant developments that occurred over the course of the Digital/Virtual era include the visible use of condoms during penetrative sex and further indicators of industry mainstreaming. ***Condom Use:*** Unlike films from the Reel and Video era samples, visibly apparent STI prevention and/or contraceptive methods are used during the Digital/Virtual era. Condoms are first seen in this film sample in 1996 with the film *Shock*. Although condoms are not used in every scene, their presence in a big-budget serial film from a major production studio (VCA) marks a significant turning point in adult film content. After *Shock*, condoms are used (on average) in approximately half this sample’s penetrative sex scenes. The (lack of) condom use seen in key adult films, particularly from the Digital/Virtual era, alludes to tensions existing between the business of adult film production and talent occupational safety.

As I have discussed, industry insiders began working to protect talent from the threat of STI/HIV infection as early as 1993 and formally in 1998. Condom use in adult films, however, is a tricky wicket. On one hand, the health and safety of talent are major concerns, and condom use in penetrative sex scenes is clearly a safer practice than occasional or none. Dean Ryan of Fascination Films stated the reason for the company’s mandate was because “[Fascination Films has] the highest regard for the health and well-being of talent,” (citation unavailable without revealing sources). On the others hand, the *business* of adult film production is affected by condom use. It has been reported that

sales decline when condoms are in place. For example, the production company Video Team was reportedly “getting killed in the marketplace” because of condom use, but as soon as they dropped their condom-only policy, sales increased markedly (Ross 2004). Reportedly, the decline in sales occurs because condom use destroys the element of fantasy consumers look for in popular adult films (Kernes 2007). “I don’t think fans want to see condoms on film because [they] are coming to see fantasy,” said Jules Jordan of Jules Jordan Video, a company with a strict no-condom policy, “and condoms are not usually part of that fantasy,” (Strauss 2008).

Finding a balance between protecting talent –the persons who endure the vast majority of health risks associated with adult film production— and maintaining the industry’s viability has proven to be challenging. The presence of condoms in the key adult films included in this sample speaks to these challenges, particularly during the Digital/Virtual era.

Continued Mainstreaming: As was the case in the Video era, iterative adult film series and adult versions of mainstream narratives are present in Digital/Virtual era films. VCA continued its *Devil in Miss Jones* and *New Wave Hookers* series and created a new original two-part film serial with *Latex* and *Shock*. The Digital Playground film *Pirates* (2005) is a clear take on the typical pirate/high-seas film and may very well have been the company’s reaction to Disney’s then-emerging *Pirates of the Caribbean* franchise.

There are two additional indicators of industry mainstreaming that are directly linked to films in the Digital/Virtual sample. First, Evil Angel’s *The Fashionistas* (2003) was adapted into a Las Vegas show in October, 2004. Although the show closed in February, 2008 after a three and a half year run, the musical/dance performance received many positive reviews from several local Las Vegas publications and was named one of Las Vegas’ top ten shows of 2004 by the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. Second, Digital Playground released an R-rated version of *Pirates* (2005) during the summer months of 2006. The film is cheerfully lauded in myriad on-line reviews and is currently available through mainstream outlets such as Amazon.com and Blockbuster video.

These examples of mainstreaming are very unique and significant. Some adult films, particularly from the late-Reel and early Video eras, have become fixtures in popular culture because of their campy quality and/or some form of scandal surrounding them. The films *Debbie Does Dallas* (1978) and *Deep Throat* (1972) are classic examples of this. Moreover, some industry insiders have themselves become known in the mainstream for various reasons. The names Larry Flynt, John Holmes, Traci Lords, and Jenna Jameson have been in the mainstream press for myriad reasons during decades recently passed. Public awareness of adult films and personalities is an indicator that the world of adult is steadily folding into the mainstream.

Instances of mainstreaming that emerge from Digital/Virtual era films are somewhat different though. In these cases such as *The Fashionistas*' Las Vegas adaptation and the R-rated cut of *Pirates*, adult content was directly and seamlessly translated into institutionalized mainstream outlets in the absence of scandal, crime, or even celebrity. By lacking, for example, the talent spousal abuse and cinema landmark mystique of *Deep Throat*, the underage scandal of Nora Kuzma/Traci Lords, or the celebrity fascination associated with free-speech crusader Larry Flynt, prolific talent John Holmes, or "world's biggest porn star" Jenna Jameson (Grigoriadis 2004), *The Fashionistas* and *Pirates* represent a new level of adult industry mainstreaming that is apparently seamless.

* * * * *

During the Digital/Virtual Era, obscenity became even more difficult to identify, specifically because of preexisting legal standards and developing technology. One stipulation of the three-pronged Miller Test (1973) tasks "the average person, applying contemporary community standards" with identifying obscenity. What constitutes "average" and "community," however, is completely amorphous in an online world. A handful of geographically-fragmented consumers may constitute a community, and a community of consumers may show their support of a product in purchasing it. On these

grounds, technology complicated *Miller's* definition of obscenity significantly. Examples such as the Adam Glasser/Seymore Inc. and the Zicari and Romano/Extreme Associates cases illustrate these complications and ambiguities.

Industry protective practices continue to protect both workers and the industry itself. Practices such as the development of the Cambria List and the establishment of a centralized, mandatory HIV/STI testing system show industry negotiation of tensions between itself and mainstream regulators. By staying well below the radar of possible obscenity or health regulation, industry insiders protect both the viability of the industry itself and the well-being of industry employees. This active negotiation is particularly interesting when considered in conjunction with the steady mainstreaming of the adult film industry.

The industry appears to be mainstreaming steadily, and in some instances seamlessly, during the Digital/Virtual Era. Moreover, the content of the sex depictions themselves reflect little overall change from the Video era. Patterns around content consistency and a decrease in some forms of “extreme” content are therefore present across each era Reel, Video, and Digital/Virtual.

The patterns of mainstreaming coupled with content consistency point to changes in attitudes about sex, sex representation, and adult content itself in wider society. As the adult film industry holds relatively steady, the wider world is in flux. Two subtly different hypothetical explanations of this relationship may shed some light on this phenomenon. First, wider society may be changing in response to the constant and consistent presence of porn. After decades of keeping adult film content and the adult film industry a socially and culturally significant *secret*, society may be moving in the direction of openly accepting the industry and its products. Second, society may be in the process of a wider evolution in terms of sex and sexuality. This wider sexual evolution may be fostering some common ground between wider society and the adult film industry. Although consideration of these possibilities is beyond the scope of this project, they are very interesting puzzles that warrant further scholarly attention.

As was the case in both the Reel and Video eras, there is no evidence of bottom-up worker organizing occurring in the adult film industry. The worker-beneficial effects of industry protective practices partially explain the absence of activism. Worker incorporation and opportunities for participation come from above via leader-initiated industry protective practices. Workers do not feel compelled to organize around occupational incorporation and opportunities for participation that they have already been granted. The industry's social network also contributes to the refrain from worker organizing. As the industry developed, so did a tightly interconnected occupational network. Because of the stigmatized nature of adult film production and the rapid growth of the industry, this tightly interconnected network blurred traditional boundaries between workers' workplace and personal lives. The network operates in conjunction with the effects of industry protective practices to further foster a refrain from bottom-up organizing during the Digital/Virtual era.

SUMMING UP PART TWO

In Part Two, I considered the expansion of women's labor incorporation and opportunities for participation in the context of an account of the US adult film industry's development informed by key adult film content. Significant developments and broad changes have occurred within the adult film industry in respect to the three key dimensions (organizing and activism, jurisprudential regulations of obscenity, and developing technology) and in film content over the three eras Reel, Video, and Digital/Virtual. These developments and changes helped produced the adult film industry network and necessitated enactment of industry protective practices. The adult film industry network and industry protective practices have, in turn, shaped women's workplace incorporation and opportunities for participation.

Part Two 1) reveals the importance of industry protective practices in expanding women's workplace incorporation and opportunities for participation from above and 2) suggests the operational and protective significance of the adult film industry network. First, evidence suggests that industry protective practices are initiated to stabilize the industry and act as bulwarks against attacks (and sometimes potential attacks) on various fronts. Although workers benefit from the enactment of industry protective practices, I argue that maintaining industry viability is the primary motivation behind them. Second, due in part to industry stigmatization, a tightly interconnected occupational network built on both public and private connections developed as the industry developed. This network operates in conjunction with industry protective practices to expand women worker's incorporation and opportunities for participation from above in the absence of worker and/or advocate organizing and activism. Part Two also points to the significant symbiotic relationship existing between the adult film industry and regulators and consumers. In addition to informing an understanding of the processes involved in the industry's development, the content of key adult films reflect the delicate balance between the producers and the demands of consumer and regulators.

I will now discuss some of the implications of these findings, starting with the expansion of women's incorporation and opportunities for participation from above and moving on to the particularities of film content.

Incorporation and Opportunities for Participation from Above: Industry Protective Practices and the Adult Film Industry Network

In Part Two, I considered the expansion of women's labor incorporation and opportunities for participation in the context of an account of the US adult film industry's development informed by key adult film content. Developments and changes around three key dimensions (organizing and activism, jurisprudential regulations of obscenity, and developing technology) and the content of key adult films led to emergence of the adult film industry network and necessitated enactment of industry protective practices. The adult film industry network and industry protective practices have, in turn, shaped women's workplace incorporation and opportunities for participation.

During the Reel era, adult film industry development was in its very beginning stages. Although clarifications to the legal constitution of obscenity set the stage for adult industry growth and development, existing technology limited industry growth and development. Given the industry's fragmented and clandestine nature, it is not surprising that we see no labor organizing or activism from adult film industry workers, or even on their behalf.

The groundwork for a cohesive adult film industry was laid during the first half of the Video era. The advent of videocassette recorder technology and the jurisprudential refinement of the Miller Test worked in conjunction with the legalization of adult film production in California to facilitate the beginnings of adult film industry development during the second half of the Video era. Around the same time, anti-pornography activism functioned to exacerbate stigma already attached to adult film sex work, sharpening tensions existing between persons working in adult film production and wider society. Collectively, these patterns of development and tension helped concentrate and

isolate the industry further, while highlighting the steadily increasing need for internal-industry alliance and defense. These alliances and defenses manifest as industry protective practices during the Video era. To varying degrees, these practices functioned to stabilize and protect the industry, including its workers. As was the case in the Reel era, there is no evidence of women organizing for workplace rights within the industry during the Video era.

During the Digital/Virtual Era, obscenity became even more difficult to identify, specifically because of preexisting legal standards and developing technology. Industry protective practices continue to benefit workers and the industry itself. The industry appears to be mainstreaming steadily, and in some instances seamlessly, during the Digital/Virtual Era. There is still no evidence of labor organizing.

My consideration of the processes shaping labor organizing and activism, obscenity jurisprudence, and film production and distribution technologies in Part Two point to at least two significant findings. First, a very close-knit industry network developed in concert with the adult film industry itself. During the 1980s, anti-pornography activism and stigmatization, geographic concentration, and the mom-and-pop start-up nature of many production houses contributed to the network's initial development. Continued stigmatization and geographic concentration have contributed to the intensification and tightening of this network.

The adult film industry network is closely interconnected to the second significant finding: seemingly in lieu of labor organizing or activism from below, women workers' incorporation and opportunities for participation have been expanded from above via industry protective practices. I maintain that two unique industry-structural elements, the network and the mode by which most talent enter the industry, contribute to the expansion of worker protections and rights from above.

First, the closely-linked nature of the industry network facilitates both a refrain from exploitation and a refrain from organizing. For many industry leaders, their employees and coworkers are quite literally their family and friends. The presence of

these traditionally more personal and private (family and friend) connections in what is ordinarily a relatively impersonal and public social sphere (the workplace) changes the power dynamic and overall nature of the workplace. Consequently, workers may already be well-satisfied with their positions and/or may handle any workplace grievances through different (and perhaps more efficient) unexplored channels. This possibility will be explored further in Part 3.

Second, talent and behind-the-scenes workers are distinct, separate populations within the overall industry. Whereas behind-the-scenes workers may have lifelong, closely interconnected careers in the adult film industry, the vast majority of talent are constantly cycling in and out. This contributes to talents' refrain from worker organizing. As has been reported happening in other sex work occupations (Barton 2006), perhaps talent who are immediately dissatisfied with their work leave the adult film industry quickly. Or, perhaps talent are not in the industry long enough to become dissatisfied with the politics or the state of their workplace, much less to organize around it. This possibility parallels Bernadette Barton's (2006) assertion that many "early-career" exotic dancers enjoy their work immensely; however, as they become "late career" dancers, they report being more dissatisfied with their work. According to the durations reported by Barton's respondents (2006), dance careers last years longer than the average women's career as adult film talent. Although exotic dance labor is certainly different from adult film talent labor, the possibility that adult film talent careers "expire" before the talent themselves are (potentially) dissatisfied is an interesting consideration. Moreover, the fact that talent are most often hired on a per scene basis contributes to a relatively fractured or scattered, isolated "workplace," which may in turn contribute to a refrain from organizing. These dynamics will also be explored further in Part 3.

When given the potential occupational health hazards (ie possible sexually transmitted infection/STI exposure) and stigmatized nature of the adult film industry and talents' labor therein, it is in the best interests of the industry and industry leaders to keep workplace conditions as stable and standardized as possible. Overtly problematic

workplace conditions would likely quickly garner unwanted attention from outside regulators and/or anti-pornography activists. Consequently, outside of occupational health hazards and stigmatization, it may be that talent's particular area of adult film industry labor is organized such that it is not overtly unsafe, unfair, etc. This allusion of an industry protective practice may operate in conjunction with women talents' generally brief time in the industry to discourage any labor organizing from below.

It is interesting to consider the consistency of key adult film content in light of industry protective practices. Since the 1980s, only a small handful of obscenity indictments have had anything to do with adult film content. Once an idea of what constituted obscenity became somewhat clear, it seems that the vast majority of adult filmmakers made the pragmatic decision to avoid it. This may be because, relative to companies specializing in niche filmmaking, most key-caliber adult film production houses operate on a large scale, producing big budget projects with the potential to reach a large, diverse, global market. Consequently, producers of key-caliber adult films have more to lose from an obscenity indictment than a smaller niche film producer. What's more, while smaller companies may feel pressure or compulsion to compete for percentages of the market through provision of "extreme" sexual content, larger companies with more established reputations and extensive filmographies do not seem to feel the same pressure. It is not surprising then that when issues of obscenity do come up in recent years, they are more often in the niche market production houses.

This is not to suggest that niche production houses have a greater penchant for the obscene (although some certainly do); nor is it to suggest that key adult film production houses refrain altogether from producing "extreme" sexual content or that key adult film production houses refrain from producing extreme content for more benevolent reasons. It is to suggest though that negotiations of the still somewhat nebulous notions of obscenity are shaped significantly by the market and a production company's place therein. With these reflections in mind, I will now discuss some of the particularities of key adult film content and their potential implications.

Film Content: Evolution and Consistency

While the content of key adult films is useful in informing an understanding of the processes involved in the industry's development, it also reflects a delicate balance existing between adult film producers and the demands of consumer and regulators. A complex combination of changes and consistencies over time point to evolving cultural conceptualizations of "pornography." In terms of content changing, three clearly identifiable patterns centered on 1) the presentation and form of sex depictions; 2) the industry's progressive mainstreaming; and 3) women talents' aesthetics emerged. In terms of content remaining consistent, three clearly identifiable patterns centered on 1) sex depiction ubiquity; 2) the over-representation of white women talent; and 3) problematic racist representations of black men talent emerged.

Evolution: Changes in the Content of Key Adult Films

The content of adult films evolved between 1972 and 2005, and three clearly identifiable patterns centered on the presentation and form of sex depictions; the industry's progressive mainstreaming; and women talents' aesthetics summarize these changes. First, the transition from the ubiquitous presence of sex to the discrete, contained presentations of sex scenes in adult films is significant. In the 1970s and early 1980s, adult film producers appeared to be negotiating their place within the overall world of film and media. Adult films produced during these days often had social commentaries and/or deeper meanings embedded in their texts. As time passed and independent adult film production evolved into an adult film production industry, the appropriation of literary works and some social commentaries appeared in conjunction with adult content less frequently. Although *recognizable* narratives –features, comedies, and narrative parodies of mainstream works- continued to be the most popular frame for adult content, consumers did not seem to want deep social commentary alongside their porn and/or adult film producers stopped including it.

The next significant trend apparent upon consideration of this film sample relates to industry mainstreaming. Adult film content and, subsequently, the adult film industry itself have mainstreamed steadily since the 1970s. This is significant when considered in conjunction with the simultaneous tensions existing between the adult industry and wider society. In the days of “porno chic,” there was nothing underground about adult feature films. Society’s relatively open-minded regard for adult content seemed to shift somewhat in the 1980s. During this time, we see adult films moving away from the ubiquitously sexual art film form and taking up many mainstream media tropes and narratives. This may have been a tactic to garner greater appeal with the general public through familiarity or it may have been a protective measure to hide within the context of similarity. In a “Miami Vice” landscape, *Miami Spice* may have been easily recognizable or even novel. Or, it may not have stood out at all. The resemblance relatively recently produced adult films appear to have with mainstream narratives and the marked presence of adult content in the market may indicate a cultural revitalization similar to the “porno chic” 1970s. Perhaps the recent seamless mainstreaming of adult content may be a high point of popularity before an inevitable fall back into stigmatized obscurity.

Finally, the changes that have occurred in women talents’ aesthetics are also significant. The relatively real-world-representative variety of (white) women present in films from the 1970s and 1980s has been replaced with representations that fit into a much narrower -although somewhat more racially diverse- aesthetic margin. Put simply, earlier films contain depictions of relatively “natural” or “real” women of variable ages and body types with little costuming, apparent surgical changes, and manicuring; however, most of them are white. Later films contain depictions of specific types of “unreal” women – young, thin, augmented and manicured, elaborately costumed; however, there is a greater degree of racial diversity amongst them.

There has been much speculation over these trends and the impact they (presumably) have on individual persons. Critical social commentary from authors such as Naomi Wolf (2003) and Pamela Paul (2004) suggest that consumers of adult film texts

seem to be compelled to such a degree by these “unreal” representations that they are steadily having more difficulty separating (sexual) fantasy from reality. This is, in turn, negatively impacting “real” women.

Activists and scholars have discussed the ways in which the presentation of “unreal” women as “real” in adult and mainstream films, advertising, and modeling have negatively impacted women’s and girls’ self esteem and persons’ conceptualizations of aesthetically desirable, attainable, normal, and expected.⁴³ The onus of responsibility for creating the ever-widening discordance existing between fantasy and reality should not be placed however on media outlets alone - complex processes between producers and consumers operate synergistically to foster this discordance. This makes particular sense when considering the multi-dimensional stream of supply and demand in which both media producers and media consumers are involved. Additional, further nuanced considerations of the deep-seeded gender inequalities existing amongst and between women and men (of which this trend in adult film talent aesthetics both reproduces and is simply indicative of) are necessary. Similar tensions between fantasy and reality seem to exist around the topic of condom use in adult films.

Consistency in the Content of Key Adult Films

Although it may have changed in some respects, the content of adult films also remained consistent between 1972 and 2005. Three clearly identifiable patterns centered on sex depiction ubiquity; the over-representation of white women talent; and racist representations of black men talent characterize consistencies in adult film content across the three eras. First, a significant consistency emerged around the ubiquity of the sex depictions themselves. Although the presentation and form may have changes, sex acts depicted in films produced during the 1970s can be found in films produced throughout the sample. Depictions in films made in the Digital/Virtual era also occur in Reel and Video era films. Combinations of visible pop shots, anal sex, oral sex, double penetrative

sex, various iterations of group sex, and the use of sex toys are depicted in every film in this sample.

The content of these films shows that, rather than becoming more extreme, sex depictions in the most commonly produced and widely-viewed genres of adult films have remained relatively consistent. This is relevant as it is at odds with findings reported in some scholarly and popular assessments of adult film content (see chapters 1 and 2). Assertions that content is steadily becoming more extreme may actually be an indicator of shifts in cultural attitudes about sex and sex depictions. Assessment of (potentially) varying cultural attitudes about sex and sex depictions would be an interesting and necessary step for further consideration of this possibility.

It is important to note that, as the adult film industry has grown, the number of films and the diversity of genres produced have grown too. It stands to reason then that different patterns may have developed within smaller niche segments of the adult film industry. For example, films such as Extreme Associates' "Federal Five" (five films that were collectively indicted on ten obscenity-related counts in August, 2003) contain uncommon themes and sex depictions not present in this sample. Because these types of exceptional content receive mainstream and legal attention, they are often used (erroneously) as a proxy for all adult film content. Systematic consideration of niche content is necessary, but beyond the scope of this project.

In addition to the consistencies in sex act depictions amongst key adult films, two additional significant consistencies exist amongst depictions of talent. First, in spite of the racial and ethnic diversification that occurred amongst women talent, white women are over-represented regularly. The overwhelming presence of white women talent in each era can be read many ways, from (presumed) sexual desirability to (presumed) sexual in/availability.

Second, although this analysis focuses on depictions of women talent, an obvious and significant pattern in black men talent emerged. Unlike depictions of black women and other women talent of color, there are no depictions of black men contained in this

sample that are not (overtly) problematic. In each era, black men talent are presented virtually identically: as primitive and savage sexual aggressors. Moreover, these representations depict black men as perilous and demeaning to white women *only* – black men talent are not partnered with women talent of color in any scene contained in this sample. These depictions of black men are indicators of complex and consistent, deep-seeded racism existing in US culture. What is more, the over-representation of white women and the racist images of black men speak to the sustained presence of cultural dualisms existing between body and mind, women and men, and black bodies and white bodies. Considerations of men talent and specific considerations of men talent and race in key adult films are clearly necessary.

Rather than revealing intensification in graphic sexual imagery or some form of egalitarian shift, the content of key adult films point to consistency. A consistent series of complex and unequal, yet stable, relationships between (white) sexualities and power in terms of race and gender exist in adult film content. It would be interesting to consider these patterns in conjunction with consumer demographic data; however, in spite of much lip service regarding the ever-increasing possibility of women's and heterosexual couple's consumption of adult film content and findings that suggest political and cultural conservatives purchase more on-line porn than their less-conservative counterparts (Edelman 2009), there are no available data describing who exactly is consuming this content and how.

PART THREE

Inside the Adult Film Industry

In order to examine the ways in which the adult film industry network and industry protective practices have impacted women workers' lives, I now turn to an examination of the contemporary adult film industry from within. In Part Three, I explore an adult film production workplace and its workers in depth. My analysis is based on ethnographic observations of Fascination Films and informal interviews with its workers. In Chapter 6, I explore Fascination Films' company history, including both its industry-representative and unique elements, within the wider historical context of the adult film industry. I also map its organizational structure. In Chapter 7, I consider Fascination Films' women workers workplace and career experiences specifically. Together, chapters 6 and 7 demonstrate phenomena identified in Part 2.

Fascination Films' organizational structure and operating history are themselves a reflection of the industry's overall development, as are the experiences of Fascination Films' women workers. The adult film industry's occupational network developed and the use of top-down industry protective practices began during the Video era. Over time, the industry network and industry protective practices began working to shape the adult film industry and workers' experiences therein in partial concert. Part Three shows top-down industry protective practices and the adult film industry network operating synergistically in the lives of everyday women office workers and contract talent. The discussions in Part three also provide a more nuanced understanding of some women's workplace experiences in the adult film industry.

CHAPTER 6: INSIDE “FASCINATION FILMS”

Highlighting Fascination Films’ organizational structure is extremely relevant when discussing examples of women’s labor rights and opportunity expansion occurring from above. Fascination Films has a long organizational history that spans the Video and Digital/Virtual eras of adult film production. Given the organization’s longevity and its role as a prominent and prolific producer of adult films, it was necessarily shaped by developments in obscenity law and production regulation, technology, and labor organizing and activism. In other words, as the adult film industry developed, so did Fascination Films. Moreover, members of Fascination Films participate in industry protective practices and are interconnected with the adult film industry network. As was shown in Part Two, each of these dimensions is partially responsible for shaping of women workers’ rights expansion. Additionally, the company produces content similar to that found in key adult films. Consequently, I use the case of the organization to shed some light on 1) processes at work in the adult film industry as a whole and 2) top-down processes impacting the expansion of women worker’s incorporation and opportunities for participation.

I have found that Fascination Films is not at all unusual in terms of bureaucratic organizational structure. I have also found that while Fascination Films produces some of the most popular and commonly viewed adult content currently available via a very recognizable organizational structure, the company also engages in some unique operating practices and principles. The discussion of Fascination Films’ organizational structure in this chapter provides readers with a glimpse into a complex workplace within a highly stigmatized and controversial industry captured in its most normative form.

Why Fascination Films?

As was previously stated in Part One, Fascination Films is an example of typical contemporary adult film production enterprise. The company is one of the most prolific

producers of the most commonly consumed genres of adult films, averaging one new feature or vignette production per week. Out of all currently and successfully operating adult film production houses, only one has been open longer than Fascination Films. However, although many aspects of Fascination Films are characteristic of adult film production in general, the company also possesses its own unique ethos.

Fascination Films was established by Dean Ryan in the early 1990s. This was Ryan's second venture into entrepreneurial adult film production, born of both his increasing interest in the creative aspects of film making and his desire to produce feature films that appealed to couples and women (company press kit, 2006). According to the company's press packet, Ryan's original vision has remained consistent since its inception. It states: "Fascination Films continues to break new ground while remaining focused on producing quality adult entertainment, strengthening its appeal with women and couples..."

Ryan's production efforts received immediate recognition from industry peers, and Fascination Films won multiple industry honors for films produced during its first year of operation, including several AVN Awards. AVN Awards, which are euphemistically referred to within both the mainstream and adult industries as the "Oscars of Adult," are considered to be among the industry's highest accolades. Fascination Films has received multiple AVN Awards annually since the early 1990s, honoring both the performances of the company's affiliated talent and various creative aspects of its film production. For example, among myriad other awards including (but not limited to) recognition for technological and marketing achievements, the company has won in the categories of Best Film, Best Director, Best Actress, and Best Screenplay. As of 2005, Fascination Films has won for Best Film and Best Video four times; Best Director four times; Best Actress seven times; and Best Screenplay eight times. Moreover, the company has won again at least once in each category during the years of 2006 through 2008. The number of awards and the diversity of categories in which they were awarded suggest that Fascination Films produces erotic feature films that are well-

respected in many regards within the adult film industry. Additionally, Fascination Films' productions are also popular with the viewing public. According to Adult DVD Empire, twelve Fascination Films titles are among the 100 top-selling adult films of all time.

In addition to producing films that are both popular with the viewing public and well-respected within the industry, Fascination Films participates in other endeavors that impact persons at the local, legal (thus state and national), and even global levels. For example, Fascination Films has a long and unique history regarding condom use in films. As I discussed in Part Two, after veteran performer Marc Wallace falsified the results of an HIV test and performed condomless in several sex scenes during 1998, at least three women talent were diagnosed as HIV-positive (Kernes 2007; McNeil and Osborne 2005; Tannen 2004). As a result Wallace's manipulation of the industry-initiated HIV/STI screening system and the very real dangers such manipulations pointed to, industry leaders took various steps to protect both the business and its talent. In addition to the FSC-initiated development of Adult Industry Medical (AIM), six adult film production companies –including Fascination Films- immediately and voluntarily instituted a “condom-only” policy for sex scenes in their films. As I have also already discussed, this condom only mandate became a complex issue for many producers. And, as some companies struggled with subsequently declining sales, they dropped their condom-only policies one by one. When another HIV outbreak situation occurred in 2004, only Fascination Films and one other company had retained their condom-only policies. By the beginning of 2006, Fascination Films was the only adult film production company with a condom-only policy, which it continues to uphold today (other companies are generally condom optional although some, such as the previously discussed Jules Jordan Video, are mandatory no-condom). Dean Ryan stated in 2004 that Fascination Films instituted its condom-only policy because “[the company has] the highest regard for the health and well being of talent.” This example shows Fascination Films actively contributing to the well-being of industry talent at the relatively “local” level.

As I have discussed in Part Two, leaders in the adult entertainment industry formed the Free Speech Legal Defense Fund (FSLDF) during the early 1990s in an attempt to protect the rights of all members of the adult entertainment industry. In 1992, the FSLDF evolved into the Free Speech Coalition (FSC), the trade organization that currently works to both protect adult entertainment workers' rights through lobbying, litigation, and legislative "watch-dogging" and provides sexual free speech education to industry insiders and the general public (FSC "History" and "Mission Statement"). Fascination Films has provided consistent public support for the FSC's endeavors since its inception. For example, the company has sent both executives and contract talent to Sacramento, CA and Washington D.C. during times of intense lobbying for industry rights. Fascination Films' executive Melissa Park was appointed to the FSC Board in July of 2007 and was reappointed in 2008. This example shows Fascination Films' involvement with jurisprudential regulation at both the state and federal levels.

During the late summer of 2007, Fascination Films released a film about a small-town soldier mistaken for deceased while on a tour of active duty in Iraq. The film follows the soldier's suffering as he is drafted, leaves his home and romantic relationship, and is injured (and incorrectly presumed killed) in battle. The soldier endures further pain upon his return home, both from the post-war psychological trauma and because his former romantic partner moved on to another romantic relationship after learning of his supposed death. This film explores the emotional and physical traumas soldiers bear on myriad levels, while simultaneously delivering genre-appropriate hardcore sex depictions.

This film and the intense themes it engages are unique for adult content in of themselves; however, Fascination Films' promotion of this film set it even further apart. Because of the relatively somber and opportune content, Fascination Films executives decided to hold a slightly atypical release party in celebration of the film's completion. Instead of a more conventional glamorous nightclub soiree, Fascination Films held a small town/county fair-themed charity event. Approximately \$10,000 was raised at the

event and donated to a national organization that supports US troops. This example conveys a mindedness for international and global issues that is fairly significant. In addition to generating a substantial sum of charitable money, this event certainly drew attention to contemporary issues involving US military action.

These examples –mandatory condom use; leadership in and support of the industry’s most significant trade organization; and raising awareness and money benefitting persons who suffer the brunt of a significant social problem— suggest feminist activism, philanthropy, and social justice mindedness. Clearly, Fascination Films is a complex place. The company generates highly consumed hard core adult films in their most common form while simultaneously engaging in projects that can be described as both progressive and socially aware. It is important to note that, without insider knowledge of other comparable production companies, it is impossible to know how exceptional Fascination Films’ “extra curricular” endeavors actually are. Regardless, this discussion and these examples have illustrated that, while Fascination Films can be used as a typical example of adult film industry production, it is also a unique space with a particular culture and set of characteristics. Its consideration partially reveals the complexity that exists within the adult film industry, captured in its most normative form. I will now discuss the organizational structure of Fascination Films in detail.

Organizational Structure of Fascination Films

One afternoon, while in the midst of stuffing letters and DVDs into manila envelopes for the weekly PR mail out, “Chauntelle, come see Dean” crackled over the buildings-wide company intercom. When I entered his office a few minutes later, Dean greeted me with his sarcastically-incredulous-yet-friendly smile and the qualifier “I’m sure you’ve heard about my tendency to micromanage everything...” He then explained that he had just noticed the captions I had written to accompany a handful photos and a press-release-type blurb I had posted in the news sub-section of the Fascination Films website a week or so prior. I had gotten the text of the blurb and photos approved before posting, but I had inserted some (unauthorized) quippy captions as an afterthought. Particularly because the photos were of Fascination Films’ women

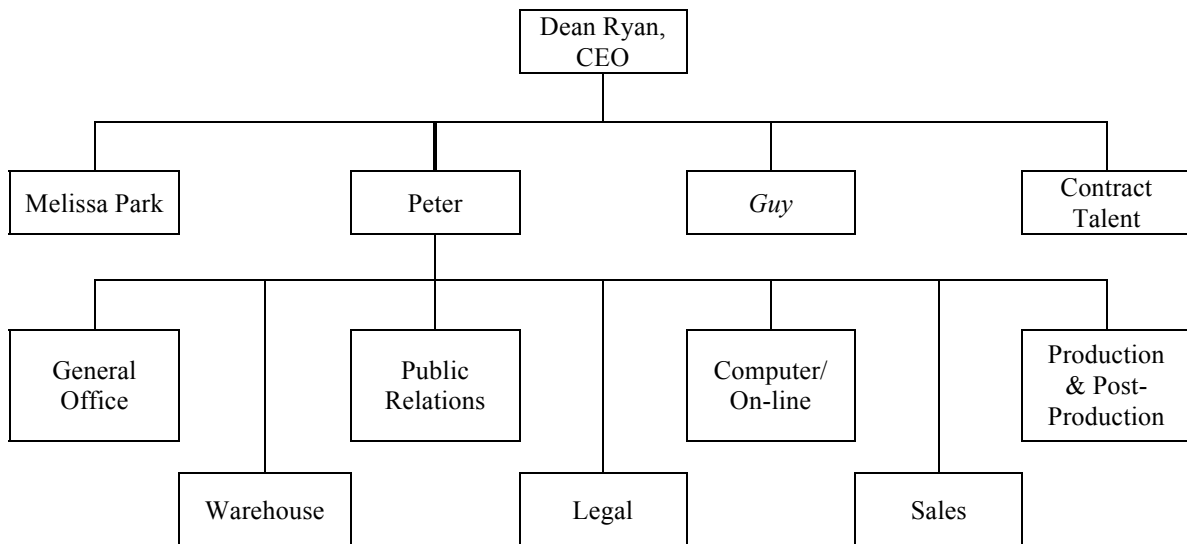
contract film talent posing with well-known professional athletes at a mainstream sports event, Dean explained that the captions I had written did not convey a tone he thought appropriate for the event. He asked me to replace the current captions with relatively unobtrusive revisions. I walked out of his office slightly stunned – not because he was punitive or even displeased, but because the CEO of one of the largest adult film production companies in the world was keenly aware of such minutia and exactly who was responsible for its generation.

The above anecdotal example illustrates a unique quality of Fascination Films’ organizational structure: the most powerful, the least powerful, and every person in between interact with one another to some degree in the context of the workplace. According to Joan Acker (2006), the steepness of organizational hierarchy is one dimension wherein workplace inequality emerges and varies. The steepest hierarchies – and the most pronounced inequalities— are found in traditional bureaucracies, while “flat,” team-based organizations generally manifest a more equitable distribution of power, responsibility, and authority (Acker 2006).

The organizational structure of Fascination Films has elements of both traditional bureaucratic hierarchies and team-based organizations, making it difficult to situate within either of the afore-mentioned typologies at first glance. Upon closer inspection, however, it emerges as a sort of hybrid. The organizational structure of Fascination Films is traditionally bureaucratic and hierarchical with significant elements of team-based structure.

General organizational structure: Dean Ryan continues to preside as the CEO of Fascination Films. He is clearly the person with the most power and control within the organization. Including Ryan, Fascination Films employed 45 total persons: 31 full-time and 2 part-time office and warehouse workers and 12 contract talent. Ryan directly “supervises” Melissa Park, a woman upper-level executive working on various special projects; Guy, an upper-managerial level consultant; twelve total women and men contract talent; and Peter, a man office manager responsible for supervising the remaining 30 office employees working in seven different occupationally distinct subdivisions.

Table 1: Overall Organizational Structure



This table illustrates the overall organizational structures and hierarchy of Fascination Films in its simplest form. The seven occupationally distinct subdivisions are shown. At this level, there is only one outside contractor visible: Guy (as indicated by *italics*).

Melissa Park’s position in the company is both amorphous and autonomous. Over the course of her almost 15-year history with Fascination Films, she has been responsible for product sales and for public relations in various capacities. Park is often credited with crafting the company’s image through promotional work with one of the industry’s biggest stars during the mid to late 1990s. Currently she handles select high profile/volume sales and distribution accounts, works with archival scene footage to develop compilation films, screens and approves the final cut of every new film, does occasional PR and event planning, and works on any other large project that requires extensive industry expertise and finesse. Melissa’s opinions and thoughts are also significant factors in Dean Ryan’s decision making process.

Guy has an equally amorphous and autonomous occupation at Fascination Films. A personal friend of Dean’s, Guy’s position at Fascination Films can best be described as a business and financial consultant with upper-managerial level human resources

responsibilities. During my time at Fascination Films, the exact nature of Guy's role within the company remained relatively unclear to me. Although he was only physically present in the office two days per week, the specter of Guy was tangible at all times and the employees treated him with a measure of deference second only to Dean Ryan. Regardless, I had an impossible time determining the specifics of his job description and exactly who he was in terms of his relationship to Dean. One afternoon, Guy called me into his office to "check in." He wanted to see how I was doing in the office in general, and we chatted pleasantly for 10-15 minutes. This would have been the perfect opportunity to ask him about what exactly he did, but I myself was a little intimidated by his mystique and did not do a good job of working my questions into our conversation. Regardless of the wholly friendly and innocuous nature of our conversation, the office was abuzz by the time our meeting was finished – everyone knew that something significant *must* have happened while I was in there. My getting called into Guy's office was the gossip for the afternoon, and sadly this was the only one-on-one conversation he and I ever had.

As the previously discussed caption writing example also indicated, my interaction with Guy and the workers' reaction to it point to the hybridized organizational structure of Fascination Films. Hierarchy is clearly present, and yet a "flatter" dimension emerges through Guy's awareness of my powerless presence. It may be, however, that Guy was interested in me because of my relatively less powerless role as a researcher. Based on my observations and conversations with other employees, I was able to determine that Guy negotiates contracts with salaried employees, contract talent, and outsourced third-party labor. He also handles the uncomfortable "dirty work" of terminating employees and contracts that do not fall under the office manager's jurisdiction. He is clearly involved in upper-echelon decisions and practices at Fascination Films, and weighs in on most big decisions the company faces. Like Melissa's, Guy's opinions and thoughts are significant factors in Dean Ryan's decision making process.

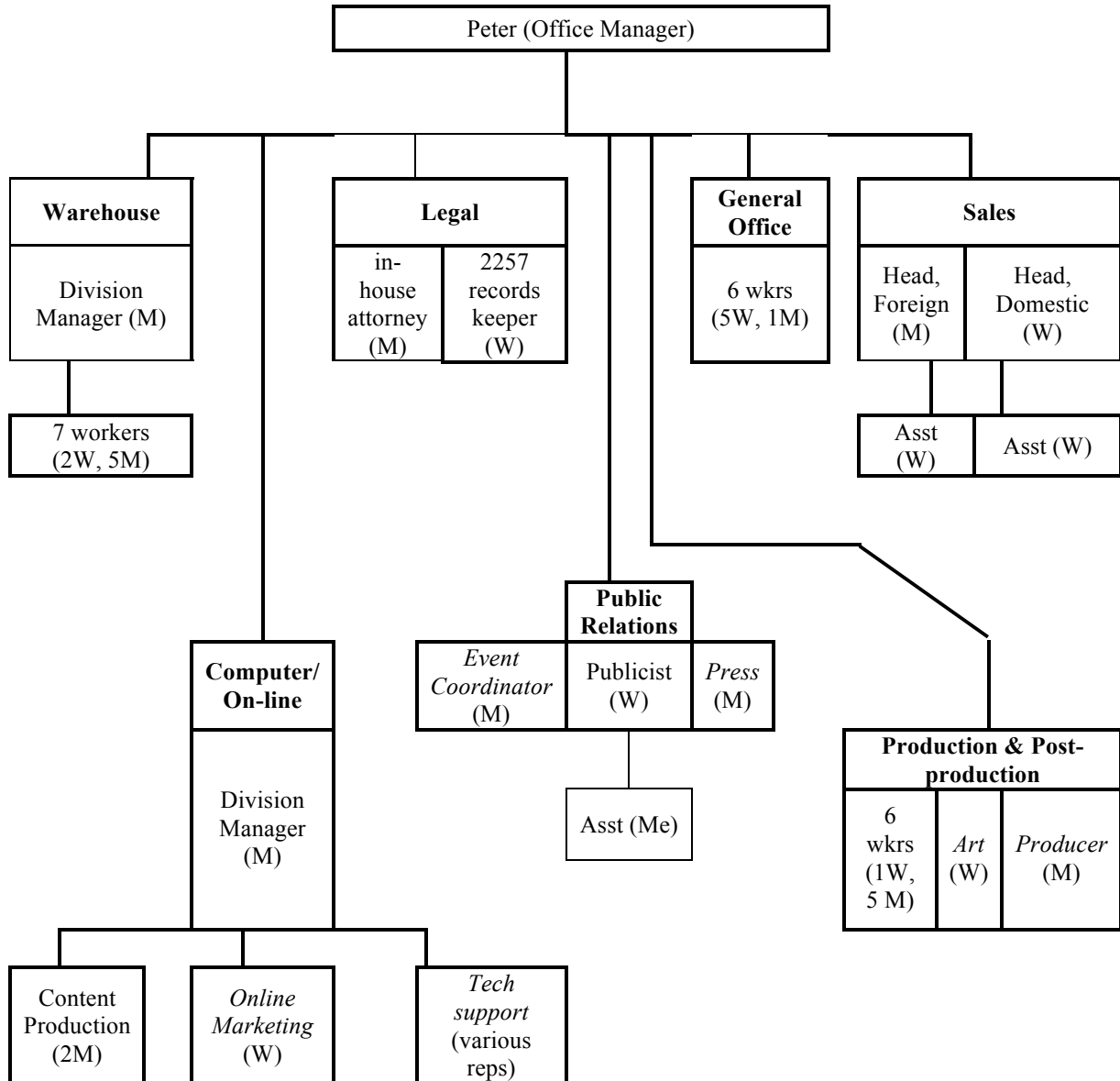
Guy's mysterious occupational category and sporadic presence in the office points to a unique class of contract employee working with Fascination Films. As is the case in most organizations, some services are provided by outside vendors. Fascination Films employs seven such "outside contract" entities (in addition to the 45 regular employees) for things such as online marketing management and computer network maintenance. Some outside contracted employees are essentially self-employed individuals, while others are representatives of larger service organizations. Because Fascination Films consistently required the same services and these services were commonly met by the same representative, outside-contracted employees were familiar faces around the office. They are significant components of Fascination Films' organizational structure, but they are not in the same class within the organization as the 45 "regular" employees.

Unlike Melissa's and Guy's positions within the organization, Peter's job is very clear-cut and well-defined. He is Fascination Films' office manager and is responsible for supervising seven sub-divisions within the company, or a total of 30 employees and six outside-contacted employees/agencies. These subdivisions are: Warehouse, Computer/On-Line, Legal, Public Relations, General Office, Productions and Post-Production, and Sales.

Some of these sub-divisions are clearly defined by the presence of their own area supervisor. For example, the Warehouse and Online/Computer Support divisions each have their own area supervisor. Peter interacts with respective division employees via the area supervisor, and employees working in these divisions report to their area supervisors directly (not Peter). Some organizational sub-divisions are not formally defined and do not have an area supervisor. For the sake of simplicity and clarity, I created categorical sub-divisions for informal divisions. In these instances, I grouped occupations together based upon either 1) occupational association and/or 2) similar job tasks. Thus, for example, the two components of the Legal division, the in-house attorney and the 2257 records keeper, are associated by occupational area/task: both employees work with legal aspects of the adult film production process. In another example, the components of the

Production/Post-production division have distinct occupations but they all collaborate closely on various stages of actual film production, from scheduling and managing shoots to creating box art and DVD menus. Peter directly supervises each of these persons and/or areas. The following table shows Fascination Films seven area subdivisions in greater detail.

Table 2: Detailed Organizational Structure (from Office Manager, down)



This table shows greater detail of Fascination Films seven area subdivisions, including number and gender of workers (W: woman/women; M: man/men). The position of publicist's assistant was "filled" by me during my observation times, but I do not include myself in any discussion of Fascination Films employee demographics. The six outside contractors are indicated by *italics*.

Simply in terms of occupational structure, women are clearly a significant presence in the Fascination Films workplace. Almost half (20 out of 45 total workers) of the company's employees are women, and 14 out of 33 office workers are women. Women workers are present at every level of the organizational hierarchy. Women work in some fairly low profile "traditional" positions, such as reception and human resources; but women also fill several high profile spots, such as 2257 Records Keeper and Head of Domestic Sales. Moreover, one of the three "executive" positions at Fascination Films is filled by a woman (Melissa Park).

In spite of their organizational ubiquity, women are still concentrated in more "traditional" occupational subdivisions and are relatively isolated from the more traditionally masculine; however, this is not unusual in the US labor market. Paul E. Gabriel and Susanne Schmitz (2007) reported gender percentage ratios between women and men to be 48:52 in sales, 79:21 in clerical and administrative support, and 22:78 in laborers during 2001. Half of the persons employed in sales at Fascination Films are women. Five out of six "clerical and administrative support"-type workers are women (83%), while only two out of seven (29%) "laborers"/warehouse workers are. Moreover, as one moves up the Fascination Films organizational hierarchy, there are fewer women workers. For example, each of the three management-specific positions (warehouse manager, computer/on-line manager, and office manager) are filled by men. I will discuss the occupations and experiences of women office and warehouse workers further in Chapter 7.

Talent Situated within the Organization: Contract employees in the adult film industry are a unique, yet familiar, class of worker. In exchange for some sum of money, a person with a particular skill set is signed to an exclusive contract with an adult film production studio for a predetermined length of time (often one to two years, often with the possibility of renewal). During that time, the person under contract cannot perform or provide contracted services to any other company without the permission of their

contracting studio. This allows a production studio to limit the public's access to particular talent, which presumably sustains and possibly augments both contract talents' and the company's market demand.

The company takes breaches of contract-protected content very seriously. For example, during my observation times Candace Carmichael gave a prominent adult magazine access to a collection of Fascination-owned digital photos of herself to use in an upcoming layout. Candace had neglected to get permission to distribute the photos, and she was not clear on the details of the layout itself. When Dean Ryan found out about this, he was very displeased. I believe this was both because Candace gave out company-owned content without authorization and the company would not have any say as to how the photos were used due to the manner in which she had distributed them. Although Dean did not attempt to pull the photos from the magazine (presumably because of its prominence), I do not think Candace's mistake went unsanctioned. She was very upset after talking over the issue in a meeting with Dean and Guy.

As I have discussed, this employment structure is intended to resemble contracts in the old Hollywood studio system. This is clearly beneficial to a production company if the talent is in high demand. In the adult film industry, contracted performance talent are most often women. Persons contracted for artistic, production jobs (ie director, cinematographer) are most often men. Fascination Films is unique in that it contracts women and men with a variety of "talents," including performer, script writer and director, and cinematographer. Most Fascination Films current contract talent are women, and most persons contracted for production jobs are men with two exceptions: although she started out as contract talent only, Candace Carmichael's current contract includes equally balanced talent and directing duties; industry icon Logan X's contract is primarily for talent, but includes directing duties.

For women talent, becoming a "contract girl" is generally considered both prestigious and advantageous – having the support of a relatively large, well-known, and successful production company helps garner career and life opportunities unavailable to

uncontracted talent. For example, Fascination Films has flown women contract talent all over the world including Australia, South Africa, Mexico, and France for various events. Candace Carmichael has spoken on behalf on the industry and Fascination Films with Melissa Park in an array of high profile news media venues. Candace, Cassidy Rae, and Olivia Loren have each done acting and/or modeling work for mainstream companies. In each of these instances, contract talent were booked through Fascination Films and thus were present on the behalf of the company. In an effort to increase film quality, Fascination Films has provided talent with useful trainings that concurrently contributed to their general health and well-being. For example, Madison Leigh received a series of singing lessons to prepare for one film; Madison, Cassidy, and Tessa Blue trained in martial arts for an action-themed film. In each of these instances, from news appearance to singing lessons, Fascination Films provided contract talent with opportunity that simultaneously contributed to the well being of the company.

The vast majority of women talent working in the adult film industry, however, are not contract talent. Rather than working with one production house exclusively, most women are booked by myriad companies for scene work. Companies will book talent as needed by contacting their respective representing modeling agency. Consequently, in addition to working in a relatively temporary occupation (6 months to three years), uncontracted talent may also experience inconsistent and/or unpredictable work. Moreover, although there are a few very popular “free agents” with enough elusive and amorphous *je ne sais quoi* to garner wage rates comparable with contract talent (according to Melissa Park, Jenna Haze, Courtney Cummz, and Lisa Ann are examples of popular uncontracted women talent who have earned contract talent-comparable incomes), most uncontracted talent make less money than those with exclusive performance contracts. For further details about the experiences of women and men adult film industry talent, contracted and uncontracted, see Martin Amis (2001), Clay Calvert and Robert D. Richards (2006), Susan Faludi (1999), Jenna Jameson (2004), Wendy McElroy (1995), Carly Milne (2005), Frank Rich (2001), and Eric Schlosser (1997).

Like other comparable companies, Fascination Films has a core of contract employees, the skills of whom are featured regularly in their productions. The company then hires uncontracted talent on a scene by scene basis to fill out their film rosters. Fascination Films has had a total of seventeen women contract talent over the course of its operating history. At the time of my observations, there were six women performers under contract: Candace Carmichael, Olivia Loren, Tessa Blue, Kianna Taylor, Madison Leigh, and Cassidy Rae. Each of these women were required to perform in a certain number of sex scenes and appear at a number of public relations events over a predetermined length of time in exchange for a flat sum of money paid per month. Although women talent under contract were not permitted to do any hard core sex scenes, pictorials, appearances, etc. associated with another adult company, they were permitted to book feature dance dates (a substantial source of supplementary income wherein popular adult film talent are “featured” dancing at a strip club for a brief series of successive dates) and make independent public appearances. These additional bookings were subject to approval by the company on a case by case basis, and talent could not book events that conflicted with any Fascination Films’ project dates.

Of the six women talent currently contracted to Fascination Films, Candace Carmichael is the only one also contracted to write scripts and direct films. Candace’s experiences illustrate an interesting phenomenon occurring in the adult film industry: front-of-the-camera talent transitioning into various high-profile film production roles. Although this appears to have begun in the 1980s and was alluded to by Susan Faludi (1999) almost ten years ago, it remains an uncommon path for women (and men) talent today. Moreover, although there are a handful of women talent who try their hands at script writing and directing, Candace is a rare exception in that her efforts have been quite successful. The films she has directed and the scripts she has written are generally well-regarded by the industry. The films she has written and/or directed and also performed in sell well, are well-regarded by industry insiders, and have won multiple AVN awards (AVN “Charts” and “Reviews”). Not all women talent make this transition

successfully though. For example, Tessa Blue tried her hand at directing a vignette film at one point, but she produced a very poor quality product and was not afforded the opportunity again.

Most talent who successfully make the transition to script writer/director are men, a tendency illustrated by the men talent contracted to Fascination Films. Of the six men currently under contract, four are indentured as directors. Of these directors, Keith and Justin are former talent, although Keith regularly casts himself in the sex scenes he is directing. Of the remaining two men, Logan X is contracted as talent and Mason as a cinematographer, although both do occasionally venture into directing.

Table 3: Women and Men Contract Talent

Women	Approx Age*	Race/ethnicity	Primarily contracted for...
Candace Carmichael	30	White	Talent and director
Cassidy Rae	25	White	Talent
Kianna Taylor	25	Asian	Talent
Madison Leigh	25	Native American	Talent
Olivia Loren	40	White	Talent
Tessa Blue	35	White	Talent

Men	Apprx Age*	R/ Eth	Primarily contracted for...	Former talent	Additional occupational dimensions
Craig	45	white	Director	no	
Justin	40	white	Director	yes	
Keith	40	white	Director	yes	Occasionally talent
Logan X	45	white	Talent	NA	Occasionally directs
Mason	40	white	cinematography	no	Occasionally directs
Troy	40	white	Director	no	

These tables break down some demographics and some occupational duties for Fascination Films' women and men contract talent. Women contract talent are clearly younger on average (avg approx age = 30) as compared to men (avg approx age = 42). Women are contracted primarily as performance talent, whereas men are contracted primarily as directors. Men's duties within the context of their contracts have greater occupational diversity than women's.

**Exact ages have been rounded to the nearest fifth year (ie 29 => 30)*

Hierarchical Organization in a Collaborative Workplace

Although departmental divisions, hierarchies, and sub-hierarchies exist within Fascination Films, representatives from all possible inter-departmental combinations

work together on projects regularly. Here is an excerpt from my field notes that describes a particularly kind inter-departmental collaboration:

Today was day number three of working on the promo kits for “XXX.” Regina had me outside in the alley behind the main building spray-painting boxes by 9 this morning, and it was easily over 90 degrees in the shade by 11 AM. At some point, Janice came out to see what I was doing. She chatted for a few minutes, and then left. Soon after, Drake (her assistant) came charging around the corner with water and a taco from the lunch truck (for me!) and whole lot of enthusiasm. He said Janice had decided she could manage without an assistant for the day, and she was “lending him” to me. He was so excited about the art project that I don’t even think he noticed how hot it was. Together we painted and assembled 150 kits.

In other examples, the digital content producer in the Online/Computer Support division regularly updated the images posted on the women contract talents’ promotional MySpace pages. Janice, the post-production assistant, regularly had Drake (her assistant) gather and select images for new DVD menus (a task ideally handled by others in the division). I once assembled product preview packages for approximately eighty of Lacie’s domestic sales clients. Holly, the reception person, regularly assisted the public relations department with weekly promotional mailings. Innumerable collaborations such as these functioned to “flatten” the organizational structure, softening departmental divisions and making hierarchies less visible and less intense. Moreover, Dean Ryan’s tendency to “micromanage” every level of Fascination Films’ operation served to further “flatten” the feel of the organization. I heard countless stories about “R” (Dean Ryan’s workplace nickname) visiting an employee’s office or chatting at a desk, albeit briefly, to check in. These visits were never punitive (Peter or Guy mostly handled that, unless it was an issue with talent), and these small interactions invariably seemed to make employees feel as though Ryan cared about both them and their jobs.

In addition to the commonplace collaborative teamwork, many of Fascination Films’ workplace characteristics operate in conjunction with one another to create a sense of organizational “flatness.” The relatively small number of employees in each departmental sub-division, the amorphous nature of some job descriptions, and the myriad interdepartmental collaborations fostered a sense of cooperative organizational

structure. For example, the Production and Post-Production department consisted of six employees and two outside contractors. This means that, from organizing a film shoot to finalizing packaging layout, only eight persons total are directly responsible for creating a new Fascination Films product. Although it stands to reason that each person had a distinct responsibility in this process, the small amount of workers/contributors certainly contributed to a more collaborative feel. Film production in a larger department may not incite similar feelings.

Regardless of the *feeling* of flatness, the organizational structure of Fascination Films clearly represents that of a traditional bureaucracy. The overall and detailed structure of the company shown in Tables 1 and 2 clearly show hierarchical organization, and –as my caption writing example illustrated- even the smallest actions must be approved. Dean Ryan’s tendency to micromanage may give an employee the feeling that they are working directly with corporate higher-ups, but it also shows a measure of excessive scrutiny from upper management. Although this may be necessary when dealing with this type of delicate and potentially volatile content, it may also contribute to diminished worker autonomy and increased feelings of anomie.

* * * * *

I asserted in Part Two that industry protective practices were a significant way by which persons in power within the adult film industry organized. The industry protective practices discussed in Part Two are clearly at work at Fascination Films. From the organizational structure of the company to the participation in and support of protective industry trade organizations, Fascination Films is a “textbook” adult film production company. Its exceptional longevity attests to this further.

Highlighting Fascination Films’ hierarchical organization is extremely relevant when discussing the expansion of women’s labor incorporation and opportunities for participation from above. Because the company is such a significant component of the

adult film industry, Fascination Films has been (and continues to be) shaped significantly by industry protective practices and the adult film industry network. Consideration of Fascination Films' organizational structure provides a clearer picture of the settings in which industry protective practices operate and the network operate. These dimensions impact women's workplace experiences.

In looking at the distribution and occupations of women, we can directly see what was only alluded to in Part Two: women work in diverse occupations at every organizational level of the adult film industry. Regardless of their vertical integration into the adult film industry workplace, women continue to be concentrated in more traditional, lower-level occupations. These patterns are not dissimilar from women's occupational patterns in other industries. Moreover, in spite of the semblance of a "flat" organizational team, power and decision making capacity clearly come from above in Fascination Films.

CHAPTER 7: WOMEN WORKERS' EXPERIENCES AT FASCINATION FILMS

In this chapter, I explore women's workplace experiences in the adult film industry. I draw on over 250 hours of ethnographic observation, informal interviews, and primary and secondary source material to consider the nature of adult film industry labor and the top-down processes involved in expanding women's labor incorporation and opportunities for participation. I discuss women's experiences specifically within the organizational hierarchy of Fascination Films. Women workers' experiences at Fascination Films support the Part Two's assertion about the significance of the industry's occupational network, show top-down processes around rights and opportunity expansion at work, and provide a more nuanced understanding of adult film production in general.

Fascination Films Women Workers: A Closer Look

Fascination Films' women employees are a diverse group, representing a variety of characteristics. An array of ages, social classes, sexual orientations, educational attainment levels, and religious practices are represented among these women. As I previously mentioned, Fascination Films employs 45 total persons including office personnel, talent, and warehouse workers. Of these 45 individuals, 20 are women: 12 are office employees working at various levels within the corporate hierarchy, 2 are warehouse workers (packaging), and 6 are contract talent. The women office and warehouse employees range in age from 25 to 50, with an average age of 40 years. Eight of these women are white, three are Hispanic, one is black, one is Asian, and one is Middle-Eastern. Women are employed at all levels of the organization and in each occupational sub-division with the exception of the computer/on-line department. It is worth noting that there is one outside contracted women working in this department, though – the on-line marketing representative. Women's duration of employment with the company ranges from less than one year (Sydney) to well over a decade (Melissa).

Most women workers are employed full-time and work traditional eight-hour days (8:30 AM – 5:30 PM with one unpaid hour for lunch). Hope, who handles human resources duties, is the only part-time employee at Fascination Films. She works three full days per week (rather than a few hours each day).

There are currently six women contracted to Fascination Films as performance talent, and one woman's contract also includes directorial duties. These women range in age from 25 to 40, with an average age of 30 years. Four of these women are white, one is Asian, and one is Native American. At the time of my observations, Candace and Olivia had been under contract for (approximately) five years; Tessa and Kianna for four; and Madison and Cassidy for two. Madison and Cassidy were still working under their original contracts; however, the other four women have each renegotiated and had their contracts renewed multiple times. Contract talent do not work traditional in office 40 hour work weeks; however, as salaried employees, they receive all the benefits of full-time employment. The following table lays out some demographic details for Fascination Films' women workers, including approximate age, race/ethnicity, time with the company, department/division of employment, and a brief description of their respective occupations.

Table 4: Fascination Films' Women Workers

Name	Approx Age*	Race/ ethnicity	Employment duration	Department/ Division	Occupation	Prior network connection?
Melissa Park	45	white	13 years	Executive	various	Yes
Annette	45	white	4 years	Legal	2257 Records Keeper	Yes
Lacie	45	white	2 years	Sales	Head, Domestic Sales	Yes
Paula	45	white	4 total years	Sales	Domestic Sales Asst	Yes
Giselle	35	Hispanic	8-10 years	Sales	Foreign Sales Asst	No
Barbara	50	white	2 years	General Office	Payroll	Yes
Holly	25	white	2 years	General Office	Reception	No
Hope	45	white	3-4 years	General Office	Human Resources	Yes
Sydney	30	white	less than 1 year	General Office	Executive Asst	Yes
Miranda	50	Asian	unknown	General Office	Office Expense Accountant	Unknown
Lillian	45	Hispanic	unknown	Warehouse	Packaging	Unknown
Angelina	25	Hispanic	unknown	Warehouse	Packaging	Unknown
Janice	35	Middle-Eastern	6-7 years	Prod & Post-production	Post-production Coordinator	Yes
Regina	35	black	6 years	PR	Publicist	No
Candace Carmichael	30	white	Fall, 2002	Contract Talent	Talent & Director	Yes
Cassidy Rae	25	white	Fall, 2005	Contract Talent	Talent	Yes
Kianna Taylor	25	Asian	Spring, 2003	Contract Talent	Talent	Yes
Madison Leigh	25	Native American	Fall, 2005	Contract Talent	Talent	No
Olivia Loren	40	white	Spring, 2002	Contract Talent	Talent	Yes
Tessa Blue	35	white	Spring, 2003	Contract Talent	Talent	Yes

This table lays out some demographic details for Fascination Films' women workers. There are 20 women employees total: six contract talent and fourteen office and warehouse workers. Most women were connected to the adult film industry before working at Fascination Films.

**Exact ages have been rounded to the nearest fifth year (ie 29 => 30)*

Simply by studying this table, the diversity amongst women employed by Fascination Films is apparent. Close consideration of these women's experiences help demystify our understanding of women working in the adult film industry and provide some specific insights into the experience of adult film industry sex work. Specifically, the women's workplace experiences discussed in the following section illustrate the importance of connection to the wider adult film industry network, the availability of career advancement within the industry, and the ways in which power operates from above.

Women Workers' Experiences at Fascination Films

In this section, I consider specific examples wherein women Fascination Films employees' experiences illustrate workplace opportunity coming from above and the role of the adult film industry social network in generating these opportunities. As I discussed in Chapter 5, there are two predominant modes by which women enter the adult film industry: through the industry network and as talent. There are additional women, however, working in occupations other than talent who enter the industry without prior connections to the social network. Consequently, I have sorted Fascinations Films' twenty current women employee's into three distinct categories, and I discuss their experiences accordingly. First, I discuss the eight women office workers who came to work at Fascination Films through the adult film industry network, the most common mode by which women came to work at the company. Next, I discuss the three women office workers who came to work at Fascination Films from outside the adult film industry network, or having no connection to the adult industry prior to their employment with Fascination Films. Finally, I discuss the unique experiences of women talent and the paths by which these six women became contract talent. Five of the women talent took the most common path: they worked on a scene-by-scene basis for various companies for before they were contracted by Fascination Films. The sixth woman was

working as an exotic dancer and made a connection with two Fascination Films employees. This led to her eventual contract with the company.

The remaining three women workers (Angelina, Lillian, and Miranda) are not included in this discussion. I was unable to determine their exact route to Fascination Films during my observation times. Although other workers suggested that at least two of these women were connected to the industry network, I was unable to confirm this with the women themselves.

Women Workers and the Adult Film Industry Network: In any industry, it is often easy to see network connections operating in upper-level, high profile occupational positions. This is also true of women working in the adult film industry. For example, largely because of the ubiquitous presence of popular media, it is fairly common knowledge that Christine Hefner, eldest child of Hugh Hefner, was the CEO of Playboy Enterprise for over 20 years. Only slightly less well known connections include Theresa Flynt's rise to executive status at Hustler/LFP (her father is enigmatic media mogul and First Amendment/free speech activist Larry Flynt) and Marci Hirsch's integral role in production at Vivid Entertainment (her brother is Steve Hirsch). Even information about less high-profile connections (such as Lila Glasser's reception/office worker position at Seymore, Inc) or connections shaping less "mainstream" production houses (for example, Karen Stagliano's work at Evil Angel) are readily available with minimal interest in the industry.

It is often more difficult to identify and explore the network connections shaping the experiences of persons with less high-profile occupations and/or direct kin relation. Many women's experiences at Fascination Films help fill in this gap. Eight of the fourteen women office and warehouse workers began working at Fascination Films via a connection with the industry network. Some of these women's experiences simply speak to the existence of an adult film industry network, whereas others' experiences reveal the

network's unique cohesion and strength. Each example shows occupational opportunity in the workplace, and some show these opportunities coming from above.

Having some sort of "connection," be it through a social friend or an industry coworker/peer, is often beneficial when seeking employment. Some of Fascination Films' women workers' experiences speak to this type of more basic, straightforward network connection. Consider, for example, the case of Lacie, Fascination Films' Head of Domestic Sales. Lacie's father is a well-known sales representative in the adult film industry, and she herself has over twenty years worth of experience in adult industry film sales. Approximately two years prior to my observations, the production company she was working for downsized, and Lacie was laid off. Around the same time, Dean Ryan had begun to look for a person to handle Fascination Films' domestic sales exclusively. A mutual friend connected the two, and Lacie has been working for Fascination Film ever since. For Lacie, a connection to the wider adult film industry network was imperative in garnering employment. Although Lacie's subsequent success at Fascination Films attests to her possession of the necessary job skills, social connections facilitated the initial acquisition of her new position. There are several other examples of similar connections. Paula, who was social friends with a Fascination Films employee, illustrates a similar network connection. When the company was looking for a Domestic Sales Assistant, this person connected Paula to the company. When the company grew to need an additional Human Resources person, Hope was hired via a connection to Guy. Sydney was hired as Dean Ryan's assistant via a connection with another adult film production company CEO.

In these examples, a connection via the adult industry network facilitated occupational opportunity. There are other examples that illustrate both the importance of basic network connections in facilitating occupational opportunity and the possibility for upward occupational mobility. Melissa Park, for example, was already working in the adult film industry when her social friend Dean Ryan opened Fascination Films. He

originally hired her for public relations, and she has since advanced to an upper-level executive position.

In another example of network connections and upward occupational mobility, consider the case of Janice. When Fascination Films was looking for a person to fill a reception position, a then (now former) PR employee referred his wife. Janice, a woman who repeatedly described herself to me as unintelligent because she did not go to college (“I’m not smart like you... I didn’t go to college” she would say in a sort of sassy whine while making an exaggerated unhappy face), was thus hired via a personal connection to the network. Peter (the office manager) was immediately impressed with her efficiency and effectiveness. Not only was Janice excellent at her reception duties, her natural curiosity and insatiable desire to know what was going on at all times made her an astute observer of persons coming to and going from the office. This included being mindful of various persons involved with film production and post-production, and Janice soon found herself evolving into a sort of post-production “hub.” People would drop off film and images in various stages of processing and development; Janice would then pass the materials to the correct person and keep note of the materials’ whereabouts. As the company grew, the coordination of post-production materials became a job of its own, and after two years Janice was promoted from reception to Post-Production Coordinator. She still holds the position today and is considered invaluable and irreplaceable. A much repeated story around the office illustrates her integral role: there had been some sort of crisis with film masters and Janice, who was literally in a hospital delivery room about to welcome her second child, had to be phoned for help. Janice, who had only recently returned to work from maternity leave during my observations, was humorously regaled by her coworkers more than once for giving urgently important instructions to a poorly-performing temp worker mid-push! Like Melissa’s, Janice’s experiences speak to the importance of network connections and suggest opportunity for upward occupational mobility.

In another example, consider the case of Annette. In the early 2000s, Dean Ryan was looking for an assistant, and a mutual friend suggested Annette. Annette worked as Dean's assistant for approximately two years before rumors about 2257 record keeping regulations enforcement began to circulate throughout the industry. According to US Code Title 18, 2257, whoever produces any sexually explicit visual media depictions after November 1, 1990 must "create and maintain individually identifiable records pertaining to every performer portrayed." The intended purpose of this law is to document the legal ages of persons performing in sexually explicit productions and prevent under-age persons from engaging in recorded sex performances.

Because of the characteristics Annette had exhibited on the job and because of the poor record keeping that had (not) been happening, Annette was promoted to 2257 Records Keeper in 2005, a then-newly created and intensely important position. She was responsible for creating all new records and collecting information missing from previous projects. During the time of my observations, Annette's 2257 record for each project included, at minimum, a photo of each project-relevant talent holding two forms of current identification (one of which had to be picture), photocopies of these same IDs, and a signed model release affidavit. Annette's job is extremely serious and significant, and it seemed to compel her significantly at times. Here is an excerpt from my field notes that shows the difficulties, intensities, and seriousness of Annette's work:

Annette was clearly on a mission – she stayed late last and got in before everyone else today. Also, between being on the phone and digging through boxes of old talent stills, she had been stomping around growling something like "I'm so gonna find you" to herself. I asked Drake what she was doing, and he let me know that she had come across an incomplete record from a film that was several years old. The man talent she was trying to track down had only worked in few scenes throughout the industry, and the records that had been taken on him by Fascination and by other companies were very poor. I am not quite sure how she eventually identified him, but I know she did – she came running out of her office cheering and did a victory lap around the planning table before running down the hallway to the photocopier.

In addition to taking her job very seriously, Annette excels at it. In addition to the previous example, here is a case in point: the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

conducted a 2257 records audit of 19 randomly selected adult film companies in 2007. Fascination Films was audited and was one of only three companies with no 2257 records violations.⁴⁴ Like Janice, Annette's experiences speak to the importance of network connections and the presence occupational advancement. And like Janice and Melissa, Annette's career has evolved into a high-profile, integral occupational position.

In addition to cohesion and the opportunity for upward occupational mobility, some women's experiences show the closeness of the adult film industry network. In each of the examples already discusses, network connections helped women acquire positions that already existed or developed. In some instances however a person's connections can facilitate the creation of an entirely new position. Consider the case of Barbara, another twenty-plus year veteran of the adult film industry. Barbara and her husband Dale were long-time friends of both Dean Ryan and Melissa Park. Approximately two years prior to my observations, the production company that Barbara and her husband were working for was bought out by a larger company and downsized. Many, including Barbara and Dale, lost their jobs. Fascination Films had recently lost its warehouse manager, and Dean Ryan immediately offered Dale the position. Because she was still out of work, an office position was created to accommodate Barbara as well. Barbara's example clearly illustrates the importance of the adult film industry network; but in this example, social connections go beyond simply connecting employee and employer at the level of the workplace. Barbara's case illustrates something unique about the adult film industry network – its closeness.

Women Workers not Previously Connected to the Network: In the previous examples, women's connections to the wider social network facilitated job opportunities, but is there work opportunity for women coming from outside the network? The answer is "yes." For example, Holly simply answered an ad for an entry-level reception position; she had no prior connection with the industry. Her experience is not particularly exceptional, nor is it dissimilar from the ways in which similar occupational positions in

different fields or industries are filled. Some women's experiences however reveal occupational opportunity in the adult film industry that does not appear to exist in the wider workforce.

Consider the case of Regina. Regina was working towards completing a public relations degree from a respected Southern California university during the late 1990s/early 2000s. However, as a young single mother, she was unable to complete any (unpaid) internship positions during her undergraduate years. Consequently, upon her graduation she was considered "inexperienced" and was unable to find work in her field for over one year. In what Regina described as then feeling like desperation, she began answering advertisements for public relations positions in the adult film industry. Regina was hired by Fascination Films as a public relations assistant, and she has since advanced to become the head of the department.

This example illustrates both opportunity for advancement after starting at an entry-level position and the possibility of opportunity unavailable in the wider workforce. It also says something about social class. As a young single African American mother in pursuit of an undergraduate degree, Regina was already an exception in the university classroom. Within this context, she herself chose to pursue a public relations degree. One could argue that the composite of Regina's marginalized identities (race and gender) and young motherhood were simply at odds with the PR workforce's occupational standards (relevant degree and internship experience). Maybe Regina and mainstream PR were simply a poor fit. This may very well be the case; however, Regina's example also speaks to the masculine gendering of organizations (Acker 1990) and embedded class bias. Based on the occupational requirements, it does not seem that PR allows for young motherhood, thus for some uniquely women's experiences. Moreover, it would appear that careers in mainstream PR are only available to persons with relevant requisite degrees and enough class privilege to completing unpaid internship labor. The amount of privilege necessary to complete the minimum standards for public relations employment (relevant degree and internship experience) is certainly not available to everyone. Given

the prevalence of young motherhood in African American populations and the US's marginalization of black women in general, it seems that mainstream public relations employment is simply not for black women.

In light of either PR's occupational standards or outright discrimination (depending on which argument one feels has more resonance), it is interesting to consider the adult film industry's willingness to employ Regina. Given both parties (porn's and Regina's) marginalized identities, I speculate that the fit between Regina and Fascination Films may have simply felt more natural. Thus, even though she was not already a member of the industry network, Regina and adult already had a semblance of a social bond. Industry protective practices were also at play here. Melissa Park, who was directly responsible for hiring Regina, recalled that she was delighted to hire a person "with a degree... even if she had no experience." By hiring someone with a mainstream education who was trained in playing the mainstream "game," Fascination Films itself took a small step towards mainstreaming. The presence of a college educated publicist may have contributed to Fascinations Films' overall legitimacy, and consequently to its organizational stability.

Finally, consider the case of Giselle. Giselle answered an advertisement seeking a public relations assistant approximately ten years ago. At the time, Giselle was a single mother of three in her early twenties. Although she possessed a great deal of intelligence and life experience, she had no higher education and no public relations work history. Regardless, she was hired immediately. Soon after Giselle began working at Fascination Films, the then-sales manager (who was in charge of both foreign and domestic divisions before the departments were split) realized she was bilingual, and he began lobbying to have her transferred to his department. Reluctantly, the public relations department let her go.

Today, the sales department has split into "foreign" and "domestic" divisions, and bilingual Giselle works in the foreign division (Lacie heads up the domestic division, and Paula is her assistant). Her reputation around Fascination Films is impeccable, such that

the division would fold without her. Case in point: because of her language skills and her vast knowledge of products and foreign accounts, she attends all sales meetings and convention-type events with her immediate boss. According to Giselle, she has been able to travel the world, something she feels she never would have been able to do on her own, because of her job.

The company exhibits its high value of her daily, particularly in the form of the “lifestyle” accommodations that are often made for Giselle. Specifically, her consistently poor attendance is regularly overlooked because of her integral role within the organization. Giselle has had two more children since being employed and is often called away to tend to them. In a world where organizations hold all employees to a masculine objective (Acker 1990), such treatment is exceedingly rare.

As I have discussed, the opportunity for occupational advancement is available for women inside and outside the adult film industry network. In many instances, these opportunities surpass those found in other workplaces. Regardless, women’s experiences in terms of performing office work duties within the adult film industry workplace are not so unlike women’s experiences in any other workplace. Women talent, however, have far different occupational duties than other workers and other adult industry employees. With this in mind, I will now discuss the unique experiences of women talent.

The Particularities of Women Talent: Thus far, I have discussed the experiences of women working at Fascination Films in occupations “behind the camera.” Most of these women were plugged in to the adult film industry network before coming to Fascination Films, and none of these women worked as talent prior to their current position. But what about the women who do work in front of the camera as talent? How are these women situated within the wider network of adult entertainment, and how does their relationship with the network compare to those who do not work as talent. What bearing might these dynamics have on their workplace experiences and opportunities?

Men and women talent make up a significant proportion of the adult film industry workforce. According to the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation, the adult film industry employs an estimated 6000 persons, 1200 of whom work as talent (CDC 9/23/05), or one in five. Although there are no statistics on the ratio of women to men talent, evidence suggest that the majority of these 1200 workers are women.

Most women with no connections to the adult film industry network enter the industry as new talent. Their career paths typically unfold in the following way: qualified women enter into a representation relationship with an adult talent/modeling agency. There are many agencies to choose from – AVN had 41 “talent and modeling agencies” listed in their 2009 *Directory*; XBiz had 80 “talent agencies” listed in their online adult business directory. These agencies cater to myriad types of adult entertainment and vary across a broad spectrum of professionalism. There are, however, ten top agencies that talent, new talent, and production companies should and do seek out. They are: New Line Talent Agency, Foxxx Modeling, Spiegler Girls, World Modeling, LA Direct Models, Gold Star Modeling, A-List Talent, Lisa Ann’s Talent Management, Adult Talent Mangers, and It Models (AVN Directory 2009; XBiz Directory; Melissa Park, interview data). Production companies then hire appropriate women talent via these agencies on a per-scene basis. In most instances, women with representation work steadily until they are “shot out” of the business, an industry euphemism referring to the point where talent reach their own particular filming/photographing saturation point, or decide to leave the business for personal reasons. On average, this happens over the course of six months to three years (Richards and Calvert 2006).

Not all women talent are represented by an agency throughout their careers in the adult film industry. For example, some women talent work as “contract girls.” As was previously discussed, Vivid Entertainment’s Steve Hirsch was the first person to adopt the old Hollywood studio system by contracting Ginger Lynn Allen in the early 1980s, and most larger companies in the adult film industry have adopted this employment model for their core talent. If contract girls are to be booked for work outside their

production house, this booking goes through the production company and not a talent agency. It is very rare that contract talent are booked for hard- or soft-core scene work outside their respective production houses. This would weaken a production house's control of their commodity and may be a potential violation of contract terms. Contract talent are often booked for non-scene work with little restriction though. For example, during my observations times, a hip and somewhat edgy mainstream network wanted to book "two or three girls" to present accolades during a televised awards show. This would have been a more than acceptable event; however, the network in question did not want to pay the women for their work. They were, thus, not booked. In other examples, Cassidy, Olivia, and Candace have all done work in various mainstream film, television, music, and print modeling projects. Tessa has hosted numerous industry events and is a regular commentator on Playboy Radio.

There are a few accounts detailing women's occupational trajectories from industry outsider to contract talent. These descriptions most often come in the form of memoirs written by notable women talent who have at some point been contracted "porn stars" (Canyon 2004; Jameson 2005; Milne 2005). However, when considering the number of women working -and hoping to work- as adult film industry talent relative to the number of women talent who eventually negotiate exclusive contracts, these stories are clearly atypical. For example, between 1993 and 2007, Fascination Films has contracted a total of seventeen women at various times, yet literally hundreds of women have been featured in their films on a pay-per-scene basis.

Becoming contract talent is clearly far from the norm. Consequently, the six women contracted with Fascination Films' during my observations are atypical when considered within the context of the entire adult film industry and in relation to all women talent. Regardless, these six women are a significant component of the Fascination Films workplace, thus any close consideration of this organization would be incomplete without their close consideration as well.

The career trajectories of Fascination Films' women contract talent seem to fall somewhere on a spectrum between two general experiences. At the extreme ends, women 1) have worked in the adult film industry for an appreciable amount of time before getting signed or 2) were contracted almost immediately after entering the industry. Tessa Blue's career most directly reflects the first extreme. Tessa entered the adult film industry in 1999. She was already a "wonderful industry professional" who had worked for a number of production companies in over 160 titles, including several Fascination Films projects, when she was signed in 2003. Madison Leigh's career most directly reflects the second extreme - Madison had only performed in two scenes when she was signed in 2005. Others have career trajectories somewhere between these two extremes. For example, Kianna Taylor began working in the adult film industry in 2002. She was in about 40 titles before being signed in 2003. Similarly, Cassidy Rae began working in the adult film industry in 2004 and had also been in about 40, mostly girl-girl scenes before she was signed in 2005.

It is difficult to determine what qualities talent can exhibit to increase their chances of becoming "contract girls." According to Dean Ryan, he looks for an overall "whole package," of which looks, personality, determination, and enthusiasm are key elements, when talking to prospective contract talent. I would offer that a built-in fan base and the almost complete exclusivity that talent such as Tessa and Madison (respectively) possess also contribute to a woman talent's overall package. Whatever the elusive composite of contract-worthy qualities involves, it certainly varies over time and across companies.

In addition to revealing something about women contract talents' career trajectories, Fascination Films' women contract talents' experiences also reveal another dimension for career opportunity in the adult film industry – moving behind the camera. Given the nature of women talent's work, it is clear that they will not be able to retire in their current occupational position. At whatever level they had been working, when women's time in the adult film industry is up they often leave the industry and disappear

into the wider workforce. Some women, however, cultivate careers behind the camera within the industry. For example, Jewel De’Nyle went from exotic dancer to talent to CEO of Platinum X Productions; Juli Aston became one of Playboy Radio’s first hosts, which marking the beginning of her transition away from working as talent (Milne 2005).

Some of Fascination Films women talent are already in varying stages of this process. For example, in addition to working as talent, Tessa has also worked as a director, writer, and line producer and has assisted in art direction for Fascination Films. According to several Fascination Films employees, Tessa’s work in production was often not up to the company’s standards, thus her occupational forays beyond talent are only occasional. The fact that they exist, however, indicates the availability of occupational opportunity.

In another telling example, consider the career trajectory of Candace Carmichael. Candace was working as an exotic dancer in the early 2000s when she met a then well-known adult film star traveling on a feature dance tour. The two became friends, and months later this woman helped Candace make the necessary networking connections that facilitated her first performance in an adult film. Candace then negotiated her way through the adult film industry’s talent ranks in a manner similar to Cassidy Rae (an appreciable number of films/scenes with mostly girl-girl content) and was eventually offered a contract with Fascination Films in 2002. Up to this point, Candace’s career path was unique only in that she had reached the commonly understood acme point for talent. In the smaller context of women contract talent, Candace was yet unremarkable. This soon changed.

According to Candace, she had enjoyed and excelled at creative writing since high school, and she presented Fascination Films executives with a script she had written about a woman detective in 2003. Thinking that the quality of the script was a fluke, they asked her to write another. And then another. Candace has since written over fifteen scripts for the company, all of which have been made into films. Moreover, as a direct result of her reported frustration with other directors’ interpretations of her work,

Candace began directing films in 2004. She has since directed nine total movies for Fascination Films and is currently musing over plans for a sequel to her most recent filmic effort, a spy comedy that she wrote, directed, and performed in.

Candace Carmichael's experiences illustrate the importance of network connections and opportunity for career advancement within the adult film industry. They also exemplify my point that opportunity for women in the adult film industry comes from above. Clearly Candace is a bright, upwardly-mobile and career-minded woman; however, her efforts to move from in front of the camera to behind it would not have materialized without the approval and support of Fascination Films executives. Her experiences illustrate both the importance of the social network and the phenomenon of workplace opportunity coming from above.

Fascination Films' women contract talents' experiences also reveal something about the importance of the adult film industry network. Consider the career trajectory of current contract talent Madison Leigh. Madison was signed in 2005. At that time, she had built up an extensive exotic dance and pictorial resume but had minimal experience performing in adult films. Regardless, Dean Ryan reportedly signed Madison because she exhibited the difficult to pinpoint yet extremely important "whole package" he looked for in women contract talent. Thus, Madison did not have to negotiate the casting cattle-calls (Faludi 1999) and/or all-sex film paces (Amis 2001) that, for example, other Fascination Films contract talent had done.

One day during the course of my observations, I accompanied Madison to a sex-toy warehouse show. At these events, adult industry retailers can purchase products in bulk, at wholesale prices. Often, representatives from small, independently-owned novelty shops come to stock their shelves and obtain unique memorabilia. Talent working these shows pose for pictures and autograph glossy head shots, posters, and DVD boxes. These items will eventually be posted in stores and/or used as prizes in promotional contests. Over the course of several hours of coffee, conversation, and endless pictures, Madison explained her path to Fascination Films contract talent in

greater detail. According to Madison, her heritage, social class, and the Southern region she came up in had left her financially and culturally disadvantaged. This combination of factors eventually necessitated withdrawal from her university shortly before completing her bachelor's degree. She soon began working as an exotic dancer out of financial necessity and found she was quite good at it. The way she put it, in her thick Southern drawl: "Ahs justabout done with [college] when evathin finally caught up with me. Ah had no money, no more aid, and ma family's justa buncha drunk Indians, ya know... so I started strippin... an ma pole tricks got good real quick." She was in Las Vegas for a high-profile exotic dance competition when she was approached by Fascination Films' contract talent Tessa Blue and contract director Keith. Madison had no experience with the adult film industry at that point but was immediately intrigued by the duo. A whirlwind that changed her life soon followed.

Tessa and Keith introduced her to Dean Ryan, who was interested in her unique aesthetic and charm but was also concerned about contracting a completely inexperienced performer. According to Madison, Fascination Films had her do one gonzo scene before finalizing her contract in order to ensure she would not refrain from performing (or, presumably, perform poorly) on film. She completed the scene, signed a two year contract with the company, and never looked back. While relating here story, Madison constantly expressed her pleasure and pride over being contracted with Fascination Films. She even repeatedly stated "Ahm a Fascination Girl, ya know... an ah jus luv tha sounda that!"

Madison Leigh's experiences exemplify my point that connection to the wider social network of adult is key in women's occupational advancement. Aside from exhibiting some intangible qualities that beggar description, Madison did little to advance herself to the top of the adult film industry talent ranks. She did not have to work to connect herself with the network via modeling agencies and casting call work. A woman performer already contracted with Fascination Films and a contracted man director coupled with her "whole package" facilitated her opportunities within the industry. In

other words, Madison's occupational advancement and rights –as characterized by her contract- were facilitated predominantly by persons from above. Similar to Barbara's and Regina's cases, Dean created an occupational opportunity for a potentially "unqualified" woman worker. Barbara's job was created because a close friend was in need; Regina was considered unqualified by mainstream PR standards; and Madison lacked the occupational experience most of her peers possessed. These examples all convey opportunity beyond what is normatively granted in traditional hiring practice.

In terms of opportunity for persons previously outside the network, Madison's case also parallels experiences such as Giselle's or Janice's. But, like the cases of Lacie and Paula, some women talent's experiences reveal the presence of deeper, more personal network processes. For example, consider some of the specifics of Kianna Taylor's experiences with Fascination Films. As I have already mentioned, she was signed in 2003. She "stepped away" from the adult film industry (and her contract) in 2004, however, to move abroad and pursue a romantic relationship with a professional rugby player. According to Fascination Films employees, Kianna had "screwed over" the company and Dean Ryan by not fulfilling the terms of her employment. Consequently, I found it surprising that she appeared to be fully reengaged with Fascination Films as contract talent during my observation times. Her relationship had failed after about one year, and she had returned to the US as a result. According to Kianna, she felt both grateful and enthusiastic for the opportunity to return to her work and her contract from where she had left off.

Kianna abandoned the terms of her contract and had apparently cultivated some bad blood amongst the ranks of Fascination Films' employees as a result. I found it interesting that she had been permitted to return so seamlessly after her year-long hiatus. This may simply be because of the quality and/or value of her work and the amount of revenue it generated. However, given the fairly final-seeming manner in which she had left the company in 2004, I found it even more surprising that no formal/legal or informal action had been taken against her for a breach of contract in the first place. I suspect that

some deeper connection contributed to Ryan's refrain in prosecuting her and/or denying her work upon her return. The social network is certainly a contributing factor here.

Finally, consider the case of Olivia Loren. Olivia began working in adult entertainment as one half of a very popular exotic dance duo in 1991. This eventually led her to her first adult scene work. Over the course of the next decade, Olivia became one of the most sought after women talent in the industry. She was contracted throughout the late 1990s with a major production company and was featured in a wide variety of mainstream content. After two years of independent representation (during which she did scene work for major production studios only), the now-"award winning adult film legend" was signed to Fascination Films in 2002. Olivia won the industry's highest accolades in 2004 for her work in one of Fascination Films' 2003 productions.

During my observations, Olivia's career appeared to be declining significantly.
Case in point:

Madison, Cassidy, Candace, and Olivia were all stationed at their own little round tables to pose for photos and sign autographs for fans at the "XXX" convention. Candace had her own line that wrapped around the entirety of the booth at least (the booth is the size of a small apartment). She needed her own security guard. I was keeping an eye on the other three with the help of a second guard while Regina ran an errand. Madison and Cassidy had pushed their tables aside and were signing autographs and posing for cute, suggestive photos with fans. Their line/crowd was growing steadily. Olivia was sitting behind her table, a mixture of disgust and anger on her face – she had no line at all. She began glossing her lips and playing with her phone. After a short while said she was going to go smoke. I asked her to please wait until Regina returned so someone could accompany her (it was unsafe for talent to walk across a convention floor filled with fans without a guard).

In this awkward and somewhat sad example, fan behavior mirrors the state of each woman's respective career. Candace's is at the height of power and popularity, unrivaled; Madison's and Cassidy's are growing steadily; and Olivia's is done. Moreover, according to Regina, Olivia was a notorious "diva" who was impossible to work with, and her physical appearance had changed dramatically in the past few months. Her most recent films were reviewed and had sold poorly (which was certainly not

entirely her “fault”), and the general consensus around the office was that Dean Ryan should have refrained from resigning her most recent contract.

During my brief encounters with her, Olivia seemed to be suffering from extreme career burnout – she had simply been in front of the camera for far too long. She once briefly mentioned she had been “doing makeup” on sets, presumably in an attempt to develop a new marketable skill. She also appeared to be very aware of both the state of her career and the reputation she had developed amongst her coworkers. According to Melissa Park, Fascination Films’ executives had been well aware of Olivia’s declining marketability on all fronts for some time; regardless, Dean Ryan had made the decision to renew her contract for 2007. Because of the state of Olivia’s finances and personal life, Ryan had “felt sorry for her” and had hoped the final year of stable contract work would give her an opportunity to put her affairs in order.

Olivia had depended on her body’s ability to physically labor in front of the camera for over fifteen years - far longer than the vast majority of her peers. Her story exemplifies what most persons who rely on their bodies to physically labor will eventually go through. Over time, all bodies begin to change and eventually decline. Persons who have depended predominantly on their body’s ability to physically labor in any capacity as a means for survival will face challenges as they attempt to reconcile these inevitable changes. This includes Olivia, who was rapidly reaching a point wherein she could no longer fulfill the obligations of her occupation. Olivia’s story points to the finite nature of adult film talent’s occupations. Although Olivia’s career extended years beyond reported average durations, even industry legends reach a point where they can no longer work.

Olivia’s experiences with Fascination Films also point to the industry network. As was the case with Barbara, Dean Ryan had essentially created a position for Olivia by renewing her contract for 2007. Given the declining state of Olivia’s position in the adult industry marketplace, this last contract seems to be more of an expression of gratitude

and reciprocity than anything. This concern for the person/employee over the demands of the market speaks to the significant interconnectedness of the network.

Transcending Public and Private Lives – The Network Out of Bounds?

As I have shown, the adult film industry's close-knit occupational network shapes workers' experiences differently and significantly. It also blurs boundaries between persons' public and private lives. In some instances, such as the facilitation of some women's career paths to the company, this blurring of boundaries is beneficial. Paula's, Lacie's, Candace's and others' experiences speak to this. In other instances, such as the case of Barbara and her husband Dale, the blurring of boundaries is dramatically more beneficial. And, in some rare instances, the blurring of boundaries can be life saving.

Consider the case of former talent and "industry legend" Hailey Jordan. Hailey worked as Fascination Films' contract talent during the late 1990s and early 2000s. She eventually quit working as talent to pursue nursing school; however, she continued to book adult industry-related appearances and feature dance across the country in order to earn supplemental cash. She remained closely connected to the network. When Hailey was diagnosed with an aggressive form of breast cancer in 2009, the industry rallied around her. Fascination Films collaborated with two other production companies to hold an industry benefit for her at the end of 2009, and Tessa Blue organized a mail-in donation campaign that targeted Hailey's fans. In another example, Regina and her family were in a severe car accident in 2009 wherein her husband, father-in-law, and two of her three children were badly burned. Fascination Films rallied around their publicist, collecting donations and holding a benefit for Regina. In both these examples, the monies collected were intended to help defray the cost of medical bills. Although I do not know the amount of money that was collected on the behalf of each woman (I only know of these events via *AVN* news stories), the network's blurring of public and private boundaries in these instances is significant.

Not all instances of network blurred boundaries seemed to benefit workers though. Consider the following example from my field notes:

An angry and frantic looking Regina marched over to my desk with a list of names and phone numbers early this afternoon. She needed me to call the people on the list and let them know that the shoot scheduled for tomorrow was cancelled. According to Regina, Madison's routine STI test from the day prior had tested positive for curable STI. Industry protocol was clear, and Madison would not be permitted to work (as talent) until she received a subsequent clear test from AIM. Because tomorrow's shoot was for one of Madison's films (meaning she was supposed to perform in most of the scenes), everything had to be canceled. Aside from the obvious inconvenience, I couldn't quite understand why Regina seemed so angry *at Madison* – it wasn't like she had given herself the infection. But then I realized: Fascination Films is condom-only, meaning Madison did not/was not permitted to work without a condom (which would have protected/prevented her from contracting the STI in question). Consequently, it was likely that she had contracted the STI in her private sex practice.

In this example, Madison's private sex life was about to be put on display. Although I was instructed not to tell anyone exactly why, there were very few sets of circumstances that would justify the last minute cancellation of a large and expensive film shoot.

Madison's right to privacy in terms of her health was about to be violated. This example speaks to two significant issues. First, talents' labor is extremely complex. It consists of publically engaging in behaviors most people consider extremely private. Negotiation of this dynamic is certainly challenging, and further exploration of this phenomenon is clearly necessary. Second, this example speaks to the sometimes problematic blurring of public and private boundaries facilitated by the adult film industry network. As contract talent, Madison is tightly connected to a network that mandates she regulate her private sex practice with public/work standards in mind. Although this is the only example I have of this type of problematic boundary blurring, it is unreasonable to assume it is the only one. Further exploration of this phenomenon is also necessary. In the end, Regina made the phone calls.

* * * * *

From Madison's rapid rise in the industry to Tessa's long slow journey to the top, from Candace's burgeoning career to Olivia's declining one, Fascination Films' women contract talents' experiences tell us much about the adult film industry, as do the experiences of "ordinary" women office workers. Specifically, Fascination Films women workers' experiences discussed in Chapter 7 reveal much about the adult film industry network, top-down processes, and the operationalization of industry protective practices.

In Part Two, I asserted that the adult film industry network was both significant and significantly interconnected. We see the significance of the adult film industry network operating directly in the lives of most of the women workers. For some of these women, connection to the industry network seems to facilitate relatively straightforward occupational opportunity. Experiences such as Tessa's, Cassidy's, Paula's, and Lacie's all point to the existence of relatively "normal" opportunity, while some women's experiences with the adult film industry network, such as Barbara's, appear to be more significant. Opportunity also exists for women office workers and women contract talent not already connected to the adult film industry network. And while experiences such as Holly's speak to more straightforward occupational opportunity, experiences like Regina's and Giselle's appear to be more significant and irregular. Experiences such as Madison's are, to my knowledge, extremely rare.

In Part Two, I also asserted that women's workplace opportunities came from above through a series of top-down processes. We see women's workplace opportunities coming directly from above in many instances at Fascination Films, particularly in the cases of Regina, Janice, Giselle, Madison, Annette, and Candace. Although the adult film industry network and top-down workplace opportunities manifest somewhat differently for talent than for office workers, these key elements identified in Part Two are clearly at work in the lives of Fascination Films women workers.

SUMMING UP PART THREE

Part Three gives contemporary credence to the phenomena identified in Part Two, while providing a more nuanced understanding of some women's experiences. Specifically, Part Three shows top-down processes and the adult film industry network operating in the lives of everyday women office workers and contract talent. In chapters 6 and 7, I have considered the experiences of women working for Fascination Films in various capacities within the context of an organization that has been shaped by the historical development of the industry as a whole. Women's experiences both in front of the camera and behind it suggest that 1) incorporation and opportunities for participation for women in the adult film industry workplace come from above and that 2) connections to and negotiation of the industry's social network are key to capitalizing on these opportunities. Although Fascination Films' women employees' experiences are in no way representative of all women's -nor of all sex workers'- experiences, they do provide a contemporary glimpse into adult film industry sex workers' lives and can tell us some things about sex work in general.

Fascination Films women workers clearly illustrate the availability of diverse occupational positions (beyond becoming talent) discussed Part 2. These opportunities come from the upper echelons of the organization and are mediated, in part, by one's connection to the adult film industry network. Moreover, the scope of available opportunity is wider and more welcoming to women employees than it seems to be in the wider workforce. Respectively, Regina and Giselle's experiences speak to nuances of this point. In Regina's case, a qualified woman worker was unable to find employment in the mainstream public relations workforce because she had been unable to complete supplementary occupational training components. She was however able to find employment at Fascination Films. The scope of opportunity in the adult film industry appears to be "wider" than it was in the mainstream industry in this instance. In Giselle's

case, traditional organizational practices were modified regularly for the sake of mothering, an uncommon practice in traditional bureaucratic organizations.

Although there are plenty of career and job opportunities available for women coming from outside the network, there appears to be a tendency in the industry to hire from within its wider social network. This speaks directly to the tight, closely-interconnected social network that began developing in the industry decades ago. Because sex work in general and the adult film industry in particular are highly stigmatized occupational fields, employers have always conceivably hired from within their own social networks, filling their workplaces with a variety of friends, family, and partners. In the late 1970s, the bulk of the adult film industry relocated from the east to the west coast and grew substantially. I would argue that relocation, geographic concentration, and continued stigmatization resulted in further tightening of the adult film industry network in the 1980s, which in turn intensified intra-industry hiring tendencies. Clearly this practice is still in place.

As the industry continues to grow, employers need more and more workers; however, finding persons from the general population to work in a highly-stigmatized branch of the sex work industry may be challenging. In spite of the fact that most women Fascination Films employees work in benign commonplace occupations, they are all still employed in the sex industry. Although little to no literature exists on the adult film industry workplace specifically, there are volumes that explore its negatively stigmatized sister fields and their negatively stigmatized workers. Hiring from within the industry network has been and continues to be a tactic employers use to ensure workers are both as comfortable with and as loyal to the industry as possible. This hiring tendency is in of itself an industry protective practice.

In addition to career opportunity, plenty of opportunity for occupational advancement exists within the industry, both as it currently exists and as it continues to grow. This is clearly illustrated by Lacie and Janice's experiences. In Lacie's case, she went from working for a struggling studio to running the domestic sales department of

one of the largest and most prolific production houses in the industry. Her career advanced when she took the job at Fascination Films, particularly in terms of job stability and security. In Janice's case, her career advanced as the industry and organization grew. Janice went from being an entry-level receptionist to coordinating the "hub" of Fascination Films primary objective: film production. Her career advanced in terms of both stability and prestige.

It is important to note that career opportunity manifests very differently for women who do not work as adult film industry contract talent and for women who do. Fascination Film's women contract talent –and adult film industry contract talent in general- are almost always necessarily plugged into the wider industry network as uncontracted talent before they become "contract girls." Madison Leigh's case, while illustrative of the power of the industry's social network, is unique. Thus, when considering Fascination Films' women workers specifically, it appears that opportunity beyond sex performance exists for talent once they are plugged into the wider industry network, but it exists for women working in positions other than talent regardless.

It is also important to note that differences in opportunity exist between women talent who have exclusive contracts with a production studio and women talent who do not. I saw no evidence of Fascination Films affording per-scene talent workplace and career opportunities similar to those afforded to their contract talent. Although this is to be expected, it is but one indicator that the occupational experiences of per-scene talent and contract talent are markedly different. Although exploration of this dynamic is well beyond the scope of this project, the occupational position of talent in the adult film industry is very complex. Further consideration of opportunity, power, and privilege pertaining to women (and men) adult film industry talent in general is necessary.

The women workers at Fascination Films have shed some light on the experience of sex work in the adult film industry and thus on the experience of sex work in general. Although workplace occurrences in the adult film industry speak directly to just one field situated beneath the umbrella of sex work, all sex work fields and occupations are

stigmatized such that their own social networks have developed. This implies that workplace opportunity similar to that found in the adult film industry may also exist for women in other legal sex work fields. However, the very things that allude to the similarities between fields also make further research challenging. Occupational and social networks have contributed to the development of boundaries, both between sex work and wider society and amongst the sub-fields of sex work in general.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this work has been to explore the processes shaping changes over time via an exploration of the development of women adult film industry workers' occupational incorporation and opportunities for participation. The central questions guiding this work consider how women's labor incorporation and opportunities for participation in the US adult film industry and the content of adult films have changed since the 1950s. These questions are compelling in light of the absence of worker organizing, or bottom-up processes, which are generally used as the explanatory model for rights development and liberalization. The adult film industry's *reputation* for objectifying women while creating problematic, steadily-more-extreme content have made these questions even more intriguing.

Several broad insights, specifically regarding 1) industry protective practices, 2) the adult film industry network, and 3) the content of key adult films, have emerged from this work. First, I have argued that industry protective practices have contributed to the expansion of women workers' incorporation and opportunities for participation in the absence of a social movement or worker organizing. All leaders in every commercial industry must negotiate the intricacies of business practice. Adult film industry leaders also negotiate a vast array of business practices, but while under intense scrutiny from wider society. Consequently, industry protective practices, some of which dramatically improve workplace conditions, are enacted to protect the industry from external forces that threaten its operating capacity and viability. Thus, industry protective practices function as stalwarts against various forms of mainstream persecution while simultaneously benefitting worker welfare. Just as Mounira M. Charrad (2001) and Mala Htun (2004) found that women's rights expansion occurred in the interest of the state, the improvement of women's workplace conditions via industry protective practices is in the interest of the industry as a whole.

In addition to the broad sweeping improvements brought about by industry protective practices, evidence suggests that workplace conditions have improved on a more localized, case-by-case scale over past decades. The stigmatized nature and legally-sanctioned geographic concentration of adult film production have contributed to the emergence of a “porn bubble” in LA’s San Fernando Valley – individuals live and work in a vast cityscape while keeping pretty much to themselves. Consequently, a very complex network built on work and kin relationships has developed between and amongst industry workers. Because this network based on interconnections between work and kin relationships, it blurs boundaries between public and private. This has resulted in high measure of permeability between adult film industry workers’ public and private worlds. Thus, the relatively public/private nature of adult film industry work/kin network further contributes to the improvement of workplace conditions. I therefore also argue that the adult film industry network contributes to the dual-function of industry protective practices (protect the industry, protect the workers) and the general workplace improvement that occurs from the top-down.

Finally, I have shown the ways in which the content of key adult films reflects both adult film industry development and a symbiotic relationship between the adult film industry and wider society. The state of the relationship between producers, consumers, and regulators is reflected in the content of key adult films. This is significant in that, contrary to popular perceptions and most scholarly and activist work, the most commonly viewed adult film content has not become more extreme in past decades. In fact, similar graphic sex depictions can be found all key adult films. Particularly when juxtaposed with common perceptions of adult film content, this pattern is suggestive of myriad tensions between adult and the wider social world and speaks to a deep cultural and scholarly misunderstanding of industry and its products.

This study addresses two significant theoretical issues. First, the process of rights liberalization occurring within the industry challenges conventional conceptualizations and models explaining the ways in which women gain incorporation and opportunities for

participation. As I have stated, this study has built on Charrad's (2001) and Htun's (2004) insights, exploring similar top-down processes occurring in a subculture of Western women workers. The adult film industry "state" has initiated rights liberalization beneficial to both workers and the development and protection of the industry through top down processes. Consequently, this study adds to the growing body of scholarship developing new theoretical models explaining the process of rights expansion and sets the stage for further considerations of rights liberalization in the absence of a social movement, at a level of analysis other than the nation state. Second, this study's emphasis on production has provided a fresh and contemporary feminist perspective to the scholarly analysis of "pornography" by considering more representative components of the industry. It has brought the experiences of women insiders into the conversation, adding a new dimension to adult film industry scholarship and to the consideration of sex workers.

Future Directions

This work is rich in insight and detail and begins filling in some gaps left open by previous work. It also sets the stage for future work. On the most general level, there is a basic lack of demographic data about the adult film industry. This is because, beyond some industry generated statistics, none exists. A rigorous comprehensive survey of the adult film industry needs to be conducted.

In this work, I offer an in-depth look at only one adult film production company – Fascination Films. Consideration of additional production houses generating comparable content would add additional depth to this analysis. Moreover, in my considerations of key adult films, I emphasize women talent. Similar, careful consideration of the evolution of men talent's bodies in key adult films is absolutely necessary. If the argument can be made that depictions of women talent affect the mainstream, it stands to reason that depictions of men talent affect the mainstream as well. Further, it would be interesting to compare the adult film industry to other industries around the question of

rights. However, because this is not a case study about in/equality and/or the presence or absence of rights, further explorations of the adult film industry along these lines are needed.

There are three additional dimensions that must also be explored. First, although the vast majority of adult film content resembles the depictions discussed here, there are sections of the adult film industry that do not. These niche film production houses and their content need to be explored – not as representative of the whole industry (as they have been in the past), but as significant component of it. Second, the impact the internet and purely virtual access to adult content has had on the industry also needs to be explored. In spite of lip-service regarding a complete shift to online consumption, many consumers do not have access to the technology or privacy necessary to facilitate porn consumption in this way. Exploration of how this dynamic is operating in the real world and how it is impacting the industry is necessary. Finally, consideration of the amateur porn production industry is necessary. Persons who web-cast sex content from their homes or other private spaces are not part of the adult film industry, yet these private persons are often conflated with the adult film production industry. For example, after her 2007 abduction and tragic murder, internet model “Zoey Zane”/Emily Sander was widely reported as a “porn star.” This young woman, who web cast herself out of her Kansas home, was in no way affiliated with the adult film industry, yet her case was often used as a rhetorical warning about the dangers of porn. There are no scholarly considerations of this branch of amateur porn production sex work, an oversight in need of reconciliation.

What can the Adult Film Industry tell us about the Rest of the World?

The adult film production industry is not so dissimilar from other US industries. For example, other industries are organized around short-term projects and rely heavily on informal social networks. Candace Jones (2001) discusses the Hollywood film industry as a purely “network organization.” In a network organization, rather than being

organized around traditional self-contained hierarchically organized workplaces, careers move across firms from project to project via a social network that is constantly re/shaping. Although the adult film industry is not a purely network organization by Jones' standards, there are similarities between the adult and Hollywood film industries in terms of project-by-project contract labor and integral nature of the social network. Further useful comparisons could be made between the adult film industry and the Hollywood film industry as both industries are producing very similar products and have some similar organizational structures. Much more needs to be learned about the adult film industry as a whole, however, in order to make such useful comparisons. For example, systematic consideration of writers working in the adult film industry are needed in order to make comparisons with William and Denise Bielby's (1992; 1996) considerations of film and television writers' experiences.

In addition to being comparable to other industries organized around short-term projects and informal social networks, other industries are geographically concentrated. For example, AnnaLee Saxenian (2000) discusses historical development and geographic concentration (among many other things) of the computer systems industry in California's Silicon Valley. Similar to Saxenian's assertion that a predominant proportion of the computer development and production is concentrated in a specific geographic area, the vast majority of adult film production occurs in the San Fernando Valley.

Structural similarities between the adult film industry and the Hollywood film industry and the computer systems industry clearly exist, and certainly additional similarities exist between the adult film industry and myriad other workplaces. In addition to these similarities, a unique set of tensions between the adult film industry and the wider social world have emerged. There is clearly a market demand for porn - US consumers alone fund billions of dollars worth of graphic sex content production annually. Content wherein "barely legal" women talent may engage in a wide variety of risky sex performances without condoms. Content where some "girls" are waxed bare

and some vampy porn stars have Barbie-like bodies crafted by a surgeon's hand. Content where nondescript white everymen ejaculate on women talent's bodies somewhere, anywhere, as long as there is a visible pop. Occasionally black men talent are featured in this content, but only if said talent are depicted in the most problematic and racist ways possible. This content almost always features heterosexual anal sex, group sex, and girl-girl sex (which is not to be confused with lesbian sex, which is not featured; we also don't see men talent doing anything constitutive of "boy-boy" or gay/queer sex – these types of content have their own niche market). While simultaneously funding the production of this content, members of US society also love discussing the nefarious nature of the industry as a whole and the persons responsible for creating its products. Common topics include the ways in which adult films, and thus their producers and the industry in general, are desensitizing the population to "real" sex and "real" women, are willfully and constantly attempting to push the boundaries of obscenity, are corrupting children, and are exploiting and endangering talent. This type of rhetoric gives rise to the nightmarish image of so commonly associated with the adult film industry – an image of suitcase pimps forcing vulnerable runaways to work in an unregulated and dangerous trade fraught with disease, drug abuse, and botched surgeries has captured the popular imagination.

As I have shown, the reality of adult film production is far more complex. Women are both present and powerful in the adult film industry. The industry is both internally and externally regulated in numerous ways. Dealings involving talent are carefully monitored in an attempt to protect business owners, the talent themselves, and the industry as a whole. Yet, this love/hate relationship with adult film content, the adult film industry, and the persons working therein points to a deep-seeded, almost schizophrenic ambivalence existing in US culture, to which members of the adult film industry (and sex workers in general) are often subject. The mainstream –we— desperately, to the tune of billions of dollars per year, want what porn has to offer. We want to watch adventurous sex between young hot multiple partners happening without

condoms in pirate ships, but we simultaneously feel compelled by some wider normative force to outwardly reject these scenarios on the grounds of their (supposedly) soul-destroying and objectifying nature. We want what, for whatever reason, we are not supposed to desire. These tensions and so many more point to greater US cultural problems both with sex in general and with sex practices that are perceived as “abnormal.” Like prostitutes who are arrested while their johns go free and sexually mature teens who fumble around with neither information nor pregnancy and STI protection, people who work in the adult film industry feel the brunt of this cultural ambivalence. Decades upon decades of such ambivalence have functioned to encapsulate the adult film industry and its workers in a semi-permeable membrane, confining them to an amoebic bubble all their own.

Throughout this work, we see evidence of tensions existing between the adult film industry and the wider social world. More often than not, tensions come in the form of the mainstream-sanctioned rules, regulations, and standards, such as with 2257 record keeping standards. Occasionally the industry has foresight enough to see developing issues before they come to a head. The industry’s pre-2257 practice of checking and documenting talent identification (regardless of how thoroughly this may have been done) and the industry’s internally mandated and regulated HIV/STI testing program are examples. Although the symbiotic relationship between the US culture and adult goes both ways, these tensions can primarily be characterized as the mainstream shaping and regulating adult.

But some tensions, such as those surrounding the issue of condom use in films, are trickier. Internally mandated, industry-wide condom use, even to the degree it was done after the Marc Wallice incident, exemplify the dual purpose of industry protective practice – the industry is (preemptively) protected from sanctioning and/or external regulation and workers’ occupational conditions are improved. As the evidence suggests, however, consumers did not want to purchase films featuring condom use. This puts adult film production companies in a complex double-bind: condom use functions as an

industry protective practice and benefits workers, but it simultaneously puts the operational viability of the businesses at risk. Condom use cessation increases sales, while simultaneously endangering workers and opening the industry up for scrutiny. For example, a media firestorm erupted in June of 2009 when the *LA Times* reported that 16 cases of unpublicized/unreported HIV positive talent were currently working in the adult film industry (Yoshino and Lin 6/12/2009). “Requiring” talent to work without condoms for the benefit of industry sales was discussed as one cause for this outbreak. It is doubtful that many people heard much about the *LA Times*’ virtually next-day story retraction or about the LA County Department of Health’s inaccurate analysis that prompted this story in the first place (Yoshino and Lin 6/17/2009; Kernes 6/17/09). It is also doubtful that anyone pointed out that no one is “required” to work in the adult film industry in the first place or that there are plenty of condom-optional companies around.

In fact, only one woman talent tested positive in the above mentioned example and she was promptly quarantined by AIM (Yoshino and Lin 6/17/2009; Kernes 6/17/09). Due to AIM’s/the industry’s regular and rigorous testing mandates, no additional talent were infected. This implies that the woman contracted the virus via private (versus work-related sexual) activity. It only takes a slight shift in perspective to see how this story, albeit tragic for the woman, is actually a mark of success for the industry. This is the first time since 2004 that an active performer has tested positive for HIV. Compare this to the estimates of HIV incidence (amount of new cases) in the general US population. According to H. Irene Hall, et al (2008), there were 22.8 new cases of HIV out of every 100,000 US persons in 2006. Considering five years of zero HIV incidence among approximately 1200 active, yet constantly cycling, talent, HIV incidence among adult film talent is actually lower than it is in the general US population.⁴⁵ In an industry where people labor through sexual intercourse and maintain unmonitored private sexual practice, this comparison is almost incomprehensible; and yet, it is true. Instead of, for instance, learning from the industry and its testing practices, we seek to vilify it. Instead of considering how the industry has taken steps to protect its

workers and itself, we subject it to incompetent reactionary reporting (*LA Times*) based on poorly done research (LA County Department of Health) that threatens its fiscal survival.

The questions scholars and activists have asked for decades about porn, the industry, and its impact on US culture have missed the mark. It is not about what porn is doing to talent, women, consumers, and society (anti-sex/pro-censorship). Nor is it about women attempting to negotiate some measure of autonomy, space, or power in a social-structural system that is already so gendered to their *disadvantage* (pro-sex/anti-censorship). Instead, our considerations might be centered on why we as a culture are so ambivalent. Why are we so preoccupied with sex and porn, yet so unwilling to engage it critically? Why are we so eager to consume the industry's products, yet so unwilling to respect it as a viable and influential industry that employs a vast array of working *persons* (including and in addition to talent)? Further exploration of questions such as these, questions that attempt to get at the symbiotic relationship that has always existed between wider US culture and adult, is clearly necessary.

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VITA

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¹ According to David Morgan (www.filmwad.com), *The Hollywood Reporter* reported Hollywood film revenue was at a record high in 2007 with 9.62 billion dollars generated. This amount marked a 4% increase since 2002.

² These figures come from the Center for Disease Control's *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* (MMWR), dated September 23, 2005. The CDC cited unpublished data from the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation (2005) as its source for these figures.

³ The mandates of employment law are articulated by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Equal Pay Act of 1963, the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) of 1938, and the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 among many other acts, cases, findings, and statutes (<http://avalon.law.yale.edu>).

⁴ See the US Department of Labor at www.dol.gov and the Center for American Women in Politics (CAWP) at www.cawp.rutgers.edu.

⁵ Regarding "modernity," the adult film industry is often on the cutting edge of technological development. Case in point: some adult film production companies are currently selling downloadable movies that can be burned to DVD. This technology is considered integral to the growth of online distribution, according to Chmielewski and Hoffman (2006).

⁶ See Note 12 for further definition and discussion of adult film genres.

⁷ According to Wendy Chapkis (1997: 21-22), Camille Paglia's "uncompromising pronouncements on sex" render her an equal pro-sex counterpart to Andrea Dworkin's anti-sex perspective.

⁸ Key dimensions are those dimensions hypothesized to have a significant impact on comparable cases (Charrad 2001).

⁹ This first trip to the San Fernando Valley was funded in part by a UT Liberal Arts Graduate Research (LAGR) grant. This preliminary study received IRB approval from UT Austin.

¹⁰ The names Fascination Films and Smith.com are pseudonyms, as are the names of all the respondents included in this study.

¹¹ Grounded theoretical analyses of data are emergent processes. Themes are identified in preliminary data gathering and analysis; these themes are then considered in subsequent data analyses. For further information on grounded theory, including gathering rich data through intensive/in-depth interviewing, see Kathy Charmaz (2006).

¹² According to an *AVNonline* survey conducted in 2004, ninety percent of the adult films produced by 500 production companies surveyed are features or all-sex films. All other subgenres ("niche" films) collectively make up the remaining ten percent.

Feature films include sex depictions couched within an overarching plot and do not ordinarily incorporate many of the themes or sex practices found in niche genre films. All-sex films depict sex scenes only, with no overarching plot or developing narrative. The all-sex film category is made up of "gonzo" and vignette films. Gonzo films incorporate the use of a "talking camera" wherein the person filming a particular sequence or scene is also playing an active, integral role in the film. For example, a person may be holding

the camera while giving directions or making comments to people performing in a sex scene (or engaging in sex behaviors themselves). Vignette films string sex scenes together with an overarching concept. For example, the sex scenes in a vignette film may be connected by a consistent costume/visual theme or by the consistent presence of particular talent.

¹³ Fascination Films opened in 1993. There is only one other adult film production company currently open with a longer history.

¹⁴ See Appendices A1 and A2 for further film sample details.

¹⁵ My preliminary analysis was written up in “Go to Camp (Cuddly Pines)!: Mainstream Commercial Pornography and the ‘Straight Feature’ Film.” This in-depth analysis of the adult feature film *Camp Cuddly Pines Powertool Massacre* (2005) was completed during the Fall, 2005 semester as part of Professor Mary Kearney’s *Feminist and Queer Film Theory* course (RTF 386C).

¹⁶ For further information on grounded theory, including gathering rich data through analyses of extant texts, see Kathy Charmaz (2006).

¹⁷ See Barry Keith Grant (2007) for further discussions of applying generic definitions to texts versus considering generic elements emerging from a collection or sampling of texts. Problems that emerge from “genre fixity,” or thinking of genres as permanent, are also discussed. See also Rick Altman (1999).

¹⁸ See Appendix A1 for the contents of the entire original sample.

¹⁹ From the Video era, *Traci, I Love You* (1987) and *John Wayne Bobbitt: Uncut* (1994) were removed. *Traci, I Love You* is the last adult film talent Traci Lords performed in and is the only film she appeared in over the age of eighteen. *John Wayne Bobbitt: Uncut* stars John Wayne Bobbitt, a man famous for having his penis cut off by his then-wife in 1993. From the Digital/Virtual era, *Pam and Tommy Lee: Hardcore and Uncensored* (1998) and *I Night in Paris* (2004) were removed; both films are “celebrity-sex tapes” featuring Pamela Anderson and Tommy Lee and Paris Hilton respectively, not adult industry film productions. *Snopp Dogg’s Doggystyle* (2001) and *Snoop Dogg’s Hustlaz: Diary of a Pimp* (2003) were endorsed and directed respectively by hip-hop artist Calvin Broadus, who is more commonly known as Snoop Doggy Dogg. It is likely that the celebrity novelty attached to these films bolstered their sales.

²⁰ Adult DVD Empire won the *AVN* award for “Best Retail Site” in 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2007.

²¹ Review of *Pirates* by Jared Rutter (*AVN* December, 2005).

²² This consideration speaks to Jason Mittell’s (2004) position that what elements constitute categorization within a particular genre change over time, in conjunction with changes in the culture.

²³ *Behind the Green Door* is one of three key adult films informing this study that defies categorization as either feature or vignette. *Behind the Green Door*, along with *Insatiable* (1980) and *Hidden Obsessions* (1993), constitute what I call feature-vignettes. Feature-vignettes have very thin plot lines couching myriad conceptually-linked sex scenes.

²⁴ MacKinnon and Dworkin’s ordinance passed in Minneapolis but was later overturned as unconstitutional by the District Court. This decision was upheld by the United States Court of Appeals in 1985 (Edwards 1992).

²⁵ The eleven Commission committee members directly heard 30 testimonies; however, 51 more individuals were formally invited to testify before them. For reasons undisclosed in the Final Report, each of these 51 formally invited individuals ended up not testifying. An additional 196 testimonies from various expert witnesses were heard by commission staff investigators, and a total of 127 individuals submitted written statements (*Final Report* 1986). According to Nobile and Nadler (1986), there were even more individuals with whom committee members and the Commission spoke to informally about testifying. Once it was determined that these testimonies would not support the Commission's anti-pornography agenda, formal invitations to testify were not extended.

²⁶ Margo St James founded COYOTE in 1972 or 1973. Both years are cited alternately, often (see Jenness 1990; McElroy 1995; Weitzer 1991).

²⁷ *Women* who perform the *actual physical sexual labor* in any sex work field are often the first and only persons thought of as "sex workers." Based on Ron Weitzer's (2000) conceptualization of "sex work" however, persons performing the physical sexual labor *and* persons involved strictly in its commercial exchange are all sex workers. Although COYOTE advocates on the behalf of all gendered sex workers, persons involved in commercial exchange who do not perform any physical sexual labor are not included in its advocacy. I engage Weitzer's broader conceptualization of "sex worker" in this project, the implications of which will be discussed in Part Three. It is important to note that COYOTE's work seeks to address the needs of all persons performing physical sexual labor. Person's working in sex work occupations who do not perform physical sexual labor do not reside under COYOTE's umbrella of advocacy.

²⁸ Quote taken from the Prostitutes' Education Network website (12/08) www.bayswan.org/COYOTE.html. Emphasis added.

²⁹ Various COYOTE chapters around the US distributed approximately 200 4-page surveys to their members. Wendy McElroy received forty-one completed surveys by mail (McElroy 1995).

³⁰ According to Brett Pulley (2005), Vivid employed ten women contract talent in 2005. As of December, 2008, Vivid employed eight: Monique Alexander, Briana Banks, Lanny Barby, Hanna Hilton, Jenna Jameson, Nikki Jayne, Sunny Leone, Megan Mallone, Tera Patrick, and Savanna Samson (www.vivid.com)

³¹ The names Melissa Park and Fascination Films are pseudonyms. See Part III, chapters 7 and 8 for discussion of this organization and Park's role in the adult film industry. Information in this section also comes from my own ethnographic observations.

³² www.freespeechcoalition.com December, 2008

³³ American Civil Liberties Union quoted by the Free Speech Coalition (www.freespeechcoalition.com December, 2008). All other information regarding *Ashcroft v Free Speech Coalition* (535 US 234; 2002) is taken directly from the case itself.

³⁴ On April 8, 2008, John Stagliano and his businesses Evil Angel Productions, Inc. and John Stagliano, Inc. were indicted by a federal grand jury with seven different counts of obscenity for the transportation and intended distribution of the films "Milk Nymphos," "Fetish Fanatic Chapter 5," and "Storm Squirters 2: Target Practice." The case is still pending.

³⁵ The exact year Margold founded PAW is difficult to determine. Margold is quoted saying PAW was

conducting HIV/STI testing as early as 1993 (McNeil and Osborne 2005). He is also quoted describing PAW as “the organization [he] set up after [talent] Savannah killed herself in 1994,” (Meyer 5/12/04). Although not exact, dating PAW as being established in the early 1990s seems sufficiently accurate.

³⁶ As of December 2008, PAW continued to maintain a live website (www.pawfoundation.org), however it was extremely out of date. For example, the PAW calendar’s most recent event listing was from 2005. Bill Margold himself, however, continues to be very active in the industry.

³⁷ “Fisting” refers to the insertion of five total digits into a person’s anus or vagina. “Fisting” is a misnomer though, as this act is completed with an open hand, not a closed fist.

³⁸ Although compelling, discussion of the personal and legal rationale behind Zicari and Romano’s decision to plead guilty is beyond the scope of this project.

³⁹ AIM Mission Statement quoted from: www.aim-med.org

⁴⁰ See Chapter 4 and my discussion of the prostitutes’ and sex workers’ rights organization COYOTE. See also Bernadette Barton’s (2006) discussion of the unionization of San Francisco’s Lusty Lady peepshow house.

⁴¹ Review of production credits and Internet Movie Data Database (IMDB) listings are revealing, but need to be taken critically. Histories of the adult film industry allude to women working at more and more occupations within the industry over time, however there is no available reliable record itemizing occupation and the gendered worker. My method here is the closest I can come to specific data on this topic, however I realize it is questionable at best.

⁴² LA Direct Models is a talent agency listed in the *XBiz* “Directory” (January, 2007). The gender of persons represented by LA Direct Models was determined by accessing the agency’s website in March, 2007.

⁴³ See Jean Kilbourne (1999), Sharon Lamb and Lyn Mikel Brown (2006), and Naomi Wolf (1991; 2003) among many others.

⁴⁴ See Robert D. Richards and Clay Calvert (*AVN* June 27, 2007) for more information and details.

⁴⁵ According to Hall et al (2008), HIV incidence in the general population was 22.8/100,000 in 2006. Given 1200 active talent (CDC 2005) and five years with zero new cases, HIV incidence in adult film talent is 1/6000 or 16.7/100,000.