Harmful and Harmless Objectification and Pornography

Rosa Vince

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

MAY 2021

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
THE UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD

ABSTRACT

Harmful and Harmless Objectification and Pornography

In this PhD thesis I argue that pornography is not necessarily, and not uniquely, harmful by virtue of involving or perpetuating objectification.

After arguing for particular conceptions of pornography and objectification, I propose that objectification is not harmful itself, but harm is done when objectification is a) non-consensual, b) 'context-creeping' or c) trades on stereotypes or reinforces oppression. We can explain the popular intuition that objectification is usually or always harmful by pointing to just how common these three factors are; objectification regularly happens in these ways. I then show that pornography is no worse than other objectifying media in terms of these three harmful factors, and suggest, finally, that not only is the feminist focus on pornography (over other media) unjustified, it is also dangerous, insofar as it contributes to the stigmatisation of sex workers and to misogyny more broadly.

I aim for this thesis to be accessible and responsive to feminists outside the academy. In this spirit I track popular intuitions as far as possible in my definitions, and cite experts outside the usual philosophical 'canon'.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank my parents Margret Vince and Jim Stuart, and my brother Ben Vince. I owe these three people so much, and I am very fortunate to have their love and support. I also must acknowledge the great luxury of two free proof-readers (my parents) – these last few months would have been so much harder without you. I consider myself very lucky to have a family who not only love and support me, but are genuinely interested in what I am doing. All three of you have fostered my interest in philosophy, and influenced the ethical and political commitments which influence my work, through years of thoughtful conversation. I wrote a significant chunk of this thesis while listening to Ben's music – so thank you for that.

Thank you so much to Nils Olsen. Your love, kindness and patience has kept me going through the last year of this PhD. I am also grateful for your wonderful conversation; you seem to be able to contribute something new, thoughtful, and insightful on any topic.

I have endless love and gratitude for all my friends, inside the university and out, who bring me joy and have made this PhD bearable. Thank you so much to: Taz Alsayyed Ahmad, Rachel Bayles, Olivia Belton, Sally-Anne Beverley, Andrea Blomkvist, Emma Bolton, Olivia Caputa, Hannah Chappell, Alex Cocker, Soph Cocker, Matt Cull, Kayleigh Doherty, Isela González Vázquez, Adam Gouldin, Michael Greer, Patrick Hans, Alex Hawker, Will Hornett, Maryam Jameela, Tom King, Anna Klieber, Cassie Last, Nadia Mehdi, Miriam Miller, Lizzie Milton, Robbie Morgan, Emma Nagouse, Ashley Pennington, Jamie Ranger, Loren Richardson-Stevens, Leo Rumfitt, Sabina Wantoch, Alana Wilde, Toby Wright. Special thanks to Alana, Matt, and Robbie for reading several drafts of my papers, to Anna for writing and resisting with me, and to Nadia for looking after me at many conferences.

I will forever be grateful to Jamie Lloyd, who supported me at every talk I gave, and discussed all my ideas during my master's as well as much of my PhD. I am so lucky to have had your kindness and company.

I want to extend a massive thank you to the early-career friends and acquaintances who paid it forward and helped me navigate academia when formal support is scarce – some have already been mentioned, but also: Natalie Ashton, Naomi Hetherington, Hannah Robbins, Lizzy Ventham. Without kind colleagues reading and giving feedback on applications and papers, showing examples of their own, and passing on information about journals and jobs, I would have been completely lost. I will do the same for others whenever I can.

Thank you to the academics who did what they could to make me more welcome and accepted in academia. Steve Makin and Miranda Fricker helped me get through my undergraduate degree. For the support given throughout my master's I am grateful again to Steve, as well as Jenny Saul and Komarine Romdenh-Romluc. Thank you to Chris Bennett and Jules Holroyd for their warm support supervising my PhD and their many helpful suggestions and discussions on drafts of this thesis. Thank you to Megan Blomfield and Shannon Dea for examining this thesis, but more importantly for

making me feel welcome in academia, and to Jenny again, who always made time to answer my questions. Thank you also to the over-worked and under-thanked office staff, without whom none of this would be possible.

Thank you so much to Amanda Marples for supporting me through my PhD, helping me organise my life, and listening to me talk a lot – honestly, you made this so much easier.

A massive thank you to all the students I have taught – I'm not sure I would still be interested in working in academia if it weren't for your thoughtfulness, energy, and creativity.

Thank you to Rachel and Gabby, and to all the activists, both those I am fortunate to know, and those whose work I've read and listened to, all of whom have taught me much more than any philosophy book. I have endless respect and love for everyone at ECP, SWARM, Ugly Mugs, Decrim Now, Sisters Uncut, and many more similar organisations that provide support, fight injustice, and educate.

This PhD was hosted by the University of Sheffield, and funded by White Rose College of Arts and Humanities. I am also grateful to the Royal Institute of Philosophy and Yorkshire Ladies' Council of Education for financially supporting my fourth year; the former with a Jacobsen Bursary and the latter through covering my fourth-year fees.

Finally, I would like to thank spite, for being a powerful motivating force and carrying me through.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

This thesis defends the claim that pornography is not necessarily (or uniquely) harmful in so far as it objectifies. This is a direct counterargument to the popular claim that we should oppose pornography because it is objectifying.

Argument

This thesis is situated within feminist philosophy, as well as philosophy of sex and sexual ethics. Much feminist philosophy thus far has been concerned with attempting to explain or explore what is wrong with pornography. Many feminist philosophers have taken 'is pornography bad?', 'when is pornography dangerous?', 'how is pornography harmful?', or 'what should we do about pornography?' to be important questions in fighting women's oppression. *Objectification* has been a key part of this, as it has often been seen as a) a central and widespread feature of women's oppression, and b) particularly manifesting in pornography. Many feminists (both in and outside philosophy) have claimed that we should oppose pornography because it objectifies women (more background to these debates will be provided in Chapter One). Here, though I diverge from the feminist philosophical literature in some aspects of my methodology (as we shall see), my topic is very much situated in this canon.

This thesis conforms to an overall argumentative structure whereby I define three terms/concepts, then explain what follows from their interaction. Each chapter of this thesis defends the soundness of the premises in an overall argument for the claim that pornography is not necessarily harmful insofar as it objectifies, the overall argument being structured as follows:

1. Pornography is understood as pieces of media which meet at least two of:
    a. *It is sexually explicit [content]*
    b. *It is aimed at/intended for sexually arousing viewers [intention]*
    c. *It tends to be understood as intended for the purpose of arousing viewers [audience reception].*
2. Harm is understood as *the thwarting, setting back, or defeating of an interest, where an interest can be thought of as a welfare interest.*
3. Objectification is understood as *reduction to body or appearance, often characterised by instrumentalisation.*
4. Objectification is not necessarily harmful (given [2] and [3]).
5. Pornography is not necessarily harmful insofar as it involves objectification (given [1] and [4]).

Methodology

There are a few background assumptions for this thesis. First, this thesis is situated within *feminist philosophy*; therefore I will assume that the reader does not require a justification of basic feminist

principles. It should be uncontroversial that patriarchy is a) real, b) not over, but rather, continues to structure society, and c) bad. Only basic feminist principles need be assumed though, as big controversies *within* feminism are the subject of this thesis. I will also assume that the reader rejects right-wing, traditionalist, sexual moralism; it should follow from basic feminist principles that things like homophobia and moral disgust at non-reproductive sex are unacceptable. I will assume that it is a *feminist* goal to want to reduce harm to women.

In this thesis I will be talking about harms to women. However, while it is probably the case that all women suffer misogyny (though in many different ways), it is not the case that all people who suffer from misogyny are women. Therefore, when I say 'women+' in this thesis I generally mean 'all women[1] and those read as women'. This acknowledges that many nonbinary and agender people, and those men who are often read as women, will experience some of the harms I discuss. This should be relatively uncontroversial; if many people passing a particular trans man on the street mistakenly believe him to be a woman, that man is not immune to things like catcalling, where the perpetrator is aiming to target women.

One feature of this thesis which bucks trends in the literature is attending to the fact that when talking about 'women', that includes, or at least *should* include, women in the sex industry. There has been a tendency to discuss harms to the mythical 'everywoman', who is affected by the existence of pornography and sex work but is certainly not a sex worker and does not participate in pornography (and might not watch it either). For example, when Langton says, "If pornography silences women, it presents a conflict within liberty itself, between pornographers' right to speak and women's" (2009b, p. 63), Langton clearly is not speaking of women pornographers when she speaks of 'women'. And when an anti-strip club campaigner says, 'Women do not feel safe in the area around this club', that campaigner is clearly not talking about the women who work in the club, but a different group of women who have some distance from the industry. This common exclusion of sex workers from the category 'women'[2] tends to either mean that sex workers are left out of the discussion entirely, or that their interests are erroneously seen as separate from and even in conflict with 'women's' rights and interests. Excluding the writings and activism of sex workers from philosophical work on sex work and pornography is an ethical and epistemic mistake. This thesis acknowledges the obvious fact there are sex workers in the group 'women' (and, for that matter

[1] It should not need saying, but 'all' includes cis and trans women.

[2] I am not saying that many writers think no sex workers are women, or that they misgender sex workers, by leaving them out of the concept 'women'; I am saying that when they discuss 'women' they are genuinely not concerned with capturing this group of people and their interests. In ignoring or sacrificing sex workers' interests in the conscious and deliberate prioritisation of 'women's' interests, they are, in a real sense, treating 'woman' as a category with no sex workers in it. This is very obviously a mistake, and I do not think I need to defend the view that some (indeed most) sex workers are women. I will argue later on that sex workers' interests (and voices) should be more central in our discussions of harms to women+, but for now, I am not discussing which interests get centre stage, but pointing out that some writers leave some groups of women out of their concept, or picture, of women (even if they do understand that those women are in fact women). Another way to put this is that X can understand Amy as a token belonging to the type Woman, rather than any other type, but when X imagines type Woman, someone like Amy does not come to mind, or may instead be seen as a threat.

'feminists'), whose interests need to be taken into account, and also that sex workers have (and this should be unsurprising) made important testimonial and theoretical contributions[3] to discussions around sex work and pornography.[4] This thesis will – most obviously in Chapter Five – draw on these contributions, in addition to drawing on the philosophical 'canon'.

Finally, I am interested in philosophical work which interacts with our lives and the world. I am interested in feminist work which is responsive to, and useful for, the world outside philosophy. While work which does not aim at these things is still interesting and valuable, the focus here is on work which is applied and applicable inside the academy and out. This means I generally aim to define terms in a way which reflects popular usage, and it means I discuss harms to women+ in a clear and specific way, such that claims about how to reduce harm in the real world can follow. This motivates things like my focus on harm rather than wrong (Chapter Two), and my focus on 'treating-as' rather than 'imposition' accounts of objectification (Chapter Four).

Chapter Overview

Chapter One will introduce the background and the history of the feminist literature on pornography. I briefly explain the debates known as the 'sex wars': a collection of disagreements within feminism through the latter half of the 20th century, around sexual ethics. While I utilise the 'sex wars' framing, I also acknowledge problems with it. I then narrow the focus to discuss pornography debates specifically, and then again to introduce *objectification* as a key tool in antipornography feminism. I introduce some of the proposed definitions of pornography in the feminist literature, demonstrate the problems with these, and offer an alternative definition that tracks popular intuitions:

> *For a piece of media, x, to be pornography [or count as a 'pornographic artifact'], x must have at least two of the following conditions:*
>
> 1) *It is sexually explicit [content]*
> 2) *It is aimed at/intended for sexually arousing viewers [intention]*
> 3) *It tends to be understood as intended for the purpose of arousing viewers [audience reception].*

Finally, fitting with this definition, I argue that we should abandon academic distinctions between sexist and non-sexist pornography,[5] pornography and erotica, and between feminist and mainstream pornography. I argue that these distinctions are at best unhelpful, as they only attempt to track themes in the content rather than the experiences of women involved in its production, and at worst perpetuate stigmatisation of sex workers and misogyny, through reinforcing a popular distinction

[3] See for example Delacoste and Alexander (2001), and Smith and Mac (2018).
[4] Though I do not set out to defend standpoint epistemology here, it seems intuitive that people who experience x will have information about x that those who merely write about x, do not have. For an explanation of standpoint theory see Harding (1992) and Longino (1990).
[5] Or pornography and 'm-pornography' for Jenkins (2017).

between good women who have wholesome sex lives, and bad women who are to be blamed for sexual violence.

Chapter Two offers a definition of harm as a setback to interest and defends working in terms of harm rather than wrong when discussing the impacts of pornography and objectification. I start by explaining Feinberg's definition of harm, contributing modifications, and offering a distinction between necessary and contingent harms. In arguing for working in terms of harm rather than wrong, I demonstrate that a focus on harm is already present in the literature (referring to the thinkers mentioned in Chapter One). While some thinkers have done influential work on pornography without defining harm, a great deal of talking at cross-purposes and seemingly irresolvable disputes could be avoided if our basic terms were pinned down. This chapter argues that the definition of harm will make a great deal of difference to the clarity of our assessment of pornography, and so needs pinpointing. I argue that a focus on harm allows us to precisely locate sources of disagreement in feminist debates and avoid talking at cross-purposes. I end with an examination of first, how my understanding of harm interacts with my definition of pornography in Chapter One, and second, how it interacts with consent. The work in this chapter will be useful for providing clarity to many existing debates in feminist sexual ethics, and I utilise it in Chapter Five, demonstrating the precise ways in which objectifying media can be harmful, which informs the stance we should take on pornography.

In Chapter Three I offer a definition of objectification as reducing someone to their body or appearance. I start out by explaining which things a definition of objectification needs to be able to do: reflect popular intuitions, capture paradigm examples, which I formulate and analyse, and be clear, in that it should be reasonably unambiguous whether things count as objectification. I list some paradigm examples of objectification, including adverts with pictures of women in their underwear, casual sex, and squeezing a woman's bottom. I draw on these throughout the rest of thesis, and explain briefly how it is that objects (a poster, an advert), as well as people, can objectify.

In the second part of Chapter Three I analyse the features of objectification proposed by Nussbaum (1995) and Langton (2009d), arguing that there are two broad problems that many of these features suffer: the problem of relevance, and the problem of indeterminacy. The former problem is that four of the features are not intuitively characteristic of object-like treatment, and do not give us *relevant* grounds on which something can count as objectification. The latter problem is that five of the features are too ambiguous to give clear answers on whether an example meets them. I argue that these two problems reveal that, as they stand, Nussbaum's and Langton's accounts of objectification are not useful as a definition. However, I find that some of their features do capture something that is going on in objectification, so I take these as a basis for a definition in Part Three. There, I transform these features into a definition of objectification as follows:

> *Objectification occurs where either (1) or (2) of the following conditions is present:*

1) *Reduction to body: a) The objectifier treats the person as nothing/little over and above her body or body parts. b) The objectifier foregrounds the person's body or body parts.*
2) *Reduction to appearance: a) The objectifier treats the person as nothing/little over and above her looks/appearance to the senses. b) The objectifier foregrounds the person's looks/appearance to the senses.*
3) **Instrumentality: a) Means: The objectifier treats the person as a tool for his or her purposes. b) Mere Means: The objectifier treats the person as a mere tool for his or her purposes.*

**(Note: (3) is not intended as a necessary criterion itself, but rather tends to correlate with (1) and (2) and should be considered as a guide for settling borderline cases.)*

I test this out with our paradigm examples, and finally defend it against three possible objections; overinclusivity, that reduction to body collapses into reduction to appearance, and that a negative conception of objectification (by 'negative' conception, I mean a conception of objection which has built into it that objectification is bad) better captures intuitions. On this view, objectification is not necessarily harmful, and not necessarily morally problematic.

In Chapter Four I further defend my account of objectification. I examine other existing accounts of objectification in the literature, and argue that my account is preferable. I begin by differentiating what I take to be two strands of thinking around objectification. The first is 'treating-as' objectification, where objectification is a way of treating or seeing people. My account, Nussbaum's, and part of LeMoncheck's (1985) are in this tradition. The second is 'imposition' objectification, where the objectifier *imposes* a nature upon the objectified. Jütten's (2016), Haslanger's (2012), and one understanding of MacKinnon's are of this kind. I argue that the latter is not in line with popular usage, so given my methodology and aims, we should focus here on the former understanding. I explore the details of LeMoncheck's account, and argue that it is not preferable to my account given that it fails to fit popular usage or include paradigm examples, and includes 'object-like treatment' in the definition, without offering a satisfactory understanding of what object-like treatment involves. A very different challenge comes from Bauer's (2015b) approach, which argues that attempts to define objectification, as I do, are misguided, as instead feminists 'know objectification when they see it' (Bauer 2015b, 26–27). Bauer also disagrees that benign objectification is possible, favouring a wholly negative approach. I argue that the 'I know it when I see it approach' is unhelpful given that though there will be some convergence, there is no unanimity in either what objectification is, or in whether it is always harmful, among feminists. I show that attempts like mine to define objectification need not, as Bauer worries, come at the expense of attending to intuitions. Finally, I address an objection to an account like mine, made by Papadaki (2010b) and gestured at by Bauer: that the concept 'objectification' is more *useful* if we take it to be exclusively covering bad or harmful phenomena. I argue that the projects for which a negative definition of objectification would be useful (like anti-pornography campaigns) are not in fact desirable (this ties in to the

argument about stigma at the end of Chapter Five), and that this also obscures how an *absence* of objectification can do harm.

Chapter Five covers the final steps of my argument. I start by showing that, given the definitions we have established over the last few chapters, *objectification is not necessarily harmful.* This yields the result that *pornography is not necessarily harmful insofar as it objectifies.* But I go further than this; I want to explain why it is that the intuition that objectification is harmful is so widespread. I identify three ways in which objectification can be carried out that involve harm, and argue that the prevalence of these ways of objectifying explains the popular intuition that objectification is harmful. The three harm-generating factors are:

1) *Consent Violation*
2) *Context Creeping*
3) *Oppression.*

The first two are related, in that *Context Creeping* is bad because is contributes to *violations of consent* further down the line. I show that objectification which *Violates Consent* is always harmful in the ways that violating consent is harmful, particularly when it involves something sexual in nature. *Context Creeping* is a term I propose for a phenomenon whereby (consensual) objectification which appears regularly outside of a sexual context creates the illusion that there is no time or place when objectifying a woman is inappropriate. I suggest this (usually in the form of adverts and tropes in film and television) contributes to rape myths based on the idea that women are always up for sex. Rape myths contribute to sexual harassment and assault (which are non-consensual objectifications). *Oppression* is shorthand for when the objectification involves saying something which constitutes or reinforces oppression, e.g. a racist objectifying comment. I argue that these cases are best understood as harmful by virtue of the way the prejudice grounding the oppression is already harmful, *not* by virtue of the objectification. This is because different oppressions are not straightforwardly reducible to one analysis, in that they are not all done in the same way. For example, we would need different conceptual apparatuses to explain (a) why a fatphobic beer advert is harmful and (b) why an Islamophobic catcall is harmful, even though both share a common feature (being objectifying).

We will find that pornography is not uniquely harmful in these three ways, and other objectifying media (adverts, sitcoms etc.) are just as harmful (or more so – given that context creeping cannot apply to pornography). I show this by addressing each of the three harm-generating factors in turn, demonstrating that they cannot provide the result that pornography is uniquely harmful. Finally, I suggest that the focus on pornography thus far is not only unwarranted, but actually does harm in contributing to stigmatisation of sex workers.

What I am aiming to create here is a piece of philosophy that argues for the conclusion that pornography is not uniquely harmful insofar as it objectifies. However, I also hope that this work can be useful practically; I work on this topic *because* I want to reduce harms to women, nonbinary

people and all others harmed by patriarchy and misogyny. While this kind of applied feminist philosophy relies on the hope that there is a bridge and an overlap between feminist philosophy and feminist activism such that each can be useful to the other, this also means that harm can be done by one to the other. So while we hope that our feminist work can improve the world, we must also be aware that our work may cause harm in the world. This awareness, in part, motivates some of my methodological commitments, as well as the content of my arguments, most obviously the arguments at the end of Chapter Five regarding harms done by anti-pornography feminism (inside the academy and out).

CHAPTER ONE

The Sex Wars and Pornography

The debate I am jumping off from is a second-wave feminism debate, but it is important to realise that that is not the only place it occurred; this debate has survived after second-wave feminism, and existed before in other contexts. This chapter is intended to lay the groundwork for the main body of the thesis by familiarising the reader with the background literature, and arguing for particular definitions that are relevant later on in this thesis, and contested in the literature.

In Part One I motivate the claim that this thesis is relevant to real-world debates and events, and does not take place in a vacuum, by briefly describing the views, actors, and events that make up the loudest parts of the feminist sex wars. In Part Two I narrow the scope to discuss the focus on pornography in the sex wars, and introduce objectification and explain its relevance. A rough definition of objectification will do for now, as 'objectification' will be defined and explained more thoroughly in Chapters Three, Four, and Five. I argue for a definition of pornography, and explain why I am discussing this topic in the way that I do. In Part Three I challenge the distinctions between pornography and erotica, pornography and misogynistic pornography, and between feminist and mainstream pornography.

Part One – The Sex Wars

Though they began earlier and persisted later, the debates referred to as the 'Feminist Sex Wars'[6] famously took place throughout the 1970s and 1980s and consisted of debates in the academic and public realms between roughly two groups of feminists: the radical feminists (sometimes called cultural feminists, which captures a slightly different group) and the sex radicals (often called the sex liberals, or sex-positive feminists, though again these terms capture slightly different groups). Though there are many whose views do not fit neatly into one group or the other and, as with any dichotomy, the divide is imperfect, it can be helpful to discuss it in this way, if only for the sake of awareness of how it has been framed. Actors in both groups were activists, lawyers, philosophers, journalists, and many other groups with some common feminist goals; there was no single 'arena' in which these debates were played out. While the ways they disagreed are emphasised in the 'sex war' paradigm described below, the camps generally had the common feminist goal of *improving things for women*, or *reducing harm to women,* though they disagreed on the extension and implications of these, and certainly about how to achieve them.

1.1 The Radical Feminists

The radical feminist positions are, roughly, positions that are concerned primarily with violence against women, characterised by broad conceptions of what counts as violence: pornography,

[6] Using the title 'the Sex Wars' to capture the sets of debates discussed here is widespread (see for example Love (2010), Ferguson (1984), Mikkola (2019b), and Rubin (2011)), but criticisms of this framework, or of certain ways of articulating this framework, can also be found (G. Rubin 2013; Phipps 2017).

sadomasochism and sex work have all been considered inherently violent, some also considered most heterosexual practices to be violent.[7] Among the key radical feminist actors were the groups Women Against Pornography (WAP) and Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW), who picketed many events including the 1982 Barnard Conference on Sexuality (at Barnard College, New York City). This conference involved talks by sex radicals and is considered a key moment in the feminist sex wars.[8] One possible reason this event was such a key landmark was that the leaflets that WAP were distributing targeted individual sex-radical women involved in the conference, by making explicit claims about their sexual conduct; this gave the feeling that in these debates, the gloves had come off. Notably, the radical feminists were given the support of National Organisation of Women (NOW) in the fallout from this event who (at the time) agreed with them that pornography and sadomasochism constituted violence against women (Bronstein 2011). A year later, the 'Dworkin-MacKinnon Ordinance' was drafted; this was a piece of (US) legislation that understood pornography as sex discrimination and proposed enabling women to sue pornographers if they can show they have been harmed by pornography. It was passed in a couple of states but overruled by mayors and courts.

Key activists in the radical feminist tradition were Andrea Dworkin, Susan Brownmiller, Catherine MacKinnon and Kathleen Barry, and more recently Julie Bindel. Other writers seen as part of this movement were Melinda Vadas, Susan Griffin, Carole Pateman, Sheila Jeffreys, and Adrienne Rich. Catherine MacKinnon's *A Feminist Theory of State,* and Andrea Dworkin's *Intercourse* are landmark texts for the radical feminist movement. Writers like Rae Langton have revived MacKinnon's work, and could be considered contemporary contributors to this tradition.

It is important to note that not all members of radical feminist groups and writers in radical feminist literature share the same positions, so as I indicate what the 'radical feminist views' on particular topics are, that is not to say that every person counting as a radical feminist will hold such a view.[9] The radical feminist position on pornography is perhaps the one on which there is most consensus; pornography is understood as constituting violence against women and generally opposed by radical feminists. Due to the wider agreement on this position, radical feminists have also been known as 'anti-pornography feminists'. Why is it that pornography constitutes violence? Usually the answer to this references either *subordination* or *objectification* (MacKinnon 1987c; A. Dworkin 1987; Russell and Lederer 1980) (which is why there is a need for a thesis dedicated to assessing the plausibility of the claim that objectification is necessarily harmful). Similarly, sex work is deemed oppressive, and is opposed by most radical feminists for reasons similar to those for pornography; both are understood

[7] Andrea Dworkin has been credited with the view that all heterosexual sex is rape. She has not claimed this explicitly (and explicitly denies claiming this). However it may be implicit in her work that all sex where the man is in a dominant position (perhaps literally as well as figuratively) is rape, though of course, given the world we live in, there may be very few instances where the man is not dominant. She touches on this in the preface to the book *Intercourse*, added in 1995 (A. Dworkin 1987, ix–x).

[8] This event is mentioned by many writers looking back this stage in the sex wars. See for example Wilson (1983), Rubin (2013), Vance (1992a), and Love (2010).

[9] A handy, though perhaps not entirely accurate summary of radical feminist maxims can be found in Ferguson (1984, 108).

as objectifying and subordinating women, though there is disagreement on whether the sex workers involved are complicit in this or are 'victims'. Sadomasochism finds a great deal of opposition among radical feminists as well; this was a focus of Women Against Violence in Pornography and Media, and feminists like Bartky (1984) and Vadas (1995) have argued that sadomasochists endorse, or even contribute to, patriarchal oppression by eroticising domination of women by men. Gender essentialism is also common among modern radical feminism (though is by no means essential to it), resulting in writers such as Julie Bindel, Kathleen Stock, and Sheila Jeffreys arguing against trans rights, and rejecting trans people's genders (Bindel 2004; Stock 2018; Jeffreys 1997). It is worth remembering, however, that this camp is not monolithic, and other radical feminists have rejected trans-exclusionary positions (MacKinnon, in C. Williams 2015).

1.2 The Sex Radicals

Sex-radical positions are seen as more concerned with women's freedom to act as they choose, though it would be disingenuous to imply that they were not also concerned with violence against women.[10] It is more difficult to describe the sex-radical 'position' because they were less of a unified group with one explicit goal than the radical feminists, who acted mostly under the header of 'anti-pornography feminists'. Generally though for sex radicals, pornography, sadomasochism, and sex work were considered to be practices that women are able and permitted to consent to be involved in. Some additionally considered these as potential tools for liberation, and many saw it as the business of feminists to fight right wing, traditionalist views that limited women's sexual agency.

The feminist sex wars gave rise to new opposition for the sex radicals; right-wing traditionalists found unlikely allies in the radical feminists. Prominent sex-radical organisations included the groups FACT (Feminist Anti-Censorship Taskforce), COYOTE (Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics), Lesbian Sex Mafia, and Samois. The former two campaigned against anti-pornography feminism and for sex workers' rights, while the latter two were more focused on the right to practise sadomasochism. Sex radicals have also fought for the safety of sex workers, pushing for decriminalisation to enable sex workers to work in safe places and to remove the fear of arrest, lack of protection, and/or violence from police. COYOTE has successfully protested various anti-prostitution laws in the US, and raised money and support for bailing out sex workers who had been arrested. COYOTE was also supported by NOW in recommending the decriminalisation of voluntary sex work, despite NOW's prior support for the radical feminists' anti-pornography work (Jenness 1990, 406). Prominent activists included sex workers Nina Hartley, Margo St James (founder of COYOTE), and Norma Jean Almodovar, founder of International Sex Worker Foundation for Art, Culture and Education (ISWFACE).

[10] For examples, in 'Radical Feminism and Feminist Radicalism' (1984), Willis, whose views on pornography are decidedly sex-radical, describes how her activism began in addressing patriarchy, and male violence against women. Also, modern feminists whose work connects with early sex radicals often argue that less restrictive and anti-carceral approaches are the best way to minimise violence against women, see Mac (2016).

In 1981 Samois published a seminal collection of writings largely on queer BDSM that included work by founding members Gayle Rubin and Patrick Califia (Samois (Organization) 1987).[11] A year later, the 1982 Barnard Conference on Sexuality included work by sex radical writers and activists Gayle Rubin, Ellen Willis, and Carole Vance. Gayle Rubin's talk 'Concepts for a Radical Politics of Sex' drew particular attention from the radical feminist protesters, as did talks that discussed subjectivity in pornography.[12] However, sex radicals claim that little attention was paid to the content of the programme, more to criticising the participants (Vance 1992b, xxi–xxii; Califia 2000a, xiv). More recently, sex worker activists and academics, including Molly Smith and Juno Mac, Alison Phipps, and Martha Nussbaum and have argued against the stigmatisation and criminalisation of sex work (the former two focusing particularly on the material harms associated with stigmatisation and criminalisation) in line with a sex-radical view (Smith and Mac 2018; Nussbaum 1998; Phipps 2017).[13]

Again it is important to remember that not all sex radicals share the same views; some focused on freedom, some on the idea of sex as good for individual wellbeing, and some just think a permissive approach to sex is the best approach for minimising harm to women.[14] Sex radicals are generally much more permissive in most areas than radical feminists: sex radical organisations and writers supported trans, nonbinary and other queer identities that were often left out of the radical feminist agenda, and were more open to male allies. Sex radicals have also often been much more positive about women's ability to consent than radical feminists; while radical feminists often claim that women cannot validly consent to sex work, sadomasochism, and any kind of submissive role, sex radicals hold women's ability to consent as vitally important in determining when acts are permissible and when they are not. For example, some radical feminists consider all sex work to be inherently non-consensual, whereas sex radicals are more likely to take women at their word on whether particular sex was consensual or not.

1.3 Against the 'Sex War' Paradigm

There is some opposition to utilising the 'sex war' paradigm. Alison Phipps argues that the standard model of the sex wars obscures and obstructs sex worker rights activism, by creating a picture where sex workers are "either helpless victims or privileged promoters of the industry" (Phipps 2017, 306). The idea is that under this two-camp model, the radical feminist view is that sex work is bad and sex workers are victims and need rescuing, and the sex radical view is that sex work is good and can be liberating and empowering. This bad/good picture leaves no room for talking about what labour rights sex workers need, and improving access to medical care and such like. Phipps explains how Amnesty International's policy supporting decriminalisation was attacked by prominent individuals

[11] In which Califia argues that the start of the feminist sex wars was in fact in the late 1970s in San Francisco, not at the 1982 conference (Califia 1987).
[12] See programme in Love (2010).
[13] I feel somewhat uncomfortable putting Phipps in this category here, as she explicitly rejects the sex war paradigm I describe here. More on this below.
[14] Again a handy, though perhaps not entirely accurate summary of sex-radical maxims can be found in Ferguson (1984, 109).

such as Jessica Neuwirth and organisations such as Coalition Against Trafficking in Women International as being a project to 'legalise pimping' rather than a project to ensure the safety of sex workers. This kind of attack is enabled by the simplifying of complex issues around sex workers' rights, the impact of the law, and social justice to 'helpless victims' vs. 'privileged women who want to be able to consent to whatever they want'. Phipps' point, then, is that this simplification means that sex worker rights activism (and sex workers themselves) are ignored and lose power.

Here Phipps deliberately runs two different groups together: 'sex radicals' and 'sex-positive feminists'. Phipps is demonstrating that under a 'sex wars' framing, sex-positive feminism is seen as *the* anti-anti-pornography position, which erases sex worker rights activists who do not want to give a rosy picture of sex work and are not best represented by 'sex-positive' feminism: "Within the 'sex war' paradigm sex worker activism is homogenised under the 'sex positive' banner, which is tied to the body of the 'happy hooker' as though she is the only activist in the movement and this is her only possible form of discourse" (Phipps 2017, 311). I think Phipps is right to be concerned about this: we do not want it to be the case that sex worker rights activism can be caricatured as just 'sex-positive'. This might provide a reason to reject the 'sex war' framing altogether, or it might instead provide a reason to prefer 'radical feminists vs. sex radicals' to 'radical feminists vs. sex-positive/liberals'.[15]

Does the 'radical feminists vs. sex radicals' formulation successfully avoid these problems with the 'radical feminists vs. sex-positive feminists' formulation? I think so, given, as I said before, that the 'sex-radical' framing is less damaging than the 'sex-positive/liberal' framings. 'Sex-positive' framing leaves out the sex workers who don't see sex as wonderful and sex work as liberatory, and gives the false impression that in order to fight for sex workers' rights you have to buy into this rosy picture. The 'liberal' framing is similar in this way, and additionally leaves out those who do not buy liberalism (a majority of grassroots and working-class sex worker rights activists, I suspect). Focusing on 'sex radicals', however, instead communicates that it is radical to oppose dominant myths of sex work as inherently demeaning, communicates that it is radical to oppose criminalisation and the state, and better reflects the idea that the sex radicals are trying to give voice to the most marginalised. To be clear: this is not a decision to choose one name over another for the same group; this is a decision to focus on one group rather than another. The radical feminists were disagreeing with sex-positive feminists, liberals *and* sex radicals (though there is plenty of overlap in these three latter groups). Framing the sex wars as a debate between radical feminists and the first group, leads to some of the problems Phipps raises, but framing the sex wars as a debate between radical feminists and the third group (which I think also benefits from broader application) avoids some of these.[16]

[15] In support of this, we find sex radicals referring to the sex wars and articulating their own place on the anti-anti-pornography side, and clearly rejecting the equivocation of their side with sex-positive feminism (G. Rubin 2013).

[16] We could actually have the same kinds of worries about framing the other side of the debate: radical feminists, cultural feminists, and carceral feminists, are also groups that overlap in tending to oppose

Having said this, while I explain the layout of the pornography, sex work, and BDSM debates in this way, I do not want to fully endorse this framework in general. This framework might give a roughly accurate picture of how the above debates appeared, have been popularly understood, and have been recreated, but it does not give an accurate picture of the state of feminist activism in general. Marxist feminism and black feminism are rendered invisible in the Sex Wars picture, not because Marxist, black, and black Marxist feminists had nothing to say about these topics, but because what they did have to say has been granted less air time. I suspect the debates which can be painted as simply 'pornography is bad and should be banned' vs. 'pornography is empowering and should not be censored' have had the most air time because they are more 'acceptable' in that (unlike black Marxist feminism) they do not require a radical restructuring of society. To put it bluntly: the feminist views which are more likely to be printed in The Guardian are the views which are more likely to be taught in a neoliberal university, and are therefore the views most likely to be seen as 'the canon'.

So I use this framework only to give a sketch of the history of the pornography debates for the sake of context, and I am not, in the rest of the thesis, engaging in a 'sex war' narrative. For better or worse, the 'sex war' paradigm is how this collection of debates in feminism (sex work, pornography, BDSM) has been characterised. The rest of this thesis does not engage in an un-nuanced 'sex-negative vs. sex-positive' argument about sex work; instead, it takes a close look at how objectification and harm work, and how these concepts can be applied when thinking about pornography. I care deeply about sex workers' rights and believe and hope that my project here does not obscure or obstruct activism to those ends, and hope it will do the opposite by showing that the 'x is objectifying, so it's harmful for women' line does not work.

1.4 'Middle Positions'

Some writers have explicitly proposed positions they see as 'in between' radical feminist and sex radical viewpoints, but I do not want to make a list of things that look like 'middle positions' here, as I think that would risk contributing to the mischaracterisation of all the views involved. In proposing a 'middle ground' we lose track of the extent of agreement[17] between sex radicals and radical feminists, and make both sides appear more extreme and less nuanced.

Consider a candidate for a middle position: Debra Satz on sex work (Satz 1995). Satz criticises sex work as morally wrong by virtue of perpetuating inequality, but wants to be permissive about what individual women can choose to do, and thinks sex work is not inherently wrong. Characterising this

pornography, but I have not yet come across an argument that framing the debate in terms of any of these groups is better than framing it in terms of any of the others. I use 'radical feminists' as it seems to be what most others in the literature use, and it is quite broad.

[17] For example, COYOTE and WHISPER, groups headed by Margo St James and Kathleen Barry respectively, seem to sit in different camps in the sex wars, but share some important points of agreement. See Jenness (1990, 413).

as a middle position obscures the fact that many sex radicals also care about how industries perpetuate inequality, and how many radical feminists also care about women's individual freedom.

The most helpful way to think of views that do not fit neatly into either camp is to view them as evidence that the camps are very loosely defined and contain much internal disagreement, and, even if the camps do not exhaust the conceptual possibilities, it is better to see views that do not fit as outside of the paradigm, rather than squeezed into a middle space. If we cannot put everyone's views in these neat boxes, that's fine, and it helps remind us that there is no one 'sex-radical view' in the same way that there is no one 'feminist view'.

In this section, my intention is to have laid out a very brief history of the feminist sex wars, and the two camps that are taken as constituting either side: the sex radicals and the radical feminists. I also discussed the possibility of 'middle positions' and raised a worry with how we characterise them and indeed this whole debate. We should now have a rough idea of the context, and the area to which my thesis is contributing. While it is not the 1980s anymore, debates on sex work, pornography, and sadomasochism have continued to the present, and the context of the sex wars still very much informs how these debates occur.

Whether, and in what ways, feminists should criticise[18] pornography perhaps matters even more today, with anti-pornography arguments impacting new laws affecting the lives and safety of all sex workers.[19]

Next, I narrow the focus slightly, to give an overview of the debates between feminists around pornography in particular, which motivates what goes on in the thesis as a whole.

Part Two – Pornography and Objectification

For the remainder of this chapter I will explain and defend the concepts I will be using and the scope of the thesis. First, I will give a brief description of the context of feminist debates around pornography more specifically. Second, I argue for a definition of pornography that I think captures popular intuitions, and challenge competing definitions of pornography.

2.1 Pornography in the Sex Wars

As will be obvious from the above discussion, there was a lot going on the sex wars. On pornography in particular, there have been many points of discussion and positions on these. There have been

[18] Whether feminists should criticise pornography does not necessarily track whether it is wrong or harmful. For example, some feminists might think it is harmful, but that criticising it would cause additional problems that we should avoid (I will suggest something like this at the end of Chapter Five). These kinds of nuanced positions further illustrate the problems articulated above with a straightforward dichotomous 'sex wars' framework, given that some might be anti-pornography in principle, but not in practice.

[19] Fosta-Sesta laws in the US, and the Audiovisual Media Services Regulations 2014 in the UK, have had a huge impact on those in the sex industry and those outside it.

debates on what pornography is,[20] on whether it is art,[21] on whether it is speech,[22] and on whether is harmful, wrong or essentially antifeminist.[23] The most pressing questions, I think, are the latter ones: it matters politically, socially, and materially whether pornography is harmful or wrong or antifeminist. These questions often overlap in interesting ways. I think it is safe to assume that if pornography is antifeminist, it will be so because it harms or wrongs women in some way. Given this, there is no sense in embarking on a search for the ways in which it may be 'antifeminist' independently of a search for harm or wrong, so I will continue with the focus on whether pornography is harmful or wrong. Unfortunately, in the literature there is little clarity or agreement on when people are talking about harmfulness and when they are talking about wrongfulness, in relation to pornography. I will discuss harms and wrongs in the next chapter and make a commitment to addressing *harm* rather than wrong, but will set this distinction aside until then.

In discussing what might be wrong/harmful with pornography there are a couple of different routes feminists go down: some argue that there is something harmful/wrong about pornography because of harms and wrongs it causes in the world, whilst some dispute this. Some argue that pornography constitutes harm or wrong in its very existence, and others dispute this. This pair of arguments represents a distinction between *causal* and *constitutive* harm.

Some feminists argue that wherever the harm is situated, pornography can only ever involve harm, and others argue that pornography is not always harmful, or at least, that the harm is contingent, such that harmless examples of pornography are possible. (Of course, someone could also argue that pornography is *never* harmful, but I have not seen that position in print, though many argue that many of the harms people are concerned about do not exist.) This distinction is between *necessary* and *contingent* harm.

To claim that pornography is causally harmful or wrong, is, fairly obviously, to claim that pornography causes harms or wrongs. To claim that pornography is constitutively harmful or wrong is to claim that pornography *is itself* a harm or a wrong. As for the second distinction, those claiming that pornography is *contingently* harmful/wrongful, are claiming that pornography might be harmful or wrong right now, but that it is possible for pornography[24] to exist and not be harmful/wrong. Those claiming that pornography is *necessarily* harmful or wrong, are claiming that pornography is always harmful, and cannot exist without harm or wrong, such that if we wanted to eliminate the harms or wrongs, we would have to eliminate pornography itself. Given this, I think the most

[20] For example see Longino (1980), and on the other side Rubin (1993).
[21] See Maes (2013).
[22] For example see Langton (2009c) and Saul (2006) for a view on either side of this.
[23] See for example Eaton (2007), Cawston (2019), Jenkins (2017), Dworkin and MacKinnon (1988), and Russell (1988).
[24] Here I am articulating the claim that pornography (in general) can exist non-harmfully, but we can also make the claim that the same piece of pornography can be harmful in one context and not harmful in another. I do not need this claim here, but it is worth remembering as it will be discussed in Chapter Two, Section 1.2 and in Chapter Five when we will look at harms of objectification that either result from or are exacerbated by interaction with context.

pressing distinction is the latter: if we want to reduce harms to women (as I think is our common feminist goal), we need to know whether it is possible for pornography to exist harmlessly, or whether, in order to reduce certain harms to women, the only option is to eliminate pornography. So my goal is to assess whether pornography is *necessarily* harmful. I will show that in one key way at least, it is not. (I will also, at the very end of this thesis, draw attention to a way in which anti-pornography work may contribute to other harms to women – which would make it the case that *even if* pornography was necessarily harmful, opposing it would not automatically be the best option.) A further reason to focus on this distinction rather than the distinction between *causal* and *constitutive* harms is that that distinction may not turn out to be clear-cut or important after all, given Jenkins' and Finlayson's contestation that what is in fact being captured when we make this distinction is more to do with the immediacy of the effects of pornography, rather than whether those effects are caused by or constitutive in pornography (Jenkins 2017; Finlayson 2014).

Some radical feminists have argued that pornography is necessarily harmful/wrong in two key ways. If they are right, we may have to oppose pornography;[25] however, I want to provide reasons to believe they are wrong. One key way in which some radical feminists have argued that pornography is necessarily harmful/wrong is via *objectification.* They suggest that pornography necessarily involves objectification; objectification is always harmful/wrong, so pornography is harmful/wrong. This is the argument I engage with in this thesis. The other key way in which radical feminists can argue that pornography is necessarily harmful/wrong is via *subordination*. They suggest that pornography necessarily involves subordination, subordination is always harmful/wrong, so pornography is harmful/wrong. I do not deal with subordination in this thesis,[26] but it is worth mentioning, as it is the other route that would need blocking off in order to claim that pornography is not necessarily harmful/wrong. While I cannot (without doing the work to block the subordination claim) claim in this thesis that pornography is definitely not necessarily harmful/wrong, I can, in addressing the objectification claim, claim that pornography is not necessarily harmful by virtue of it being objectifying. I can close off one of two routes to the claim that pornography is necessarily harmful/wrong.

This is why I focus on objectification here: because how objectification works is crucial to whether pornography is necessarily harmful/wrong, and because objectification has been debated a great deal in the feminist literature on pornography.[27] Key figures in the anti-pornography and radical feminist movements have claimed that pornography objectifies women, reduces women to objects, or uses women as objects, and this has been central to their message. The implication is that these things – 'objectifying', 'reducing to objects', 'using as objects' – are *bad*. The way the terms are used

[25] This is not necessarily the case though, if, for example, opposing pornography causes other, greater harms. I suggest in Chapter Five that opposition to pornography can and currently does contribute to other harms, but I set this aside for now.

[26] But if I did, I would go after the first premise: I would argue that pornography is not necessarily subordinating.

[27] There may also be important implications for discussing sex work; in showing that objectification is not always harmful I also shut down the argument often made that sex work is harmful because it is objectifying.

tells us that there is a background understanding of objectification that involves things like *reducing*, and that this treatment should inspire moral disgust in us.

> "Q: *But not all pornography is violent. Do you object to pornography in which there is no violence?*
>
> A: Yes. Not all pornography is violent, but even the most banal pornography objectifies women's bodies. An essential ingredient of much rape and other forms of violence to women is the objectification of the woman. This is not just rhetoric. It means that women are not seen as human beings but as things. Men are reared to view females in this way, pornography thrives off this and feeds it, and rape is one of the consequences." (Russell and Lederer 1980)
>
> "We define pornography as the graphic sexually explicit subordination of women dehumanized as sex objects, things, or commodities … reduced to body parts." (MacKinnon 1987c, 176)
>
> "Pornography makes women into objects." (MacKinnon 1987c, 182)
>
> "Male supremacy depends on the ability of men to view women as sexual objects… ." (A. Dworkin 1981a, 113)
>
> "In literary and cinematic pornography she is taught to be that thing: raped beaten bound used until she recognizes her true nature and purpose … she is a thing to be used." (A. Dworkin 1981a, 128)

Through these extracts from radical feminist texts we are coming to understand objectification as something like reducing women to objects, things, body parts, and/or using them as such. These key actors in the sex wars talked about pornography and objectification in this way, as did many others, and used this concept to make the case against pornography. It should be clear from this why it is important to pin down the concept of objectification, and why a preliminary sketch of the context of the sex wars is necessary before analysing 'objectification'.

We have now narrowed down the focus a little further, from the debates about pornography in general, to those about objectification in particular. This is the topic of the thesis proper, so before we dive into that, there are two more things that need doing. First, I need to return to another area of the pornography debates: what pornography *is*, so we have an idea of what exactly it is we are talking about. And after that, we will have to determine what harm is, in the next chapter.

2.2 What is Pornography?

There are a number of ways to define pornography, but there are four main routes: we could base it on the *function*, so pornography will be whatever *does* certain kinds of things; we could base it on what the *content* is, so pornography will be whatever material has certain kinds of content; we could base it on the *intention,* so pornography will be whatever was created with the *intention* to do certain things or be something particular; or we could base it on the *reception*, so pornography will be whatever the audience interprets in a particular way. I will look at accounts of pornography that go down each of these routes. I first discuss the definition offered by Catherine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin, which defines pornography in terms of what it *doe*s, and offer a few arguments

against its consistency and utility.[28] I next briefly discuss a similar contribution from Helen Longino, but which instead focuses on what the *content* of the material is, and show that it falls down in similar places to MacKinnon/Dworkin's. After that I look at Mari Mikkola's *Makers' Intentions* Model and show that, while adequately neutral and non-question-begging, it does suffer counter examples that highlight problems with accounts that take intention to create pornography as a necessary condition for identity as pornography. Finally, I briefly discuss the idea that pornography is defined by audience interpretation, the best-known example of this kind of view being "*I know it when I see it.*"[29] I finally offer a tripartite definition that is *prima facie* neutral in its ethical judgement of pornography and captures intuitions. This means that when we go on to discuss whether and where there are harms in pornography, we can be confident that we are talking about the same set of materials, and we can set about identifying the features common in pornography that yield conflicting judgements.

i. Dworkin and MacKinnon

The best-known candidate for a *feminist* definition of pornography comes from Catherine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin, and is adopted by many in the radical feminist tradition.

Catherine MacKinnon states this definition of pornography in Feminism Unmodified (1987b), Towards a Feminist Theory of State (1989), and Pornography and Civil Rights: A New Day for Women's Equality (1988), where MacKinnon and Dworkin elucidate the details of their Ordinance. This kind of definition is function-based, as in pornography being defined in terms of what it *does*.

> "Pornography is the graphic sexually explicit subordination of women through pictures and/or words that also includes one or more of the following: (i) women are presented dehumanized as sexual objects, things or commodities; or (ii) women are presented as sexual objects who enjoy pain or humiliation; or (iii) women are presented as sexual objects who experience sexual pleasure in being raped; or (iv) women are presented as sexual objects tied up or cut up or mutilated or bruised or physically hurt; or (v) women are presented in postures or positions of sexual submission, servility, or display; or (vi) women's body parts----including but not limited to vaginas, breasts, or buttocks----are exhibited such that women are reduced to those parts; or (vii) women are presented as whores by nature; or (viii) women are presented being penetrated by objects or animals; or (ix) woman are presented in scenarios of degradation, injury, torture, shown as filthy or inferior, bleeding, bruised, or hurt in a context that makes these conditions sexual.
>
> The use of men, children, or transsexuals in the place of women in [the paragraph] above is also pornography… ." (A. Dworkin and MacKinnon 1988, 36; square brackets in the original)

[28] This is obviously a distinct kind of *functional* account, and there may be other functional accounts which do not resemble this one. For example, one could defend an account whereby pornography is whatever is used as something (similar to Vadas (2005), though this example is more of a function/audience reception combination). I offer reasons at the end of the next section against functional approaches in general, and again in Section 2.2.v.

[29] This phrase was made famous by Justice Potter Stewart in the 1964 case *Jacobellis vs. Ohio* (Jacobellis v. Ohio 1964).

To be clear on what Dworkin and MacKinnon are proposing here, for something to be pornography it must meet two conditions: first, it must be 'the graphic sexually explicit subordination of women through pictures and/or words', and second, it must include at least one of clauses (i)-(ix) above, where 'woman' in (i)-(ix) can also be substituted by 'men, children, or transsexuals'. The most literal interpretation of this is that both of these conditions must be met, so let us proceed as if this were correct for now.

The literal reading

Taking the first condition first, at first glance it appears counter-intuitive: if it is the case that only material that subordinates women can be called pornography, then a video of graphic sex shown on pornography sites that *does not* happen to involve any subordination will not count.[30] This goes against popular intuitions, being too narrow; most people would visit that site looking for pornography, find the aforementioned video, use that video as pornography, and certainly conceive of it as pornography. Dworkin and MacKinnon could, in response to this, say that their project is not intended to reflect popular intuitions but to describe pornography in a way that is politically useful, or makes sense of it, irrespective of what popular opinion judges pornography to be. What Dworkin and MacKinnon are trying to communicate, for pornography, is the way in which it harms women; this is made clear by MacKinnon referring to it elsewhere as a kind of terrorism against women (MacKinnon 1987b, 130). So it may be totally fine for them to not include material that does not harm or subordinate women in any way, if they are trying to define pornography in a way that furthers political goals, rather than accurately reflect the varieties of pornography as people usually understand it. The problem with this is that they are very clear that this is not their goal:

> "Pornography is an industry. It exists in the world. No pornographer has any trouble knowing what to make. No distributor has any trouble knowing what to carry. No retailer has any trouble knowing what to order. No consumer has any trouble knowing what to buy…The Ordinance adopts a simple if novel strategy for definition. It looks at the existing universe of the pornography industry and simply describes what is there, including what must be there for it to work in the way that it, and only it, works." (A. Dworkin and MacKinnon 1988, 36–37)

Dworkin and MacKinnon make it clear that this is not a revisionist strategy; they do not aim to define pornography in a new way for a particular purpose, they aim to reflect the world. If that is their aim, then their definition certainly is too narrow, as there can exist sexually explicit media bought and sold as pornography that does not subordinate.[31] The next problem, though, is how can we tell?

We need to know what subordination *is* in order to tell if the first condition is met. They provide this definition: "Subordination is an active practice of placing someone in an unequal position or in a

[30] It might be the case that most of the material you find on PornHub (for example) is subordinating and dehumanising anyway, it might not, but that is neither here nor there at this point.

[31] This is not something MacKinnon would deny – she would just refuse to call that pornography, and count it as 'erotica' (more on this distinction later). Here my point is that some of the things MacKinnon would call 'erotica' are (perhaps mistakenly on her view) sold in pornography sections, and used for the function of pornography.

position of loss of power. To be subordinate is the opposite of being equal" (A. Dworkin and MacKinnon 1988, 39). There may initially be a worry about the plausibility of the claim that pornography *is* subordination (that it *constitutes* it). Some have criticised this as being indefensible,[32] and that they are only in a position to claim that pornography *does* subordination, or *causes* it. But Dworkin and MacKinnon explain "Under the Ordinance, pornography *is* what pornography *does.* What it does is subordinate women" (A. Dworkin and MacKinnon 1988, 38). So in establishing whether the first condition is met, we can ignore the confusing use of 'is' and the *constitutive* claim, and need only look for whether something *does* subordinate and look for the *causal* claim, as for Dworkin and MacKinnon they are the same thing.[33] So for the first condition to be met, the material must place (or cause the placing of) women [or 'men, children or transsexuals'] in 'an unequal position or in a position of loss of power'. The factors that contribute to unequal status are many and complicated; it is not plausible that a piece of media alone *caused* someone's subordinate status, and if we charitably broaden this to whether a piece of media *contributed to* someone's subordinate status, it will be extraordinarily difficult to determine whether it has. If we cannot show that a piece of media caused, or even contributed to, someone's unequal status, we cannot call that thing pornography. It is not even a matter of whether we can *confidently* refer to that thing as pornography; worse than this, for Dworkin and MacKinnon it must be *provable*:

> "[T]he Ordinance restricts its definition only to those sexually explicit pictures and words that actually *can be proven to subordinate* women in their making or use." (A. Dworkin and MacKinnon 1988, 38–39; my emphasis)

I do not think it is overstating the problem to say that for many or most pieces of sexually explicit media, it will be nearly impossible to prove that women are subordinated in its making or use. This leaves us with very few things MacKinnon and Dworkin can count as pornography, and certainly much fewer than popular intuitions would count. If we understand Dworkin and MacKinnon's definition of pornography as being composed of two necessary conditions, this is a big problem, as for one of the two conditions we do not have a way of determining or demonstrating whether it has been met.

MacKinnon and Dworkin could disagree about how provable it is that any particular piece of material subordinates, and they could disagree that some of the material sold under the label of 'pornography' will not subordinate. The problem then becomes that there does not seem to be a way of making either case without either making huge unsubstantiated empirical claims (i.e. 'every piece of media ever sold under the label 'pornography' can be empirically proven[34] to have

[32] See Dworkin (1993). Saul (2006) and Papadaki (2010a) have also offered criticisms of the claim that pornography has a constitutive connection to objectification.

[33] Remember: Jenkins (2017) and Finlayson (2014) have argued that the causal/constitutive distinction is very murky here, and that the claim MacKinnon is making is that there is an immediate and tight relationship between pornography and particular harms that women experience. There is no problem then, with MacKinnon and Dworkin running *causal* and *constitutive* together like this.

[34] As in: can be demonstrated *without* simply turning to whether that thing is named 'pornography', or examining the definitions.

subordinated'), or, arguing in a circle and working from a question-begging starting point, i.e. 'pornography is that which subordinates'; 'how do we show that this piece of media subordinates?'; 'it must do, because it is pornography'. This is why it is important to not build subordination into a definition of pornography if the idea is to claim that pornography subordinates, especially if one is also claiming to *not* be embarking on a revisionist project (more on this in a moment).

But what about the role being played by Dworkin and MacKinnon's second condition?

The alternative reading

There is an alternative interpretation, however. It could be the case that what looks like the second condition is actually just an explanation of the first condition. As in: we throw our hands in the air and ask, 'But how can we tell if this video subordinates?', and the definition answers, 'Why, we need only look and see whether any of (i)-(ix) are present'. However, this response may yield a problem of being too *broad* (given their purposes)*,* instead of too narrow (given popular understanding).

Recall that Dworkin and MacKinnon are aiming to capture sexually explicit material that subordinates women, and do not expect to capture *benign* sexually explicit material. Now consider an example of the kind of thing that Dworkin and MacKinnon, it seems, do not want to include: a film involving sex acts performed by a lone cisgender man, in which he displays his body for the viewer. This does not seem to harm/subordinate/dehumanise women in any way. Unfortunately, this film may well count as pornography on their definition (on the alternative reading). This film involves a person fulfilling the fifth condition of the disjunctive: being in '**postures of** sexual submission or servility or **display**'. It does not involve a woman, but that's fine, because remember "**the use of men**, children or transsexuals **in the place of women … is also pornography**" (A. Dworkin and MacKinnon 1988, 36; my emphasis). If it is the case that any benign material involving 'sexual display' of people of any genders counts as pornography then now it appears that Dworkin and MacKinnon's definition may be too broad for their purposes, given that their intention seems to be to capture cases which are subordinating to women, as well as being too broad on popular definitions.[35]

In any case, I do not think this alternative reading is what MacKinnon and Dworkin were aiming for. This is because part of the motivation for saying material must be 'proven to subordinate women' was to exclude their own books as counting as pornography by virtue of describing rape, and on this interpretation, their own books are not excluded.

Utility

There is a more general criticism we can offer of Dworkin and MacKinnon's definition, that has less to do with the details and more to do with the political efficacy.

[35] A response could be: 'MacKinnon is just describing the kinds of things that count, her definition needn't be watertight'. But for our purposes we need a tight definition, and so does she, given that hers was used for legal work.

I have already shown that while they do not take themselves to be embarking on a revisionist project, it is the case that their definition does not match popular intuitions, and is intended for a political purpose. I argue now that the definition they offer cannot be politically useful given this.

First of all, Dworkin and MacKinnon cannot claim to *prove* to us, or *show* that pornography (in general) is oppressive or harmful to women if they have built into the definition of pornography the assertion that it is so. This constitutes a 'question-begging' problem, of the kind mentioned briefly above. Perhaps, though, they are not interested in showing that pornography is harmful; perhaps they just want us to take their word for it. If this were the case then this objection does not matter so much, but it still seems a bit much to expect the reader to take their word for it that all these media are harmful if, by their account, someone must have first *proven* that each piece of media subordinates women in order for it to count as a member of the kind 'pornography'.

A further problem is that for all of the goals that Dworkin and MacKinnon have in mind, not reflecting popular intuitions is unwise. If, like Dworkin and MacKinnon, you use concepts like 'pornography' to argue for certain legal reforms or particular ordinances, then you need to have a similar definition to that held by the policy makers you approach, and that of the everyday feminists from whom you rally support. If I decided to start a campaign to make all school dinners vegetarian, and my definition of vegetarianism was different from that of all of the people interested in joining my campaign, this would be an important problem. If we ended up with a result reflecting their understanding but not mine, I may be disappointed and confused. If we ended up with a result reflecting my understanding but not theirs, they might feel I have been dishonest, in gathering their support for a campaign that was different from what they thought this was. This is just to illustrate that it is important to be using a definition of something that is not too far removed from its popular usage if you are working in area that interacts with the real world, such as law, feminism, and sexual ethics.[36]

Similarly, the following analogy should help to illustrate why Dworkin and MacKinnon's definition of 'pornography' is not one we should use, and that the phenomena they describe should be simply described with greater specificity:

> Say I discover that there are lots of sexist publications which are also shiny, short-form, article-based publications similar to newspapers but less news-y and more interest-directed. I call this set of things Magazines. On this project, all magazines are sexist, because I am just naming the things that are sexist, article-based, short publications. If someone said, 'But there are some great feminist magazines, and some totally benign magazines', I could respond 'Ah, but on my project under my definition they are not magazines; you'll need a different name for them'.

This would be unhelpful and misleading. It would be even more unhelpful and misleading if I then started calling for the banning of all magazines, or for magazine editors to be subject to new codes

[36] If the point is to *change* popular usage, I have different arguments against that below.

of conduct; I would be talking at cross-purposes with everyone whom I am trying to persuade. Surely it would have been better if I had not named 'sexist magazines' as 'magazines', since people generally use 'magazine' to refer to lots of non-sexist article-based publications.[37]

One worry we might have about the argument just made is that it seems to constitute an objection to revisionist strategies in general: should it be the case that we should not try and alter meanings, reclaim terms, or revise problematic language for the sake of avoiding talking at cross purposes? I do not think so, but I need to show why this anti-revisionist argument holds, when I do not want to condemn revisionist strategies in general.

Examples of revisionist strategies that we do not want to criticise might be (i) reclaiming previously pejorative words, like 'queer', or (ii) moving to using less stigmatising language, like the move from 'prostitute' to 'sex worker'. So what is the difference between these, and revising how we use the word 'pornography' to only apply to subordinating material (assuming we know what counts)? The key difference seems to be that with 'queer' or 'sex worker' there is a strong moral or political reason for the revisionist strategy. These moral/political reasons trump the pragmatic reason of avoiding talking at cross-purposes. In the case of the word 'pornography' there is no moral or political reason for altering the use of the word: for Dworkin and MacKinnon there are strong moral and political reasons for taking a certain attitude to pornography, and doing certain things about it, but not for the change in the meaning of the word. In fact, their moral and political goals around pornography are better served, more easily achieved, if the meaning of 'pornography' reflects popular use, as my above argument aims to show. It might be asked here, 'Well, what does it take to trump the pragmatic reasons? When are moral or political reasons enough?', and I don't know the answer to this. An answer on this is not necessary though, as my point does not rely on a particular scale; in the queer and sex worker cases, a moral or political reason exists and is expressed by proponents of the strategy, and in the pornography case, a reason does not exist and is not expressed by proponents of the strategy. I do not want to be misunderstood here: lots of reasons are given by Dworkin and MacKinnon for using the strategies they use to fight pornography, and for taking the positions they take on it, but there are no reasons given for altering the extension of the term (presumably because Dworkin and MacKinnon do not see themselves as embarking on a revisionist strategy in the first place).

A defender of the Dworkin-MacKinnon definition could try offering political reasons for revising the term 'pornography' in this way. They could argue, for example, that it is important to get people to identify pornography in general with the most harmful examples of it, for the purpose of increasing anti-pornography sentiment and strengthening their activism. Unsurprisingly, this does not help us here because firstly, we are looking for a tight definition to assess whether an anti-pornography stance is justified in the first place (as in: the reasons for opposing pornography are precisely what is

[37] This argument will come up again in Chapter Four, when looking at certain kinds of definitions of 'objectification'.

at stake in this thesis). And secondly, this move is very obviously going to increase stigmatisation of sex workers, which is actually bad for their political goals of reducing harms to women; instead, it contributes to material harms, which will be discussed more fully in Chapter Four and Chapter Five.

In general, there are cases where revisionist strategies are good (where the pragmatic concerns I raised are trumped by other important reasons), but this is not one of those cases.

Function-based accounts in general

A final problem which applies to function-based accounts in general is that there are counterexamples: there are cases which look like pornography, but have not, or cannot, perform the function they need to count. Imagine a graphic artist creates cartoon pornography, which depicts the dehumanisation and sexual commodification of women, and the artist sells this video to a pornography site. Once there, it actively subordinates women by virtue of the effect it has on the attitudes of the men who watch it. (I know I have just given reasons to question that it works like this, but let's assume Dworkin and MacKinnon are right for the moment.) For Dworkin and MacKinnon, this is pornography. Now imagine an identical graphic artist creates an identical video, but no site buys this video. It remains unwatched. This identical piece of media does not count as pornography for Dworkin and MacKinnon simply because it has not had the chance to do any subordinating. This is counterintuitive, given that it is otherwise the same piece of media. This is a problem for any account which defines pornography in terms of what it *does.* Similarly, an account that defines pornography as 'material which arouses' would have the same problem for two identical videos, one of which has not yet been watched by anyone.

One way to respond to this is to claim that in the unwatched case, that piece of media still has the function of subordinating or arousing because it still has the *capacity* to subordinate or arouse (in the sense that a capacity-based functional definition of a kettle still captures unused kettles because they have the capacity to boil water). This response does not appreciate the full extension of the problem though; the greater worry is: how do we determine whether a thing is pornography *prior* to it being used for anything? In order to show that this piece has the capacity to subordinate or arouse, we have to appeal to some other shared feature it has with that pornography which has already performed that function. And what might those other shared features be?

Further, what if the pornography is just bad at what it does? This is certainly a problem for a proponent of 'pornography is media which performs the function of arousing'. If a piece of media is clearly meant to be pornography but it just fails to arouse anyone in the manner intended, on a purely functional account it does not count as pornography. This is somewhat counterintuitive, and we will return to it later on.

Next, we look at the kind of account which definitely is not vulnerable to this last problem: a content-based account.

ii. Longino

Helen Longino offers the following definition of pornography:

> "I define pornography as *verbal or pictorial explicit representations of sexual behavior that,* in the words of the Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, *have as a distinguishing characteristic 'the degrading and demeaning portrayal of the role and status of the human female … as a mere sexual object to be exploited and manipulated sexually'*." (Longino 1980, 42)

Adding later:

> "What makes a work a work of pornography, then, is not simply its representation of degrading and abusive sexual encounters, but its implicit, if not explicit, approval and recommendation of sexual behavior that is immoral, i.e., that physically or psychologically violates the personhood of one of the participants. Pornography then, is verbal or pictorial material which represents or describes sexual behavior that is degrading or abusive to one or more of the participants *in such a way as to endorse the degradation.*"(Longino 1980, 43)

This definition is clearly drawing on Dworkin and MacKinnon's in some ways[38], but here pornography *is* what pornography *contains*, rather than, 'pornography *is* what pornography *does'* (as for Dworkin and MacKinnon). Longino clarifies that behaviour is 'degrading' if it (a) "includes physical harm or abuse, and physical or psychological coercion"[39] or (b) "ignores or devalues the real interests, desires, and experiences of one or more participants" and that behaviour is *endorsed* if it is shown as being pleasurable to either the male or the female participants, and there is no suggestion that this degradation is "inappropriate to their status as human beings" (Longino 1980, 43–44). This conjunctive understanding of endorsement does not quite work, but let's set this aside for a minute. The main problem with Longino's definition is that it is *underinclusive*.

Similar to Dworkin and MacKinnon's, Longino's definition would classify the example of a video found on a pornography site and used as pornography as *not pornography* if it does not depict any degradation. This runs against popular intuitions, and though Longino might be happy not to reflect popular intuitions,[40] I have argued above that not reflecting popular intuitions is a bad idea.

But the extent of this problem is greater than for Dworkin and MacKinnon; since Longino specifies the degradation happens to 'human females', on this account gay (male) pornography cannot exist. This is even more counterintuitive, particularly if we consider an example of hard-core gay pornography which contains eroticised homophobic abuse and degradation. Surely this is the kind of example that should be included on any definition of pornography, particularly one which forefronts degradation.

Further, Longino's definition fails to properly include some of her own examples:

---

[38] She also has a similar understanding of erotica (Longino 1980, 42–43).

[39] This covers material that is 'degrading or abusive', while (b) covers just material that is 'degrading'.

[40] Though we have reason to believe she would not be happy to deviate far from popular intuitions, given the range of examples she offers, and given that the foreword to this chapter (presumably written by the editor) says "Helen Longino puts forth a serious definition of pornography which we believe withstands a rigorous and critical examination and which may prove useful to teachers, doctors, laypeople and jurists – anyone, in fact, who is interested in a good working definition of the term." (Longino 1980, 40)

> "No longer confined within plain brown wrappers, it [pornographic material] jumps out from billboards that proclaim 'Live X-Rated Girls!' or 'Angels in Pain' or 'Hot and Wild,' and from magazine covers displaying a woman's genital area being spread open to the viewer by her own fingers."[41] (Longino 1980, 46)

If material has to be degrading to count as pornography, then how does a photo of a woman displaying her vulva count as pornography? I fail to see how this example can be argued to count as pornography on Longino's definition, without resorting to the sex-negative kind of understanding of degradation (where anything sexually explicit is bad) that Longino explicitly rejects (Longino 1980, 41). A woman showing her vulva does not meet any of Longino's stated criteria for degradation; no-one is abused, and it would be difficult to show that any picture showing a vulva runs contrary to the 'real' desires of the participant, without making the wildly implausible argument that no woman has ever really wanted to show her vulva to anyone.[42]

Finally, Longino moves from 'pornography is defined as degrading' (1980, 42) to 'what is wrong with pornography is that it is degrading' (1980, 45): this constitutes a straightforward *question-begging* problem. Gayle Rubin identifies this problem in Longino's definition, and connects it to the discrepancy between how feminists have treated other sexist media, and how they have treated pornography:

> "If pornography is defined simply as that which is inherently degrading to women, then by definition it cannot be reformed and must be extirpated. This tactic completely finesses the necessity of providing some demonstration that what is generally thought of as pornography is accurately denoted by such a definition." (G. Rubin 1993, 27)

Rubin is making two points here: first, she is showing that this move enables feminists to condemn pornography outright as unsalvageable, while approaching other media as things to be repaired and made less sexist. Second, she demonstrates that if you define pornography as degrading, you can skip the step of showing that much pornography (as it is popularly understood) is in fact degrading. A particularly underhand version of this move can be identified here:

> "Pornography[*] then, is verbal or pictorial material which represents or describes sexual behavior that is degrading or abusive to one or more of the participants *in such a way as to endorse the degradation*. The participants so treated in virtually all heterosexual[43]

[41] To this example, Longino adds a footnote explaining in obvious horror that this was a 'full-colour' magazine cover seen in a delicatessen. The inclusion of this information is probably supposed to be intended to condemn the public acceptability of pornography, but given the actual benign nature of the content of this pornographic material (a woman showing her own vulva), it reads more like a condemnation of nudity ('I went to a shop and saw a vulva!') than anything else.

[42] Similarly, Longino wants still photographs of bound women to count as pornography, but these pictures do not contain the pleasure of any participant. She argues that the implication is that they are *desirable*, through *glamourising* the image, but this is not the same thing as depicting pleasure. One reason she gives for them counting as pornographic is that there is no indication that this treatment is inappropriate (the second conjunct), but both halves of the conjunction are needed for her account. (Longino 1980, 44). Longino could avoid this by simply making the conjunct a disjunct.

[43] The slide from talking about pornography to talking about 'heterosexual pornography,' is also a sleight of hand to avoid the problem that it would be difficult to claim that gay pornography is misogynistic, but I do not go into that here.

> pornography[**] are women and children, so heterosexual pornography[**] is a matter of fact, material which endorses sexual behavior that is degrading and/or abusive to women and children." (Longino 1980, 43)

This pair of sentences can be understood in two ways. I have marked two uses of 'pornography' here, labelling them 'pornography*' and 'pornography**'. Pornography* is clearly Longino's definition; the extension of this term is just material that meets her criteria, *not* the broader popular understanding. Pornography** is most consistently (but not most naturally) understood as being identical with pornography*. This understanding makes Longino's claim the following:

> Of the things I call pornography (i.e. the things that are degrading), most of it degrades women and children, as opposed to degrading men. So it is a fact that pornography [things that degrade] degrades women and children.

However, the more natural reading of pornography** is as the broader popular understanding, which would make her claim:

> Of the things most people call pornography (i.e. sexual media), most of it degrades women and children, as opposed to not degrading women and children. So it is a fact that pornography degrades women and children. So it is a fact that pornography [sexual media] degrades women and children.

The first understanding gets you to the conclusion that the material which is defined as degrading is predominantly degrading to women and children; the second understandings gets you to the conclusion that pornography as popularly understood (without degradation built into the definition) is predominantly degrading to women and children. Only the first understanding is consistent with what Longino argues, but it is clear that the reader is expected to slide to the second understanding, and reach the more damning conclusion.

The question-begging problem Rubin identified, and the underinclusivity problem above, together generate the same problem of 'utility' articulated for Dworkin and MacKinnon's definition: if Longino wants feminists to campaign for the end of 'pornography' it sure would be helpful if everyone involved were referring to the same things.

Content-based accounts in general

One problem for content-centred accounts of pornography more broadly is that things which are used, created, and sold as pornography will not count if they do not have particular kinds of content. If particular content is a necessary condition, the first problem is how we determine what counts as the right content. As soon as we start trying to make a list, we risk privileging different kinds of sex: we do not want an account which says pornography has to contain penis in vagina sex, for example, because that centres heterosexual people. What we are risking is generating an account which is underinclusive by virtue of only counting those sex acts which are most heteronormative and/or traditional. Second, many things could count as pornography in one context and not in another. Consider both softcore pornography of people kissing, and object fetish pornography. A picture of

two people kissing could be softcore pornography if printed in a pornography magazine, but a suitable-for-work snapshot if printed alongside an article about a celebrity wedding (from which the photo is taken). Similarly, a video of a person putting on boots, or smoking, could be pornography when sold on a pornography website, but not pornography when part of a footwear advert or anti-smoking campaign.

This kind of example does not hurt Longino's account as she would already discount such things in virtue of not being degrading, but we can construct an example (and this is not an implausible example, as we'll see later on) that she would probably want to include: Imagine an abusive pornography director decides to make a film that looks really benign. The director wants to appeal to the feminist market, so makes a sexually explicit video that depicts a nice, egalitarian, sexual encounter, with dialogue that explicitly affirms the humanity and dignity of all the characters. However, the characters are played by very good actors, who are in fact treated with little humanity by the director.[44] Under Longino's definition, we are forced to call this example erotica or art because it does not represent degradation, though it seems like the kind of thing she might in fact want to call pornography and would presumably want to criticise; it would be surprising if Longino was not interested in *actual degradation* occurring (the behaviour of the abusive director), rather than being exclusively interested in depicted degradation. The most charitable interpretation of why feminists care about *depicted* degradation or harm is because they, at some level, care about *actual* harms to women. This is why there are attempts from these same authors to draw causal or constitutive connections between actual harms and depicted ones – indeed, Longino goes on to say that pornography, on her definition, is injurious in three ways, at least two of which are explicitly concerned with harms to women (Longino 1980, 48).

One consistent way Longino could respond to this counterexample would be to say, 'Actually we only care about harms to women who are not involved in any kind of sex work, so it is fine for this example to be left out'. This would also explain why Longino emphasises how harms to depicted women can be generalised to other women; "since nothing is alleged to justify the treatment of the female characters of pornography save their womanhood, pornography depicts all women as fit objects of violence by virtue of their sex alone" (Longino 1980, 46). This implies that if only pornography made it clear that 'actually these women deserve it; other women, good women, don't deserve it', then Longino would have no complaint. Unfortunately, what this response offers in consistency it loses in being absolutely morally despicable. As long as a defender of a definition like Longino's does not want to explicitly exclude harms to sex workers from the category of things that matter, this counterexample is problem.

To sum up: as well as the underinclusivity in Longino's account (on both her own understanding and a popular one), we have also seen a serious risk of underinclusivity in content-based accounts in

[44] And when the video is used, the viewers may also fail to adequately attribute humanity to the performers.

general, and the broader problem that determining what kind of content is relevant is no straightforward task.

iii. Mikkola

Mari Mikkola takes MacKinnon,[45] Longino and others to be answering a slightly different question to herself. She takes them to be giving an answer to 'what is pornography *about*' rather than '*which things* are pornography'. This picks out a difference between her account and theirs, in that she is not interested in explaining the content of pornography and what effect that has on women, while Longino and MacKinnon are. However, I think all three accounts are giving an answer to 'what is pornography' understood as '*which things* are pornography';[46] the method and the answers are just different. What Longino and MacKinnon do is tell us which things are pornography *via* telling us what is bad about them, as for them, it is the bad features that *make particular objects count* as pornography.

Mikkola offers a definition of pornography utilising Thomasson's account of artifactual kinds, which offers a mechanism for making sense of everyday objects which depend on minds for their existence. Thomasson's account can tell us that some object counts as a chair, and Mikkola suggests that it can do the same with pornography, with the following application of Thomasson's framework:

> "Some object *x* (film, book, picture) is of the kind 'pornographic artifact' only if it is the product of a largely successful intention to create pornography, where the maker intends that the artifact is an instance of pornography only if
>
> (a) They have a substantive concept of pornography that largely matches the substantive concept held by some group of prior makers (provided some exist), and
>
> (b) The maker intends to realize that concept by imposing pornography-relevant features on the object." (Mikkola 2017, 114–15)

This might be confusing, as there are multiple uses of the term 'pornography' at work here, so let's break them up. I mark them with numbers 1-4 below.

> "Some object *x* (film, book, picture) is of the kind 'pornographic artifact' [1] only if it is the product of a largely successful intention to create pornography [2], where the maker intends that the artifact is an instance of pornography [2] only if
>
> (a) They have a substantive concept of pornography [3] that largely matches the substantive concept held by some group of prior makers (provided some exist), and
> (b) The maker intends to realize that concept by imposing pornography-relevant features [4] on the object."

Now let us spell out what these different uses mean:

[45] She refers to MacKinnon, rather than Dworkin and MacKinnon as a pair. This is because MacKinnon has published the definition she shares with Dworkin independently as well, and Mikkola is citing books by MacKinnon alone, i.e. *Feminism Unmodified*, and *Towards a Feminist Theory of State* (MacKinnon 1987b, 1989).

[46] Though MacKinnon and Longino may be answering 'what is pornography about' *in addition*.

[1] ‘Pornographic artifact’ refers to ‘the objects that are instances of pornography’ (e.g. Hustler, Deep Throat).

[2] ‘Pornography’ which the makers must have ‘a largely successful intention to create’ is unclear; I think it is most likely to be shorthand for ‘pornographic artifact’ here, given the context of it being ‘the thing which is being created’.

[3] Third, there is ‘the substantive concept of pornography held by some makers’, so this is a background, intuitive definition that makers have in mind (e.g. ‘sexually explicit material aimed at arousing the viewer’).

[4] Fourth, there are ‘pornography-relevant features’ which are those features that constitute ‘pornography’ in the third sense (e.g. being films, involving sex acts).

It seems that [1] (pornographic artifact) is the thing for which Mikkola is providing a definition, [2] (pornography) is just shorthand for [1], [3] (substantive concept of pornography) is a concept that is already at work in people’s minds, and [4] (pornography relevant features) is a collection of features in the world that constitute the concept [3].

At this point, we are no closer to knowing what pornography is, and which things count as pornography, if we do not know what the ‘substantive concept of pornography’ [3] is, or what ‘pornography-relevant features’ [4] are. This was less of a problem for Thomasson: in trying to establish which things count as chairs, we are less likely to suffer significant disagreement about what the substantive concept of chair is, or what the list of chair-relevant features contains. With pornography, however, these things *are what is at issue*.[47] What we have is a nice template for a definition of pornography, but still no way of knowing what pornography is, and which things count.

Fortunately, Mikkola does offer a suggestion of what the substantive concept of pornography [3] could be (while being clear that this will vary over time):

> “My view presupposes that makers possess some contentful pornography conception operative in the creative activity. Everyday paradigm exemplars support this view and tell us something about such a conception: typically, pornography artifacts are sexually explicit; they contain nudity and scenes of a sexual nature; they have the potential to sexually arouse their viewers; and they are often used as ‘masturbation materials.’” (Mikkola 2017, 118)

She also gives a rough idea of what the pornography-relevant features [4] will be (again, these may vary over time):

> “[P]aradigm everyday pornographic artifacts suggest that the relevant features include footage, images, and depiction of sexual acts and scenes of sexual nature (broadly conceived).” (Mikkola 2017, 118)

These explanations are relatively intuitive to me; the problem is that once we start thinking about the conception [3] and the features [4], it becomes clear that this account cannot ‘fix ground’ in the way Mikkola intends: Dworkin and MacKinnon could respond to this account with ‘fine, you’re right

[47] This is not an oversight of Mikkola’s; she offers an account which leaves a gap here because she recognises that people’s intuitions about what pornography is about are heterogeneous. More on this in a moment.

about what pornographic artifacts are, as it is obvious that 'subordination' will be on the list of 'pornography-relevant features' and I could say that 'subordination' should not be on the list, and we are at an impasse. Mikkola's account cannot tell us whether a video of two women having sex without subordinating each other counts as a pornographic artifact/pornography or not. Mikkola intended it to be the case that this account would enable us to set aside the debates about whether pornography was subordinating until *after* we have fixed what a pornographic artifact is,[48] but this is not going to work: as above, Dworkin and MacKinnon can just say, 'We find it intuitive that subordination be on the list of 'pornography-relevant features'', and that pushes the problem back to the front.[49]

It should be said that it is not an accident that [3] and [4] are tentative: Mikkola wants to attend to the fact that what is taken to be pornography will change over time, and which features are pornography-relevant will be different at different times and places (Mikkola 2019a, 17). This is something to be aware of, but the gap Mikkola leaves for 'plug[ging] in the concepts and features of your day' is simply too large to make the definition useful for fixing ground; if we leave [3] and [4] open, we have a skeleton of a definition of pornography, where feminists of different stripes can have exactly the same arguments they had before and no more common ground.

One problem remains with Mikkola's account: it hinges on *intentions.* This necessity of particular intentions generates some counterexamples:

> Abi accidentally leaves her camera on, and it records her masturbating. When selecting an image to share on social media, she accidentally shares the video of her masturbating. On Mikkola's account Abi has not made pornography, while intuitively we may want to say she has accidentally made pornography.
>
> Bex wants to make a video that the audience find sexy. She successfully makes such a video, but Bex has no concept of 'pornography' (perhaps she is a feminist philosopher who, after reading the literature, has realised that she does not have a clear idea of what is and is not pornography). Since she is missing the substantive conception 'pornography', she also cannot meet Mikkola's condition of intending to create pornography.
>
> Cary also wants to make a video that the audience find sexy. They successfully make such a video, but Cary has the *wrong* concept of 'pornography' (Cary has never deliberately searched for pornography, and has only so far seen the odd clip on a friend's phone). Given that the friend shows Cary clips that they take to be amusing in some way, Cary now takes

[48] "[M]y proposal fixes what makes *x* a pornographic artifact, after which we can discuss whether these artifacts have some particular central use (sexual stimulation) or meaning (subordination)." (Mikkola 2017, 115)

[49] It might be the case that some ground has been fixed: that whether something is pornography or not hinges on makers' intentions, but this is also disputable, given that the other accounts discussed here do not take intention to play a significant role, and given particular counterexamples discussed below.

the wrong things to be substantive features of pornography, given the unrepresentative sample they have seen.

If we follow the intuition here that Abi has created pornography despite her intentions, and throw out the role of intention entirely, and leave only the pornography-making features 'depiction of sexual acts and scenes of sexual nature', this would let in many more counterexamples than this one (for example sex education programmes, CCTV of sex acts, etc.). So while we do want intention to play some role, making it *necessary* causes problems. Further, intuitively, Bex and Cary have both created pornography, but given that they both lack the right concept, they cannot count has having created pornography on Mikkola's account.

Given the structure of Mikkola's account, we may be able to get a picture of what pornography is that avoids these problems if we remove the necessity of intentions; the result would be something which looks like the account I offer shortly.

iv. 'I know it when I see it'

I may be cheating slightly in using this quote as pointing to a definition of pornography based on audience reception – it need not be interpreted that way. It could instead be a claim that there is some other way of defining pornography, but that our intuitions are sufficient for identifying when that other definition is met. Let us set that version aside though, and choose to interpret it as suggesting that a definition of pornography should be based on audience interpretation.

I entertain this understanding only for completeness, as I have not yet come across a defence of such a definition. The obvious problem with such a definition is that it simply pushes the problem back a step: if pornography is that which the audience takes to be pornography, then what it is that the audience is taking the material to be?

It is all very well to say pornography is whatever people refer to as 'pornography', but for philosophical purposes, we need a more substantial definition, such that we can speak with clarity about whether pornography does certain things, and to ensure we are not talking at cross-purposes.

The other problem with a definition of pornography based on audience-understanding is that it can easily get the extension wrong: if someone makes a pornographic film, and edits it, and uploads it to a pornography website, it seems that that video is pornography regardless of whether anyone has watched it yet. We have seen this problem before for 'function-based' accounts (only in this case the proponent of the account cannot appeal to 'capacity' in the same way – while only some things have the capacity to be used for a particular function, virtually anything has the capacity to be interpreted in a particular way).

This means that audience reception cannot do the work alone, but given that part of my methodology is to reflect popular usage and popular understandings, it could still play a role in an account. We will not spend any more time on audience reception as a definition now, given that it has (to my knowledge) no proponents. Next, I suggest a hybrid definition of pornography.

v. A Proposal

While I think pinning down a concrete definition of pornography is not always necessary and will possibly never be perfect, I offer the following definition to 'fix some ground' (to shamelessly borrow Mikkola's phrasing). While this might not be entirely 'common' ground insofar as many antipornography feminists will take only degrading or damaging material to be pornography, they do for the most part also understand there to be a broader category of sexual materials, though they reserve the name 'pornography' for those degrading pieces. I offer this definition to make clear the terms of the discussion and ensure we all have the same kind of thing in mind before we proceed.

I take my account to get the extension right in terms of including and excluding materials in line with our intuitions. Further, I take my account to be more concrete in its details and significantly simpler than Mikkola's account, which I see as much more plausible than the others.

> *For a piece of media, x, to be pornography [or count as a 'pornographic artifact'], x must meet at least two of the following conditions:*
>
> 1) *It is sexually explicit [content]*
> 2) *It is aimed at/intended for sexually arousing viewers [intention]*
> 3) *It tends to be understood as intended for the purpose of arousing viewers [audience reception].*

These criteria may be surprising given that I have just argued against centring content, intention, and audience reception. However, the problems with each of the above accounts were largely over- or underinclusivity due to centring only one of these features. I shall now consider all of the problems raised with the above accounts and make clear how my account is not vulnerable to those problems.

First, it should be obvious that my account avoids the kind of question-begging problems around whether pornography is harmful for which Longino and MacKinnon and Dworkin could be criticised; my account makes no commitments or assumptions about whether pornography harms, degrades, or subordinates.

In assessing MacKinnon and Dworkin's account, we came across two main problems; that it was underinclusive both by virtue of being a function-based account, and by virtue of excluding anything non-subordinating, and, relatedly, that it deviated far from popular intuitions. My account is not underinclusive in this way, and captures all of the intuitive cases raised so far. For instance, the example excluded on MacKinnon and Dworkin's account – a video of graphic sex shown on a pornography site which involves no subordination – will count here by virtue of meeting all three of my criteria. The example excluded on function-based accounts in general – an unwatched piece of pornography – will count here by virtue of meeting (1) and (2).

Longino's account excluded gay pornography by centring 'females', and excluded all pornography which does not meet her criteria for degradation; it is clear none of these problems apply to my account. However, the bigger problem with centring content is that it is no simple task to determine which things do and do not count as *sexually explicit* content. First, a video of two people kissing

might count as sexually explicit in some contexts and not others. Second, examples of fetish pornography are at risk of exclusion, as it is not at all clear whether a video of someone smoking counts as sexually explicit or not.

Fortunately, much of the bite of these problems is offset by there being a way of something counting as pornography without needing to meet the content criterion (1) (i.e. by meeting (2) and (3)). This is going let in fetish pornography and provide the context needed to help categorise some context-dependent content; a video of two women kissing might count as pornography on a pornography site, but not in a daytime reality television show, by virtue of the former being intended, or understood as intending, to sexually arouse viewers. Further, that the third criterion references what audiences take the pornographers' *intentions* to be, rather than what the audience *uses* the pornography for, ensures that heteronormative pornography is not unfairly privileged in being more able to clearly meet the content condition. If the third condition had been in terms of *use,* then a video of a woman smoking that is aimed at arousing viewers, yet for those viewers it misses the mark and does not turn them on, would not count. In such a 'bad pornography' case, viewers understand it as pornography, but it does not work for them. On a *use-based* criterion, this would not count as pornography, but penis-in-vagina filmed sex that misses the mark and fails to arouse viewers will still count (because of meeting the 'content' condition straightforwardly). My criterion (3) avoids this privileging and makes it the case that bad fetish pornography (e.g. a smoking video that does not successfully arouse) and bad vanilla hardcore pornography (e.g. a penis-in-vagina sex video that does not successfully arouse) can both count as pornography.

In dealing with difficulties with defining the right 'content' above, I avoided saying which things count as the right content, instead only mentioning how context may help guide us. This is deliberate, and reflects the influence of Mikkola's account on my own thinking.

Mikkola's intentions-based account suffered two problems: first, there was a gap, insofar as we were no closer to knowing what kinds of things counted as pornography (without determining which things are pornography-relevant features, or constitute a substantive concept of pornography), and second, the account left out accidental pornography and pornography created by people who do not have a particular conception of pornography. My account avoids these problems, while still leaving some room for variation over time – the primary benefit of the aforementioned 'gap'.

Regarding the second problem: my account can capture accidental pornography (including the case of Abi) by virtue of meeting criteria (1) and (3), and given the absence of the need for a shared substantive concept of pornography on the part of the maker, Bex and Cary will also meet (2).

Regarding the first problem: first, the gap I leave is smaller. The gap I leave is in what counts as 'sexually explicit content'. Referring to 'sexually explicit content' provides much more to go on, and is much more precise, than 'pornography-relevant' or 'concept of pornography'. My three criteria make sense as answers to questions of 'which things are pornography-relevant' and 'what goes into our concept of pornography', so it should be obvious that the gap I am leaving is much smaller than

the gap Mikkola leaves, and that we do have more information than we start with in the question 'what is pornography'. Still though, there is room for variation over time and context; what counts as sexually explicit in England today will not be the same as what counted as sexually explicit in England in 1920, and what counts as sexually explicit (as explained above) can shift according to other contextual factors.

The goals Mikkola has in mind (fixing common ground while being sensitive to how pornography changes over time) are important, and I hold that as well as being sensitive to change over time, my account can also still 'fix common ground' between those different sides in pornography debates.

On the face of it, it looks like MacKinnon would reject my account for failing to include 'subordination' as a necessary condition. However, my definition *is* consistent with MacKinnon's understanding in that it is consistent with the broader category of sexual material that radical feminists like MacKinnon have in mind, when they acknowledge the existence of both sexually explicit material that is harmful and sexually explicit material that may not be so (they just save the name pornography for the subcategory of sexually explicit material that subordinates).

MacKinnon distinguished between pornography and erotica; immediately after defining pornography as characterised above, MacKinnon explains: "Erotica, defined by distinction as not this, might be sexually explicit materials premised on equality."[50] (MacKinnon 1987c, 176)

One implausible way of interpreting 'defined by distinction as not this [i.e. not pornography]' is to take 'erotica' to mean either 'everything in the world that is not porn'. This is clearly not what is meant, as cats and tables are neither pornography nor erotica, so MacKinnon must instead mean 'everything within a certain category that is not porn'. What is interesting about this is that MacKinnon must already have a broader definition of some category at work, which includes both pornography and erotica. This category must be something along the lines of 'sexually explicit material'. This means MacKinnon may actually hold an understanding of pornography consistent with those who want a morally/politically neutral definition; she just reserves the term 'pornography' for the subcategory of material within that group which she takes to be subordinating.

What my account aims to capture (and I think Mikkola is trying to capture the same thing) is exactly this set of things including both what MacKinnon would refer to as pornography and what MacKinnon would refer to as erotica. While Mackinnon would want to define the term 'pornography' differently to us, my account is still compatible with hers in so far as I capture the broader category she has in mind.

[50] While MacKinnon and Dworkin share a definition of pornography, they do not share a definition of erotica. The definition of pornography quoted in Section 2.1 of this chapter is drawn from the co-written ordinance, and is (almost) identical to the definition on page 176 of MacKinnon's lecture 'Francis Biddle's Sister', yet, in MacKinnon's lecture, the definition of erotica above is inserted.

Is my account also compatible with sex-radical understandings of pornography? The reader might be wondering why I have not yet included an explicitly sex radical definition, since I began this chapter with a picture of two opposing camps, yet have just described two radical feminist definitions of pornography (MacKinnon/Dworkin and Longino). The reason for this is that sex radicals have not offered a definition of pornography designed to match their political goals in the same way that the radical feminists did. Sex radicals instead tended to not offer a definition in favour of taking for granted a popular understanding. The only gestures sex radicals make towards laying down a definition are to express allegiance to common understandings:

> "In itself, pornography—which, my dictionary and I agree, means any image or description intended or used to arouse sexual desire—does not strike me as the proper object of a political crusade." (Willis 2014, 95)

I think this understanding is roughly consistent with a) popular opinion and b) the formulaic definition I offer above and c) the broader category of sexual material that MacKinnon has in mind which covers both pornography and erotica.

It appears that my definition will be capable of fixing ground insofar as it is compatible with radical feminist and sex-radical understandings of pornography, as well as leaving room for pornography to change over time. My account includes all the intuitive cases of deliberate and accidental pornography, and excludes everything else.[51] This account gives a role for the intention of the creators and the reception of the audience, without either being independently necessary. This definition makes no claims about whether and when pornography causes harm, meaning feminists can look at different kinds and aspects of pornography to explore these kinds of claims.

Part Three – Erotica vs. Pornography (and other problematic distinctions)

The distinction between erotica and pornography is contested, but here I show that it is not only this distinction that can be challenged. In this section I explain the challenges to the distinction between erotica and pornography; further, I explain why we should also reject the distinctions between feminist pornography and mainstream pornography, and between pornography and misogynistic pornography. I offer four main problems for the erotica/pornography and pornography/feminist pornography distinctions, before briefly discussing how the distinction between pornography and *misogynistic* pornography inherits the problems of all other distinctions.

We saw above that MacKinnon offered the following definition of erotica: "Erotica, defined by distinction as not this [i.e. not pornography], might be sexually explicit materials premised on equality" (MacKinnon 1987c, 176). This definition leaves a whole load of open and problematic questions: what exactly are we to understand by 'premised on equality'? Does this mean that BDSM

[51] I have not said anything thus far about how my account *ex*cludes the right things, because that would be an infinitely long task. However, the kinds of things we might worry about are perhaps: sex education videos, which will be ruled out on account of not meeting at least [2] and [3], and possibly [1] if context does the work I mean it to, and, a television show with romantic and sexual scenes, which should also be ruled out for not meeting [2] and [3] (if it does meet those, then it actually would best be categorised at pornography!).

is ruled out, or that filmed sex should not involve participants of anything but identical socio-economic class, race, gender, etc.? MacKinnon's definition does not give us a clear answer, but she does draw explicitly on Steinem's account, which gives a little more information. There, erotica is characterised as containing warmth and love and sexual expression, contrasted with pornography which is characterised as containing dominance and violence. We shall see what is wrong with this distinction, and the other distinctions which have arisen, below.

3.1 Problem #1: Controlling sexuality

As well as the distinction between love-based and dominance-based sex that Steinem describes as characterising the distinction between pornography and erotica, Steinem also emphasises the need for us to "control our own sexuality" (Steinem 1980, 39). Taking Steinem to mean by this that women should decide for themselves what they do and do not want in their sex lives and sexual imaginations, rather than having their sexuality dictated for them [by the almighty Gods of heteropatriarchy: pornography writers (presumably)]. If we interpret this charitably (i.e. we ignore any potential worrisome implications about what can count as authentically desired by women), then this call from Steinem echoes one from people who do not see themselves as defending erotica at all, but who are instead defending BDSM and hardcore pornography. Miller-Young (2013) and Nash (2008) both reject the white-male-gaze-centred view of pornography, defending black women's right to make and consume pornography that speaks to their heterogeneous wants. Similarly, Banerjee, Merchant and Sharma (2018) and Ritchie and Barker (2005)[52] (again separately but similarly) defend BDSM on the grounds that it is, at its core, people taking ownership of themselves and deciding their own power dynamics rather than being beholden to whatever social position they have had wished upon them.

> "The idea of power and power exchange [is important] it's about choosing that exchange rather than having it forced on you." (Jane in Ritchie and Barker 2005)
>
> "Kink is centred on agency, consent, negotiations and communication. Hence, a dominant or submissive role or power dynamic is actively chosen and discussed. The devices of negotiations, roles and consent are in itself empowering to women, allowing proactive exploration and assertion of their sexuality." (Banerjee, Merchant, and Sharma 2018, 314)
>
> "It [the work of black women pornography filmmakers] also upsets ideas about consumption and the notion that black pornography can only ever be offered up for someone else's fantasy – the purported white male gaze." (Miller-Young 2013, 109)

BDSM and pornography as they are articulated by these authors certainly sound like 'taking control of one's sexuality', and these things are precisely what MacKinnon and other anti-pornography feminists object to. To be clear: I do not mean to imply that the authors quoted here are claiming that pornography is always fine. I am instead pointing to the irony of anti-pornography feminism acting in the name of 'controlling one's own sexuality', when having control over one's own sexuality is a key component of the work of those who are decidedly not allied with MacKinnon and Dworkin's

[52] Ritchie and Barker's paper was based on a participant-led focus group, so really when I say 'Ritchie and Barker defend BDSM' I really mean they and their participants defend BDSM.

anti-pornography work. Defenders of BDSM and hardcore pornography criticise anti-pornography feminists (like MacKinnon, who draws on Steinem) for attempting to block their attempts to control their sexuality. Nash explicitly criticises the line MacKinnon draws between (good) erotica and (bad) pornography, as being both unclear and unfairly rejecting all pornography because of the assumption of a white male viewer:

> "MacKinnon's conception of 'equal' sexual representation is too vague to be conceptualized, neglectful of the potential importance of domination and subordination to the cultivation of sexual subjectivity, and inattentive to the sheer variety of pornographic products that 'speak sex' to a host of consumers." (Nash 2008, 62)

The mistake Nash identifies is both a matter of inaccuracy – pornography is extremely diverse (in its language, its content, its consumers), so cannot be described as one thing which works in one way and communicates one thing – and a matter of injustice: who is MacKinnon ignoring when she frames pornography in this way? Amongst others, MacKinnon is ignoring queer and black spectators.

From a slightly different angle, Mikkola argues that far from furthering control of our own sexuality, the MacKinnon-Steinem understanding of erotica "romanticises sex and ends up connecting sex and love in a way that reflects common gender stereotypes" (2019b, 208). If Mikkola is right (she is), then deeming erotica – containing a romanticised view of sex, with heavy links to compulsory monogamy – as acceptable and pornography as unacceptable is harmful insofar as it reinforces patriarchal ideas about femininity. If women are to 'control their own sexuality', prescribing them a normative romantic version of sex is a very poor place to start.

3.2 Problem #2: Class

The MacKinnon-Steinem-style distinction between pornography and erotica has been criticised by writers such as Ellen Willis, but also, interestingly, by Andrea Dworkin.

> "Erotica is simply high-class pornography: better produced, better conceived, better executed, better packaged, designed for a better class of consumer." (A. Dworkin 1981b, 10)

> "The accepted meaning of erotica is literature or pictures with sexual themes; it may or may not serve the essentially utilitarian function of pornography. Because it is less specific, less suggestive of actual sexual activity, 'erotica' is regularly used as a euphemism for 'classy porn.' Pornography expressed in literary language or expensive photography and consumed by the upper middle class is 'erotica'; the cheap stuff, which can't pretend to any purpose but getting people off, is smut. The erotica-versus-porn approach evades the (embarrassing?) question of how porn is used." (Willis 2014, 96)

These writers argue that the distinction seems not, in fact, to be capturing any kind of political or ethical difference between different kinds of material, but instead capturing an aesthetic difference which is steeped in classism: pornography, which admits it is for masturbation, is low-brow and vulgar, whereas erotica, which does not say the masturbation part out loud, is high-brow and artistic. The distinction Steinem identifies, which seems to track the difference between making love and fucking, does not contain any information about whether the performers have good working conditions, or are authentically enjoying themselves. It is naive to assume that because it looks more

soft and gentle, it is more feminist.[53] Willis' quip "What turns me on is erotic; what turns you on is pornographic" (2014, 96) captures not only the subjective nature of a content-based distinction, it also points to the problem that this distinction turns on a harmful kind of moralism where some kinds of sexuality are palatable and some are not, which reinforces the misogynistic "good girl-bad girl split" (Willis 2014, 98) (we shall return to this moralism in Chapter Five when we discuss stigma around sex work). There may be other reasons why some media are better/worse than others i.e. that they do harm, but this is precisely what the rest of this thesis will investigate, and cannot be arrived at by determining how high-brow that piece of media is (it is all wank-material after all).

3.3 Problem #3: "Feminist for who? For the viewer?"[54]

The more recent practice of distinguishing *feminist* pornography from *mainstream* pornography is surprising then, because it looks an awful lot like the pornography/erotica distinction. This time though, the more acceptable kind of sexually explicit material admits it is pornography, and rejects the 'love-making' restriction of erotica.

Usually when people talk about 'feminist pornography', they are making a claim about the kind of content; while mainstream pornography might be filled with heterosexual sex which also involves degrading women in one way or another, feminist pornography might be filled with more empowering sex acts which subvert patriarchal norms. What counts as 'feminist' in this sense will be subject to wide disagreement (for example, is a woman visibly enjoying playing a submissive role an assurance that this scene was enthusiastically consensual, or reinforcing the idea that women enjoy subservience in everyday life?).[55]

Let's be honest: drawing the feminist/mainstream distinction, like the erotica/pornography distinction, is making a claim about which pornography is good and which pornography is bad. If we as feminists want to draw a distinction between which pornography is good and which pornography is bad, we cannot simply establish a naming convention based on content.

Anti-pornography feminism has a history of concerning itself with the *message* of pornography, but not the *workers.* Similarly, the category of feminist pornography has turned out to be telling a similarly incomplete picture, insofar as a piece of media being in the 'feminist' category will generally tell us nothing about whether women performing in it were treated well. Mari Mikkola cites Tristan Taormino in suggesting that the term 'feminist pornography' should also appropriately capture the situation of the workers, and how the media are produced, rather than merely the content (Mikkola 2019b, 201). This would, I think, be a more useful application of the term 'feminist pornography'. Unfortunately, this improved way of identifying work as 'feminist' simply does not

[53] My partner, cynically, but I think astutely, said of this distinction, "Of course they [middle-class feminist intellectuals] think erotica is fine – they're the target audience, it's marketed towards them."
[54] This is a quote from Juno Mac, speaking on a panel on feminist pornography at *A Decriminalised Future: Sex Workers' Festival of Resistance* (Mac et al. 2019, 00:10:07), discussed further below.
[55] For more on these kind of difficult questions see (Mikkola 2019b).

track reality. At *A Decriminalised Future: Sex Workers' Festival of Resistance* in 2019, pornography performer and activist Hello Rooster explained:

> "As soon as it's very beautiful lighting and very beautiful cinematography and camerawork, we automatically think that's ethical, or everyone in those productions are getting paid well, or the labour rights are good, and I don't think that's the case based on my own experience." (Mac et al. 2019, 00:07:21)

Pornography performers are telling us that the pornography that is currently categorised as 'feminist' is a largely aesthetic matter. 'Feminist pornography' does not tend to capture a political or ethical commitment, but rather an artistic style, where you perform a different kind of persona to fit the message that is being sold. On the same panel as Rooster, Lina Bembe tells us:

> "You have to perform not only like fucking for camera, but also have to perform a feminist version of yourself, like a certain correctness, a certain type of commitment to 'the cause,' a certain sense of joyfulness into what you do, but also to deliver nice smiles, still say nice things, but not to be too fierce enough. And I think that actually that's just like one bit of the extra labour… ." (Mac et al. 2019, 00:26:11)

So it turns out that when producers call their film 'feminist' they are more often tracking a style than reflecting a political commitment. Being in a feminist pornography film does not guarantee you safety, and being in a mainstream pornography film does not preclude it. The performers in the panel above confirm this picture; Rooster describes their experience of being sexually assaulted in a feminist pornography set: "It looks very beautiful aesthetically, but there is like boundary violations and sexual assault going on. Who gets to call that ethical?" (Mac et al. 2019, 00:36:09).

This is not to say all pornography is bad, of course; feminism is present in lots of different kinds of pornography in different kinds of ways. The point is that the label 'feminist porn' does not track the presence of feminism.

Mikkola also acknowledges this discrepancy, citing Jiz Lee, who criticises the assumption that mainstream larger pornography companies always denote worse working conditions than independent, alternative companies (which are more likely to describe themselves as 'feminist') (Mikkola 2019b, 210). Mikkola however does not think we should do away with the distinction, but that we should retain the term 'feminist pornography' for that material which is genuinely feminist and ethical in its production. However, the final problem I discuss gives us reason to abandon the term, even if we fixed the misapplication problem and it began to track ethically produced material.

3.4 Problem #4: Class and Misogyny

Mikkola rightly questions the ability to define pornography from the philosopher's armchair, and warns that creating definitions in the way MacKinnon, Dworkin, and Langton do silences women in the pornography industry (who are, after all, the experts) (Mikkola 2019b, 208). Mikkola is making this point to challenge the idea that 'feminist pornography' just collapses into 'erotica', claiming instead that feminist pornography is possible because feminist pornographers tell us they are making feminist pornography – and they would know. "Our philosophical theories should do justice

to the claims of feminist producers and not dismiss them outright" (Mikkola 2019b, 208). This is right; we should not dismiss the claims of feminist producers outright. However, this may not help us settle anything as different producers will say different things about defining feminist pornography. And, more importantly, as we saw above, performers (the *workers*) can disagree with producers.[56]

As above, performers in pornography ('mainstream' and 'feminist') have rejected the category of 'feminist pornography' as merely an aesthetic description, and not in fact reflecting how women are treated. The criticism goes further than this though: the category of 'feminist pornography' is not only misleading, but also harmful.

Misha Mayfair argues that the distinction between feminist and mainstream pornography hurts mainstream pornography performers by stigmatising them as "the wrong kind of sex worker" (2019, 00:15:15). Mayfair describes a situation where the same sort of 'good girl-bad girl split' articulated by Ellen Willis is happening within the pornography industry, where those who perform in 'feminist pornography' are *good* and those in mainstream pornography are *bad:* "by definition of having that distinction, you're throwing everyone else under the bus" (Mac et al. 2019, 00:14:30). Mayfair demonstrates that in drawing a distinction between good feminist pornography and bad mainstream pornography, we not only harm mainstream performers by ranking them as inferior, but we also contribute to whorephobia and misogyny more broadly, and reinforce the idea that some women, particularly the women who have lots of sex, are dangerous, dirty, corruptors.

> "I think all of this feeds into a rhetoric that what people like me who've done scenes like gang-bang stuff and bukkakes, we're somehow responsible for symbolic violence against women, and this even comes from people who like feminist porn. I get death threats from people. I get told that, because of me, people are being abused. And it's quite serious. And this is why… this distinction, and this is why I'm so against this distinction, because, you know, we can all have these abstracted conversations, but it's not your real life, and I have to deal with these people every day, pretty much. And it's a lot, it's a lot emotionally, especially when you're a survivor yourself, for people to tell you, 'It's your fault this is happening.' Well, no. At the end of the day, we can play around with porn, no matter how we want, but it's men who do these things. And we can blame porn, and we can blame sex acts that women have consented to and enjoyed, as much as we want, but the issue is still going to be men. But, you know, a lot of feminists have now obfuscated that, and now we're just attacking other women. It's really, really unhelpful." (Mac et al. 2019, 00:23:09)

The problem articulated here with the feminist/mainstream distinction has a similar ring to the objections we saw to the erotica/pornography distinction, echoing the classist high-brow/low-brow distinction. Mayfair's point goes further, though: in demonstrating the scale of the problem in separating 'good' from 'bad' pornography, Mayfair shows that those who do the 'bad' stuff are not only treated as lesser, they are also treated as *blameworthy* for injuries against the women who are

[56] Misha Mayfair says: "So why make this class definition, in my opinion, because some of these producers … they're coming at it from a place where they don't have to do this to live. … And I don't think it's a good dialogue; I think it's exclusionary, and it's about the aesthetic rather than the ethical issues." (Mac et al. 2019, 00:05:53) and Hello Rooster says: "You might be directing and producing, but I don't think that gives you the power to be like dismissing whoever's been in that scene, their experience, and be like, 'No. My stamp says this is ethical, regardless of what your experience was.'" (Mac et al. 2019, 00:36:57)

granted the status of the 'good girls'. We should be deeply concerned about any framework which reinforces the idea that some women are 'good', or else are legitimate victims, whereas others are 'bad', corrupting influences who are to blame for the victimisation of other women (conveniently ignoring who it is who actually hurts women).

This is all to say that we should reject the distinction between 'feminist' and 'mainstream' pornography, but it is not to say that we should leave feminism (the ideological commitment, rather than the label) at the door when engaging with pornography. Our pornography should be more feminist, but at present these distinctions seem to be doing more harm than good.

3.5 Pornography and Misogynistic Pornography

The same again can be said of the distinction between pornography and misogynistic pornography. Katharine Jenkins proposes a distinction between pornography and m-pornography. 'Pornography' she defines along with Mikkola (roughly: the result of a successful attempt to realise a shared concept of pornography, see Section 2.2.iii), and m-pornography she defines in the same way as Longino defines pornography (roughly: depictions of abusive or degrading sexual content, with implicit approval of this degradation, see Section 2.2.ii).

Setting aside the problems articulated for these two definitions in the second part of this chapter, this distinction will inherit most of the problems raised above with erotica/pornography and mainstream/feminist pornography distinctions. If an overarching problem with these distinctions (especially when they are based on the *content*) is that they try to draw a line between 'good' and 'bad' pornography, which (a) can be really difficult to draw, (b) does not track the wellbeing and rights of performers, and (c) contributes to material harms to sex workers and reinforces misogyny more broadly in bolstering a 'good girl-bad girl split', then Jenkins' distinction is no exception.

Additionally, though, drawing this kind of distinction has the air of desiring to criticise pornography, but not desiring to appear sex-negative, so stipulating that one's work only applies to the bad bits. This kind of distinction can only be seen as earnestly making nuanced distinctions between the impacts of different pieces of media, rather than as veiled sex-negativity, when the same distinction is applied to other kinds of media. This may seem cynical, but only when I see a large body of literature on how misogynistic sitcoms are bad, with brief stipulations that non-misogynistic sitcoms are to be set aside as benign, will I evaluate this more charitably.

This distinction also bears some resemblance to distinctions between non-violent and violent pornography, which, rather than tracking whether pornography is safe and egalitarian, mistakenly tends to include consensual BDSM as violent. (Again, this distinction is problematically based entirely on the *content* that the viewer sees, rather than whether the workers are having a good time or not). The resemblance with this other messy distinction makes it clear that a neat line between pornography which is misogynistic and pornography which is not is simply not possible. There are not two neat categories here; it is not clear at all what constitutes 'representing abuse'. If you asked a hundred people to watch a dozen mainstream pornography videos and to put them into the two

categories, I contend that you would see very little agreement on which videos go in which categories. What counts as degrading to women is very much up for debate, whether objectification is harmful is clearly still up for debate, so expecting any kind of agreement on which material goes into the misogynistic category is wildly optimistic.

Given all of this, I contend that all of these distinctions are unhelpful then because they simply are not possible to draw neatly; they involve elevating certain kinds of sex and denigrating others, involving harmful moralism, classism and contributing to whorephobia and misogyny; they ignore how this (and marginalising BDSM) prevents people from controlling their own sexuality; and finally, taxonomy is never a good indicator of how consensual and safe it is.

I propose that for these reasons we abandon these distinctions, and refer simply to pornography, which varies greatly in content and working conditions.[57]

Part Four – Summary

In this chapter I have given the background and laid some groundwork. I explained the rough history of debates within feminism around objectification, harm, and pornography, outlining but acknowledging the limits of the 'sex war' paradigm. I explained the causal/constitutive and necessary/contingent distinctions and explained how the former can be set aside, and the latter will be instrumental to my central questions of *is pornography necessarily harmful,* and *is objectification necessarily harmful* which I answer explicitly in Chapter Five, to show that pornography is not necessarily harmful by virtue of objectification.

In Part Two I examined competing definitions of pornography, so one of the three key concepts I use can be defined (these three concepts being 'pornography', which I defined here; 'harm', which I define in Chapter Two; and 'objectification' which I define in Chapters Three and Four). In this section I show that the famous definition from Dworkin and MacKinnon gets the extension wrong, doesn't match intuitions, and is unhelpful practically; I show that Longino's account inherits many of the problems with Dworkin and MacKinnon's account, as well being even more unintuitively narrow; and I show that Mikkola's account, though more complex, gets more intuitive results, but suffers from centring 'intentions'. As well as challenging these particular accounts, I challenge the kinds of accounts they are: accounts based on *function*, *content*, *makers' intentions*, and *audience reception*.

After challenging all of these accounts, I offered my own hybrid account, which includes some of the elements from Mikkola's account, but leaves no component independently necessary. This allows it to get the extension right and track intuitions.

[57] There are related questions as to whether we should count 'revenge porn' and filmed rape as 'pornography' or not. This is beyond the scope of this thesis (I do not need to take a position on these issues for my purposes here), but at first glance it looks as though these will, in some cases, fit my definition. However, there may be overriding moral reasons for excluding them.

Finally, in Part Three I challenged distinctions often made in the literature between: pornography and erotica, mainstream pornography and feminist pornography, and pornography and misogynistic pornography.

The work in this chapter gave a picture of where this thesis is situated in feminist philosophy more broadly, and provides an understanding of pornography which will appear again in the next chapter in relation to harm, and which we should especially bear in mind in Chapter Five when I argue that pornography is not uniquely guilty of any harms associated with objectification.

CHAPTER TWO

Defining 'Harm' in Feminist Sexual Ethics

Throughout this thesis I will be making claims about whether, how, and when pornography and objectification harm women+. In order to do this I need to put forward a clear idea of what 'harm' means. Though other writers have done influential work on pornography without defining harm, I suspect the definition of harm will make a great deal of difference to the clarity of our assessment of these practices, and so needs pinpointing. Defining harm may not necessarily alter the content of the claims that are at stake, but it will certainly allow us to be more precise, and thereby identify where different feminists agree and disagree with less risk of talking at cross-purposes. Moreover, it will allow us to ground our claims that x is or is not harmful, by checking them against a definition, rather than leaving such claims unsupported.

In this chapter I will clarify the definition of harm that I will be using throughout the thesis, and explain the distinctions between different kinds of harm. My goal will be to utilise a definition that that would be appropriate for all (or most) of the literature I am engaging with; ideally, I want a definition that is already present in the background for the other texts I discuss. My starting point will be Joel Feinberg's understanding of harm (1984, 33, 37), because his definition is widely considered plausible[58] and seems to fit neatly with the literature in philosophy of sex, though the writers I engage with rarely make their definition explicit.

I will arrive at the following definition, which is a similar to Feinberg's, but with key changes:

> *We define harm as* ***the thwarting, setting back, or defeating of an interest,*** *where an interest can be thought of as a welfare interest. A group can be harmed when* ***something sets back the interests of members of that group by virtue of their group membership****. Something can be necessarily or contingently harmful, depending on whether an interest is necessarily, or* ***contingently,*** *set back.*

In Part One I explain features of Joel Feinberg's definition of harm, one at a time, while modifying his definition to reach my own. In Part Two I defend focusing on *harm* rather than wrong. I look at the existing feminist literature on pornography and show that *harm* is already at work. (The motivation for doing things in this order is that in order to show that harm is at work in that literature, we must already have a working definition to identify it). I then argue that, amongst other reasons, a focus on harm allows us to precisely locate sources of disagreement in feminist debates and avoid talking at cross-purposes. In Part Three I look at implications and applications of my definition of harm: first how it interacts with my definition of pornography, and second how it interacts with consent. The work in this chapter will be relevant in Chapter Four when we look at existing accounts of

[58] There are some well-known objections to Feinberg's account, and other 'counterfactual' and Millian accounts. For a brief overview of these and some potential solutions, see Klocksiem (2012).

objectification which treat objectification as necessarily harmful, and in Chapter Five where I argue that objectification is only contingently harmful, and elucidate how and when it is harmful.

Part One – What is Harm?

Feinberg defines harm as "the thwarting, setting back, or defeating of an interest" (Feinberg 1984, 33) (with clear influence from J.S. Mill's understanding of harm (Mill 2003, 95–97, 131–32, 147–55)).[59]

In this section I take apart this definition, explaining first what we mean by 'setting back', then looking at what 'interests' are. After that, I consider how groups as well as individuals can be subjects of harm under this definition, and finally I look at the distinctions between necessary and contingent harms.

1.1 Setbacks

The focus on 'setback' rather than 'thwarting' or 'defeating' is somewhat arbitrary; I use it (and Feinberg sometimes used it) as it as a catch-all for all three here. Feinberg's definition of 'setback' is clarified in the claim that for something to be 'set back' is for it to be "in a worse condition than it would otherwise have been" (Feinberg 1984, 34). This counterfactual element yields certain difficulties that I am not going to go into here[60] (Klocksiem 2012). This understanding also relies on a rejection of a kind of simple subjectivism. In this context, simple subjectivism means that a person is harmed only insofar as they feel harmed, or conceive of themselves as being harmed. This maps onto an obvious kind of harm: pain. It might make sense to say we are only in pain if we feel like we are. However, this does not work for other kinds of harms. For example: imagine Amy has a malevolent acquaintance, who spreads nasty rumours about her to all of her friends and colleagues. This acquaintance makes sure that no-one is as friendly or as kind to Amy as they would have been otherwise, and Amy finds herself very isolated. Amy has surely been harmed by this acquaintance, but Amy knows nothing about the acquaintance's actions; she does not know that people would otherwise have treated her respectfully. Or for a more controversial but relevant example: Julie does not believe in patriarchy; she is under the impression that sexism ended in the 1950s and that feminists have nothing left to complain about. However, she nevertheless experiences systematic and multitudinous setbacks to her interests as a result of the sexist society she lives in. These examples should show why it is sensible to reject simple subjectivism about harm, in favour of an approach which accommodates the intuition that a person can be harmed *without their knowledge*. This approach is consistent with most of the literature I will be dealing with; in fact, much of the radical feminist literature requires a rejection of simple subjectivism in order to work (any literature

[59] Brink puts Mill's definition succinctly as: "To constitute a harm, an action must be injurious or set back important interests of particular people, interests in which they have rights." (Brink 2018)
[60] In short, these are: how to conceive of harms that involve a net gain, harms that affect the identity of the harmed person, a multiplication problem, distinguishing between harm and failure to benefit, and overdetermination problems.

on false consciousness requires a rejection of simple subjectivism).[61] For example, Langton claims that one harm done to women is their being placed in a certain ontological category, which can be done without the women's knowledge. On a simple subjectivist account of harm this could not happen; the woman would only be harmed if she understood herself as such. Vadas (2005) argues that women are subordinated by pornography, and this is a harm to them whether they understand themselves to be subordinated or not. Similarly Carse (1995), LeMoncheck (1997), and Nussbaum (1995) discuss the harm of objectification in way that seems to require that if a person is objectified, this occurs irrespective of that person's understanding of it.

1.2 Interests[62]

Feinberg describes two kinds of interest: *welfare* interests and *ulterior* interests. Welfare interests are the much simpler interests; they are *(virtually) universal human needs*. Feinberg lists:

> "In this category are the interests in the continuance for a foreseeable interval of one's life, and the interests in one's own physical health and vigor, the integrity and normal functioning of one's body, the absence of absorbing pain and suffering and grotesque disfigurement, minimal intellectual acuity, emotional stability, the absence of groundless anxieties and resentments, the capacity to engage normally in social intercourse and to enjoy and maintain friendships, at least minimal income and financial security, a tolerable social and physical environment, and a certain amount of freedom from interference and coercion." (Feinberg 1984, 37)

I will accept Feinberg's characterisation of welfare interests, though suggest we construe 'normal' very loosely, and consider the fourth clause to read 'the absence of absorbing [unpleasant] pain and suffering'. The insertion of 'unpleasant' is to accommodate cases where people experience some pains as pleasurable, and I remove 'and grotesque disfigurement' entirely due to the ableism implied in suggesting that disfigurement is always harmful and 'grotesque', independently of the suffering resulting from an ableist society. For the same sorts of reasons I remove 'minimal intellectual

[61] Though I am leaving room for false consciousness, I want to emphasise that standpoint theory and basic respect for the agency and autonomy of others motivate attentiveness and charitability to people's testimonies, or else we end up being guilty of dehumanisation and infantilisation (and epistemic arrogance). This is beside the point for now, but will bear remembering in Chapter Five.

[62] While I use Feinberg's account of welfare interests here, there are similar accounts which could be equally useful. This account has a great deal in common with Martha Nussbaum's Central Human Capabilities. I suggest that while we are understanding harm as a setback to welfare interests, one could roughly equivalently understand harm as a setback to a central human capability. It seems to me that Feinberg and Nussbaum have the same ideas in mind, but give them different names.

acuity'.[63] With these minor amendments[64] in mind I will agree with Feinberg that a setback to welfare interests is always a harm. After amendments, our list of welfare interests looks like this:

> *In this category are the interests in the continuance for a foreseeable interval of one's life, and the interests in one's own physical health and vigour, the integrity and normal functioning of one's body, the absence of absorbing unpleasant pain and suffering, emotional stability, the absence of groundless anxieties and resentments, the capacity to engage normally in social intercourse and to enjoy and maintain friendships, at least minimal income and financial security, and a tolerable social and physical environment, and a certain amount of freedom from interference and coercion.*[65]

This characterisation of harm as setbacks to welfare interests and the list of welfare interests are, I think, intuitive: a person being shot in the leg has their welfare interest in their own *physical health* set back, and so on this account we would say that was a harm. For a different kind of harm: a person being unjustly bullied and ostracised suffers a setback to their welfare interest in their '*capacity to engage normally in social intercourse and to enjoy and maintain friendships*', and so this counts as a harm. However, a person not being able to have their hair done by their favourite hairdresser ordinarily does not set back a welfare interest, so does not count as a harm. There is going to be some room for disagreement here; what some may consider as causing *groundless anxieties*[66] others may conceive of as justified nuisances, and the scope of '*tolerable'* and of '*certain amount'* are going to be very much debatable.

Along with *welfare interests* we have *ulterior interests.* Ulterior interests are our aspirations and goals. These include things like hoping to get married, buy an expensive car, or overthrow the government. I might have an ulterior interest in a career in philosophy, but also a welfare interest in being in a tolerable social and physical environment.[67] If an ulterior interest is set back, that is not

[63] I am also very wary of the inclusion of 'emotional stability'. This and 'minimal intellectual acuity' are both suspect terms which may imply that being disabled as a result of some emotional instability or cognitive ability seen as less than average (however society has decided to measure such a thing) will always be harmful. Disabled people's testimony undermines this view. However, we want to preserve the intuition that if domestic abuse like gaslighting makes me less emotionally stable, or someone hits me in the head and damages my long-term memory, I have been harmed by them. I am not wholly sure how to balance these two concerns, but a solution might be to say that while emotional instability and cognitive disability are not in themselves harmful, a setback or change in capacity or stability might be, insofar as our society is not structured in such a way as to avoid life getting harder for the subjects of such a change.

[64] We might also alter 'minimal income and financial security' to render it applicable to non-capitalist societies. This might read something like 'reliable access to the resources which enable other welfare interests to be met (e.g. food/shelter)'.

[65] This list looks complete to me, but I am not ruling out anything else being added to it with adequate justification.

[66] This is quite an ambiguous interest. I suspect the kinds of examples we are thinking of here are cases like spending a month under the impression that you have a very short time left to live, only to be told afterwards that it was a mistake and you are actually fine, or being required to jump through lots of administrative hoops to access disability benefits, when the administrative hoops are in fact unnecessary.

[67] While this may read as tongue-in-cheek, it could certainly be the case that if you are a member of a marginalised and/or underrepresented group, certain workplaces will not be tolerable social/physical environments for you and so be actively harmful.

enough to constitute a harm: for example, me not writing the best philosophy paper ever written is not a case of me being harmed.[68] Feinberg argues that if someone causes an ulterior interest of mine to conflict with another interest, then they may have harmed me[69] (Feinberg 1984, 41–42), or if they have manipulated the situation so I am left with nothing if my ulterior interest is not achieved (Feinberg 1984, 42), but I set these aside as they will not be relevant here. I will focus on the most serious of Feinberg's harms: setbacks to welfare interests.[70]

When I discuss harms done to women+, I will usually be referring to setbacks to welfare interests, not only because they appear most important, but also because they are the kinds of interests other writers in the literature seem to be concerned with. Writers on sex work and sexual violence are often interested in cases where women have their interest in bodily integrity set back. As we will see below, an interest in living in a tolerable social and physical environment is an interest that is also set back in the case of most of the harms at issue in feminist philosophy of sex. While I do not want to start ranking interests, we will see in Chapter Five how important setbacks to bodily integrity and freedom from interference[71] are, by virtue of how important controlling our boundaries is for feeling safe.

This highlights a strength of my account, in that it is sensitive to context: if certain people are under threat of boundary violation, they may experience some harms that others do not by virtue of that threat. For example: in and of itself walking behind someone is not harmful, but if we lived in a context where people are frequently violently attacked from behind while walking, then walking behind someone can be harmful by virtue of setting back their interests in freedom from anxieties and suffering (in that the person in front may be really afraid for their safety). The account of harm I am working with accommodates the idea that some things may be harmful in some contexts and not others, or *more* harmful in particular contexts, and is attentive to social and environmental factors in this way. We will see in Chapter Five how this pays off, in that contexts of patriarchy and rape culture render certain things particularly harmful, and particularly harmful for women+.

1.3 Who is Harmed?

Our next concern is working out *who* is the subject of the harm. Any individual person can be harmed, but if we are concerned about harms to *women+*, another question is how our understanding of harm works for *groups.* In order to describe how a group can be harmed, the group

[68] Feinberg might say I am experiencing a 'disliked' state, but not a harmed one (Feinberg 1984, 47).
[69] An example of this might be if I am currently working in my dream job, yet I am blackmailed such that I must either do something that may cause me to lose that job (setting back an ulterior interest) or lose my kneecaps (setting back a welfare interest).
[70] Another key thing to note is that part of the harm of setbacks to welfare interests is in the resultant setback to ulterior interests. For example, if my welfare interest in health is setback, I may be unable to advance my ulterior interest in learning badminton. So with this additional setback, setbacks to welfare interests turn out to be even more serious.
[71] To clarify what I see the distinction between these two as being: a setback to *freedom from interference* will include things which violate any kinds of boundaries, so anything non-consensual, whereas a setback to *bodily integrity* will include things which violate bodily boundaries in particular.

must have *interests.* Fortunately, there is already a framework for discussing harms to (and interests of) groups; Feinberg offers three definitions of *public interest*:

1) "a collection of specific interests of the same kind possessed by a large and indefinite number of private individuals"
2) "a 'common' or widely shared specific interest"
3) "a resultant [net] interest shared by everybody without exception" (Feinberg 1984, 222–24).

For any of these definitions, we must identify a specific or net interest, like having clean water, and in cases where that interest is set back for everyone (or nearly everyone in the case of (1) and (2)), it counts as a public harm. Now we should shift from talking about 'public interests' to 'group interests'. I want to demonstrate that this notion can function as a framework for articulating *group* harms (and I do not want to give the impression that I am jumping into an existing discussion on 'public harms'). Given that the public is essentially a group containing everyone in a given society, we can deal with group harms in a similar way. This focus on the 'interests of the group' over the 'interests of group members' may be an unnecessarily complex characterisation, as for Feinberg, the former seems to be little more than shorthand for the latter. This points to a distinction between summative and non-summative group interests.

Summative group interests will be interests that women[72] (group members) have individually, and since all/most of the group members have them, such interests will count as interests of the group. *Non-summative* group interests will be interests that the group has independently of whether all, most, or perhaps even any individual group members have those interests.

An example of a case where *no* group members have the non-summative group interests might be a company which is composed of a few hundred employees: it might be the case that the group 'The Company' has an interest in selling lots of products, but that all of the individuals who compose The Company have no interest in selling lots of products. I am sceptical of this kind of example, and generally of non-summative group interests which *no* individuals have. (I think in this case either The Company does not in fact have an interest in selling lots of products, or The Company is not actually a group composed of the employees but something else – perhaps an entity in its own right, or a group composed of the bosses and higher-ranking staff).

I do not see there being any interests which attach to the group 'women' (conceived non-summatively) that *some* individual women composing the group do not also have. In the same way, I

[72] I discuss women in this section, rather than women+. This is just for simplicity as explaining group ontology is tricky enough without the additional step of speaking of two groups together. In this thesis I engage with both harms to the group 'women' and harms to the group 'women and those read as women'. Remember, I identify the latter group to capture harms to which we are vulnerable based not on what gender we actually are, but on what gender people often read us as, as for example in catcalling. I will also refer to 'women' rather than 'women+' when discussing claims other people have made; for example, if discussing how Dworkin is concerned about a particular harm to women, I will not put words into her mouth by expanding the scope of her claim to 'women and those read as women' (that is the scope of *my* claims).

do not see there being any harms done to the group 'women' that individual women composing the group do not experience; it seems to be that we care about certain harms to women (group) *because* they involve harm to real, individual women. For example, we care about women (group) being worse off financially because that means the (all, many, or some) women (individuals) composing the group are suffering poverty and injustice. I think the best candidate for an example of a setback to this kind of non-summative group interest is subordination, e.g. subordination sets back a group interest for group 'women'. I can see people claiming that this is the case whether or not any group members see themselves as having an interest set back. However, this does not tell us that group members do not have an interest set back, this tells us that group members *do not believe they are having an interest set* back (remember we have already rejected simple subjectivism about harm which would equivocate these). What is at issue is whether the group can have an interest set back without any women *actually* having an interest set back, and I do not think they can. If no actual women are being subordinated, there is nothing useful or interesting about the claim 'women [group] are being subordinated', and presumably the reason anyone wants to claim the latter is that they are concerned about the former. As feminists we care about real harms to women, and would not spend energy fighting a perceived harm that has not actually affected anyone.[73]

While I doubt there any feminists claiming explicitly that 'X harms Women, but doesn't actually harm any women', some feminists have discussed harms to the group 'woman', or to the mythical/metaphorical 'everywoman' without discussing how, or which, individual women are harmed. I am thinking here of cases where harms to individual women are set aside in favour of prioritising harms to 'women' as a group. In such cases, usually a subset of women (e.g. middle-class, non-sex-working women) is being treated as representative of the whole, while other subsets of women (e.g. poor, sex-working women) are treated as non-representative of the whole. This approach avoids looking at harms to real women, in favour of abstractly discussing harms to the group.

In contrast, there is a kind of non-summativism about groups which does not fall into the traps above. If we say that a thing can count as a harm to group 'women' if only *some* (but not necessarily most or all) women are harmed in that way by virtue of their group membership, then if we also reject the idea that something which harms *no* women can count as a harm to women, we have a non-summative approach which is grounded in acknowledging harms to (literal) women, without requiring near-uniformity.

[73] To be clear, I mean to imply that a 'harm to women' is a harm to some group members *qua* women. Where a harm is done to, say, 60% of women, this does not mean that the remaining 40% count as harmed in the same way just because it makes sense to refer to that as a 'harm to women'. My version does not entitle (e.g.) white women to claim harms to black women as their own, but still allows all women to count harms in virtue of their gender as gendered harms, even if many other women are protected from them by some other privilege.

At this point, we have very much diverged from Feinberg's framework. I suggest a simple way of characterising group harms could be as follows; **a group harm has occurred if something sets back the [welfare] interests**[74] **of members of that group *by virtue of their group membership***.

This qualifier – *by virtue of group membership* – replaces Feinberg's qualifier that interests must be set back for '*many', 'all',* or '*most'* group members. The motivation for including any such qualifier is as follows: if it turns out that pornography causes women to be treated as subordinate to men, then we could say that pornography causes a *group harm* to the group 'women', as many women's interests are set back by virtue of their membership of the group 'women'. However, it would be misleading (though not inaccurate) to describe something as 'harmful to women' if it were mere luck that many women had had their interests set back by it, or if many women had their interests set back by it, but so did similar numbers of men (this case might then be more accurately described as a *public* harm).

As I touched on above, the motivation for preferring 'by virtue of group membership' to 'many' is that it seems to be the case that if 20% of women experience x by virtue of being women, and no other genders experience x, then x is appropriately described as something which affects women. Using 'many' risks ruling out the case where x affects 20% of (only) women as being a harm to women, thereby further marginalising already marginalised women, because not all women experience what they do. This does not mean that a thing that affects 20% of women is always *best* described as a harm to women; there may be a more precise explanatory way of framing that particular thing and in some circumstances the more precise explanation might be more useful (but this is absolutely not a given). A thing affecting a small number of women will also not mean it matters *less*: if something seriously harms all fat women with depression, that can be a very important harm to women, but may in some circumstances be best characterised with the specificity of a harm to fat depressed women. It might also be the case that if a harm is done by virtue of group membership, it is likely that it will affect many members of that group, and it might also be the case that if harm is done to only a few members of that group it might (but need not) be better described as harm by virtue of some distinct group membership or combination of group memberships (e.g. as a fat depressed woman).[75] In any case, if we remove the requirement of 'many', we can avoid the worry that harms to some women, which many women might be protected from, do not count. [76]

This distinction between individual harm and group harm does not have a great deal hanging on it, but is worth bearing in mind in the discussion later on and in Chapter Five.

[74] Again, I am not bothered about ulterior interests here.

[75] Relatedly, it should be clear that I am meaning to include among 'harms to women' harms which occur across multiple axes; there may be harms to black women that do not happen to white women and non-black women of colour or to black men. These can still be framed as harms to women (otherwise - given that other factors are always at play and no-one's identity is one-dimensional - we could not frame anything at all as a harm to women) (Crenshaw 1989).

[76] Having said all this, if you hold a differing ontology of groups to how I present Women here, I do not think that means you cannot go along with the rest of my analysis.

1.4 Necessary and Contingent Harms

Recalling the distinction made in the previous chapter: on most definitions of harm, some things (actions/events) will come out as *necessarily* harmful, and some as *contingently* harmful. If a thing is *necessarily* harmful, there is no circumstance in which it is not harmful.

For objectification (for example, but also as our focus in later chapters) to be *necessarily* harmful, it must be always harmful across all (or all relevant) possible worlds, rather than just always harmful in the current context. All worlds *includes* our current world, though, so if it is the case that objectification is *not always* harmful in our current world, then it is *not always* harmful across *all* possible worlds, and therefore *not necessarily harmful.*

It is necessary that interests will be set back in the case that a necessarily harmful thing happens. By contrast, a thing is contingently harmful if it is entirely possible for there to be a case[77] in which it is not harmful. Given our definition of harm, a thing will be necessarily harmful if it necessarily sets back a welfare interest. For example, if we understand 'torture' to mean 'to cause unpleasant pain', then there is no way torture could not be harmful, as it sets back a welfare interest by definition ('absence of absorbing unpleasant pain'). Whipping a person would be an example of something contingently harmful, as there are possible circumstances in which there is no harm done by whipping, such as if this is a particular kind of sexual encounter and the person feels that pain as pleasure.[78] (At this point I should distinguish between *harmful* and *harm*: a *harm* is a setback of interests, something is *harmful* if it does the setting back of interests. So whipping is (contingently) harmful, the resultant pain is a (contingent) harm.)

For an example of a *group* harm: if a government decides to send agents to forcibly evict undocumented migrants from their homes, then many members of a group (migrants) are having certain welfare interests set back (interests in a tolerable social and physical environment, and a certain amount of freedom from interference and coercion, and probably more). So the government's actions constitute a group harm.

The following is a more complex example and features all the distinctions we have considered so far, but is the kind of thing we will be considering. If some women are subordinated (this being a setback

[77] In our world, across all relevant possible worlds, across all possible worlds; you can plug in whatever you like here for now. Though it will not make any difference to the results I end up with (given that I am showing that something is *not* necessarily harmful, rather than that something *is* necessarily harmful – in which case you only need show it does not hold in our world), in Chapter Five I will clarify how close I am considering all possible worlds to be.

[78] Further, something might be harmful in respect to setting back one interest, but greatly beneficial in furthering others. One might be tempted to describe an example like that as not harmful, for example: restraining someone who would otherwise fall off a building (thanks to Jim Stuart and Chris Bennett for both drawing my attention to this point). This points to a distinction between two ways of understanding harms: *fine-grained* or *net*. I am here committed to working with the former kind, whereby, in these mixed cases, a person may really have interest in non-interference (for example) setback and thereby be harmed, but there are other benefits which render the act in question overall beneficial (so not harmful in the 'net harm' sense). Some of the arguments I present in this chapter for working in terms of harm also support working in the fine-grained sense of harm. This distinction comes up again in Section 3.2 on consent to harm.

to their interests) because of pornography[79] (by virtue of them being women), but pornography could in certain circumstances avoid causing this harm, then the subordination is a ***contingent group harm*** and pornography is ***contingently harmful*** *(to the group: women)*.

I suggest that this distinction between necessary and contingent harms is useful for our approach to feminist sexual ethics. I argue that certain practices criticised by radical feminists, like pornography, are only *contingently* harmful, and that this means that tackling the particular problems the radical feminists raise need not involve condemning pornography outright.

Part Two – Harm vs. Wrong

While some of the writers I discuss describe certain practices as 'harmful', others describe them as 'wrong'.

I argue that it is most useful to work in terms of harm rather than wrong here, for three key reasons: firstly, there is more common ground; feminists all care about harms to women (not all care about wrongs[80]). A focus on harm is already present in feminist philosophy and feminism more broadly, and making that explicit makes it harder to talk past one another. Secondly and relatedly: looking at harm enables us to locate points of disagreement and routes to resolution more easily. Given the extent to which harm-talk is already present (as I will demonstrate), it is not difficult to frame everything here in terms of harm, and therefore to pinpoint precisely where views diverge. Finally, in Section 2.3 I briefly explain a couple of additional good reasons for avoiding talking in terms of wrong in particular (as opposed to reasons *for* talking in terms of *harm*). Though I explicitly contrast a focus on harm with a focus on wrong here, if I am right, then my first two arguments give us reasons to prefer using 'harm' to other alternatives such as 'unjust'.

2.1 Preferring Harms – It's There in The Literature

In this section I demonstrate that a focus on harm is already present in the literature. To do this, we shall look at feminist writings on pornography, sex work, and BDSM, and make explicit the harm-related content, taking those in the sex radical camp first, and the radical feminist camp second.[81] The reason I look at claims about these three practices together, rather than just pornography, is because in the sex radical literature these are often discussed together (recall the discussion of this in Chapter One), as they receive the same kinds of criticisms from radical feminists, and, as Rubin argues, those engaging in these practices share the lowest rung of a harmful sexual hierarchy that, Rubin argues, anti-pornography feminists buy into (G. S. Rubin 2011). Given this, it is sometimes easier to reference claims that address these practices together rather than separately in the sex radical literature.

[79] This does not reflect my view – just an accessible example.
[80] This might sound like a strange thing to say, but more on this in Section 2.3.
[81] Remember though, that as argued in Chapter One, the 'radical feminist' and 'sex radical' camps are by no means neat categories, and we have good reason to reject this binary picture. However, I continue this way for the pragmatic reasons discussed in Chapter One.

i. Sex Radicals

Recalling the previous chapter, Sex Radicals are feminists who generally oppose the kind of feminism that restricts women's[82] options (particularly anti-pornography feminism). That Sex Radicals are interested in harm reduction is often obscured by straw man descriptions of them as merely 'sex positive', but through a few key texts (Rubin's 'Thinking sex' (2011), Willis' 'Feminism Moralism and Pornography' (2014), and Califia's 'When Sex is a Job' (2000b)) I intend to show that their concerns are also ultimately harm-based, though they speak about harms to slightly different groups, and in different ways. I will here draw out three key claims from the sex radical literature, showing their harm-focus, and following each claim with a translation into the terminology from our definition of harm/interests.

1. *Sex laws harm people who deviate from sexual norms (LGBT+ people, sex workers, kink practitioners) by causing their imprisonment, raiding, and harassment by police.*
    - ***Members of group[83] (LGBT+/SW/Kink) have interests (absence of suffering / a tolerable social and physical environment / a certain amount of freedom from interference and coercion) set back by virtue of group membership.***

Califia argues that sex workers in particular suffer harassment and trauma as a result of restrictive sex laws (Califia 2000b). He describes how sex workers experience police bursting into their homes and invading personal space, leaving them feeling unsafe and exposed. Those who get arrested also have to suffer the trauma of the arrest itself (often having a deadly weapon pointed at them), and then perhaps prison, or harsh fines, or citations that make it impossible for them to get another job (preventing them getting out of the sex industry, if they wanted to). Califia adds that radical feminists like Kathleen Barry bolster the popular moral condemnation of sex work that props up these laws (Califia 2000b, 136–38).

2. *Current sexual norms (from conservatives and radical feminists - including anti-pornography stances) harm people who deviate from sexual norms by causing stigma and affording them lower social status. (This is a claim of subordination). This causes further harms through legitimising, causing, and encouraging violence against them.*
    - ***Members of group (LGBT+/SW/Kink) have interests (the capacity to engage normally in social intercourse and to enjoy and maintain friendships / a tolerable social and physical environment[84], and, physical health / absence of absorbing pain and suffering) set back by virtue of group membership.***

[82] Some of this literature is also concerned with harms to nonbinary people and trans people of all genders.
[83] Or plug in whatever phrasing your preferred group ontology suggests.
[84] I am not 100% sure how to describe subordination, or lower social status, neatly in terms of Feinberg's welfare interests, as it seems to include so many of them; however I have chosen these two as representative.

Sex radicals have argued that laws against sex work[85] are archaic, sexist, and harmful. In 'Thinking Sex' Gayle Rubin describes how people who deviate from sexual norms have been persecuted throughout the 20th century, and how moralism about pornography has played a central role in this. She argues that we need a radical theory of sex, which helps to liberate the sexually oppressed and explain current injustices (G. S. Rubin 2011). Rubin lists key ways in which current western sexual ideology works to marginalise many sexual identities and preferences. She argues that the belief that sex is dirty or dangerous in a special way permeates popular discourse, and that what debates are often about is what can make these acts acceptable: marriage? love? monogamy? She describes a sexual hierarchy, where the monogamous, cis, hetero, loving, procreative married couple are at the top, and the polyamorous, sadomasochists, trans people, and sex workers (including pornography performers) are at the bottom. It seems to be the case that when radical feminists criticise those at the bottom of the hierarchy, and leave those at the top alone (there is a version of this hierarchy where homosexuals are accepted near the top as long as they are monogamous, cis, vanilla, etc., and enjoy the benefits of being near the top) they validate the existence of this hierarchy and participate in the subordination of those at the bottom. Rubin discusses another way of approaching the same phenomenon, where we draw a line between 'sexual order and chaos'; what kind of things go on each side of the line will differ slightly for different groups (feminists, socialists, traditionalists, psychologists), but anyone who draws and endorses the line is participating in a harmful kind of moralism. This moralism "grants virtue to the dominant groups, and relegates vice to the underprivileged" (G. S. Rubin 2011, 153).[86] Sex workers, pornography performers,[87] and sadomasochists are usually placed at the bottom of this hierarchy, and their place there is reinforced by legal and social structures, as well as damaging stereotypes and norms, but Rubin is clear that a 'progressive' reordering of the hierarchy would be committing the same kinds of harms.[88]

3. *Anti-pornography feminism harms women (especially kinky women, women who watch pornography, and women who have sex with men) by making them feel guilty about sexual feelings.*
    - ***Members of group (Women) have an interest (absence of suffering / the absence of groundless anxieties and resentments / a tolerable social and physical***

[85] By 'laws against sex work' I mean any laws that criminalise sex in exchange for money or benefits in kind, or make sex work more difficult to do legally and safely. This means 'Nordic Model' laws are also a target, as they still restrict what a sex worker can do, and make some of their activities illegal and less safe. For more on these distinctions between different kinds of laws and how they affect sex workers see Mac (2016) and Smith and Mac (2018).

[86] It is unclear whether sadomasochists and sex workers (for example) count as underprivileged by virtue of falling on the 'bad' side of the line, or whether they tend to be underprivileged because of the stigma they experience because of that. The latter would be an (I think plausible) empirical claim.

[87] She also describes sex which *involves* pornography as one of those acts which earns a place at the bottom of the hierarchy, so those who *use* pornography as well those who are involved in its creation are also underprivileged.

[88] "It is just as objectionable to insist that everyone should be lesbian, non-monogamous, or kinky, as to believe that everyone should be heterosexual, married, or vanilla – though the latter set of opinions are backed by considerably more coercive power than the former." (G. S. Rubin 2011, 154)

environment / a certain amount of freedom from interference and coercion) set back by virtue of group membership.

Ellen Willis argues that women are suffering as a result of restrictive sexual norms. Willis agrees that "nearly all porn is sexist" (Willis 2014, 95) but argues that anti-pornography feminism is making the situation worse for women who have any sexual feelings other than soft vanilla lesbianism. She suggests that women can, and do, find pornography that works for them, and use their imagination to repurpose pornography targeted at men. This can be seen as rebellious; taking something that is *for* men and supporting male dominance, and using it for your own purposes. When anti-pornography feminists claim that enjoying pornography is wrong, or a symptom of being brainwashed by patriarchy, this lends powerful support to the idea that women who are sexual, who enjoy pornography, who are aroused by men, should be ashamed of themselves.[89] This is an idea that has been around for so long and has such wide acceptance (especially in right-wing and traditional ideologies) that with radical feminist support, it becomes very powerful indeed. Willis argues that this sexual repression is bad for women (not just kinky women, for example) in that it contributes to more guilt and shame. Further, with particular consideration of the women who work in pornography, it "bolsters the good girl-bad girl split" by "pit[ting] 'good' feminists against 'bad' whores" (Willis 2014, 98).

We have now looked at three key sex radical claims, and made it clear that these are claims about harm being done. Next, let us do the same for some radical feminist claims.

ii. Radical Feminists

Again recalling the previous chapter, radical feminists (as I am conceiving of them here) are generally anti-pornography and are concerned centrally with violence against women (broadly construed). It is relatively easy to see that the radical feminists want to reduce harm. If we look at the seminal texts in this area, the claims being made are largely (and loudly) about violence against women, and about damage to 'Women' as a group. A look at a couple of key books (Pornography and Civil Rights: A New Day for Women's Equality (A. Dworkin and MacKinnon 1988) and Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law (Catharine A. MacKinnon, 1987a)) and a few related papers yields certain popular harm-based kinds of claims. In these texts, words like 'harm' and 'violence' appear regularly,[90] so the claim that the radical feminists are concerned about harm to women is not a difficult one to make. However I will still show how they fit Feinberg's understanding of harm, for consistency and thoroughness.

1. *Pornography harms women involved in the production of pornography through sexual violence (e.g. Linda Boreman).*

[89] For a tangential discussion of shame experienced by those who deviate from sexual norms, see Bartky and P's experiences of guilt (Bartky 1984).
[90] See also Dworkin and MacKinnon (1988) and Russell (1988).

- ***Members of group (Women) have an interest (physical health / absence of absorbing pain and suffering) set back by virtue of group membership.***[91]

In the first chapter of Feminism Unmodified, MacKinnon describes how Linda Boreman experienced violent rape in the production of pornography, and assures us in this text and elsewhere that this is not uncommon (MacKinnon 1987e, 147). Throughout Pornography and Civil Rights, Dworkin and MacKinnon describe 'the abuses of pornography's production' as inevitable and ubiquitous:[92]

> "[R]ape, battery, assault, kidnapping, sexual molestation of children, and many other acts [are] standard practice in the pornography industry." (A. Dworkin and MacKinnon 1988, 31–32)

2. *Pornography harms women by silencing them and causing sexual violence against them, through affecting men's attitudes/behaviours.*
    - ***Members of group (Women) have an interest (the capacity to engage normally in social intercourse and to enjoy and maintain friendships / absence of absorbing pain and suffering / a tolerable social and physical environment / a certain amount of freedom from interference and coercion) set back by virtue of group membership.***

Of Dworkin's anti-pornography work, MacKinnon writes:

> "Andrea's work shows that pornography contributes to enslaving women's minds and bodies. As a social process, and as a form of 'speech,' pornography amounts to terrorism and promotes not freedom but silence." (MacKinnon 1987d, 129–30)

This idea was a key foundation for a wider literature about pornography as speech and pornography as silencing. Rae Langton (2009c) offers a philosophical breakdown of these claims, arguing that pornography counts as a speech act which silences women's refusals of sex, causing, or at least contributing to, sexual violence against women. MacKinnon makes this point explicitly: "Pornography causes attitudes and behaviours of violence and discrimination that define the treatment and status of half the population" (MacKinnon 1987e, 147). Radical feminists claim that the first part of this claim, that pornography causes violence against women, has been supported by studies showing increased acceptance of rape myths, decreased blame towards rapists, and

[91] While this would make more sense as 'Members of group (*pornography performers)*', the Radical Feminists are less likely to make this kind of claim, as this suggests that the women are harmed because of violence against sex workers rather than violence against women. There may actually be a problem with conceiving of this as a group harm (as in a problem for MacKinnon and those who claim this is a harm to women, rather than a problem for my analysis). If it is the case (as MacKinnon presumably wants to claim) that women in pornography only experience that violence because they are women, then there is an origin problem: she says elsewhere that pornography causes the lower social status, but the lower status would need to exist before the pornography is created in order for women in pornography to experience violence as a result of their group membership. There are fairly obvious ways around this, but there is a further problem: if the women in pornography experienced harm because they are women (not because they work in pornography) then there would be no sense in raising them as an example to demonstrate harms in pornography instead of any example of a woman *not* involved in pornography, as there would be nothing special about the pornography setting.

[92] They go on to explain how women forced to *watch* pornography experience serious harms, but we are just looking at a couple of harms here; we do not need to (and could not possibly) list them all.

increased likelihood to commit sexual violence after watching certain amounts of pornography.[93] The latter part of the claim, that pornography causes a lesser status for all women, is the kind of claim often being made when feminists call something *subordination*, bringing us to the final claim we are looking at here:

3. *Pornography harms women by ascribing to them a lower social status.*
    - ***Members of group (Women) have interest (the capacity to engage normally in social intercourse and to enjoy and maintain friendships / a tolerable social and physical environment) set back in virtue of group membership.***

The idea is that pornography says certain things about who women are and what they are like, and men learn, from pornography, to see women in that way. Pornography has, on this view, played a crucial role in defining women. MacKinnon expands on this idea in 'Francis Biddle's Sister', in which she offers her controversial definition of pornography (discussed in the previous chapter of this thesis): "the graphic sexually explicit subordination of women" (MacKinnon 1987c, 176).

When discussing Rubin's (and others') work, I included broad claims about sexual norms that include anti-pornography, anti-BDSM and anti-sex-work stances, while when I was talking about MacKinnon's work, the claims were more specifically about pornography. This might be unhelpful, as they do not map on neatly to one another, but I chose the claims I did because they were illustrative and clear; there are however many more claims made on either side. (In fact, many of MacKinnon's anti-pornography claims are made particularly in opposition to BDSM pornography.) I am not trying to settle the pornography debates here and now; I am only motivating the claim that all sides in this debate and other related ones are concerned primarily with *harm*.

I have, in this section, described some of the claims made in the feminist literature around pornography, showing that they are already about harm and translating them into my Feinbergian framework. Next, I want to say more about how this framework is useful for these debates.

2.2 Preferring Harms – locating disagreement

Framing these claims in terms of harm allows us to identify precisely where disagreement is occurring, which perhaps also means we can more easily identify solutions.

The following table contains all the same claims made in Section 2.1, but just the translated version in the terms of our harm definition:

[93] Though this is by no means settled: the studies cited in favour of this conclusion (Zillmann 1989a, 1989b; Donnerstein, Linz, and Penrod 1987) may not make as strong a conclusions as they need to to do the work MacKinnon et al need them for, and there are also studies supporting opposing conclusions (Kohut, Baer, and Watts 2016; Baer, Kohut, and Fisher 2015; C. J. Ferguson and Hartley 2009).

	Group	Interest
Sex Rads claim 1	LGBT+/SW/Kink	absence of suffering / a tolerable social and physical environment / a certain amount of freedom from interference and coercion
Sex Rads claim 2	LGBT+/SW/Kink	the capacity to engage normally in social intercourse and to enjoy and maintain friendships / a tolerable social and physical environment (*subordination)* / physical health / absence of absorbing pain and suffering
Sex Rads claim 3	Women	absence of suffering / the absence of groundless anxieties and resentments / a tolerable social and physical environment / a certain amount of freedom from interference and coercion
Rad Fems claim 1	Women	physical health / absence of absorbing pain and suffering
Rad Fems claim 2	Women	the capacity to engage normally in social intercourse and to enjoy and maintain friendships / absence of suffering / a tolerable social and physical environment / a certain amount of freedom from interference and coercion
Rad Fems claim 3	Women	the capacity to engage normally in social intercourse and to enjoy and maintain friendships / a tolerable social and physical environment (*subordination)*

First, let us focus on the *interests*. The same interests are at stake in both the sex radical claims and the radical feminist claims. There is no difference between the interests concerned for each group; the one exception is that an interest in 'the absence of groundless anxieties and resentments' appears on the sex radicals' list but does not appear in the radical feminist claims. Since this interest sits amongst many others that radical feminists do share, it is clearly not a significant difference maker here. Whether they like it or not, both camps are trying to reduce the same kinds of harms. Both camps are concerned about subordination, both camps are concerned about violence. This should give us hope for resolutions to the debates within the sex wars; there is common ground. This common ground is important, and attention needs to be paid to it. If different groups of feminists realise that they both want to reduce violence against sex workers, for example, a conversation can be had about what is in fact effective (instead of talking past one another).[94]

[94] There might be other reasons that block such a productive conversation being possible; for example, if one group of feminists excludes certain people, or considers some people as acceptable collateral damage, and the other does not.

The disagreement appears to lie, then, in the 'who' of the claims. Two of the sex radicals' three claims are about harms to groups who deviate from sexual norms: LGBT+ people, sex workers[95], and kink practitioners.[96] The third claim is about harms to women. Conversely, all three of the radical feminist claims are about harms to women, though the first could be framed as about harms to sex workers. What effect does this disagreement have? Well, clearly the popular articulations of and proposed solutions to the claims of each side differ greatly as a result, but they do not need to. Both camps have to care about harms to at least some of the same people, given that there are lots of people who are both women and LGBT+, or women and sex workers. This is part of the problem: it seems to be the case that sometimes radical feminists forget that when they say they are concerned about 'women', this includes women who are sadomasochists. This means they are going to also have to consider some of the sex radicals' claims about harms to sadomasochists. Many sex radicals seem to be already quite aware that many or most of the sex workers, kinky people, and LGBT+ people they are concerned about are women, and that they suffer harms as a result of their overlapping group memberships. Some of the harms done to women sex workers, for example, are not just by virtue of their membership of the group 'sex workers' but by virtue of their intersecting membership of groups 'sex worker' and 'women'.[97] Similarly, some of the harms experienced by those into kink will be different for different genders. Taking stock of which groups we are (deliberately) talking about, and considering who we are (either accidentally or deliberately) leaving out can be extremely useful for establishing the extent and location of disagreement.

This framing similarly helps to mitigate the problem of different feminists talking about different things without realising it. It seems to be a common problem in these kinds of debates where one group will say, for example, 'We support strip clubs remaining open because we are concerned about violence towards women', and the other group will say, 'No, we are the ones concerned with violence towards women, you are the pimp lobby'. What is happening in this example is that the second group reads the first group as *meaning the same thing as they do* by 'violence against women' but as being disingenuous. In fact, the first group might have a particular subset of women in mind (strippers and/or all sex workers[98]), while the second group might have a different subset in mind which excludes sex workers[99], or might instead be conceiving of 'women' as capable of covering *all* women (realistically or not).

[95] Who may disproportionately be women anyway.
[96] Though the marginalisation and/or oppression of these groups may be heavily informed by misogyny specifically – there will be more on this in Chapter Five when we look at stigma against sex workers and the 'good girl-bad girl' split described by Willis above.
[97] Willis (2014) is particularly suggestive of this kind of example.
[98] While I say 'strippers *and* sex workers', stripping is generally considered to be a kind of sex work, but views are divided on this amongst both strippers and non-stripper sex workers.
[99] To make it clear that this is not just an uncharitable interpretation: some feminists really are meaning to exclude some women (I am thinking here of the anti-strip-club protesters who referred to strippers as 'collateral damage'). At the same time, some feminists inadvertently, or subtly, exclude sex workers from the group 'women', by framing sex workers' interests and women's interests as in conflict, or by campaigning for particular laws (for example) which harm sex workers whilst labelling those laws as for 'women's rights'.

Importantly, as is demonstrated in the table above, this kind of analysis can show where feminists are talking about the *same* things without realising it. Identifying that radical feminists and sex radicals share a great deal in wanting to reduce the same kinds of harms, and identifying the different groups they focus on, can help find where the route to solutions lies.

The main point in these last two sections is this: feminists are interested in harms done to women, and framing the debates in terms of harm (rather than wrong or something else) fits the literature, makes sense of the claims, where they come apart, and illuminates where they differ.

2.3 What's Wrong with Wrong?

Some feminists do not care about wrongs. I mean to say that things which are harmful are generally widely cared about; however, cases of wrong with no harm are less likely to be prioritised by feminists, when we are worried about the pressing harms done to women+. For example: imagine it were the case that two writers, a man and a woman, had little success during their lifetimes. However, after their deaths, a friend found the woman's unpublished works, and released them under the name of the man. The books see enormous success, all attributed to the man who did not write them. The woman has been wronged by this, but (under many definitions of harm) has not been harmed. It seems obvious to me that, for feminists, combatting this sort of thing is less important than combatting the material conditions that cause women+ to suffer harms like violence and poverty. (If one does see the writers' case as of greater importance than some harms, then I suspect that is because of harms caused by it, for example, if the writers' case contributes to harmful myths about what kinds of successes women+ are capable of achieving.)

Another reason feminists may prefer to focus on harms rather than wrongs is that wrongs are more vulnerable to social convention and change, whereas wanting to meet basic welfare needs and avoid setbacks to them (or simply avoiding pain) is unlikely to vary a great deal. Feminists might be particularly likely to prefer 'harm' to 'wrong' given that social conventions are precisely the kinds of things feminism often calls on us to question. What is considered 'wrong' is often infected (to a greater degree than 'harm') with the social norms of the time and place. This seems to be what MacKinnon has in mind when she approaches pornography as 'not a moral issue' (MacKinnon 1987e). MacKinnon is clearly interested in harms to women, but intends to steer well clear of approaches to pornography which are grounded in moral disgust, such as the 'obscenity' condition. Whether MacKinnon is successful in this or not, and whether the terms she uses are the best ones, it is clear that MacKinnon wants to avoid the changeable and generally sexist norms of the day. Rubin and Willis may have the same thing in mind when they refer to 'moralism' or 'moral panic' as the kind of prejudicial normative judgements that should not infect our thinking about how to improve things for marginalised and oppressed people (Willis 2014; G. S. Rubin 2011). I suspect that similar motivations are shared by the many other feminists who work in terms of 'harm'.

Someone could respond, 'Isn't harm changeable too? Pre-marital sex might be genuinely harmful in some societies and not others, for example', but this is looking for consistency in the wrong place:

harms remain static, the kinds of things which *cause* harms can change. As in: 'a setback to an interest in freedom from suffering' is timelessly harmful, while whether premarital sex causes suffering can change over time.[100]

Thirdly, intuitively, wrongs cannot be done by non-agents, but harms can. We may want to talk about whether a piece of pornography has harmed/wronged any women+, but pornography, as a non-agent, cannot really wrong someone. Consider similarly that a loose stone which trips you over cannot have wronged you; it can only harm. Trying to conceive of what the wrong is in the claim 'pornography silences women', for example, is going to be much more difficult than conceiving of the harm. If a non-agent cannot wrong you, then the claim only makes sense if we understand 'pornography' as referring to an agent, but who would that be?[101] And has the content of the claim changed once we stipulate who we are talking about? 'Pornography silences women' seems like quite a different claim to 'the CEO of APN silences women'. Talking in terms of harm avoids this and also saves us the hassle of getting bogged down in blame discussions. Talking in terms of wrong tempts us to locate a wrongdoer, but often when things go wrong and people suffer, it is the result of a whole system (or multiple systems) which makes locating a wrongdoer difficult and complicated.[102] In looking at harm, we can sidestep much of this, as when we look for the source of the harm it does not undermine our analysis if we find a non-agent there. (Additionally, for harm, we need only check if interests have been setback; for wrong, we have to provide something to explain and justify what makes something wrong (a violation of a moral or divine right? Something else?) and show that 'silencing' is an instance of that. I further suspect that 'what is wrong' is more controversial than 'what is harm'.)

Finally it allows us to avoid some difficulties with consent: we want to leave room for certain things being both consensual and worthy of criticism. Talking about harm rather than wrong means we do not have to treat consent as a 'magic bullet' which transforms a wrong into something permissible (more on this later).

I am not, here, going so far as to say 'feminists shouldn't care about wrongs' or 'feminists have no good reasons to care about wrongs'; instead, I am raising some reasons why working with 'wrongs' can be difficult or inappropriate and saying that in working with harm, I avoid all of these.

Part Three – Applications and Implications

3.1 Harm in Pornography

[100] Thank you to Robbie Morgan for this example and for pressing me on it.
[101] We have to wrestle with this kind of problem in the next chapter, when working out how non-agents can *objectify*.
[102] Ruiz and Berenstain show how trying to identify individual wrongdoers can, in some cases, not only obscure how the harms being done are the result of whole structures, but also serve to sustain those harmful structures (Ruíz and Berenstain 2018).

Remembering that this thesis is about harm in pornography and objectification. Let us remind ourselves of the definition of pornography we are working with, defended in Chapter One.

> *For a piece of media, x, to be pornography [or count as a 'pornographic artifact'], x must meet at least two of the following conditions:*
>
> 1) *It is sexually explicit [content]*
> 2) *It is aimed at/intended for sexually arousing viewers [intention]*
> 3) *It tends to be understood as intended for the purpose of arousing viewers [audience reception].*

As suggested in the previous chapter, this does not seem at first glance to have harm built into it, and these features do not contain descriptions of setbacks to any interests from our list. We cannot rely on first glances though – the next step (Chapter Three) will be establishing what objectification is. If it is the case that pornography under this definition is necessarily objectifying, and objectification is necessarily harmful, then pornography will be necessarily harmful.

The kinds of claims we have seen so far - that pornography causes or involves setbacks to freedom from suffering and coercion (such as the claims of violence and abuse), or setbacks to an interest in a tolerable social and physical environment (such as through subordination) - cannot be reached automatically with a neutral definition of pornography like this one. There could very easily be media that meet this definition and do not set back any interests. My focus though, as reiterated above, is on harms that might be rooted in objectification. (Some of the harm-claims outlined above might also be intended as intimately connected to objectification; for example, MacKinnon and Longino weave in references to objectification in their discussions of subordination and abuse. Where that is the case, the truth of these claims will also be dependent on what analysis of objectification we give.)

Throughout the remainder of this thesis we will be investigating whether and how harms might be involved in objectification, so as to evaluate the claim that pornography is harmful insofar as it is objectifying. We might expect, given the kinds claims we commonly find in the literature and public discourse, claims about setbacks to interests in freedom from coercion, bodily integrity, a tolerable social and physical environment, freedom from suffering, and perhaps emotional health for harms which are traumatic, systematic, and/or regular. This is by no means meant to be exhaustive, just to gesture at the kinds of things we can expect to come across in discussions of pornography, objectification, and harm. In the next chapter we will equip ourselves with a definition of objectification so that we can see for sure, in Chapter Five, precisely how harms are done through objectification. It will turn out that objectification is not necessarily harmful, but that there are particular harms which can be associated with objectification; however, these do not turn out to be unique to pornography.

3.2 Consent to Harm

Consent is an important factor in sexual ethics; consent is often seen as 'morally transformative', that is, it can prevent something harmful from also being wrong (it transforms a thing which would otherwise be wrong into a not-wrong).

While I think consent is extremely important in establishing whether harm is present, I mean to show here that *consensual harm* is compatible with my approach.[103] This is another reason why talking in terms of harm rather than wrong is appropriate; it is useful to be able to say certain consensual things are harmful. Some writers might avoid discussing consensual sexual acts because they do not consider them wrong, but we do not want to rope off consensual practices from our discussion. This is in part because so many other writers with whom I engage discuss women consenting to harms, and I want to be able argue on their terms.

Being able to consent to harm is relatively intuitive: while it might be irrational, foolish, or strange for me to consent to having my nose broken, it is *possible* for me to do this. My interest in the absence of unpleasant pain is going to be set back in that case, even if I have explicitly said, 'Please, please, break my nose, I'm trying to prove a point'.

So why might consent to harm not be compatible with my approach?

It is a fairly intuitive and popular view (one which I will utilise in Chapter Five) that certain things can be made harmless by consent: someone touching a person's body, or sharing their private information, may be harmless when consensual, but harmful when not. If consent can make the difference between a thing being harmful and it being harmless, then consensual harm starts to sound like an oxymoron: if consent changes x from harmful to harmless, x cannot be consensual and harmful at the same time. However, we do not need to claim that consent changes things from harmful to harmless in order to preserve the intuition that consent can make a difference in harmfulness in many cases. This is because the relationship does not need to be symmetrical: the absence/violation of consent will always make something (*pro tanto*)[104] harmful (which might otherwise be harmless), but the presence of consent need not have the power to make something harmless (which might otherwise be harmful). This way consent is necessary but not sufficient for harmlessness (when it comes to sex and other bodily contact at least). If non-consensual touching happens, the interest in 'freedom from interference/coercion and bodily integrity' is always set back (and 'tolerable environment', 'freedom from suffering', and probably more, are also going to be set back in sexual cases, given how dramatically rape and non-consensual sex acts tend to affect us)[105] so harm is always done. So, while the presence of consent does not preclude harm being done, the

[103] However, a reader holding the position that consent can transform some harms into not-harms can still go along with the rest of my analysis. Generally, the harmful things I talk about will either be non-consensual, or harmful in a way removed from the thing being consented to.

[104] To be clear, I am generally talking about specific harms, rather than 'net' harms. My analysis looks for individual setbacks to interests, and does not discuss where or whether it might be appropriate to describe something as net harmful on a balance of setbacks and benefits.

[105] I am not going to give an account of why sexual harms are worse than others; Chapter Five will look at this in more detail. I just want to note for now that we experience sexual violations in a particular way that does not generally feel the same as other violations, and are more likely to have additional complications like PTSD.

absence of consent means that those interests centred on having control over our boundaries (bodily integrity, freedom from interference and coercion) will be set back. Finally, the same harmful thing may be *more* harmful when it is non-consensual, again, because it is one more interest being set back.[106]

At first glance it may look as if accepting consensual harm may be in accordance with most of the radical feminist literature I discuss (consider the idea that women can consent to a subordinate role, and that does not make the role any less harmful), but in opposition to some of the sex-radical literature around sadomasochism mentioned. One might think that the sex-radical writers might want to claim that because of the consent, a masochist woman who consents to being whipped (for example) is not being harmed. However this would be a mischaracterisation. The woman being whipped was (on our definition) never harmed in the first place; the masochist woman enjoys being whipped, so she consents to being whipped because whipping does not cause 'suffering', or any other setbacks to interests. As I demonstrated above, while the same things always count as harms (all setbacks to interests), which things *cause* those harms can vary; *suffering* is always a harm, but whether whipping causes suffering can vary. For the sex radicals, rather than consent transforming a harmful act to a harmless one, the act is consented to because it is not harmful. If a woman who does not enjoy being whipped consents to it, then she may still be harmed (though she might not be wronged). This is another reason why an interest-based account of harm is so useful: it allows us to consider cases like consensual BDSM to not be harmful, as no-one's interests are being set back, while preserving the intuition that one can consent to harm. This understanding of consent to harm, I believe, is the most consistent with the rest of the literature in feminist sexual ethics.

The work in this section will be relevant in Chapter Five, where I discuss the harms of consent violation, as well as consensual harms, in relation to pornography and objectification.

Part Four – In Summary

In this chapter I have worked through the features of Feinberg's account of harm, and explained how a modified version of his definition can work for discussing feminist approaches to pornography and sexual ethics in general.

We define harm as **the setting back of a welfare interest**. A group can be harmed when **something sets back the interests of members of that group *by virtue of their group membership***. Something can be necessarily or contingently harmful, depending on whether an interest is necessarily, or contingently, set back.

[106] As mentioned in Section 1.2 of this chapter, I do not want to get into a ranking of interests here, but we can say that consent as a difference-maker might be such an intuitive idea because the interests which are set back through consent violations are particularly important ones. Our freedom from interference and bodily integrity are not only personally valued very highly in our current social context, their violation also tends to cause additional other kinds of harms such as physical suffering and an anxious sense of insecurity.

In Part One, I explained the composite parts of this definition, including what 'interests' are, how harm to groups works, and the distinction between necessary and contingent harms. In Part Two I gave reasons for preferring working in terms of 'harm' rather than 'wrong', and I claimed that my definition of harm is consistent with the way 'harm' is used in the feminist literature that I discuss. This consistency bolstered my claim that it is more useful to conduct these discussions in terms of *harm* rather than *wrong,* and that doing so can help pinpoint where different views within feminism are diverging. I demonstrated these claims by articulating key radical feminist and sex radical claims in the language of Feinberg's account of harm.

I ended with some brief notes on the application of our definition of harm – clarifying my position on consent to harm and gesturing at how our definition will be used in application to issues around pornography.

The work in this chapter will later be used to show that pornography is not necessarily harmful in so far as it objectifies, though there are ways in which pornography may be harmful (which are shared with other media). The next step towards this conclusion is defining objectification, with which we concern ourselves in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

Objectification as Reduction

- *The Poster:*

When I was a teenager, my family were visited by a woman we will call Cathy, who was a friend of my mum's. When shown my room she looked with evident horror at the poster on my wall of a scantily clad woman, and said, "That's objectifying women." As a contrary 15-year-old, I replied, "I think it's empowering." As a no less contrary, but hopefully better-informed adult philosopher, I want to know what concepts were at work in this exchange.

As explained in Chapter One, it is a central claim of some anti-pornography feminism that pornography necessarily *objectifies* women, and that this means we should condemn pornography. By exploring the concept of objectification, and utilising our definition of pornography as defended in Chapter One, I will argue for the rejection of this latter claim. The work in this chapter is to constitute the third premise of the following argument, as the previous two chapters covered the first two premises:

1. Pornography is understood as pieces of media which meet at least two of the following conditions:
    a. *It is sexually explicit [content]*
    b. *It is aimed at/intended for sexually arousing viewers [intention]*
    c. *It tends to be understood as intended for the purpose of arousing viewers [audience reception].*
2. Harm is understood as *the thwarting, setting back, or defeating of an interest, where an interest can be thought of as a welfare interest.*
3. Objectification is understood as *reduction to body or appearance, often characterised by instrumentalisation.*
4. Objectification is not necessarily harmful (given [2] and [3]).
5. Pornography is not necessarily harmful insofar as it involves objectification (given [1] and [4]).

This chapter proposes a definition of objectification that aims to capture what feminists mean when they say, 'That's objectification'. The conversation between myself and Cathy is, I think, a common one. Notice that teen-me did not deny that the poster was objectifying; the implication was that I disagreed with the moral assessment of it. Thus I want to identify a definition that acknowledges that Cathy and I are referring to the same thing and using roughly the same definition, but that allows for differing moral judgements of it. I want to move away from definitions that only capture what philosophers are talking about and suggest feminists like Cathy are using the word incorrectly, towards a definition that can be used in a helpful and relevant way by all.

I am aiming to reflect an 'everyday' usage of the term 'objectification', while acknowledging that usage may vary over different locations and groups. Informing the definition I work towards are real-

life everyday conversations as well as articles and blogs online. I will reference here: Everyday Feminism, Teen Vogue, Ms Magazine, Buzzfeed, Cosmopolitan and mainstream newspapers such as the Guardian – note that they all differ (even internally) in whether objectification is a bad thing, but all have similar understandings of what is going on when objectification takes place (reduction to appearance, being used etc.).

I will attempt to identify a definition of objectification that is descriptive and explanatory; it tells us what objectification is, and gives us good reasons that the practices that come out as objectification, do so. In order to ascertain where objectification occurs and whether it is harmful, I suggest we need a definition that does three things well:

1) it fits our ordinary usage, including the usage of Cathy and other feminists outside academia,
2) it yields intuitive results regarding which practices will be included (and how centrally), and
3) it is determinate, as in: when we consider a condition for objectification it is as unambiguous as possible whether something would meet that condition.

Practically, what I want this concept to do is enable and clarify ongoing discussions about objectification, which is why we need a definition that includes the kind of cases already thought of as examples of objectification in existing discussions. This means that my method will be in part a paradigm case analysis; I will consider a handful of cases that we tend to think of as objectification, and test how well they fit existing definitions as well as my own. This is roughly the same method described in Fricker (2016), the idea being that by approaching the concept with paradigm cases in mind, we are less likely to end up with too narrow a definition which leaves out key cases, moving the definition further away from popular usage. This reflects (1) and (2) above: I will be judging accounts on whether they seem intuitive both in terms of the results they yield and in terms of the relevance of the distinguishing features of the account.[107] I will not be plucking my account out of thin air: I will be taking the account proposed by Nussbaum as a starting point, and then arguing that it does not work, but that elements of it can be extracted to draw up my own account. This makes my overall method a kind of reflective equilibrium: I have some examples, I try out an account (Nussbaum's) with the examples, weigh against intuitions, modify that account to yield my own new account, then try this out against the examples and intuitions.

I will propose a definition which picks out three features: reduction to appearance, reduction to body and instrumentality. I reach this via the following steps: in Part One I say a little more about the kinds of cases we need to be capturing in accounts of objectification and briefly introduce the

[107] By the latter I mean: say we define 'librarian' as 'someone who drinks raspberry leaf tea'. It could, by coincidence, yield the right results: including all whom we intuitively deem librarians, and no non-librarians. But this definition would not be intuitive insofar as the determining features (raspberry leaf tea-drinking) do not seem relevant to the concept we are defining (librarian).

account I will be defending; in Part Two, I explain Nussbaum's and Langton's accounts[108] and point to two broad problems they suffer from (*indeterminacy* and *irrelevance*); and in Part Three I explain and motivate my own account more thoroughly, test it against paradigm examples, and consider objections to it.

One final clarification: I have so far been referring to 'objectification' while the ideas and examples I am discussing are primarily 'sexual objectification'. I am predominantly interested in sexual objectification here, and will continue with a focus on this, rather than non-sexual objectification, which might involve examples such as factory workers who are seen as fungible tools by their bosses. The difference between sexual and non-sexual objectification will probably simply be that one is 'sexual'. While I am very interested in pinning down what makes something sexual, that is a project way beyond the scope of this thesis. I will continue to use 'objectification' when I usually mean 'sexual objectification' because *sexual* objectification is what is really relevant for feminist debates (which is why we are here) and because that reflects popular usage: an internet search of 'objectification' will predominantly yield sexual examples, and in these examples many if not most people are using the term 'objectification' without needing to denote that it is 'sexual' by adding the additional word. Though I am only setting out to capture sexual objectification here, I am confident my account can cover other kinds of objectification. When I analyse the moral implications of objectification (Chapter Five – when objectification is harmful) I will be considering sexual objectification exclusively, and given that sexual and non-sexual things can yield different moral considerations, a separate analysis might be warranted for non-sexual objectification, which I will not provide.

Part One – Examples of Objectification

1.1 The Examples at Issue

A few examples of things that look like objectification can aid our understanding in this chapter. The following five cases can help us in two ways: firstly as tools to aid in clarifying and explaining accounts of objectification, and secondly in testing how well an account meets the goal of capturing what is going on in everyday uses of the word. In addition to my anecdotal Poster example, these below are the kinds of examples that tend to come up in discussions of objectification:

- *Model:* An advert for a new American Apparel store featuring a woman in underwear with her legs spread wide and her crotch in the centre of the picture, accompanied by the words 'now open'. (*Huffington Post* 2013)

The Model example, like my Poster anecdote, is the kind that comes up most often when people say, 'That's objectification', so it will be more important that this example comes out as objectification

[108] While Nussbaum and Langton are my starting point here, other well-known accounts will not be ignored – an explanation of why I set aside certain kinds of accounts, and an argument for the rejection of some others, comes in the next chapter.

than the others.[109] Many of the online magazine pieces on objectification use adverts like Model as their key examples (McNamara 2016; Heldman 2012; Slade 2017; Fabello 2016; Utt 2013; Saxena 2017), and others have images of these adverts embedded in the article, implicitly intended as examples.[110] This will count as a *paradigm case.*

- *Squeeze:* At a party, a man discreetly squeezes a stranger's bottom, to communicate that she looks sexy.

This seems also like a classic case of objectification, though a very similar example can help highlight potential clashes of intuitions:

- *Squeeze 2:* At a party, a man discreetly squeezes his girlfriend's bottom, to communicate that she looks sexy.

In this example, on the surface the same act is happening as in Squeeze 1, but we have a quite different moral reaction to it. While Squeeze 1 is intuitively bad and we feel the man has behaved badly, Squeeze 2 seems like it could be perfectly acceptable, given the context of their relationship. Does this mean that only one of them is objectifying? Or that only one is objectifying in a problematic way? To avoid any suspense I will eventually argue for the latter, but in the meantime, this is meant just to illuminate intuitions and illustrate how context might be relevant.

- *Casual Sex:* Two consenting adults enjoy a one-night stand after meeting briefly in a club; the main reason they decided to spend the night together was the physical sexual appeal of the other person.

This is another case that is a popular example of objectification, with similar examples appearing in Kant's and Nussbaum's works.[111] Again, this is included in part because of the different moral intuitions it inspires; this seems perfectly acceptable to people with non-repressive attitudes to sex. It is also interesting as it is the only example where the objectification is being done in *both directions* (which may help account for it seeming more permissible).

- *Trophy wife*: A rich husband tells his young and beautiful wife that he expects her company at a party, to make him appear more successful and impressive.

This final example is, like Model, common in both academic and non-academic feminist discourses, and looks intuitively like an example of morally bad or harmful objectification; it makes us

[109] I do not think this is a very controversial claim; we most often hear discussions on Page 3, music videos, advertisements and the like being described as objectifying women. If you search for a newspaper article or opinion piece, this is usually how the word is being used.
[110] For example, a Marie Claire article (Buchanan 2016) includes an image of a poster advertising David Beckham's fragrance range, which is just a picture of him in his underwear. This article discusses whether objectification of men is acceptable.
[111] For Kant, there are descriptions of sex that describe partners using each other for sexual pleasure, with no backdrop of a loving marriage (Kant 1997). Nussbaum (1995) gives the example of two lovers in a DH Lawrence novel, Lady Constance Chatterley and Mellors, who are having sex for the pleasure of it and express fascination with each other's sexual body parts.

uncomfortable and we feel sorry for the wife being treated this way. [112] All of these cases seem to involve treating a person as object-like, or as a *body*, but each inspires very different intuitions. Another reason we should pay special attention to Model and the Poster anecdote is that they are the only examples which do not involve 'individual' objectification, as in, *person A objectifies person B*. The other examples involve one person objectifying (or not) one other person, but Model shows us that we cannot limit objectification to individual interactions.

1.2 What *is* that Poster Doing?

The Model example draws attention to a popular confusion when talking about objectification. When people look at an advert or poster with a sexualised picture of a woman in it, they could say, 'That model is being objectified by a male viewer'. However people often make a different kind of claim: they say, '*That* objectifies women'. This claim targets the advert itself, and says that the advert is doing the objectifying rather than a particular person. This claim is also ambiguous about who is *being* objectified, but general usage seems to indicate that it is women in general, in addition to the particular woman in the picture, who are the target of the objectification. Most of the literature around objectification is discussing how *individuals* are objectified by other individuals, but when Cathy makes the claim about the Poster: she seems to be claiming that a thing (a poster) objectifies a group (women). This makes for a slightly strange claim (though as we will see, not as strange as it first appears): objects are not intuitively the sorts of things that can *do objectifying*, only people can do this, and we expect objectification to be something done *to persons*, but 'categories' or 'social groups' are not 'persons'.[113] It seems to me (and Nussbaum seems to think along the same lines (Nussbaum 1995, 284)) that when someone claims, 'That poster objectifies women', they mean 'objectifies' in a complicated though still meaningful sense. I suggest that there is one 'plain' way in which 'that poster objectifies women' is understood, and there are a couple of other meanings that often go on in the background. The plain meaning is this:

> The poster (itself) objectifies women (in general).

The addition of '(itself)' here is to signify a contrast with the claim that it is the company behind the poster that is acting, and the addition of '(in general)' is here to signify that it is not just the woman in the poster who we are talking about. But clearly, more work needs to be done to make sense of this claim, as we noted above. First, we will discuss how a poster might 'do things', and second, we must explicate what we mean by 'women in general'.

How can posters do things?

[112] What kind of intuitions does the Model example yield? It will make most feminists uncomfortable, and some will see it as intuitively very bad, but similar images with men as the focus might yield different intuitions. There has been some discussion in popular media on whether objectification of men is different from that of women (Z. Williams 2018; Buchanan 2016; *BBC News* 2018).
[113] Though one could certainly argue that social groups are agents.

The first question – 'how might a poster do things?' – can be answered in a few ways. First, it could be answered with speech act theory: we could argue that posters count as 'speech', and that as such they can have the power to perform speech acts. They can perform simple locutionary acts, *saying* or *communicating* something (e.g. 'this person thinks green cars are cool'). Also, as feminist philosophers have famously claimed about pornography,[114] pieces of media can perform illocutionary acts such as *ranking, recommending,* or *legitimising* if they have the right kind of power to secure uptake (e.g. 'green cars are hereby the coolest cars'). Regardless of whether pornography in particular is able to perform these particular kinds of speech acts, it is plausible that some media, some *things,* are able to *act*.

Pateman demonstrates how images can count as performing a speech act of *advertising,* which sits in the class of *directives* (speech acts which try to get hearers to do something: *ordering, urging, recommending,* etc.) (Pateman 1980). We could argue here that the American Apparel advert *advertises* the clothing, but also *recommends* that the audience view women in a particular way, perhaps by drawing an implicit association between the clothes and the sexual imagery of 'desirability'.

Similarly, we could argue that artifacts can act using social ontology. Katharine Jenkins argues that pornography can do things to women as a group, specifically, *constructing* and *subordinating* (Jenkins 2017). On this picture, entities can have particular roles if we all treat them as such, e.g. 'this tub counts as a thing for bathing in around here'. Jenkins argues that we should understand Catharine MacKinnon's claim that 'pornography subordinates and constructs women' as something like this: through its representations, pornography (along with other media) constructs what women count as around here. Unsurprisingly, I am not totally convinced by the argument Jenkins makes. However, we can take from it that it is at least plausible that media can play a social role. If it is plausible that pornography can construct, then it is certainly plausible that adverts can objectify.

Finally, we could simply appeal to similar examples and our intuitions (as both of the above theories utilise these anyway). For example, it is intuitive that the printer is *doing something* when it prints my paper (even if it is only *able* to do this because I asked it to, and someone else programmed it to do what I asked), and it is intuitive that barriers prevent me from walking this way (even if they can only 'do preventing' because someone arranged them in that way). In the same way, we can say that adverts are doing something (objectifying), even if they are only able to do this because someone else designed it.

All I mean to show here is that this claim makes sense. I am not, at this point, making a case about which things are correctly identified as objectification and which are not.

[114] See Langton (2009c) for the landscape-changing piece arguing this, and McGlynn (2016) for a recent defence of the claim that pornography has the requisite power to perform the acts Langton describes.

How do we ascertain whether a poster has done something to women in general?[115]

For this second question, we can say that the objectification of 'women in general' just means that other women are individually objectified (by virtue of being member of the group 'women'[116]),[117] by other individual people, or that the (single) objectifier does something to multiple women (by virtue of being women) in this act. As clarified in the previous chapter, this means I am treating this group as non-summative rather than summative, though my version of 'non-summative' is grounded in acknowledging harms to both large and small numbers of real women. This is in contrast to a problematic kind of non-summativism which does not attend to real harms to any women, or looks at harms to imagined or metaphorical women. My version reflects popular usage and accommodates intersectional harms, as we are talking about real women when we say 'women', rather than some abstract category or platonic form, and allows it to be the case that something need not harm *all, most, or many* women in order to count as a harm to women; it just must harm them *by virtue of* being women.

This prompts a question: how do I *check* if women *in general* have been reduced to their appearance/bodies (i.e. objectified) by something? The answer is that we have to ascertain whether *the woman represented* is objectified.[118] I shall explain now why this must be the place we look, however we interpret the claim.

We might want to know whether many women (and whether anyone of any other genders) have been objectified as a result of a piece of media. Rather than going out and conducting a survey, if we want to establish whether other women are likely to have experienced objectification caused by this image, we should rather look at the image and see whether it is equipped to do such a thing (there is

[115] In this section, and in this chapter, I will discuss 'women' more often than I discuss harms to 'women and those read as women'/'women+'. As mentioned in footnote 15 in Chapter Two, this is because in this chapter I am more often discussing claims made by other people who do not explicitly share my claim that some people who are not women experience some harmful practices which aim to target women. As with Chapter Two Section 1.3, I also here discuss harms to group 'women' when just explaining how group harms work, for the sake of simplicity.

[116] Or, we can say that the objectification of 'women+ in general' just means that other women+ are individually objectified (by virtue of being member of the group 'women+').

[117] Remember, and applying here, that in the previous chapter we understood 'harm to women [in general/group]' as 'harms *by virtue of* being a woman [group member]'.

[118] This might generate a question about whether there can be objectification without a pictorial representation, for example an advert which had no image, but simply text which read: 'This beer will give you the confidence to talk to that sexy piece at the bar'. (Obviously, this is a little clunky, but you can imagine something snappier.) It seems intuitive to me that we can construe 'represented' broadly, to include cases like this where there is a woman whom the advert picks out, and objectifies, but she is out of sight. The imagined woman, the *character* who is referred to in the advert, is still the target of some objectification, and that character can function in roughly the same way as the characters represented pictorially. For a similar example: a radio advert (which obviously cannot use images) can still have objectifying dialogue, like the Bird's Eye Salmon Fish Fingers advert (which was actually a television advert but could equally have worked on the radio) in which women were represented by an anthropomorphic fish finger. See here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fBQpPsJwJVE (Birds Eye 2017)). I do not want to spend more time on how this works, as visual media feature more prominently as paradigm examples, but I do not see any reason why adverts which rely on words cannot be captured.

no point in checking whether women in the world have been objectified if we have not seen whether the piece of media is the kind of thing that can have caused it).

There are two things to get clear on before we do this. First, we must refer to the 'woman in the image', rather than the *model:* the audience can only be influenced by what they know about, what they see, and the audience do not know anything about how the model herself is treated. What they do know about is how the subject of the image is treated. The model is like the actor, and the woman represented in the image is the character. It matters whether the audience can read the woman in the image as objectified, less so the model.[119]

Secondly, I want to set aside the question of whether the objectification of the woman in the image is *constitutively* or *causally* related to the objectification of women in general*.* I want to shift from discussing whether the poster objectified women to whether it *caused* objectification to happen to women. This is partially because I suspect that these amount to the same claim, and partially because I think whether this relationship is constitutive or causal has no impact whatsoever on the moves I make and positions I address in this thesis.

Katharine Jenkins (2017) has also cast doubt on the sharpness of the causal/constitutive distinction in her discussion of subordination. Her discussion takes on a different shape from ours as she is interested in MacKinnon's claims around *subordination* and *construction* and we are not.[120] However, I echo some of her arguments here, where they can apply similarly to *objectification*. Finlayson also sees reason to set aside the causal/constitutive distinction, arguing that MacKinnon "is making a claim about the intimacy, immediacy, and systematicity of the relationship she sees between pornography, on the one hand, and violence and discrimination against women, on the other" (Finlayson 2014, 784) rather than making a constitutive claim that is non-causal. As discussed in Chapter One, MacKinnon and Dworkin have run together causal and constitutive connections between a piece of media and the thing that it does: "Under the Ordinance, pornography *is* what pornography *does.* What it does is subordinate women" (A. Dworkin and MacKinnon 1988, 38). A poster that subordinates is only able to do so if it is seen by others; in this case, it only begins constituting subordination at the same time as it begins causing subordination. We might think that it only matters that it constitutes subordination because (or: when) it causes subordination.[121]

[119] If this distinction is confusing: consider a more obvious example: imagine a poster that shows a woman driving a bus. The woman in the picture is represented as a driver; she is treated as someone who can drive. The model who posed for the picture cannot drive, and has never driven in her life. If we were trying to establish whether the poster was recommending a career in bus-driving, we would be looking at whether the woman in the picture is enjoying driving, not whether the model is enjoying driving (as the latter is not driving at all).

[120] Her interest in subordination is very much related to the *imposition* accounts of objectification, which, as I will explain in the next chapter, we are avoiding.

[121] Similarly, Jenkins argues: "The representation's power to subordinate thus depends on affecting people's attitudes. This invites the question of whether the maintenance of the institutional reality consists in the representation itself or in the collective recognition on the part of individuals participating in that reality. If the former, then the representation may well be said to constitute institutional reality, given appropriate recognition. If the latter, however, then this starts to look like a causal claim after all." (Jenkins 2017, 107)

Jenkins also argues that constitutive claims are implausible in the case of subordination and pornography given that there was subordination *before* the pornography (Jenkins 2017, 107). This applies in our case too; posters cannot *constitute* objectification if women would be objectified before that poster came into being.[122]

Finally, this distinction does not have any bearing on how we should respond to cases of objectification. Someone might say, 'If posters constitute objectification, then we must get rid of them. If they merely cause it, then we needn't do that', but these should not be the options on the table in our case. Firstly, if some particular pieces of media generate harm, either causally or constitutively, either way we should want to remove or offset that harm irrespective of where it is situated (as Jenkins (2017, 107) argues). Secondly, this is inapplicable here, as I will be showing that objectification is not necessarily harmful anyway. If we know that a poster constitutes rather than just causes objectification, this tells us nothing yet about what we should do about it, given that objectification can be benign.

I do not want to spend too much time on this, but the point is this: given that the distinction between causal and constitutive connections is questionable, and that it does not make a substantial difference to the claims made here, it makes sense for us to focus on *causal* versions of claims given that these are much more straightforward.

All we want is to know at this point is where to look to find out if objectification is occurring, and either way (as in whether the poster is *causing* or *constituting* objectification) we know we need to first look at the woman represented. So, returning to the question of what it is we are looking for: we can utilise another move that Jenkins makes. Jenkins (2017) claims something like this: the poster represents women in a manner which communicates 'women count as body parts around here' and that such representations accumulate, creating a general view of women, which means women *are* such. I am not adopting the claim that this kind of process *makes* women actually such things; instead, I just want to utilise the move *that images of particular women can 'represent' women in general*. This is a subtle move, but an important one, and it makes a big difference for us. Here, we need to be able to check if women are reduced to their bodies by a poster. This move tells us that we just need to check if the model (or rather, her character) is being reduced to her body, as she is representative (for the purposes of the advert) of women in general. Are there any conditions that need to be met for an image of a woman to count as representative of women in general? That is beyond the scope of this thesis, but I suspect any such conditions would be relatively loose; much media (particularly advertising) rely on the audience readily seeing those they share group memberships with as representing them to some degree.[123]

[122] If, as Jenkins considers (2017, 107), you instead claim that such and such a piece of media constitutes subordination (or in our case objectification), but so do many other pieces of media, such that women would be subordinated (or objectified) even if that kind of media had never existed, what you would end up with is a view entirely compatible with (in fact, quite similar to) the view I end up with in this thesis – see Chapter Five.
[123] Something that might make it easier for an image of a woman to represent women in general is for the woman pictured to be as close as possible to the normative ideals of beauty. This could make it the case that

One plausible way of making sense of the claim that the woman in the picture is representing women in general is to say that: if it is the case that people see the picture of her, and then go on to treat other people *who just share the feature of being a woman with the pictured woman* as object-like, then it must be the case that for the viewer, women in general are represented by the picture. The picture would only have the power to influence treatment of other women if it were representing women in some way. (Note that I am not suggesting it is ever possible or acceptable for one member of a group to *properly* represent all members of a group, the 'representation' here is meant in a loose way and does not have to be good. In fact, it is probable that any 'representation' of women in media inaccurately reflects other women.) If the language of 'representation' is unhelpful, we can motivate this with that left out: if we suspect (or even have evidence) that the poster is causing other women to be objectified through its content, and its content is just an image (rather than the words 'do objectification'), then that image has to constitute an 'example' in order for the causation to work. So again, the way to check whether a poster is objectifying women in general, is just to check whether the woman in the image is objectified.

The message is that in order to establish whether 'this poster objectifies women' we need to check whether the poster is able to cause/contribute to the objectification of other women,[124] through seeing how it represents the woman in the picture. If the woman in the poster is represented as objectified, that gives us an affirmative.

I mean to suggest that when someone claims, 'That poster objectifies women', they are saying that it objectifies in a complicated sense, and this is still a meaningful claim when talking about objectification. I want to emphasise that I do not think this undermines the Model and Poster examples' status as paradigm examples of objectification. This is because what makes them paradigm examples is that they are the most common uses of the term, and this use is one that everyone seems to understand, despite the tricky meaning. They are paradigm examples because amongst people who believe objectification exists, they are uncontroversial examples of it. While examples of objectification like Squeeze 1 and 2, where one person objectifies another, may be a simpler application of the concept, examples like Model where an artifact (and perhaps some agents) objectifies other agents (who that are not explicitly identified) are more complicated, but this complicated use is so ordinary that it warrants paradigm status. This relies on it being the case that popular usage is more important than simplicity for attributing paradigm status. I think this is right, and is consistent with my commitment to looking for a definition that fits popular usage rather than one which is used by and exclusively for academics. So I maintain that examples like Model are paradigm examples of objectification; we just need to be aware of the slightly complicated

even if the model looks nothing like most other women, she does possess features that are relevant to most women (and that most women see as relevant to them) in the sense that those features are 'ideal' feminine features that many women measure themselves against. Eaton makes a similar point (Eaton 2012).

[124] This might read a little vaguely here, but how this might work is further explored in Chapter Five, with the concept of 'Context Creeping'.

functioning of the concept in cases like this. For simplicity's sake though, these differences will not be raised again in this chapter, except in passing.

1.3 My Proposal in Brief

To give a rough idea of my account before embarking on the main body of work, I will introduce the definition I will be arguing for here.

> *Objectification occurs where either (1) or (2) of the following conditions is present:*
>
> 1) *Reduction to body: a) The objectifier treats the person as nothing/little over and above her body or body parts. b) The objectifier foregrounds the person's body or body parts.*
> 2) *Reduction to appearance: a) The objectifier treats the person as nothing/little over and above her looks/appearance to the senses. b) The objectifier foregrounds the person's looks/appearance to the senses.*
> 3) **Instrumentality: a) Means: The objectifier treats the person as a tool for his or her purposes. b) Mere Means: The objectifier treats the person as a mere tool for his or her purposes.*
>
> **(Note: (3) is not intended as a necessary criterion itself, but rather tends to correlate with (1) and (2) and should be considered as a guide for settling borderline cases.)*

At the moment, how this works will be pretty opaque, but a full explanation of how each of these conditions work, and what 'reduction' means, will be given by the end of the chapter. The features I use here have their origins in Nussbaum and Langton's work, so it is necessary that I offer an analysis of their positions, before explaining my own. This is what we turn to next.

Part Two – Nussbaum and Langton

In this section I will explain the account of objectification proposed by Nussbaum, and revised by Langton. I will then argue that it is not adequately intuitive, relevant, and determinate (precisely what these terms are meant to capture will become apparent).

2.1 Nussbaum's Seven Features of Objectification

Martha Nussbaum argued that objectification is a cluster concept. A cluster concept is a concept which includes a list of features where any example of that concept should possess a reasonable number of those features, though none is necessary or sufficient. Classic examples of cluster concepts are things like 'Art' and 'Health'. For example, in order to count as an *x*, *a* may possess features 1, 3, 5 and 6, or features 2, 3 and 4, or some other combination. Some features might be more important than others, so if 2 is particularly important, and 7 is not, a thing may possess 2 and 3, and count as *x*, while another thing may possess features 3, 4 and 7 and still not count. Considering the art example, for something to count as art, it may be extremely important that it possesses the feature of being *created*, or of being a *representation,* but the features of being

beautiful or being *emotive* are less central and not at all necessary. It is always difficult to place ambiguous cases in cluster concepts, since there is rarely an algorithm to decide which combinations are sufficient. Objectification is a very plausible candidate for a cluster concept, as the way we use the term ordinarily covers cases that seem to have little in common with one another[125]; there are so many ways to appropriately treat objects (it is appropriate to treat my teapot as a useful tool, as a beautiful decoration, and as exchangeable or disposable), so there are many ways to treat people *as* objects. Nussbaum proposes that the following seven kinds of treatment of persons are features of objectification, though she does not claim that the list need be exhaustive:

> "1. *Instrumentality:* The objectifier treats the object as a tool for his or her purposes.
> 2. *Denial of autonomy:* The objectifier treats the object as lacking in autonomy and self-determination.
> 3. *Inertness:* The objectifier treats the object as lacking in agency, and perhaps also in activity.
> 4. *Fungibility:* The objectifier treats the object as interchangeable (a) with other objects of the same type, and/or (b) with objects of other types.
> 5. *Violability:* The objectifier treats the object as lacking in boundary-integrity, as something that it is permissible to break up, smash, break into.
> 6. *Ownership:* The objectifier treats the object as something that is owned by another, can be bought or sold, etc.
> 7. *Denial of subjectivity:* The objectifier treats the object as something whose experience and feelings (if any) need not be taken into account." (Nussbaum 1995, 257)[126]

Nussbaum pays special attention to *autonomy denial* and *instrumentality,* arguing that these are the most important as they tend to imply many of the other features of objectification.[127] This is worth bearing in mind until we look at each feature in more detail in the next section. Nussbaum presents her account as morally neutral, arguing that certain things that count as objectification on this account are not morally problematic. Some things are, however; the condition for an instance of objectification to be morally problematic is that the person is treated as *merely a means* or as means without a context of regard for humanity (though it is somewhat unclear precisely what that means) (Nussbaum 1995, 265, 289).

2.2 Langton's Ten Kinds of Objectification

[125] As with art: da Vinci's Mona Lisa and Dali's Lobster Telephone have little in common.

[126] I should note that I do not agree with some of Nussbaum's terminology here; she refers to the person who is being objectified as 'the object' in each of these features. This is a mistake. One cannot objectify an object; you can only objectify something that is not an object (i.e. a person). Nussbaum accepts this: "One is treating *as an object* what is really not an object, what is, in fact, a human being" (1995, 257). However she also claims that objectification involves 'making into a thing', implying that the human being becomes a real object, at which point it is impossible to objectify, as we cannot objectify real objects. This must be somewhat hyperbolic, as none of Nussbaum's arguments seems to require that the objectified person actually *becomes* or *is* a real object. In fact, she much more often describes the person who has been objectified as a *person*. For these reasons I think we should take ourselves and Nussbaum to be talking about objectified *persons,* not objectified *objects.*

[127] In fact, Langton reads Nussbaum as claiming that instrumentality and autonomy-denial are mutually entailing (Langton 2009d, 226–27).

In 'Autonomy-Denial in Objectification' Langton (2009d) agrees with Nussbaum's list of seven features, but sees them as a starting point, in need of additions. She suggests the following three additions, claiming that they help defend against troublesome counterexamples and help better capture what feminists worry about in sexual objectification in particular.

8) *"Reduction to body:* one treats it as identified with its body, or body parts."
9) *"Reduction to appearance:* one treats it primarily in terms of how it looks, or how it appears to the senses."
10) *"Silencing:* one treats it as silent, lacking the capacity to speak." (Langton 2009d, 228–30)

Features 8 and 9 here are very similar though distinct features, both of which will be useful for explaining objectification in pornography, and sexualised media like the Model and Poster examples.

For the next two sections, we look at two particular problems for the Nussbaum-Langton picture: the problems of relevance and indeterminacy.

2.3 The Problem of Relevance

I suggest that of the ten features here, four of them are just not appropriate features of objectification, as they are not wholly *relevant.* By this claim I mean that they either are not clearly enough features of something intuitively *object-like* or they are not really the kind of feature that is relevant to the decision people like Cathy make in asserting, 'That's objectification'. I will explain this thought in more detail as we examine each one.

i. Inertness

The objectifier treats the object as lacking in agency, and perhaps also in activity.

I suggest that the feature 'inertness' cannot be a useful feature of objectification, as it faces a two-horned dilemma; either we understand 'agency' narrowly, and this feature is rendered superfluous by 'autonomy denial', or we understand 'agency' broadly, and this feature doesn't make sense as a kind of object-like treatment, as too many objects will count as having (rather than lacking) agency. It seems to be the second horn that Nussbaum has grasped, evidenced by her claiming that word processors have agency, and her claim that autonomy entails non-inertness (Nussbaum 1995, 260). This latter claim suggests that she sees autonomy as something over and above agency; I read her as implying the following definitions: *'agency: can act/move'* and *'autonomy: can act/move on own will'.*

On this understanding, inertness is not an appropriate feature of objectification, primarily because inertness is not a particularly important feature of objecthood. My phone, computer, printer and toaster all display activity and some agency. Nussbaum's example of a non-inert object is a word processor, and she seems to see this as an outlier, as she claims that 'most' objects are inert (Nussbaum 1995, 260). Perhaps this is technically true; if you count up all of the objects, most will be

inert, but considering the prevalence of non-inert objects in our lives[128], this still seems a weak feature of objects on this understanding. At the same time it seems very unlikely that people ever treat one another as incapable of moving/acting at all (except when they actually cannot move), and even if I, say, treat my aging grandmother as incapable of moving, and run errands for her and such like, it is not intuitive to say I am treating her as an object. These points show that on a broad understanding of agency we just do not consider inertness to indicate objecthood, nor is it a way people treat one another (in the cases we tend to think of as 'objectifying' and elsewhere).

If we instead were to construe 'agency' less broadly, perhaps referring to something like *human* agency, we would fall on the first horn of the dilemma laid out above, and it will collapse into autonomy, such that this feature is subsumed by 'autonomy denial'.

So either the inertness condition is inappropriate because inertness is not intuitively indicative of objecthood, or the inertness condition is redundant because it captures precisely what autonomy denial captures.

ii. Fungibility

The objectifier treats the object as interchangeable (a) with other objects of the same type, and/or (b) with objects of other types.

Here again, I am unconvinced that this is an appropriate feature of objectification. If I need medical treatment and do not care which doctor I have, I am treating the doctors as fungible: any one will do. It would be strange, I think, for someone to accuse me of treating doctors like objects.

If someone did make such a claim, I suspect their explanation would run along one of two lines. First, one could claim that if I treat my doctors as fungible I am not adequately appreciating their personal attributes. This cannot be how fungibility works as a feature of objectification, as this would amount to a description of *subjectivity denial*, which is already a feature in its own right (and will be discussed later on). Second, *disposability* is sometimes taken to be an element of fungibility. If this were the case, then my saying doctors are fungible is also saying 'I would be happy to *discard* a doctor after use'. This would be distinct from subjectivity denial, and would be quite a morally worrying feature of objectification. However, this is clearly not at work in Nussbaum's understanding of fungibility. This is at least implied (and perhaps entailed) by Nussbaum's assertion that *violability* is not implied by fungibility (Nussbaum 1995, 260). If fungibility involved disposability, then it would seem to imply violability. So fungibility is either not relevant to objecthood, or it is subsumed by subjectivity denial, or being mischaracterised as implying disposability.

iii. Violability

The objectifier treats the object as lacking in boundary-integrity, as something that it is permissible to break up, smash, break into.

[128] Nowadays, everything is some kind of computer.

I see two problems with the violability feature: it does not seem the right sort of thing to count as a feature of objectification, and it does not seem to add anything relevant in terms of yielding relatively intuitive results for what things count as objectification. Violability is a bad candidate for a feature of objectification, firstly because it is not clear that it describes an appropriate way to treat objects. Breaking into an object might be a morally neutral thing to do, but it is not what we would see as *appropriate* treatment.[129] For a feature to be adequately relevant we want it to be picking out a way of treating an object that is distinct from the way we typically treat persons (when *not* objectifying them). Violability is not a typical way of treating an object, and being inviolable is not an aspect of personhood in its own right; persons are inviolable in that we should respect their consent and boundaries by virtue of their *autonomy*.

Finally, of all the typical examples where someone like Cathy might claim 'that's objectification', violability just never appears to add much to whether they count as objectification; they seem to count by virtue of the other, more relevant, features they possess. Whether Poster, Casual Sex, Squeeze 2, Model, and Trophy Wife count as objectification seems to be a question answered by other features; violability does not make the difference.

iv. Silencing

One treats it as silent, lacking the capacity to speak.

There are two closely related ways in which silencing fails to be relevant enough to count as a feature of objectification.

Firstly, if I treat someone as having beliefs and desires, but silent, unable to express them, I cannot really be accused of treating them as 'object–like' in that sense; that seems an ill-fitting description of what is going on. If I treat them as being silent *because* they have no beliefs and desires to express, then I might be treating them as an object, by virtue of denying their subjectivity and autonomy but *not* by virtue of treating them as silent.

Secondly, Langton's justification for the inclusion of 'silencing' is that speech is an important capacity of persons, and denying speech is removing a key attribute of persons. Even if this true[130], this does not seem to be enough to warrant its identity as a feature of objectification, as something can be extremely important to people and a serious moral wrong to remove without its denial counting as objectification: we do not have to (and *should not*) try to fit every kind of feminist concern under 'objectification'. For example, being a member of a community is an important feature of human life, and to ostracise someone unjustly is a serious moral wrong, but we are not compelled to call ostracism 'objectification'. Finally, it is worth mentioning that silencing is already considered a

[129] Except for a few odd exceptions such as piñatas and eggs.

[130] Which could be questioned, given that speech might not count as an exclusively human activity. As a proponent of the claim that pornography is speech, Langton is committed to the claim the objects (DVDs, photographs etc) can speak. Considering also that some people do not speak, and we find that speech is a feature that is not exclusive to, or necessary for, personhood.

serious moral wrong with its own philosophical implications, situated in a vast literature, such that we do not need to add weight to it by including it in objectification too.

It could be argued at this point that while inertness, fungibility, violability and silencing are not the right sorts of things to be necessary for objectification, that does not mean that they need to be excluded from a cluster concept, since none of the features are independently *necessary*. The thought could be that 'violability', for example, might as well be included, even if it does not add anything, because for a cluster concept there will be other features determining whether the act is objectification. This would be a mistake, however, as long as the unnecessary feature has the power to transform a case from not counting as objectification to counting as such. While Nussbaum does not give concrete figures, cluster concepts will require that a certain number of features will be 'enough'. If, for some action or attitude, the addition of fungibility for example takes a list of features from 'not enough' to 'enough', then *in that instance the feature is necessary for objectification*. This is an unacceptable consequence if we accept that fungibility is a bad indicator of object-like treatment. In addition to the reasons already given, this tells us that omitting less relevant features is a good idea.

In this section, I looked at four features from the Nussbaum-Langton picture of objectification and illustrated that they are not sufficiently *relevant* to be included in the kind of account of objectification which we are looking for (one which reflects intuitions and is tight enough to be used to determine whether and when objectification is harmful).

2.4 The Indeterminacy Problem

As they stand, at least five of the ten features in their current form are not defined clearly enough to be able to tell us whether something counts as objectification in that way or not.

i. Autonomy Denial

The objectifier treats the object as lacking in autonomy and self-determination.

How Nussbaum understands 'autonomy' can, I think, be inferred from her use of 'self-determination'. One's actions must be *determined* by the *self.* This can be framed as *acting or moving according to one's own will*. (Which implies the contrasting definition of 'agency' as simply *acting or moving,* discussed above.)

If you are a Kantian (I am not), autonomy denial looks to be good candidate for a feature of objectification, as autonomy is a key feature of personhood. Nussbaum's framing of it however, is not yet sufficiently clear. If we attempt to determine whether autonomy denial is present in any of our examples, we struggle. The women in the Model and Poster examples are both not obviously having their autonomy denied (presumably the models consented to be in the pictures, and the pictures are not representing a non-consenting character), but they are also not obviously having their autonomy asserted or recognised. The partners in Casual Sex are respecting each other's consent, so we might expect them not to count as autonomy-denying, but Nussbaum explicitly

denies this.[131] Nussbaum would say that they are denying each other's autonomy, in that they may 'let go' and stop thinking about their rational choices and inner mental life, in favour of simply feeling. This is an odd way of talking about autonomy denial, but this is what she says is going on with autonomy denial in her Lawrentian examples of the lovers Lady Constance and Mellors (which I see as capturing similar behaviour to my Casual Sex example) (Nussbaum 1995, 267, 273).[132]

In Squeeze 1 and 2 neither man gives the woman a choice about the squeeze, so both could be said to deny her autonomy, though I think we would want to say that in Squeeze 2, the man has good reason to believe she would consent and be happy about having her bottom squeezed, so either he denies her autonomy permissibly, or he does not deny her autonomy.[133] One reason to accept the latter is that given their relationship he would at least be *attributing* her autonomy, insofar as he believes she consents to and enjoys the squeeze, and as long as that belief is correct, he isn't violating her autonomy either. However, the man in Squeeze 1 might also intend her to consent and enjoy the squeeze, but he has no reason to believe she would, so would be in that case attributing her autonomy in his belief that she consents, but still violating her autonomy. These examples show that autonomy denial just is not straightforward; we cannot yet easily determine whether these simple cases are autonomy-denying.

Langton demonstrates where the key confusion lies in understanding autonomy denial, which she attributes to ambiguity in the term 'treating'. There are two distinct meanings of autonomy denial, both of which are at work but not acknowledged in Nussbaum's discussion. These two notions are *non-attribution of autonomy*, and *violation of autonomy* (Langton 2009d, 231–38). The former involves taking an attitude to a person, or believing certain things about them, whilst the latter involves your actual treatment of them: the things you *do* (though non-attribution can involve doing things too). The former is what Nussbaum seems to have in mind when she tells us that the Lawrentian lovers, Mellors and Lady Constance, enjoy a mutual giving up of autonomy when they have sex. They are not violating their autonomy, but treating themselves and each other as lacking inner thought and choice, in a sort of animalistic sensual way. However, this understanding of Lawrentian lovers turns it into a bad example for two reasons: firstly, Nussbaum is suggesting that they give up their *own* autonomy, which seems like a different species of objectification – of objectifying *oneself*.[134] Secondly, respecting consent seems incompatible with any kind of autonomy denial, and the lovers *are* respecting consent (if they are not, then this is not the benign case of objectification she means it to be). It seems to me that respecting consent requires the belief that

[131] Nussbaum discusses the abandonment of autonomy and subjectivity in sexual encounters as a potentially "wonderful part of sexual life." (Nussbaum 1995, 267, 271–74)
[132] This needs further explanation that I cannot offer; it is not clear how Nussbaum intends this to work.
[133] Or to put it better: *If* the man has good reason to believe she would consent and be happy about having her bottom squeezed, *then* either he denies her autonomy permissibly, or he does not deny her autonomy.
[134] There is some literature on how patriarchy fosters self-objectification in women, but I will not discuss this here, firstly because it is not what is going on in the claim 'that's objectification' uttered by Cathy, and because my interest is in how pornography objectifies, and pornography is more connected with regular (other-directed) objectification.

the person consenting has *chosen* to do whatever it is they are doing: they are *acting on their own will.*

Langton disagrees; she suggests that in respecting consent, we avoid *violating* autonomy, but not necessarily *non-attribution.* The only way I can make sense of this claim is to understand it as a function of what she takes 'respecting consent' to involve: it looks like she sees it as something we *do* rather than something we *think.* Langton gives the example of a doctor who views her patient 'objectively'. Langton claims that the reason the doctor does not *violate* the patient's autonomy is by virtue of the fact that she obtained consent; however, the doctor does fail to *attribute* autonomy to her patient. This seems odd, as (as suggested above) it seems to me that you must attribute someone autonomy to care about their consent, as you have to conceive of them as a being capable of consenting and choosing. Perhaps Langton's view of the doctor is that they are obtaining consent out of respect for the rules, rather than actually thinking about the patient's right to choose. On this picture, the doctor might be understood as failing to attribute autonomy without violating it; however, they are not intuitively *respecting consent*. If you are obtaining consent for reasons outside of that person, such as respect for hospital protocol, then you may avoid violating autonomy while failing to attribute autonomy, but *actually respecting* consent, I suggest, is incompatible with autonomy denial of either kind. The doctor, then, is either not in fact respecting consent, or not in fact failing to attribute autonomy.

I have explored Langton's doctor example to clear up the distinction between *respecting* consent and obtaining formal consent for other reasons, and to defend my suspicion that respecting consent seems to rule out autonomy denial of either kind which troubles Nussbaum's characterisation of the Lawrentian lovers.

Now that we are a little clearer on the meanings of 'autonomy denial', we can see how some of our examples might be captured: it looks like the Model case might be an example of non-attribution of autonomy without violation of autonomy. She is not having her autonomy *violated* (the model presumably consented to be in the picture, and the image does not portray her as non-consenting) but she might not be being attributed autonomy (the audience might not think about her life and choices); however, the picture is also not representing her as non-autonomous. Even with the clarifications, this case is ambiguous.

As well as non-attribution of autonomy without violation, there can be examples of violation without non-attribution. Langton points out that sadistic rape requires autonomy attribution and violation; what the rapist is looking for is overpowering someone who is capable of choice, and removing their ability to choose (Langton 2009d, 234). Presumably, they would not get a kick from violating the autonomy of something to which they already attribute no autonomy (there is no autonomy, there is no autonomy violation).

So Nussbaum's understanding of autonomy denial requires two iterations, to reflect the two kinds separated by Langton, so the second of Nussbaum's seven features should instead read:

> *Denial of autonomy*: (a) *Non-attribution*: The objectifier fails to attribute autonomy and self-determination to the object. (b) *Violation:* The objectifier violates the autonomy and removes the self-determination of the object.

Before moving on I shall briefly return to the question of whether one can deny one's *own* autonomy. When Nussbaum's Lawrentian lovers 'mutually abandon' their autonomy, this seems to be what Nussbaum suggests they are doing: failing to attribute autonomy to themselves. This seems implausible. It is possible to claim one could *violate* one's own autonomy, for example by voluntary incarceration. It is less easy to conceive of someone failing to *attribute* autonomy to oneself, except in cases where someone has the sincere belief that their every thought is controlled by someone or something external. In any case, this does not seem to be what the Lawrentian lovers are doing, as presumably they must believe they have some level of control, otherwise they could not claim to be respecting the other's consent.

To sum up our analysis of the first feature I deem indeterminate, the concept of 'autonomy denial' was too unclear in its original formulation; with Langton's distinction between *violation* and *non-attribution* it is a little clearer.

ii. Instrumentality

The objectifier treats the object as a tool for his or her purposes.

Instrumentality at first glance looks like a really useful feature of objectification for an everyday understanding of the term. Women who describe experiences as objectifying often say they feel 'used', and many people explicitly built 'sexual use' into their understanding of what it means to objectify a woman.[135] An account of objectification would do well to capture these uses, but the definition of instrumentality is not yet adequately determinate. Thinking again about the examples from the beginning, we have some trouble determining whether those who are objectified are being treated instrumentally. The Model and Poster examples seem to involve women being used for some purpose, but only in the trivial way in which anyone doing their job is being utilised by a boss or customer as a means to getting that job done. Whether either man in the Squeeze cases has treated the woman as an instrument is not clear. We can at least say that the boyfriend does not treat his girlfriend as *merely* a means, as we are assuming a wider context of respect in their relationship. The Casual Sex couple have treated each other as a means to sexual satisfaction, but not in a way that is intuitively troubling (at least to Nussbaum, me, and most vaguely socially liberal feminists). The Trophy Wife is treated as a tool in a much more obvious way. It is clear that there is something more going on here than in the other examples; she is being treated as a means to her husband's ends, and not as having any ends of her own.

[135] See for example Slade (2017).

What is at work here is a distinction between using someone as means (or tool), or as a *mere* means (tool).[136] Both kinds are mentioned: Nussbaum gives the example of using her lover's stomach as a pillow as a kind of instrumentalising treatment, but she is only using the lover as a *means* and not a *mere* means (Nussbaum 1995, 265). Her most violent examples (slavery, rape) involve treating as a *mere* means, the key difference being that in the latter cases, the person is not being treated in general as an end in themselves. In contrast, the lover in the former example is still being treated as 'an end in themselves'. She marks the distinction as a difference between 'treating as a mere means/tool/instrument' and 'treating as a means/tool/instrument in the context of a respectful relationship' (Nussbaum 1995, 265). This qualifier is unhelpful though – what do we make of the case where I treat someone (*not merely)* as a means, outside the context of a respectful relationship? Say I treat the owner of my local shop as a means to getting food; I do not treat him *merely* as a means because I see him as a person and respect his boundaries, but every time I enter the shop we are rude to one another. In this case, we lack the context of a respectful relationship, and I treat him as a means to buying groceries, but I do not treat him as a *mere* means. This example is just to demonstrate that 'context of respectful relationship' and 'non-mere means' are not equivalent. Difficulties with Nussbaum's 'context of a respectful relationship' will come up again in Chapter Five when we discuss Marino's (2008) take on them. For now, I think it best we set this aside and take it to be merely an example of the kind of circumstances in which one might be predisposed not to treat someone *merely* as a means.

So the first of Nussbaum's features should be reformulated to read:

> *Instrumentality:* (a) *Means:* The objectifier treats the person as a tool for his or her purposes.
> (b) *Mere Means:* The objectifier treats the person as a mere tool for his or her purposes.

With this distinction, it looks as though very few things will come out as 'treating as a mere means', because when you respect someone's consent, you are taking their ends into account, so anything consensual will come out as means only. So respecting consent seems to rule out both mere-means instrumentality and non-attribution of autonomy (remembering the previous section).[137] (This distinction, and connection with consent, will be important in this chapter's Sections 2.4.iii and 3.3 and throughout Chapter Five). This brings us to another point of confusion in Nussbaum's account: whether instrumentality and autonomy denial are mutually entailing.

iii. Instrumentality and Autonomy Denial

Instrumentality and autonomy denial are the two features Nussbaum claims are most important[138] and, she claims, they are often linked (Nussbaum 1995, 260–61). How they are linked is something of a problem, as Nussbaum indicates in a few places that they are mutually entailing, yet gives

[136] This distinction parallels Marino's (2008) distinction between what she calls 'weak' and 'strong' instrumentalisation.
[137] Marino (2008, 351) makes a similar point; that mere means might imply autonomy denial.
[138] I suspect this is because of how consent interacts with them, and yields particular moral intuitions, but I will not go into that here.

examples where one is present and the other is not. She claims first that "treating as instrumental may well imply treating as non-autonomous" (Nussbaum 1995, 259–60). The reverse claim that 'treating as non-autonomous entails treating as instrumental' follows from her claim that "the non-instrumental treatment of adult human beings entails recognition of autonomy." (Nussbaum 1995, 264):

> Where F= instrumental treatment of adults, and G= recognition of autonomy.
>
> [If ¬F then G] is equivalent to [If ¬G then F].
>
> So, 'If [*non*-instrumental treatment of adults] then [recognition of autonomy]' is equivalent to 'If [*not* recognising autonomy] then [instrumental treatment]'.

Langton (2009d, 226–27), using these extracts and others, suggests that Nussbaum is committed to the position that instrumentality and autonomy denial are mutually entailing, but I think she need not be. Given that the passages suggesting she holds the view that instrumentality entails non-autonomy are tentatively phrased , containing 'may well' (Nussbaum 1995, 259–60), a more charitable interpretation is that Nussbaum's suggestion is instead that *in some cases of objectification, treating as instrumental implies autonomy denial*, and this will be dependent on the context. For example, in the Casual Sex example, she treats him as a means to sexual satisfaction, but does not deny his autonomy since his consent matters to her, whereas the Trophy Wife is treated as a means to her husband's ends in such a way that her choices are not considered, and her autonomy is therefore denied. In the former case the context of consent means that instrumentality does not imply autonomy denial, while in the latter case, the context of the husband's typical subordinating attitude to his wife means the instrumentality here does imply autonomy denial. I think this is what Nussbaum means when she claims "treating as instrumental *may well* imply treating as non-autonomous" (Nussbaum 1995, 259–60 my emphasis). Given that that trophy wife example seems to entail autonomy denial, but casual sex does not, and in the previous section we noticed that the former is *mere* means / strong instrumentalisation, and the latter is means / weak instrumentalisation, it seems that what Nussbaum can claim is that: *strong* instrumentalisation (*mere* means) entails autonomy denial, but *weak* instrumentalisation does not.

Nussbaum's claim in the opposite direction is much more explicit. She does claim outright that autonomy denial, in the case of adults, entails instrumentality (as shown above). This does not, I think, hold. The counterexample to autonomy denial entailing instrumentality is the way we treat children; we legitimately deny children's autonomy but do not (and should not) treat them as a means to an end. So when Nussbaum claims that autonomy denial entails instrumentality in *adults*, it appears this counterexample is now dealt with. This is not the case however, because we can consider a modified example where we treat an adult *as if* they were a child. (This is not meant to be merely a hypothetical 'gotcha' example; adults being treated as if they are children is not unusual. Disabled adults are often unjustly treated in this way, and younger and more feminine adults can experience this too.) This meets Nussbaum's condition of being about *adults*, but involves identical

treatment as in the first example, i.e. treating them as non-autonomous but not as a means to an end. It could be the case that the example of treating an adult like a child will not count as objectification, since it possesses none of the other features, but it nevertheless undermines the claim that autonomy denial implies instrumentality. So Langton's claim that autonomy denial and instrumentality are mutually entailing, and Nussbaum's commitment to at least one half of the biconditional, cannot be right. This illustrates problems with the clarity/determinacy of the Nussbaum-Langton account, but we will see later how the connection between *strong* instrumentality and autonomy denial fits in with my own account.

iv. Violability

The objectifier treats the object as lacking in boundary-integrity, as something that it is permissible to break up, smash, break into.

For all of the examples we considered, it is unclear whether Nussbaum's understanding of 'violability' is present. *Violability* may be implied in the Model example, as the implication of the advert is that it is *the woman* who is 'open'; however, there is nothing to suggest violability in the Poster anecdote. In the Casual Sex example, the participants treat one another as someone for whom it is permissible to penetrate their boundaries, to invade personal space, but this is consensual and not destructive. Whether this example counts, and in fact whether Squeeze 1 and 2 count, will depend on whether violability must be non-consensual. The word choice must be connected to the root word 'violate', implying that someone is violated if they are treated as violable, which is essentially a *non-consensual* experience. However the descriptions of violable as 'lacking in boundary-integrity' and 'permissible to break into' suggests consensual experiences should count too, as it is not incoherent to have a case where a person or thing is consensually broken into, or consensually lacking physical boundaries. This would, however, make the feature broad beyond utility, as, if we believe it is usually permissible to enter someone's personal space with their consent, then we usually treat people as violable on this understanding. If we usually treat people as violable, then this feature is not really doing anything. If, however, it is intended that violability should only capture *non*-consensual invasions of space, then it may well be superfluous, given that we now have 'violation of autonomy' as a distinct feature to capture non-consensual things. I could not say which of these understandings Nussbaum means to suggest, but either way, the feature is not really doing any work.

v. Denial of Subjectivity

The objectifier treats the object as something whose experience and feelings (if any) need not be taken into account.

As was the case with 'autonomy denial', it seems that there are a few different meanings at play here. In the definition of subjectivity denial as it is offered above (drawn from Nussbaum (1995, 257)), it seems as if the cases it aims at capturing are those where the objectifier knows the person targeted has feelings and experiences, but the objectifier does not care about them. Their feelings

are irrelevant, dismissed, not taken into account. This is how Nussbaum describes subjectivity denial when it is done to people, but when she discusses it being done to *things* she describes a situation where a thing is treated as if it *does not have* feelings or experiences at all. This gives us two kinds of subjectivity denial, split in a similar way to 'autonomy denial':

> *Denial of Subjectivity:* (a) *Dismissal:* The objectifier treats the object as something whose experience and feelings need not be taken into account. (b) *Non-attribution:* The objectifier fails to attribute feelings and experiences to the object.

The inclusion in the original definition of '(if any)' shows that Nussbaum must have had this in mind, so this is just to make it clear. However, it is important that in her discussion Nussbaum only applies (a) to people, and only applies (b) to objects. This makes sense, as I imagine denying that someone *has* feelings and experiences at all is not likely to be a common occurrence.[139]

Even with this clarification, it remains unclear whether the people in Model, Poster, and Casual Sex are having their subjectivity denied or dismissed. There is little attention paid to the subjectivity of the women in the two posters, but this is unsurprising, as photography is not an ideal medium for presenting a person's feelings and experiences. It is probable that this feature will be overinclusive when applied to photographs, as the feelings of the women (as real people or as the characters they create in the pictures) are inaccessible to the audience. (In some media cases, it might be easy to tell the characters' feelings and experiences are being presented as something we should care about, but in many it will not be so obvious.[140]) In the Squeeze examples, whether subjectivity is denied seems to hinge on whether the man is thinking about whether the woman will appreciate the squeeze. However, even if he thinks she will not, he might still be considering her feelings to be *worth taking into account*. The two participants in Casual Sex are not treating *past* experiences as relevant, though their present feelings certainly are. Each person is not particularly interested in the life, history or individual experiences of the other; they are only really interested in the features of that person's life that are relevant to sex, and relevant to that particular evening. Trophy Wife has a clear answer; her husband is not treating *any* of her feelings as relevant. The difficulty in determining whether some of the people in our examples are experiencing subjectivity denial point to a particular ambiguity in Nussbaum's account: it is not clear whether the feelings and experiences that are being dismissed in subjectivity denial must be *present* ones. The problem arises because thus far it has looked like the present is what is relevant; we have been considering whether the objectifier is paying attention to the objectified's feelings. However, sometimes Nussbaum uses it to focus on *past* experiences. Nussbaum (1995, 275) describes the Lawrentian lovers as 'surrendering subjectivity' in order to better enjoy the moment; this she counts as denial of subjectivity. This only makes sense if we are considering subjectivity in the *past* sense; the lovers are not paying attention to their past experiences, they are only paying attention to the moment. Of course, if subjectivity

[139] Having said this, I imagine it is not altogether uncommon for people to treat others as having feelings and experiences fundamentally different from their own.

[140] For cases where it will be more obvious, there could be images depicting a heterosexual couple where the man's feelings are in focus and attended to, but the woman's are irrelevant.

denial is to refer to disregarding feelings of *right now* then the lovers cannot be denying their subjectivity; they are actually paying particular attention to it!

It could be an (inclusive) disjunctive condition: if you are disregarding their past experiences/feelings, or present experiences/feelings then you are denying their subjectivity. This makes most sense given Nussbaum's usage, but it makes it implausibly inclusive. If someone requests of me that I forget their past and focus on the person they are now, to respect that request would, on this understanding, be denying their subjectivity. This example seems like a bad candidate for subjectivity denial as a feature of objectification, suggesting that subjectivity denial, defined this broadly, is a bad candidate for a feature of objectification. We would do better to limit subjectivity denial to *present tense* cases, but this means that Lawrentian lovers and Casual Sex no longer contain the feature of subjectivity denial. On the other hand, Nussbaum may mean it to be conjunctive: past *and* present feelings must be disregarded for subjectivity denial. If this is the case then our interpretation of Lawrentian lovers is incorrect and her claim is about something much more sinister than my first interpretation; she would instead be claiming that the lovers are not at all interested in how the other is feeling, which raises worries about consent. The reason this interpretation is unlikely is that Nussbaum is using the Lawrentian lovers as an example of 'wonderful' objectification, which would be difficult to defend if each has no regard for the other's current feelings.

Despite the consequence that the Lawrentian lovers example (understood in the non-sinister way) no longer counts as denying subjectivity, I prefer the latter understanding because of the implausible inclusivity of a disjunctive interpretation. The feature of subjectivity denial should therefore instead look like this:

> *Denial of subjectivity:* (a) *Dismissal:* The objectifier treats the object as something whose past **and** present experience and feelings need not be taken into account. *(b) Non-attribution:* The objectifier fails to attribute feelings and experiences to the object.

vi. Reduction to Body

One treats it as identified with its body, or body parts.

Moving on now to one of Langton's features on the list, it is initially somewhat unclear what 'reduction to body' will involve. To establish this, we can ask what 'treated as identified with' means, as Langton seems to use 'treats as identified with' and 'reduced to' as roughly synonymous. The broadest understanding of 'identified with' is ruled out; this is the understanding which is at work when I say, 'I am identified with my fatness, being fat is an important part of my identity'. This is clearly not synonymous with 'reduced to'. There are two more likely readings of 'identify with' which both stem from the root word 'identify', meaning 'to say what a thing is'. The narrower understanding of 'identified with' would be 'identical to', which does work as synonymous with 'reduced to'. To treat someone as 'identical to' their body is to suggest there is nothing to them over and above their body, that is all; you could sum up that person by indicating their body. I think this is

much closer to the understanding Langton and the others are getting at, though it has to be fractionally broader than this: in order for 'treating someone as identified with their body' to be capturing something that really happens, it must be the case that you need not necessary actually *believe* there is *nothing* to them over and above their body. Two qualifications must be made: first, we must include 'little more than' rather than 'nothing more than', to allow a little more broadness, because if reduction to body only captured cases where one was treated as *nothing* over their body, this would be so narrow as to capture very few cases indeed (and this is a problem if we think reduction to body is a common thing, as many feminists do). People are at least usually aware that the person they are objectifying has a mind. Secondly, rather than *believing* the objectified person has little or nothing over and above their body, the objectifier must only *treat them as if this were the case, in the present context.* For example, a photographer may have a good friendship with a model and be respectful of her intellect and character, but during a shoot for an American Apparel advert, he treats her as identified with her thighs; they are what she is for the length of that photoshoot.

This complements an alternative way of understanding of 'reduced to' or 'identified with' which is at play here: *foregrounding.* If I foreground some feature y of thing x, when I think of x, I will most readily think of y, or I will relate to x in terms of y (despite knowing that x in fact has other features). I borrow the term 'foregrounding' from Olberding (2014), who explains how one manifestation of implicit bias[141] is where someone attempts to present themselves in one way (*foregrounding* a feature)[142], and their audience rejects this attempt, instead seeing a different feature as most relevant (placing something else in the *foreground*).[143]

Olberding offers examples from the 'What Is It Like to be a Woman in Philosophy?' blog, in one of which a conference organiser attempts to foreground the feature 'philosopher', but other attendees do not cooperate with this foregrounding, and instead relate to her in terms of her pregnancy, foregrounding that feature instead.[144]

> "The conference organizer becomes 'the pregnant woman,' the award-winning philosopher becomes 'woman with big tits,' and so forth. Social collaboration is supplanted by social conscription." (Olberding 2014, 295)

So if I reduce a woman to her curves (in a particular context, or in general), when I think of that woman, I first think of her shape, rather than her aggressive attitude or knitting skills. *Foregrounding*

[141] 'Implicit bias' describes prejudiced or stereotyped associations that we may not, or need not, know that we have, and which can affect our behaviour in sometimes subtle ways. See for example Haslanger (2008) and Holroyd (2012).
[142] "Self-presentation involves foregrounding certain features of ourselves, those features we sanction as how we want ourselves in the situation we inhabit to be understood, and backgrounding other features, those we consider inconsistent with our situation or deem irrelevant, less salient, or simply more intimate than what we would sanction for notice in a given situation." (Olberding 2014, 293–94)
[143] Thank you to Robbie Morgan for pointing me to Olberding's paper to support this framing.
[144] Blog post ("What It's like to Be Pregnant in Philosophy | What Is It like to Be a Woman in Philosophy?" 2011) available at https://beingawomaninphilosophy.wordpress.com/.

a person's body (and backgrounding other features) is precisely what I think is going on when people say, 'This thing is objectifying, it reduces women to their bodies!'[145]

I think these two understandings of 'reduced to' or 'identified with' capture what is at play in Langton's (and others') work here. In examples like Casual Sex and Squeeze 1 and 2, a woman is treated as identified with her body, as in: in that moment, her body is what the objectifier thinks of when they think of her. If subjectivity denial is going on, then they may also be 'identifying her with' her body in the sense that she is nothing/little over and above it. So we have:

> *Reduction to body:* a) One treats it as nothing/little over and above its body or body parts. b) One foregrounds their body or body parts.[146]

Remember I am assuming here that Langton meant 'reduction to' to be roughly synonymous with 'treating as identified with,' given that that is how she worded it, and I think this works perhaps even better with our modifications. But even if we set aside the 'identified with' phrasing for now, another common use of 'reduce to' fits well with this understanding: if you 'reduce' substances (or indeed, concepts), you remove all extraneous elements, so that you can focus on only the few, most important, elements. So similarly, if you are reducing a person, you can be ignoring their other qualities, focusing on what you deem to be most important at that time: their body.

It is important to note that this does not mean that the objectifier must be considering *no other things* about a person he objectifies. The 'little' in my (a) framing is doing important work. It takes us from a rare scenario: the objectifier treats the person as if there is literally nothing to her other than her body (no personality, no moods, nothing), to a common one: the objectifier treats the person as if her body is one of *few* relevant features right now. For example, in Casual Sex, each participant is only interested in the other because of the sexual appeal of one another's physical characteristics, but there are still one or two other features which are relevant to them: it is relevant to them that the other person is enthusiastically consenting. This does not mean they are no longer being reduced to their bodies: there is still a world of difference between treating someone as little above their bodies, as if only two features are important (their body, and their enthusiastic consent) and treating someone as much more than just their body, as if *many* features are important (their warm character, their driving skills, their clothing style, etc. etc.).

So when I ask whether the American Apparel advert treats women as little over and above their body parts, I am asking whether the advert reduces women to their bodies. With this clarification, reduction to body works well as a feature of objectification; it captures what is at work for many of

[145] This is not to imply that this is always a bad feature of objectification: if I foreground my body, and request that someone relate to me in terms of my body (as someone might do when they are communicating a desire to have casual sex), then it should be okay for the person I am engaging with to cooperate with that foregrounding. We will return to this thought in Chapter Five.

[146] While I have marked these two understandings as (a) and (b), they are not two distinct kinds of reduction to body in the way that (a) and (b) are in autonomy denial and instrumentalisation; they are more like two descriptions of the same kind of treatment.

the everyday claims about objectification of women (i.e. claims about women's bodies being used to advertise cars and such like).

Before we move on, I should say a little about where (a) and (b) come apart. While I describe them differently, I think the difference between 'little or nothing' reduction and 'foregrounding' reduction is a difference in degree rather than kind. In a case like Casual Sex I might treat a stranger as little over their body; I might only be interested in, say, their body and their enthusiastic consent. I might similarly have sex with a partner or friend, and foreground their body; I might be primarily interested in their body in this context, but have backgrounded interests that I also have in their latest creative project and in what they are cooking for tea later. In the Casual Sex example, my interest in what they are cooking for tea may be not just in the background, but totally, or almost totally, absent. Both of these ways of describing reduction to body involve paying attention to some things and not others in particular contexts; they just differ in how aware and interested the objectifier is of/in the features which are not in focus. Having said this, these can be taken to be different kinds, rather than degrees, of reduction, without any impact on my conclusions; both are compatible with the rest of my account. I would like to caution, though, that we should remember not to slip into considering a difference of degree of reduction to be a reliable guide to how harmful something is. As the Casual Sex example should have illustrated, both (a) and (b) can be harmless, and as other examples (including Oberding's examples) can show, both (a) and (b) can be harmful.

While this feature was unclear at first, I think that with the clarifications I suggest it is precisely the right sort of feature we want, and will be utilised in my definition.

2.5 Ownership

The objectifier treats the object as something that is owned by another, can be bought or sold, etc.

There is one final problem with Nussbaum and Langton's list of features that is not quite a determinacy or relevancy problem: it is that the feature of ownership cannot be included as a feature of objectification if we consider *commodification* to be a way of treating people in its own right, which seems sensible.

Ownership seems to be a feature of the practice - related to objectification, but not identical to it – of *commodification* (Wilkinson 2003). Perhaps commodification implies objectification, but this does not mean ownership is therefore a feature of objectification. It seems more likely that commodification is another thing, which involves objectification, but additionally features *ownership* (this is pretty much how Wilkinson defines it). For this to make sense, ownership must not already be a feature of objectification. Given this, I suggest we avoid ownership as a feature of objectification.

Aside from this, given that the problem of relevance affects four of the ten features and the problem of indeterminacy affects five of the ten, I suggest Nussbaum and Langton's accounts are not quite right as they stand and a new approach is warranted.

Part Three – My Account

3.1 My Criteria

Recall my proposed understanding of objectification:

> *Objectification occurs where either (1) or (2) of the following conditions is present:*
>
> 1) *Reduction to body: a) The objectifier treats the person as nothing/little over and above her body or body parts. b) The objectifier foregrounds the person's body or body parts.*
> 2) *Reduction to appearance: a) The objectifier treats the person as nothing/little over and above her looks/appearance to the senses. b) The objectifier foregrounds the person's looks/appearance to the senses.*
> 3) **Instrumentality: a) Means: The objectifier treats the person as a tool for his or her purposes. b) Mere Means: The objectifier treats the person as a mere tool for his or her purposes.*
>
> **(Note: (3) is not intended as a necessary criterion itself, but rather tends to correlate with (1) and (2) and should be considered as a guide for settling borderline cases.)*

3.2 The Aetiology of my Account

My starting point for thinking about an account of objectification was to examine those features from Nussbaum and Langton's account which looked to be good candidates for features of objectification, in that they seem to be *relevant*, *intuitive,* and *determinate*. Following the arguments of Part Two these are the five features on the table (with my finesses and reconstructions):

1) *Instrumentality* (a) *Means:* The objectifier treats the person as a tool for his or her purposes. *(b) Mere Means:* The objectifier treats the person as a mere tool for his or her purposes.
2) *Denial of autonomy* (a) *Non-attribution*: The objectifier fails to attribute autonomy and self-determination to the object. (b) *Violation:* The objectifier violates the autonomy and removes the self-determination of the object.
3) *Denial of subjectivity* (a) *Dismissal:* The objectifier treats the object as something whose past and present experience and feelings need not be taken into account. (b) *Non-attribution:* The objectifier fails to attribute feelings and experiences to the object.
4) *Reduction to body* (a) One treats it as nothing/little over and above its body or body parts. (b) One foregrounds their body or body parts.
5) *Reduction to appearance* One treats it primarily in terms of how it looks, or how it appears to the senses. (This definition will change to mirror (4); an explanation of this move is offered below.)

These five features all looked like good candidates for features of objectification for one reason or another (some of them only after reworking). Whether or not we see *autonomy* as something that

demands respect, it is useful as a clear signal that something is not an object: no objects have autonomy. This makes it useful for describing objectification; if you treat someone as having no autonomy, you seem to be treating them (at least in that aspect) in a way that is appropriate to treat objects. As I said in Part Two, *Instrumentality* also captures a common everyday usage of 'objectification'. Women who describe experiences as objectifying often say they feel 'used' and describe objectification of women as 'sexual use'. Again, denying subjectivity seems like a relatively intuitive feature to include in an account of objectification; it highlights that the history/hopes/fears/achievements of the person objectified are simply not being attended to. (Though I did not offer any positive reasons for including *Denial of Subjectivity* above, I did not offer reasons for rejecting the revised version either, so its absence from the account I arrive at warrants an explanation). Reduction to body captures something that is very commonly referred to in descriptions of objectification. Many women talk about being reduced to their body, or being treated as if they were only their bodies. Reduction to body is particularly useful for picking out what is going on in adverts where women's bodies are used as selling points, perhaps with the face out of focus or missing entirely.[147] Reduction to Appearance works in a very similar way, capturing where women lament being seen as 'just a pretty face'.

Next, I show how I get from this shortlist to my final account. I will first defend the two features I see as most important, before offering reasons to reject the other features.

3.3 Motivating the Three Features

Reduction to body and appearance

First of all, I want to articulate why 'Reduction to Body' is crucial. This is because in feminist contexts outside of philosophy it seems to be the paradigm feature; consider the claim that women are treated 'like a piece of meat', and that the claim 'that's objectification' is most commonly targeted at images or descriptions of women who are revealing their bodies. It is surprising that 'reduction to body' did not appear on Nussbaum's original list, given that she mentions it many times when describing objectification (Nussbaum 1995, 254, 264, 272, 274, 275). (My suspicion is that she considered it to be implied by subjectivity denial, and therefore unnecessary to include.) Reduction to body is also appropriate insofar as objects and bodies are just physical entities, so to treat a person as reduced to their bodily features, is to treat them similarly to, or somewhere on the way to, how we treat objects (except perhaps for cases of personification). It fits extremely well with ordinary usage in both academic and non-academic contexts; Kant (1997), MacKinnon (1987c, 175), and ordinary feminists like Cathy speak of objectification in terms of reducing to, or treating as, a body.[148] As a result, 'reduction to body' makes sense of cases most often described as objectifying. For instance, the Model example is a typical example of objectification heard in feminist circles, and public discussion, and the feature most clearly present in those cases is 'reduction to body' (the

[147] For Example see no.2 Skol and no.13 Mickeys (content warning: some offensive depictions of women) in Buzzfeed's compilation of sexist adverts (Copyranter 2013).
[148] This also bears strong similarity to what Amanda McMullen describes in her new paper (McMullen 2021).

model's body is clearly *foregrounded*; it is treated as the most relevant thing about her in the context of the advert).

'Reduction to Appearance' warrants inclusion for similar reasons. Like Reduction to Body, it is an excellent candidate for a feature of objectification as it is in keeping with popular usage and intuitions; it picks out what is going on with adverts that use (normatively) beautiful women to sell products, as this is (along with use of sexiness) one of the most common cases in which people identify objectification. For example, look at almost every photo in Coca Cola's 2016 advertising campaign (MacLeod 2016): here they use beautiful women to advertise something that has little to do with people's appearance.[149] (This is distinct from the use of bodies in the American Apparel advert, as the focus is 'beauty'[150] rather than 'sexiness', made explicit by the massive difference in the amount of skin shown and the difference in which body part is central: face in one, crotch in the other). Langton's description of 'reduction to appearance' (treating primarily in terms of how they look/appear to senses) is less ambiguous than her description of 'reduction to body', and 'reduction' here seems to fit very neatly with our updated characterisation of reduction that we employed for bodies: *foregrounding*. I think further that this understanding is faithful to Langton's meaning, and given that I think we are getting at the same kind of thing with 'reduction' in my articulation of 'reduction to body' and Langton's articulation of 'reduction to appearance', I will, in my account, rephrase 'reduction to appearance' to match the phrasing in 'reduction to body', for consistency's sake. This understanding of 'reduction to appearance' is also clear in application; *all* of our examples at the beginning involve treating a woman primarily in terms of how she looks, though perhaps secondarily in other ways, or in the case of Squeeze 2, primarily in other ways ordinarily, but primarily in terms of body and appearance in that brief moment. I will say more about how our examples meet my definition shortly.

Let me briefly consider a possible challenge to my characterisation of 'reduction': it may be the case that with both reduction to body and reduction to appearance Langton means something narrower than I do, and means to include only cases where the objectified is being treated as *literally nothing* over and above their body , or "in a purely aesthetic way, appropriate for fine paintings and antiques" (Langton 2009d, 229). However, as I mentioned in relation to reduction to body in Section 2.4.vi of this chapter, this level of narrowness would render this kind of objectification far too rare, and would not capture most women's experiences (which is, after all, the point of our endeavour). Imagine someone is hiring front of house staff for their restaurant, and they stare at the candidate's legs for much of interview, and made comments like, 'You'd be much prettier if you smiled'. The interviewer is very clearly reducing the candidate to their appearance, (and *foregrounding* their appearance), but they are not treating the candidate as a painting. The interviewer is almost

[149] By mentioning that it has little to do with people's appearance I mean to anticipate the response that it may be sensible to use beautiful women to sell certain things like beauty products, but a fizzy drink is quite clearly unrelated to appearance.

[150] An account of beauty, and how it differs from sexiness, would surely be useful, but is beyond the scope of this thesis.

certainly not considering the candidate's *behaviour* to be entirely irrelevant, nor is he entirely unconcerned with the *mood* the candidate appears to be in. The candidate's level of discomfort with this situation will probably be relevant to the interviewer, even if this is in a limited and unsympathetic way and to a lesser degree than their appearance. To include these (common) kinds of cases means construing 'reduction' slightly more broadly than the target being 'nothing' over and above their body or appearance.

Relatedly, in her response to Nussbaum's account, Patricia Marino describes weak ('means') instrumental use in a very similar way to how I describe the kind of reduction to body going on in Casual Sex (Section 2.4.vi, this chapter); i.e. each objectifier pays attention to the other's body and their enthusiastic consent, whilst no attention is paid to their other features: "weak use involves respecting a person's stated permissions, while ignoring the full range of their wishes and desires" (Marino 2008, 352). (We will look more at Marino's work in Chapter Five). Also recall that in Section 2.4.ii-iii, the case was made that strong instrumental (*mere* means) use might imply denial of autonomy (which means no wishes are taken into account) but weak instrumentalisation will not imply denial of autonomy (some wishes – like sexual consent – can be taken into account). This parallel between consensual reduction and weak instrumental use is a reason to keep instrumentalisation in our definition of objectification, even though it will turn out to be neither necessary nor sufficient.

Instrumentalisation

Instrumentalisation does too good a job of articulating what is going on in paradigm cases of objectification (i.e. feeling 'used') to not be included, and it can additionally be helpful in working out whether a tricky case counts as objectification because of how bound up it is with reduction to body. (In other words, if consensual reduction to body is often characterised in the same way as weak instrumental use, if we are struggling to work out if x counts as reduction to body, looking at whether it involves instrumental use might help).

Why can't instrumentality be either necessary or sufficient? It cannot be necessary because there are a few odd examples of objectification that do not involve instrumentality. Consider a beauty pageant; it seems intuitive to say that the women competing are being objectified: the judges are looking at each one and comparing their physical attractiveness to decide who wins the title of 'most beautiful'. That this is objectification seems to remain true whether or not the judges are also using the women for their purposes (perhaps the judges get no personal or sinister pleasure out of their role).[151] It could be suggested that the judges use the women as a means to doing their job, getting paid etc., but this seems tenuous. It would be stretching the condition too far, such that anything that contributes to some benefit of mine can be thought of as my using it as a means; further, if it were this broad it would not be particularly helpful or illuminating as a condition of any concept. Instrumentality cannot also be a sufficient condition for objectification, as we would have to accept

[151] Thanks to Emma Bolton for this example.

that objectification is occurring in lots of unintuitive places: I might be said to objectify the bus driver I use to get to work. So instrumentality has to be relegated to being a strong *indicator* of objectification, rather than a hard condition, as a result of being highly correlated with the two reductions. I think we have good reason to believe it correlates with the two reductions, given the case made above, and because the beauty pageant example does seem to be an unusual one (I had to make a fair few stipulations to rule instrumentality out). Finally, while we will (spoiler) get rid of other features for not being strictly necessary, instrumentality is still worth mentioning in our account as it captures something very common to descriptions of objectification where women feel 'used', and my account is all about capturing popular usage. (A reader may have noticed that I shift instrumentality to the end of the list, from the beginning, in order to reflect its relegated status).

Denial of Subjectivity

For the sake of conciseness and accessibility, I would like to cut out superfluous features. I mentioned earlier that I suspected Nussbaum had omitted 'reduction to body' from her original list because it was implied by denial of subjectivity. I suggest this is a good reason for excluding denial of subjectivity from our list. We have already seen that in its initial formulation, denial of subjectivity was not adequately determinate, but here I show that even after we made it more determinate, it still does not need a place on our list.

Denial of subjectivity (b), non-attribution of subjectivity, is not a useful feature to include simply because it captures so few cases. Failing to attribute feelings and experiences to a person altogether seems like a very rare occurrence; generally, it is subjectivity (a), where the objectifier *does know* that the target has feelings and experiences (they do not think the target is a zombie), their feelings and experiences just are not a priority for him. For denial of subjectivity (a) to take place, the objectifier must be not taking into account, or see as worth paying attention to, the target's past and present inner mental life.

Given that the objectifier is paying attention to something about the target,[152] what is left for the objectifier to be engaging with or paying attention to but the body or appearance? I suggest that now there are no plausible cases where subjectivity is denied and reduction to body or appearance does not happen *that look in any way like objectification*. In other words, anything that intuitively should count as objectification will already count on my account by virtue of reduction to body or appearance. While it is possible to have subjectivity denial without reduction to body, there are, I suggest, no cases like this that we would want to call objectification. One could, for example, conceive of a case in which I use another person entirely for their ability to do quick maths; I disregard everything else about them and use them solely as a calculator whose inner life is irrelevant. This example illustrates that there are cases where subjectivity denial is present, but reduction to body/appearance are not. This case and those like it, however, are not intuitive

[152] We could not say x was objectifying y if x were ignoring y entirely, otherwise I would be objectifying everyone I pass on the street and do not chat to.

examples of objectification; they are not the kind of thing feminists worry about, and I am more than happy for them to be ruled out on my account.[153]

So, since all objectifying instances of subjectivity denial are covered by reduction to body or appearance, we can leave subjectivity denial off our list.[154]

Denial of Autonomy

The revised version of 'Autonomy Denial' may be a bit clearer (though not perfectly clear – remember the Model example), but with that it becomes apparent that this feature is not altogether very useful.

Firstly, as with subjectivity denial, non-attribution is not going to be particularly helpful, given how uncommon it will be for objectifiers to genuinely fail to understand the target as having autonomy, at least in the kinds of cases ordinarily referred to as objectification.[155] At the very least, too many cases of objectification do not involve the revised version of autonomy denial (remember, anything that is consensual will not count as denying autonomy).

We have another reason for excluding (2a) from our list. Even if it were the case that in the Model example, autonomy is not being attributed, we can imagine a version of Model where autonomy is not being denied, but it is still clearly a paradigm case of objectification. In lads' mags there are often features on models, where there are very sexual pictures of a woman, alongside an interview where she tells the readers all about her life and interests and why she got into modelling. In this case the editors and audience are all forced to attribute autonomy to the woman; they know she has preferences and makes choices. Yet it is still the case that a feminist like Cathy could reasonably look at a picture of the woman with her legs spread and say, 'That picture is objectifying'. This is precisely the kind of case we want to include, so we have more reasons still to let go of (2a) non-attribution of autonomy. This does mean that cases that involve non-attribution of autonomy, but *not* reduction to

[153] One might want to say these are cases of *strong instrumentalisation* or *dehumanisation,* but these are not concepts I am working on right now.

[154] It could be asked why I chose to cut out subjectivity denial in favour of the two reductions, rather than the other way around. This is in part because cases like the used mathematician will be included, and those cases are not quite the kind we are trying to capture here, but more importantly this was because reduction to body and appearance are the kinds of things that feminists tend to pick out in ordinary usage, as I claimed at the beginning of this section. It is clear that reduction to body is a relevant kind of feature for a definition of objectification to have.

[155] Failing to attribute autonomy is certainly characteristic of other related kinds of treatment; defenders of colonialism, slavery, and racial oppressions have often justified those things by claiming a lack of autonomy, or child-like nature, in those they oppress. See for example Mill (2003, 95). This move might be better called 'dehumanisation' or something else, but it is not best referred to as sexual objectification when popular usage of objectification captures something quite different. Some authors draw connections between these kinds of treatment (Collins 2009, 76–78, 146–54; MacKinnon 1987d). It is beyond the scope of this thesis to address this fully, but these kinds of moves are challenged by the work of writers like Nash (2008), which I will discuss in Chapter Five, and I think we should be especially suspicious of cases where white women use slavery to rhetorically bolster anti-pornography claims about *sexism*, rather than racism (it should be obvious that the woman who consents to casual sex or to be photographed for Hustler is not in the same category of treatment as a black person in chattel slavery).

body or appearance, will not be included on this account (for example, when we treat people like children). This is a desirable consequence because non-attribution of autonomy is simply not enough on its own to suggest objectification given that, if it were, the way we sometimes treat infants (denying autonomy) would count as objectifying, which would be a mistake.

If we remove (2a) for all of these reasons (including the reasons in Section 2.4.i), we are left with the slightly out of place (2b) floating on its own: violation of autonomy. This feature on its own does not strike one as a feature of objectification but an action (and a wrong) in its own right. When people speak about objectification, they are not always talking about cases where autonomy is violated, and when they are, that is an *additional wrong*, rather than a feature of objectification.

For example, in a case like Poster, the woman's autonomy is not being violated: she consents to be in the picture, but she is nonetheless being objectified. However, imagine an example which is identical other than the fact that the woman was forced to be in the picture. In this case she has still been objectified, and she has also had her autonomy violated. That autonomy violation is wrong, but it is not a feature of the objectification, because as the previous example showed, the objectification would still be there even if the autonomy denial were not. I suggest, then, given that neither (2a) nor (2b) fits well, that autonomy denial is not a useful feature of objectification.

What Roles Do These Features Play?

We have already seen that *instrumentalisation* will be neither necessary nor sufficient; here, I establish the roles of the remaining features I include: reduction to body and appearance.

Reduction to body and reduction to appearance play largely the same role, so they need not both be present. *One of them at a time is necessary for objectification, and either is sufficient*. So for objectification to occur, features (1) or (2) must be present, while feature (3) provides good reason to believe (1) or (2) might be present in ambiguous cases.

One penultimate clarification to note in our definition: temporal boundedness will make a difference. Temporally, there are going to be two kinds of objectification: temporally bound and temporally unbound. Simply, all this means is that sometimes someone objectifies someone in a particular context, for a particular period of time, or under particular conditions (this is *temporally bound*) and sometimes someone objectifies someone permanently, and a change in context or conditions does not stop the objectification (this is *temporally unbound*). Most objectification is temporally bound, and the more unbound it is, the more worrying it seems to be intuitively. I shall illustrate this with a couple of examples. A football club manager might treat a football player as nothing more than a part of the game, reducing her to her physical skill and football-playing capacity, *for the context of the match*. When the whistle blows, she begins treating the player as a full, many-sided person again. Our Casual Sex participants may reduce one another to their bodies within the context of having consensual sex, but if one participant says, 'Oh shit, I must go take my medication', that is like the whistle blowing. Or perhaps, one of the casual sex participants is grocery shopping the next day, only to realise that the checkout worker is the other participant. They are

not, in this new context, going to be doing the same kind of objectification as they were when they were having sex. These cases of reduction are all *temporally bound.* If I treat someone as *always* little or no more than a body part, that will be *temporally unbound objectification*. I do not think we can commit to unbound being unequivocally worse/more harmful than bound objectification, but we should note the intuition that it may often be. Consider when teachers complain that parents do not think of them as anything more than a tool for their child's learning.[156] The implication here is that parents do not consider that teachers have lives, feelings, commitments, families of their own; they do not merely ignore those aspects when the teachers are at work, they fail to realise that teachers are many-sided beings outside of work too.

Finally, as I mentioned briefly in Part Two, one last thing I changed from Nussbaum and Langton's versions of these features is that I changed the wording slightly, where Nussbaum refers to 'the object' I use 'the person'. This is because I think it is very odd to refer to the person who is being objectified as an object. Firstly, because being 'objectified' in our discussion means being treated as object-like, or as an object, not literally becoming/being an object, and secondly, because at the point at which we are describing the features it has not even been determined whether that person counts as being objectified or not. For example, when I say, 'The object is used as a tool', if being used as a tool is not sufficient for being an object (as Nussbaum and I agree) then there is no sense in referring to that person as 'the object'.

This, I believe, captures what is meant in ordinary usage of 'that's objectification', it is clear how to meet the criteria, and it will yield the right (paradigmatic) results for what counts as objectification (as briefly shown in Part One). Next, I will demonstrate this last claim by looking back at the paradigm examples, and some possible counterexamples, to ensure this account is not over- or underinclusive.

3.4 Examples

Now let us have a brief look at how this definition deals with our examples from the beginning. If it is the case that we can establish whether these count as objectification in a satisfactory way, without the need for additional features, then we have achieved our goal: this concise account does the work we need it to.

Model

In the American Apparel advert, we can make sense of both 'the model is objectified' and 'that poster objectifies women' claims on my account. The model is quite clearly reduced to her body for the purposes of the picture; the photographer/editor/creator is foregrounding her thighs for the purposes of the poster (though they may well treat her primarily as other things in other contexts). In the weaker sense, she is treated as a means. She is treated as a means to sell the product, in the

[156] Thanks to Jules Holroyd for this example. This example illustrates a case where a person is reduced to a feature in a temporally unbound way, however, I do not mean to claim that this is definitely 'objectification', as it is not a body part or appearance that the teacher is being reduced to.

same way that any worker in an industry is treated as a means to produce and sell a product (she is not treated as a mere means, as her consent to participate is respected).[157] We can say that the advert objectifies women+ in general by suggesting that women are the right kind of thing to be treated in the way the poster treats the model (foregrounding of particular body parts), and perhaps cause the audience to objectify women+ in general, by setting the example of objectifying the model. How this might play out in terms of harm is explored in Chapter Five.

Casual Sex

In Casual Sex, the two participants both come out as objectifying one another. They are treating each other as little (though not nothing) above their body parts, and foregrounding one another's bodies; they chose to have sex on the basis of physical sexual appeal, and are primarily interested in this (the others' intellectual or personal attributes are backgrounded as they do this). They are using one another as tools for their own sexual satisfaction, though as this is consensual they are not treating each other as 'mere' tools.

Squeeze

In Squeeze 1, reduction to body is very plainly occurring; the stranger is treating her as little more than her bottom, at least insofar as that is the only aspect of her that he is engaging with. He can also be described as treating her as a means to end, be that end to cause sexual gratification (in himself), or to cause amusement (in others) or humiliation (in her); she is the object that he uses to reach his goal. He might even be treating her as a mere means, as he might not be taking her ends, or her consent, into account. Squeeze 2 probably also counts as objectifying.[158] If he was thinking first about her sexiness, and if his sexual gratification in part motivated the squeeze, then it is likely he was at first foregrounding her body. In that case he will have reduced her to a body part, but in a way that is consistent with a respectful relationship (unlike Squeeze 1). If he did it to gratify himself, then he did use her as a means, but if, as we are assuming, he also understood her to be consenting and is respectful of that, and was hoping to also make her feel good, it seems obvious that he was not treating her as a *mere* means.

One possible issue that this points to: in this case the boyfriend seems to be treating the woman as little above her body parts in the instant that he squeezes her bottom, irrespective of how he may treat her ordinarily. Does this mean every sex act is objectifying? Probably not; there will be some cases where people are focusing as much on the personality or mental states of their partner as they are on their body, so 'romantic' sex acts like this might not be objectifying.[159] However, there is

[157] Remember this does not mean all advertising with people involved is objectifying, as instrumentality is not enough to make something objectification; it is only an indicator of likelihood. Reduction to body or appearance must also be there for it to count.

[158] However, if he is doing it solely to make her feel good, then he is treating her as something over and above her body parts. I do not think this indicates that it is in any way 'better', as I am not sure I would be pleased to hear that my partner was only behaving as if they were sexually attracted to me to make me feel good.

[159] This might capture the difference between 'making love' and 'fucking', where the former is less likely to be objectifying than the latter.

something about sexual desire (something about how it tends to target bodies) that makes objectification very likely in many sex acts. This is not a problem; I think it is unsurprising that lots of sex acts are going to count as (sexually) objectifying, and given that I show objectification to not be necessarily harmful then this should not worry us.

Trophy Wife

The trophy wife has been very obviously reduced to her appearance (so (2) is met). The husband treats his wife primarily as a good-looking thing, and she is being used as a tool to achieve the husband's ends; he is treating her as a thing of aesthetic value, where that aesthetic value is used to bolster his status. He has not taken her ends into account, so he has in fact treated her as a *mere* means. This is clearly objectification (though remember this is more by virtue of meeting 'reduction to appearance' rather than 'instrumentalisation'). It is also worth noting that to the extent that this extends beyond the party, and his attitudes are not 'temporally bound'.

Happily, our paradigm examples, Model and Trophy Wife, count as objectification on my account. The other examples also count as objectification, with the possible exception of Squeeze 2, dependent on his thinking. This shows us that my definition of objectification is determinate, yields intuitive results and fits our ordinary usage. (Remember, these were desiderata set out in the introduction.)

3.5 Objections to Objectification as Reduction

i. Overinclusivity

Remember I clarified at the beginning that I was trying to make sense of *sexual* objectification in particular, and not focusing on *non*-sexual objectification. This being the case, it would still be a reasonable way to object to my account, if it implied that many implausible things counted as non-sexual objectification. One way of making this objection is through *adverts*, these have been a prime example of objectification in this chapter. The worry is that if it is the case that all adverts that have pictures of people's bodies in them count as objectification (sexual or otherwise), then this would be too inclusive. Consider a billboard advertising a watch: the billboard depicts a person's hand and wrist, nothing else, wearing a watch. Does this reduce a person to their body parts, like the woman in the American Apparel advert and her thighs? Like the American Apparel advert, a body part is placed in the middle of the advert, and is more relevant than other aspects of the person.

I am actually not sure the hand and wrist are being treated as anything at all in this example; I am not convinced the hand or the wrist are the subject of the image, or intended as a thing to be paid attention to by the audience. As in: the audience do not primarily think of the person's hand, nor do they think about other aspects of the person; they do not think about the person or their hand. If they do, this may end up counting as objectifying on my account, but in a relatively mundane way that does not, like Model, interact importantly with societal norms and structures (see Chapter Five). I think it is acceptable to have various mundane kinds of objectification, that we do not normally comment on but still count. We consider it acceptable in other circumstances to have things which

count as x in various levels of mundanity and importance. For example, a factory worker whose boss thinks of them merely as 'hands'[160] and the hand model may both be non-sexually objectified, as they may both be reduced to their hands, but the exploitation of the factory worker (and treatment as a mere means) makes that case more pertinent, though both count. I am sure there is much more that can be said on this, but I do not have space to address it, particularly considering my main motivation here is making sense of the (more regularly discussed) *sexual* objectification.

ii. Does Reduction to Body Collapse into Reduction to Appearance?

While we have shown that we can conceive of reduction to appearance occurring without reduction to body, it is not yet clear that the converse holds. If it does not, then it seems we only need 'reduction to appearance' as a condition and nothing else.

There are two reasons why we should not collapse reduction to body into reduction to appearance. Firstly, it helps capture certain features of common experiences. Women often describe being treated as just a body or 'piece of meat', and we can see a difference between how women describe being reduced to their breasts (for example) and being reduced to their general look. Secondly, it makes my account more consistent with non-sexual objectification; a worker who is treated as just a body which can labour is not at all captured by reduction to appearance. Given that I am focusing on sexual objectification, whether this case is compatible with my account may not matter so much, but I would like my account to be able to make sense of non-sexual objectification, even if I am not focusing on it (at the very least it would be a mistake to preclude the capacity to accommodate non-sexual objectification, which dropping 'reduction to body' would do).

iii. Popular Usage and Negative Connotations

It could be argued that since I am interested in capturing popular usage, and it is the case that objectification is very often used with a negative moral evaluation implied, shouldn't it be the case that I build that into my account, rather than sticking to a morally neutral account? There are three good reasons not to build a negative evaluation in to an account of objectification that I offer here (though we will see more at the end of Chapters Four and Five).

Firstly, we want to be able to make sense of the question 'is objectification necessarily harmful?' and to do that (without circularity) it has to be the case that we have not already decided that it is. However, this might be vulnerable to the kind of circularity we are worrying about: we cannot also have already decided that it is *not* necessarily harmful to prove that that is the case. We must have further reasons for objectification not building in moral evaluations. So secondly, there are paradigm examples of objectification, that are intuitively morally fine, such as Casual Sex. This is the move that Nussbaum makes; she gives examples of things which can reasonably be called 'objectification', and includes some examples of sexual activity that are intuitively fine, or even 'wonderful' (the Lawrentian lovers in Nussbaum (1995, 256, 274)). If we were to build negative moral evaluation into

[160] An example like this is considered in Langton (2009d, 230–31).

our account of objectification, we would have to say that these examples are either not morally okay, or not objectification. The first option is not available to us, as it would mean condemning a whole lot (perhaps *most)* of consensual sex as morally bad, which is unacceptable. The second option might be better, but it would mean abandoning our principle of endeavouring to include paradigm examples and reflecting popular usage.

Given that we seem to be risking not reflecting popular usage both by including and not including a negative evaluation, it may be that popular usage is divided: many people use objectification negatively, and many people consider some morally permissible sex to be objectifying. The way to avoid sacrificing either of these is to approach objectification as a morally neutral concept, but then offer an explanation as to why a great deal of what we call objectification is bad or harmful. This is what I do in this thesis; Chapter Five will deal with the latter task.

Finally, we want our account to be able to accommodate claims that objectification is not only morally neutral, but actively good for some people in some circumstances because not being objectified features in their oppression. We want these examples to be included both because it helps reflect more people's usage, and because it is politically the right thing to do, for the sake of recognising them as the authority on how their oppression works. The kind of examples that are relevant here are where fat women and disabled women say it is dehumanising for them to be seen as 'sexless', and that this is part of the oppression they experience as fat and/or disabled. Fat and disabled women report that they are not, or are rarely, sexually objectified because people fail to see them as an appropriate object of sexual desire, and this cuts them off from a key part of human experience[161] (being seen as someone who could enjoy sex). Additionally, for disabled people in particular, this denial of sexuality may be linked to infantilisation, where sexuality is seen as a feature of autonomous adults, such that its denial is a part of a broader problem of unjustly treating some adults as if they were children.

This is very similar to the claims made by Lintott and Irvin (2016), and Cahill (2014), who argue that that certain women are denied full personhood by not being seen as appropriate subjects of a sexualising gaze. These authors do not discuss objectification in the way that I do,[162] but when they discuss 'sexualising' we are generally talking about the same kind of thing. Lintott and Irvin do not recommend that we just start objectifying fat and disabled women more often; rather, they suggest we need to take an attitude that involves treating them as sexual objects *and at the same time as sexual subjects.* (This might or might not fit so well with my understanding of objectification, depending on whether treating as a *subject* precludes reduction to body and appearance, which it may if it means treating a person as substantially more than their body parts and foregrounding more than just their body). Regardless, I think the point works for my account too. It remains the

[161] Not that this is a key part of human experience for everyone; for some, it is unimportant.
[162] Cahill in particular rejects the usefulness of the concept of 'objectification' because she sees it as overlooking the importance of embodiment, and prioritising non-embodied aspects of personhood.

case that fat and disabled women feel dehumanised[163] by not being treated as an appropriate object for sexual desire, so sexual objectification of fat and disabled women, when consensual, may well be a good thing, rather than merely morally neutral.

Leslie Green (2000) has made a similar argument to this regarding gay pornography. He argues that while heterosexual pornography might objectify women in a harmful way, because straight women are systematically and continuously treated as sex objects whether they consent to such treatment or not, gay men tend to be denied treatment as sex objects: "Gay pornography contributes to gay life what is everywhere else denied: that gay sexualities exist, that gay men are sexual beings, and that men may be objects of male desire" (Green 2000, 48–49).[164] He argues that gay men are subject to different kinds of myths and stereotypes than straight women, and the stereotypes affecting gay men make it more difficult for them to be seen as objects of sexual desire. For example: "When gay boys are taunted for being 'fairies' the image is of something airy, silly and gossamer; it is stereotyped femininity without being a sex-object" (Green 2000, 46–47). A good example of this is the character Damian in the iconic film *Mean Girls*, who is portrayed as fitting many stereotypes: he is the 'gay best friend' to exclusively women characters, he is camp, he wears pink, and he bitches about the 'mean girls'. Most of the other main characters in the film have sexual relationships at some point, but he does not; he is not represented as a 'sexual' character. Green's claim is that this kind of representation is widespread, and objectification of gay men in pornography is in fact often a good thing, since it gives them a kind of representation that is generally denied them: conceptualising them as sexual beings.[165] This argument may not be wholly convincing, but it is at least true that some LGBTQ+ people find pornography which represents them to be a validating and reassuring thing to find, particular when coming to terms with one's sexuality as a young adult.[166]

Part Four – Summary

This chapter offered a definition of objectification, and, *en route* to that definition, provided reasons for rejecting accounts offered by Nussbaum and Langton. At the beginning, I provided paradigm examples of objectification and explained the desiderata a useful account of objectification should have: reflecting popular usage and capturing paradigm cases, such that the features of the account seem relevant, and being determinate, in that it is clear enough that an example has met the

[163] Some authors build dehumanisation into their concept of objectification (in the next chapter we will look at LeMoncheck, who does this). This point provides a good reason to avoid that: if *not* being objectified can count as dehumanising, then it would be a mistake to consider dehumanisation to be a part of objectification.
[164] There will be more on this in Chapter Five when we look at whether objectification is harmful in pornography.
[165] A related objection could be: 'Isn't objectification more *useful* as a negative concept? Do we really want to undermine the fight against negative objectification?' to which I respond, 'No it's not, and yes we do.' I defend this move at the end of Chapter Four, and additionally offer reasons to undermine the fight against negative objectification (in its current form) at the end of Chapter Five.
[166] "Gay porn asserts homosexual desire, it turns the definition of homosexual desire on its head, says bad is good, sick is healthy and so on. It thus defends the universal human practice of same-sex physical contact (which our society constructs as homosexual). It has made life bearable for countless millions of gay men." (Dyer 1985)

criteria. I also explored how to make sense of the claim that a thing (rather than an agent) can objectify.

In Part Two I gave a detailed discussion of Nussbaum and Langton's features of objectification, arguing that their accounts fail to meet requirements of relevance and determinacy. I argued that many of their features are not appropriate features of objectification, and that other features require alterations to make them adequately determinate. I suggest that their accounts as they stand are not useful for defining objectification for these reasons.

In Part Three, I explained my own account of objectification, by selecting the best features from Nussbaum and Langton's accounts, and keeping in mind intuitions and examples. I proposed an account that claims objectification occurs when 'reduction to body' or 'reduction to appearance' occurs, and that this is often characterised by 'instrumentality'.

I propose that *Objectification occurs where either (1) or (2) of the following conditions is present:*

1) *Reduction to body: a) The objectifier treats the person as nothing/little over and above her body or body parts. b) The objectifier foregrounds the person's body or body parts.*
2) *Reduction to appearance: a) The objectifier treats the person as nothing/little over and above her looks/appearance to the senses. b) The objectifier foregrounds the person's looks/appearance to the senses.*
3) **Instrumentality: a) Means: The objectifier treats the person as a tool for his or her purposes. b) Mere Means: The objectifier treats the person as a mere tool for his or her purposes.*

**(Note: (3) is not intended as a necessary criterion itself, but rather tends to correlate with (1) and (2) and should be considered as a guide for settling borderline cases.)*

I claim that this definition best captures what is going on in paradigm examples of objectification, that it best captures popular intuitions and what is going on in Cathy's claim 'that's objectifying women', and that it is adequately determinate, in helping ascertain whether particular cases are instances of objectification. Finally, I defended my account against three possible objections; overinclusivity, that reduction to body collapses into reduction to appearance, and that a conception of objectification that imports negative evaluative judgements better captures intuitions. I showed that these objections could be dealt with. In the next chapter, I will defend my position further by showing that it is preferable to other prominent accounts (including the positions of LeMoncheck, Bauer and Papadaki). The full utility of my account will be demonstrated in Chapter Five, where I discuss three key ways in which objectification can be harmful, and show that it is not necessarily harmful, and that we should not treat pornography as uniquely harmful insofar as it objectifies.

CHAPTER FOUR

Against Competing Accounts of Objectification

In this chapter I will provide reasons to reject competing approaches to objectification, and therefore to prefer my own account outlined in Chapter Three. I briefly look at a collection of accounts which I refer to as 'imposition accounts' from Haslanger, Jütten, and Langton. Then, I look in more detail at accounts from LeMoncheck, Bauer, and Papadaki (having already offered reasons to prefer my account to Nussbaum and Langton's account(s) in Chapter Three).[167]

LeMoncheck's account is an account of objectification in its own right, whereas Bauer's account is less of an account as such, more of a rejection of this whole way of characterising objectification. Bauer suggests that all of the kinds of positions we have looked at thus far (this applies to my own) are misguided and unnecessary since as feminists we will *know objectification when we see it*. Papadaki's account is effectively a 'negative' version of Nussbaum's, in that she defines objectification in the same way as Nussbaum but narrows it to only those cases which are bad. I will look at this account towards the end of this chapter as another kind of challenge to my own, returning to the question of whether such accounts (which build in badness) are better than neutral ones.

First of all, I will briefly explain that I set aside 'imposition accounts' on the basis that they are not the kind of thing we need if one of our aims is to reflect and engage with popular understanding of objectification.

Secondly, I will examine LeMoncheck's account and show that it is not the kind of account we need. Then I look at the case for Bauer's position, and argue that while her position has merit, it does not show that no account of objectification is useful. Particularly, I will show that an account like mine does not fall down where others might. Finally, I describe and respond to an argument in favour of accounts like Papadaki's and approaches like Bauer's: that accounts of objectification which build in a negative evaluation may be more useful.

Part One – Two Objectifications

There are two uses of the word 'objectification' in philosophy, which often overlap. First, the term can refer to a group of practices or attitudes that in some sense involve treating a person like an object. There is plenty of disagreement about determining what is specified by 'in some sense', but

[167] I do not discuss Sandra Bartky's account here. I will say something here briefly though, given the similarity with my own. Bartky (1990) also understands objectification in terms of 'reduction to body', but diverges from my account in a couple of key ways. Firstly, Bartky articulates harms of objectification in terms of 'alienation' and 'self-observation', while I locate them in consent violation (as we shall see in Chapter Five). I am therefore not sure Bartky's account can explain the harm in cases like Squeeze 2; the target can feel objectified and feel violated without feeling estranged from herself. Consent violation is always harmful whether it causes alienation or not. Secondly, her account is not built to accommodate objectification of groups, and by media like adverts: "sexual objectification as I have characterized it involves two persons: the one who objectifies and the one who is objectified." (Bartky 1990, 27)

all involve a kind of object-like *treatment*. For example: considering a person as something to be *used*, and treating a person as a *tradeable commodity*, are two very different senses of objectification (see Chapter Three for a closer look at these), but both involve treating a person like an object.

I will refer to this use of the term as 'treating-as' objectification, and this is the kind of account I defended in the previous chapter. (It is worth noting that I am construing 'treatment' quite broadly, to include behaviour that involves minimal engagement. Some writers construe treatment more narrowly, so that they separate 'treating as' and 'seeing as', but I mean 'treating' to include kinds of 'seeing'. For example, I may see someone as unimportant, and as a result pay them little attention, this can count as 'treating' them as unimportant for me. I do not think much hangs on this.)

The second use of the term 'objectification', used by Haslanger (2012), Jütten (2016), Langton (2009b, 2009a), and, arguably, MacKinnon[168] (1987a, 1987f) is known as the 'epistemological' dimension of objectification, or the 'imposition account' (this term borrowed from Jütten). This is roughly the idea that when x objectifies y, x projects or imposes properties onto y, x treats these properties as being held ('objectively') by nature, and (on some accounts) y responds by replicating that nature.[169] For example, conceiving of a person as a machine may in fact make that person more machine-like. Confusingly, this use also involves some kind of objectifying *treatment* (and *seeing*) but the distinguishing feature is the *imposing* of a nature, so I shall refer to these accounts as 'imposition' accounts. These kinds of accounts can be intertwined with the first kind then, where an objectifier treats someone as lacking subjectivity and as a thing to be used (for example) and through this 'treating-as' they also *enforce* the way they see the target, and the target becomes the thing that they are seen as. I see there as being some overlap between 'treating-as' and 'imposition' accounts, but that are doing distinct projects, making something of a Venn diagram. They differ in the kinds of phenomena they are trying to capture, in that the latter are making claims about beliefs dominant groups hold about the nature of subordinated groups, while the former is trying to capture a set of behaviours described by women in the world (i.e. we are trying to capture cases like Squeeze, from myself; Lawrentian lovers, from Nussbaum; and Free Spirit, from LeMoncheck (next)). However, it should be unsurprising that some of the things we each capture are the same; for example, the way Trophy Wife is treated can be described as both Treating-as-Objectification and Imposition-Objectification.

This second use of objectification is not my focus here, crucially because it does not reflect the popular usage of the word; it does not seem to be what Cathy and I were talking about and is not

[168] I say 'arguably' because it is not wholly clear to me whether this is what MacKinnon means, as she uses the term in a few different kinds of claims. Haslanger (2012) and Langton (2009e) both provide arguments that this is the right way to interpret her, however.

[169] If this seems unintuitive, consider it applied to groups rather than individuals: if women are treated as objectively good caregivers, women are likely to end up in more caregiving roles because of various social, epistemic, and political factors (Haslanger 2017).

often what is at work in similar conversations outside the academy.[170] I suggest we need an account of objectification that reflects popular usage, because this topic inevitably applies to, and affects, the world outside of the academy.[171] If, like MacKinnon, you use concepts like 'objectification' to argue that we should take certain legal approaches to pornography, or that magazines should cease using a certain kind of advertisement, then you need to have a similar definition to that of the policy makers and magazine editors you approach, and that of the everyday feminists from whom you rally support. We saw arguments along these lines in Chapter One. I argued there that our definition of 'pornography' should line up with popular usage as far as possible, using two examples: I suggested that in a campaign to make school dinners vegetarian, or a campaign against sexist magazines, the campaigners must make their definitions of 'vegetarian' and 'magazine' line-up with popular usage, or else they run into serious problems. This argument applies equally here.

I am not arguing here against imposition accounts altogether (I do not need to do that); I am only showing why they should be set aside for projects like mine which mean to capture popular usage and work out what we should do about the things that feminists are ordinarily talking about when they talk about objectification.

Imposition accounts of objectification are just a different kind of project to mine, they are not in competition. Writers like myself and Nussbaum who develop 'treating-as' accounts are aiming to capture how the concept 'objectification' is used, whereas MacKinnon has instead observed phenomena in the world, where women have object-like natures *imposed* on them by men, and replicate them. These selected phenomena, which look obviously harmful, she has named objectification.[172] It is fine if MacKinnon's and Haslanger's version of objectification does not capture popular intuitions, because that is not what it is for. This kind of approach should, though, be set aside in endeavours like my own, where tracking popular usage is important, and practical applications are borne in mind.

So, for 'objectification', as for 'pornography', I suggest that we work with definitions and understandings which track popular usage as much as possible, and this means not using the imposition accounts here. When I made this move in Chapter One (for definitions of 'pornography'), I additionally argued that this move did not necessitate a rejection of all revisionist strategies; rather, it is the case that revisionist strategies must have some overriding reason which trumps the kind of

[170] A search through popular online magazines and social media finds use of the term which matches my use, and 'treating-as' approaches more generally. For example, "Staring like she's a piece of meat" (Cosmopolitian magazine. Harvey-Jenner 2016), "reduced anyone to their body" (Marie Claire magazine. Buchanan 2016), "reducing people who are just trying to do their jobs to their genitals" (Metro news. Reid 2018), and many more (Talkspace 2017; Z. Williams 2018; Slade 2017; Yakimovich 2016; Fitzgerald 2016; Alvarez 2016; Yang et al. 2016). (To be clear – I do not necessarily endorse the content of any of these articles; I just want to draw attention to the way people are using the term 'objectification'.)

[171] This does not mean imposition accounts cannot be illuminating in some contexts, but that for a feminist philosophy that is engaged with feminism outside the academy I argue that our definitions should match up with popular usage as far as possible.

[172] Thanks to James Lewis for suggesting this to me.

case I make above, and that such overriding reasons are absent for the definitions of pornography I was discussing. I am not convinced that I need to show that here, because accounts like Haslanger's (2012, 2017) are, honestly, quite difficult, and not clearly aimed at use outside the academy or intended as revisionist at all.[173] However, these imposition accounts all approach objectification as a *bad* thing, and I do in fact offer reasons at the end of this chapter that a conception of objectification which builds in badness is not useful.

For these reasons I am leaving the 'imposition' accounts of objectification aside, and focusing on 'treating-as' accounts.

Part Two – LeMoncheck

In this section I will explain the account of objectification proposed by LeMoncheck and offer three criticisms of it.

2.1 LeMoncheck's account

LeMoncheck distinguishes 'objectification' and 'sex objectification'; though only analyses the latter in detail, and that shall be our focus here. The former she sees as not necessarily harmful or wrong, as it is not necessarily *dehumanising* (more on what this might mean later). 'Sex objectification' however, she defines as necessarily involving dehumanisation, and seemingly therefore, unlike Nussbaum's account, *not morally neutral.* LeMoncheck is actually very careful early in her book *Dehumanizing Women* not to commit to a blanket moral evaluation of sexual objectification. She explains that what she wants to provide is an *explanation* of why most women complain about sexual objectification, and also why sometimes some women will not complain. This characterisation leaves room for it to be possible for sexual objectification to not be so bad. However, her definition of objectification and explanation of the complaint seems straightforwardly negative: "It is only when women are regarded as inanimate objects, bodies, or animals, where their *status as the moral equals of persons has been demeaned or degraded,* that the expression 'sex objectification' is correctly used" (LeMoncheck 1985, 11 my emphasis). LeMoncheck's method is actually very similar to mine, though we arrive at very different conclusions: she is tentative about making a blanket moral evaluation at the start, and sets out to explain why some people complain about it and others do not. On my account, that is because sometimes it is harmful and sometimes it is not (more on this in Chapter Five); for her, that is because while – *when directed at women* – it is always harmful, sometimes women do not see the harm that is going on.

LeMoncheck's idea of sexual objectification is as a practice of behaviours directed towards women which violate certain rights (this renders such behaviour 'dehumanising'). We can expect then, that

[173] Haslanger's account in particular is, I think, further than others from popular understanding in that she leaves sex (as in sexuality and sex acts) out of the picture. When she talks of 'sexual objectification' it is less 'objectification which is sexualising' and more 'objectification on the basis of sex [as opposed to, say, race]' (this makes sense given that Haslanger for the most part works on social categories rather than sexual ethics). The further one's use of a term is from the popular usage, I think, the harder time you are going to have justifying a revisionist project.

her extension is going to be a little different to mine, though LeMoncheck similarly offers paradigm examples of objectification for her account to set out to capture: (1) 'free spirit', in which a woman in a summer dress is wolf-whistled at by construction workers, (2) 'unhappy wife', in which a lawyer's husband initiates clumsy, drunk, one-sided, sex which she would like to refuse but does not, (3) 'assistant manager', in which an assistant manager is offered a promotion in exchange for sex (LeMoncheck 1985, 7–10). LeMoncheck notes that these three examples involve quite different settings, and that the objectification is compatible with the objectified person being treated many different ways by their objectifier (e.g. at other times, the unhappy wife is treated respectfully by her husband). LeMoncheck draws attention to these things to steer us away from the conclusion that objectification is characterised by any particular contextual factors, and so towards her picture centring rights violations.

LeMoncheck considers an important feature (which helps explain why women complain about objectification) of her examples to be "the subjugation, subordination, intimidation or psychological domination of the sex object" (LeMoncheck 1985, 28). We must assume that these cannot be features of *all* sex objectification, otherwise presumably they would have been built into the definition, and if they were, we wouldn't need LeMoncheck to explain why people complain about objectification, as the badness would be contained in these four obviously bad things. How do we then determine which things are to count as sex objectification? On LeMoncheck's account, for something to count as sex objectification, it must meet three necessary and sufficient conditions.

> "Person A treats person B as a sex object, A = B or A ≠ B, if and only if three conditions hold: (1) A dehumanises B in some context C of A's sexual relations with B or B's sexual relations with some other person D; A's dehumanisation of B in C implies that A either causes B to be like an object or treats B as if B were an object in a way which violates or rejects in a *prima facie* inappropriate manner one or more of B's rights to well-being and freedom in C; (2) A values B in C solely or primarily in terms of B's instrumental ability to sexually attract, stimulate or satisfy A or D; and (3) B's ability to sexually attract A or D as described in (2) is both the source and the means for A's dehumanisation of B described in (1)." (LeMoncheck 1985, 95)

This is all pretty dense so I shall break it up. Firstly, 'A = B or A ≠ B' is included to indicate that objectification can either be done by one person to another person (A ≠ B), or towards oneself (A=B). Next, let us look at each of the three necessary and jointly sufficient conditions.

i. The First Condition

A dehumanises B in some context C of A's sexual relations with B or B's sexual relations with some other person D; A's dehumanisation of B in C implies that A either causes B to be like an object or treats B as if B were an object in a way which violates or rejects in a prima facie *inappropriate manner one or more of B's rights to well-being and freedom in C*

The first part of the first condition stipulates that the objectifier must dehumanise the person 'in a context of her sexual relations' with some person. Lacking an explanation of what it means to dehumanise *in some context*, we must assume the meaning is that something in the content of the

dehumanising action refers to or rests on the person's sexual relations. (We know it cannot mean that the objectification must occur in the literal context of A's sexual relations – then objectification could only happen during sex!)

The second part of the first condition *('A's dehumanisation of B in C implies that A either causes B to be like an object or treats B as if B were an object in a way which violates or rejects in a prima facie inappropriate manner one or more of B's rights to well-being and freedom in C')* I take to be an explanation of the first part, describing what dehumanisation involves. (This matches the descriptions of dehumanisation (LeMoncheck 1985, 29)). The dehumanisation, then, implies that the woman either (a) becomes object-like, or (b) is treated like an object (in such a way that inappropriately violates or rejects a 'right to well-being and freedom').[174] If (a) occurs, the dehumanisation consists in causing the woman to be more like an object, or behave in a way that an object would behave. If (b) occurs, the dehumanisation consists in treating her like an object. Whichever of these occurs, it must occur in such a way as to inappropriately violate one of seven rights – which LeMoncheck lists elsewhere, and we shall see in a moment.

For greater clarity, we can articulate the first condition as:

a) A causes B to be like an object in a way which violates or rejects in a *prima facie* inappropriate manner one or more of B's rights to well-being and freedom in C, or,
b) A treats B as if B were an object in a way which violates or rejects in a *prima facie* inappropriate manner one or more of B's rights to well-being and freedom in C.

Earlier in the book, LeMoncheck gives a (non-exhaustive) list of these 'rights to well-being and freedom of persons':

1) Freedom from "a reasonable amount of physical injury or suffering"
2) Privacy, including "being free from unwarranted intrusions … controlling information persons have about them and observations people make of them"
3) Self-respect, including freedom from "the kind of humiliation that comes from a constant or gratuitous belittling of one's own needs and interests"

[174] There are two possible interpretations of this disjunctive: the final clause ('in a way which violates…') could attach to the latter component of the disjunctive, or it could attach to both components. The first interpretation is that dehumanisation either implies: (a) A causes B to be like an object, or, (b) A treats B as if B were an object in a way which violates… . The second interpretation is that dehumanisation either implies (a) A causes B to be like an object in a way which violates… , or, (b) A treats B as if B were an object in a way which violates… . Other parts of the text make it clear that the latter interpretation is the correct one. Soon after stating the final characterisation of her definition she writes "this dehumanization may be more objectionable than in other areas of personal relations where the rights and ideals denied in dehumanization are not placed at such a premium" (LeMoncheck 1985, 95). Remember, the clause we are examining is a clause explaining what constitutes dehumanisation here, and this last line heavily implies that denial of 'rights and ideals' is something that is always a part of dehumanisation. It claims that some species of dehumanisation involve the denial of more important rights than others, which suggests that all species involve the denial of some rights. More explicitly, earlier in the book she describes two forms of dehumanisation, which reflect two corresponding forms of objectification (LeMoncheck 1985, 32).

4) Freedom from others "presum[ing] too much about who they are as individuals" - particularly, a freedom from stereotyping
5) "at least civil … behaviour from others"
6) Freedom from exploitation
7) Self-determination[175] (LeMoncheck 1985, 22–23).

So, the first (a) way of meeting the first condition will involve causing a person to be like an object in a way which involves violating one of the seven rights in a '*prima facie* inappropriate way', related to her sexual relations with someone. So, the second (b) way of meeting the first condition is for a person to be treated as an object[176], having one of these seven rights violated in a '*prima facie* inappropriate way', related to her sexual relations with someone.[177]

ii. The Second Condition

A values B in C solely or primarily in terms of B's instrumental ability to sexually attract, stimulate or satisfy A or D

The second condition makes a requirement about the thinking of the objectifier: the objectifier must *value* the woman, in a context of her sexual relations, firstly in terms of how well she would attract, satisfy or stimulate another person. This is mostly clear, but the 'context of her sexual relations' is ambiguous; it either means the man will be thinking, 'the most important thing about that woman, is how sexy she is in the context of a sexual encounter' or he will think, 'the most important thing about that woman in a sexual encounter is how sexy she is'. The difference is huge: in the latter, the man may think that in all other contexts, the most valuable thing about her is her wit or her kindness, for example, while in the former there is no room for valuing her for different things in other contexts. While the latter may imply a very dull attitude about sex, the former looks more like the kind of objectionable attitude that would suit LeMoncheck's approach, given the descriptions of the objectifiers in her examples.[178] However, the sentence structure in the original passage, the

[175] It is worth noting here that it is a broad notion of 'rights' indeed that includes a 'right to freedom from others presuming too much about you' and 'civil behaviour'.
[176] What precisely it means to 'treat someone as an object' is as yet unclear. This generates a circularity problem which we shall discuss shortly.
[177] LeMoncheck clarifies that 'in a *prima facie* inappropriate way' means it is generally bad, though in some cases a person may demonstrate that objectification was not bad. The '*prima facie*' part picks out that she is claiming that this is a general badness, but she is not ruling out that there may be some morally justifiable cases, though the burden of proof is on those claiming their case to be an unproblematic exception. 'Inappropriate' is meant to work as a "moral indictment" (LeMoncheck 1985, 38 (note 2)), meaning then, that in some contexts, violating a right is appropriate/not morally worrying, or perhaps in some cases rights are waived. I will not push this further here, but I suspect it is ordinarily the case that if something really is a right, it is never appropriate to violate it.
[178] "A central theme of our examples would seem to be the subjugation, subordination, intimidation or psychological domination of the sex object. Such a theme is consistent with the claim that the sex objectifier treats the sex object as less than a moral equal, as one less deserving, not equally so, of the rights to well-being and freedom that he enjoys." (LeMoncheck 1985, 28)

discussion of her 'unhappy wife' example[179] (LeMoncheck 1985, 36–37) and her discussion of Bartky's account failing to capture cases like 'unhappy wife' where other attributes are foregrounded in non-sexual contexts (LeMoncheck 1985, 112) make it clear that her meaning is the latter: 'the most important thing about that woman in a sexual encounter is how sexy she is'. This may be a poor attitude to sexual desire and pleasure, though is less striking than the interpretation that this is the most important thing about the woman generally. Understood this way – *'A values B primarily in terms of B's ability to sexually attract, stimulate, or satisfy A or D within the context of a sexual encounter between B and A or D'* – this feature could include our Casual Sex example, which is harmless, and does not sit neatly among LeMoncheck's worrisome examples (though of course Casual Sex may not meet the first condition).

iii. The Third Condition

B's ability to sexually attract A or D as described in (2) is both the source and the means for A's dehumanisation of B described in (1)

It is unclear, in the third condition, what is meant by 'the source and the means'. My interpretation is that the third condition claims something like: 'what is going on in the first and second conditions must be related to one another'. We shall briefly look for the most charitable understanding of this third condition; however, there is no need to spend much time on it, because in the next section I challenge LeMoncheck's account on the basis of problems with just the first two conditions.

If B's sexual attractiveness must be the *source* of her dehumanisation, we could read this as being in some way where her dehumanisation *originates.* This implies that it is something like a *cause*, which is a victim-blaming attitude that I do not expect LeMoncheck intended. I think a fairer interpretation would be that B's sexual attractiveness is what *triggers* or *inspires* A's dehumanising behaviour. I am still not wholly comfortable with this, given its proximity to a victim-blaming claim, but let us set this aside for now. For B's sexual attractiveness to be the *means* of A's dehumanising behaviour must mean that her attractiveness is the thing A is referring to or engaging with.[180] It is clearer what this means in cases where the objectification is meant to occur in speech, for example in LeMoncheck's first example, which includes (in somewhat dated language) the objectifier saying, "Hey fox, give us a smile!" Here, the person's facial expression could be understood as the thing which is the source and the means for the objectification: it is her facial expression that he is responding to, and her facial expression which is described in the objectifying catcall. It is less clear, though, how someone's sexual attractiveness is supposed to count as the means of their dehumanisation in cases where the objectification is less descriptive or not clearly articulated through language.

[179] LeMoncheck describes how it is only during sex, and only during sex under particular circumstances (drunk sex), that the unhappy wife is valued in this way. In other contexts, she says, unhappy wife is treated as a skilled lawyer.

[180] LeMoncheck also describes it as "the instrument through which her dehumanization takes place" (LeMoncheck 1985, 36), which is not particularly clarifying.

So, recalling the two ways of dehumanising in (1), we can state in more straightforward terms, two ways to objectify someone:

1) A man most values a woman's ability to attract/stimulate within a sexual context, and so causes her to be object-like in a way that inappropriately violates a right of hers (dehumanisation (a)). Her sexual abilities are the 'source and the means' of this dehumanisation.
2) A man most values a woman's ability to attract/stimulate within a sexual context, and so treats her as if she were an object in a way that inappropriately violates a right of hers (dehumanisation (b)). Her sexual abilities are the 'source and the means' of this dehumanisation.

At this point, we at least have a rough idea of what is going on, but if the third condition remains unclear, this need not trouble us any longer here, as the problems I next identify with LeMoncheck's account require us to look only at the first two conditions.

2.2 Problems for LeMoncheck

i. Failure to Capture Paradigm Cases and Popular Usage

It is a merit of LeMoncheck's account that it captures some paradigm examples of objectification. Her three starting examples are intuitively cases of objectification, and do come out as such on her definition. However, while my account also covers her list of examples,[181] her account does not also cover mine. LeMoncheck's account does not, I argue, cover the full range of objectification.

Recall the original definition:

> "Person A treats person B as a sex object, A = B or A ≠ B, if and only if three conditions hold: (1) A dehumanises B in some context C of A's sexual relations with B or B's sexual relations with some other person D; A's dehumanisation of B in C implies that A either causes B to be like an object or treats B as if B were an object in a way which violates or rejects in a *prima facie* inappropriate manner one or more of B's rights to well-being and freedom in C; (2) A values B in C solely or primarily in terms of B's instrumental ability to sexually attract, stimulate or satisfy A or D; and (3) B's ability to sexually attract A or D as described in (2) is both the source and the means for A's dehumanisation of B described in (1)." (LeMoncheck 1985, 95)

This definition does not capture 'Casual Sex', as no rights are being violated. This definition probably captures Squeeze 1 (though it is not clear how the victim's sexual attractiveness is 'the source and the means' of her dehumanisation). Squeeze 2 probably will not count, as no rights are being violated in a *prima facie* inappropriate way. It is my view that Casual Sex and Squeeze 2 should be counted as benign objectification, as defended in Chapter Three, but let us set benign objectification aside for a moment. I show here that even when we limit our discussion to harmful examples,

[181] To say briefly how: the 'free spirit', the 'unhappy wife' and the 'assistant manager' are all being reduced to their body parts; their objectifiers are foregrounding their body parts, and/or treating them as little above those. They are also instrumentalising their targets.

LeMoncheck's account fails to capture the kinds of examples that should be captured, and that we expect her to want to capture, given the goals of reflecting popular usage and making sense of women's complaints about pernicious objectification.

Unfortunately, LeMoncheck's account also does not capture Trophy Wife very well, as she is not being objectified by virtue of her ability to attract *in a sexual context*, so neither (1) nor (2) holds. While her sexual attractiveness is in some way relevant to her dehumanisation, it is in the context of her appearing beautiful to her husband's colleagues at an event, not the context of her sexual relations with anybody. Her husband wants himself to appear more successful for managing to get a beautiful wife, but in demanding that she attend the event he is not discussing, suggesting, or remotely referencing any context in which she has sexual relations with somebody.[182]

An important problem is that LeMoncheck cannot capture what is going on in the Model and Poster examples. Remember, in order to reflect what feminists like Cathy are talking about when they talk about objectification, we need the paradigm cases to be captured. If we try to apply this understanding to Model, we face confusion over who A and B actually *are* in LeMoncheck's terms. 'B' cannot just be 'women', because this is an individualistic account,[183] so 'B' has to refer to the model. Similarly 'A' cannot be 'men' or 'the audience in general', so must be 'the implied author' or 'the creator of the poster' (whoever that may be: the photographer, the editor, the marketing advisor, the CEO). This is not going to work: once we think of the Model example as between the model and the photographer (say), this does not come out as objectification. First of all, the way the model is being treated like an object is in no way '*prima facie* inappropriate'; this is her job. Taking pictures of her and focusing on her appearance is precisely appropriate in this context. None of her 'rights' are being violated or rejected. One could suggest that she is being exploited, but under LeMoncheck's definition this is not the case; LeMoncheck defines exploitation as "use by persons which is to their own advantage but at one's own expense" (LeMoncheck 1985, 23) and since this is her job,[184] she is paid for it, and she chose it,[185] it is not 'at her expense'.[186] More importantly though, LeMoncheck explicitly includes an example of a model being painted as an example of something that is *not* sex objectification (LeMoncheck 1985, 27). Secondly, there is no 'context of A's sexual relationships with B or B's sexual relations with some other person D' to speak of here: B's sexual relationships are simply not relevant to her modelling for this poster. These two points show that (1) cannot be met for the Model example, so it is unnecessary to assess whether (2) and (3) are met, as all three are necessary for objectification under this account. One way to make it perhaps fit is to consider A to be individual audience members, but then we would be unable to say that the

[182] Presumably, he wants his colleagues to think she is a 'catch', but he would not desire his colleagues to have sex with her.
[183] As in: it is all in terms of 'person A' and 'person B' rather than groups of people.
[184] Perhaps all work is exploitative, or all wage work, but that it is not a problem for any particular kind of work over any other.
[185] If she did not then of course there would be something different going on here.
[186] If it does count as 'at her expense', in the sense that all wage work is exploitative, then that is fine, but this does not tell us anything interesting about sexual objectification.

advert or its creators are objectifying. All we could do is look at the advert and say, 'Well, this advert is fine, but I bet that some people objectify the model when they see it', which does not look anything like the claims that we want feminists to be able to make.

My account of objectification is non-individualised; I have built in the capacity to deal with cases where the objectifier and the objectified are not individual agents. This is desirable becomes it allows us to capture possibly the most common use of the term 'objectification': people criticising adverts, pornography, and posters. This is also something that should be especially desirable for thinkers like LeMoncheck, who want to conceive of objectification as pernicious, given that these cases are cases where people tend to see something wrong or harmful. To exclude such examples is not merely a failure to meet the goals *I* defend (I defend reflecting popular usage in Chapters One and in Part One of this chapter), but also a failure to meet LeMoncheck's own broad goals of making sense of women's complaints. To be clear, I think our goals are the same; I mean here just to emphasise that I am not criticising LeMoncheck's account for failing to meet standards that it was never intended to meet. LeMoncheck (1985, 37, 68–69) explicitly states that a model photographed for Playboy magazine is being objectified, so it is a serious problem if her account cannot accommodate objectification in images.

Our paradigm examples not being met is a reason for us not to use this account of objectification, but this objection reaches further than that; the focus on individuals makes it difficult if not impossible to claim *any* media can objectify. Claims like 'that poster objectifies women' cannot be made sense of on this account, for the same reasons that the Model example is not captured; this means that the usage of feminists like Cathy simply is not captured on this account. The role of person A is going to have to either be an 'implied author' or the 'creator', both of which are very unstable categories, as media rarely have single people as creators (existent or implied). Person D is most naturally understood as the audience; they are the ones who are being 'attracted', but 'the audience' does not pick out a singular person, and if they are being successfully 'attracted' then one would expect them to be the ones doing the objectifying, not person A. Finally, person B cannot represent women in general as it is singular, so can only represent the person in the piece of media (if indeed there is only one person in it). The claim 'that poster objectifies women' therefore cannot make sense on this account as it stands. The most that could be claimed is something like: 'a man who sees that poster might objectify the woman in it' (which implies nothing is wrong with the poster itself), or 'a creator of pornography objectifies an actress in pornography', or perhaps 'pornography might influence individual men to objectify individual women' but that would require quite different work. Being able to make these kinds of claims is not enough, since our paradigm case is not captured, and the typical ways of talking about objectification are not captured (i.e. statements like 'that poster objectifies women').

ii. Over- and Underinclusivity of Rights to Wellbeing and Freedom

Recall the first condition

a) A causes B to be like an object in a way which violates or rejects in a *prima facie* inappropriate manner one or more of B's rights to well-being and freedom in C, or,
b) A treats B as if B were an object in a way which violates or rejects in a *prima facie* inappropriate manner one or more of B's rights to well-being and freedom in C.

For LeMoncheck, whether any example counts as (sexual) objectification always hinges on whether it involves a violation of one of B's rights to wellbeing and freedom. This unusual list of rights will turn out to be both over- and underinclusive in terms of which things count as rights violations. Correspondingly, 'objectification' can end up being over- and underinclusive.

Casual Sex and other benign examples will be excluded on the basis of not violating any of these rights. Again, we shall set this problem aside for now, and instead look at places in which LeMoncheck's account may be overinclusive.

The breadth of the list of rights makes violating a right extremely easy, in a way that is counterintuitive. If any behaviour which infringes on my right to self-respect (the third right), or civil behaviour from others (the fifth), is a rights violation, then I can claim that any occasion on which someone criticises me, or is rude to me, they violate my rights. We should, I think, be suspicious of such 'rights' given that my own behaviour may often reasonably warrant rudeness or criticism from others. Further, given that it is the violation of these rights where the negative moral evaluation of objectification is situated, this leaves the claim that objectification is always pernicious a rather weak one. To say 'objectification is always wrong' is not saying much of interest if what it is that makes objectification wrong similarly makes rudeness and criticism wrong.[187]

I am not cherry-picking the most counterintuitive 'rights' here. Looking instead at the second right on the list: if persons A and B are having a sexual encounter involving dominance and submission role play, and B is intending to come across as dominant, but A is reading her as bratty, then has A unintentionally violated B's right to '**controlling** information persons have about them and **observations people make of them**', as A's observations do not accord with what B wants her to observe. Or more mundanely: B had tried to disguise the fact that she has naturally black hair, by having bleached it to ginger, and A notices this; A has violated B's right to controlling the information others have about her. Turning to the fourth right: say A thinks 'B is very adventurous in bed, I bet she likes action movies'. This may be baseless, but it seems like a benign thing for A to think. This kind of speculation violates B's fourth right which includes freedom from others 'presum[ing] too much about who they are as individuals'. The general point here is that these cases would count as 'rights violations' if LeMoncheck's list of rights were taken seriously, and that these cases are clearly not the right sorts of things to be thought of as rights violations (if we are meant to consider

[187] As someone who has no interest in 'civility', I would be annoyed if the mechanism that grounds what is wrong with me being catcalled is the same thing which grounds what is wrong with, say, swearing at me.

violating such a right as morally wrong). This should tell us that the list of rights is not fit for purpose.[188]

Does an overinclusive rights list generate an overinclusive account of objectification? It might be the case that the other conditions for sexual objectification may be stringent enough to prevent this loose category of rights violations from having a bearing on which things end up counting as objectification. I will explore a couple of examples which illustrate that the list of rights LeMoncheck endorses can allow in counter-intuitive examples to her account of objectification. Firstly, the dominance and submission example can quite easily meet the other criteria for objectification: each participant can be valuing the other primarily in terms of their ability to sexually stimulate them, and the brattishness that A perceives in B can be the source and the means for her objectification of her. It looks like we have a counterexample which meets the criteria for objectification, but is not the kind of wrongful practice that LeMoncheck seems to aim at capturing. I have missed out some explanation in this example though; I have not shown one component of the first criterion: '(1) A dehumanises B in some context C of A's sexual relations with B or B's sexual relations with some other person D; A's dehumanisation of B in C **implies that A either causes B to be like an object or treats B as if B were an object** in a way which violates or rejects in a *prima facie* inappropriate manner one or more of B's rights to well-being and freedom in C'. While I have shown every other component is satisfied, I have not shown that 'A treats B as if B were an object'.

This is obviously something of a problem, as, surely, what it means for A to treat B as an object is precisely what an account of objectification should be elucidating. How do I know if A has treated B as on object? What do I look for?

iii. Indeterminacy/Circularity Problem

With the above example, I kill two birds with one stone; I am offering a counterexample, and drawing attention to a circularity in the account. I shall offer another example which is also intuitively not objectifying and draws attention to this same explanatory dead-end. Here is a case where A makes a comment to B which references her sexual attractiveness and violates one of the more questionable rights LeMoncheck lists:

> B is getting her hair done for a date and after admiring the resultant hairstyle the hairdresser (A) says, "Your date (D) is very lucky." This is for her portfolio, and the hairdresser has been valuing B primarily in terms of how attractive she can make B look.

[188] LeMoncheck could say that these rights violations are just less serious than other rights violations, however, this move would weaken the account significantly. Given that violating these rights is what makes objectification (for her) dehumanising and wrong, if it turned out that the fact of having violated one of these rights is not actually enough to make something a serious wrong, then more explanation would be needed as to why objectification is seriously dehumanising and wrong by virtue of violating these rights.

The right of 'having someone presume too much about you' is being violated, sexual attractiveness is in some way referenced, A is valuing B primarily in terms of how attractive she can make her look, so what is keeping this case from counting as sexual objectification?

I think that what LeMoncheck can fall back on to keep these kinds of cases out is a point which makes the whole account seem redundant. As mentioned above, LeMoncheck includes in her definition 'A either causes B ***to be like an object*** or treats B ***as if B were an object*** in a way which violates or rejects in a *prima facie* inappropriate manner one or more of B's rights to well-being and freedom in C'. LeMoncheck could say that the hairdresser is not treating her client *as if she were an object*. This requirement that however A is treating B it must be in an *object-like* way begs the whole question (and it does this regardless of whether the hairdresser example works as a counterexample). 'Treating as an object' being included in her definition means we are still in the dark as to what object-like treatment *is*, rather than the definition of objectification being something that tells us this.

Does LeMoncheck offer any guidance on what 'treating as an object' might involve? A little; firstly, given that LeMoncheck distinguishes 'objectification' and 'sex objectification' (we have only so far looked at the latter), it could be that she has a picture of 'objectification' which can give an account of 'treating as an object', while her account of 'sex objectification' is a subcategory of this.[189] Unfortunately, the only information we have about what 'objectification' captures is a handful of examples:

> "Imagine the artist gazing fixedly at the human form he represents on canvas, or imagine the designer of children's clothes hemming a garment draped around the immobile figure of a six-year-old. Imagine the surgeon operating on her patient or the photographer using a face in a crowd (instead of a lamppost or a tree) to focus his camera. Or suppose I shuffle behind a classmate during a ten-year high school reunion to avoid the necessity of conversing with the class gossip. Imagine a kindly uncle playing 'horsey' with his niece, or the anthropologist classifying the members of the species Homo sapiens as higher order mammals." (LeMoncheck 1985, 13)

These kinds of examples are referred to elsewhere as 'simple' objectification, which is unlike 'sex' objectification in that it lacks dehumanisation (LeMoncheck 1985, 29). So, for LeMoncheck, there are plenty of objectifying things, including painting models and catcalling women, but only some of these things are *sex* objectification. Such things are distinguished from all other objectification (or *simple* objectification) in that they are *dehumanising*. This suggests that in order to establish which things are *simple/non-sexual* objectification, we can just subtract the dehumanising parts of the definition of sex objectification and see what remains. Unfortunately, this does not seem to be a fruitful line of inquiry, as the definition of sexual objectification, as we saw above, is entirely built around dehumanisation.

There is one other hint at what object-like treatment might be: "A woman is treated *as if* she were an object when the treatment she receives from others is the same sort of treatment she would

[189] Thanks to Jim Stuart for this suggestion.

receive if she were an object" (LeMoncheck 1985, 33). If this were meant to be understood literally, then it would narrow the account significantly; are there many cases where a person is treated in the same manner as which an object would be treated in the same situation? We cannot imagine the construction workers in the 'free spirit' case wolf-whistling at a wine bottle, or the employer in the 'assistant manager' case offering a promotion to a statue. I think it is safe to say this is not meant to be taken literally then. If it not literal, then there is simply a gap where objectification should be defined; the claim would essentially be: 'a woman is treated as if she were in object when she receives the same sort (metaphorically) of treatment as an object'. We are left with an indeterminacy problem, as we have no means of telling whether the condition of 'treating B like an object' has been met, as that is precisely what we need an account of objectification for.

Either we have a case of circularity and indeterminacy where 'treating as an object' is part of the definition of objectification but as yet undetermined, when it should be precisely what an account of objectification is articulating, or 'treating as an object' refers to a narrow practice which does not capture the paradigm examples – mine or LeMoncheck's.

I have shown in the last few sections a few reasons why LeMoncheck's rights-violations approach is unhelpful as it fails to do all of the things that we wanted an account of objectification to do: (1) it fails to capture paradigm cases (including pernicious cases), (2) the list of rights is unintuitively overinclusive, and (3) her account is indeterminate (or worse, circular) in explaining what object-like treatment is. Additionally, LeMoncheck's account is narrower than mine insofar as it means to exclude benign objectification. In Chapter Three I defend the inclusion of benign paradigm examples Casual Sex and Squeeze 2, and argue at the end of Chapter Three and Part Four of this chapter against ruling out benign objectification. Generally, I think a broader extension like mine does a better job of capturing popular usage as far as possible, particularly when such an account can explain when objectification is harmful, and also explain fairly the intuitions of those who take all/most objectification to be harmful, as I do in Chapter Five.

Part Three – Bauer

This part deals with an approach which challenges most accounts of objectification, I will use two strategies to show why I think this does not cause problems for my account. I first of all highlight problems with the approach itself, and secondly argue that if the approach does still cause problems for other existing accounts of objectification, it does not cause those same problems for my own.

3.1 Bauer's Position

Drawing on Simone de Beauvoir, Nancy Bauer argues that all attempts to come up with a delineating list of features of objectification are misguided. Bauer claims that such attempts only serve to obscure the phenomenon and make it more difficult to determine whether objectification is occurring. Bauer claims that objectification is a useful concept insofar as it helps women understand their experiences, but beyond that there is little use for it. She roots this in the position that certain concepts and words only have meaning for people holding a certain normative worldview. She gives

the examples of the concepts: *transgender, communist sympathiser,* and *obscene* (Bauer 2015b, 25). Using these terms comfortably betrays certain background beliefs that make the term make sense to you. If someone were of the opinion that if you were born with a penis you are a man, and if you were born with a vagina you are a woman, then the term 'transgender' would not mean a great deal to them. They may understand it when people use it, but it would not have a particular *use or meaning for them*, at least not in the same way as it would for people with a set of background normative beliefs that gave more use and credit to the term.[190] Similarly, if I do not think communism is a dangerous and frightening thing, I will be unable to use the term 'communist sympathiser' in the same meaningful way as someone who does see communism as dangerous.

Objectification, Bauer argues, is like this. She posits that (sexual) 'objectification' has a meaning for women who use it to explain certain kinds of practices[191] that harm them (Bauer 2015b, 28). If, however, you do not have any inclination to understand these kinds of practices, or do not think they are important, then the word 'objectification' will function like 'communist sympathiser' does for me: it is of little use, and little meaning. When people come to possess the right background beliefs[192] to use the concept of objectification Bauer describes them as having a 'lighting up experience', and from then they can 'know it when they see it' (Bauer 2015b, 25–28). Many women will have a 'lighting up' experience at some point, where they come to understand various ways in which they are disadvantaged as women, they come to understand certain things in the world around them as unfair, they begin to identify as feminists, and they *notice objectification*. To the extent to which two women share the same worldview, they will identify *mostly* the same things as objectification. Once these people have the meaningful concept, and can 'know it when they see it': that is what objectification is.

I am very sympathetic to Bauer's approach, and I think certain parts of it are well worth utilising. The idea that a concept of objectification should be constructed in such a way that it is most useful to women understanding their experiences, and the idea that the word will have different meaning to feminists and non-feminists, I find persuasive. In fact these ideas motivate my commitment to taking 'common usage among academic and non-academic feminists' as vital to a good definition of

[190] Since first writing this, the use of the term 'transgender' has shifted among people with the beliefs described; rather than being a term that is meaningless for them, it has taken on meanings which are hostile to the meanings of those who use the term sincerely (it is usually intended to pick out the same people, but its use as a noun rather than an adjective implies an insult to trans people, and a wilful misunderstanding of the meaning of those who use the term sincerely). I could remove it from this list of examples as it no longer works quite like the others, but I keep it here, as it is interesting how the use has shifted, and its use is still characterised by an *insincerity* which is central to these examples.

[191] What kinds of practices are we talking about here? It is difficult to answer this without doing precisely the kind of thing that Bauer is warning us against (trying to define objectification precisely), but the kinds of examples she utilises are things like adverts featuring scantily clad women.

[192] Here we are thinking about general feminist principles, like 'women are agents worthy of respect' and 'women should be able to move through the world without being made uncomfortable by unwelcome sexual comments'. Again, these kinds of principles are hard to define without more work being done on what kinds of things feminism is engaged with, of which, arguably, objectification is one such thing.

objectification. The further step, that we have no need for a formal account of what objectification is, I think, does not hold up.

3.2 Problems for Bauer

i. Problem of Disagreement

First, if Bauer is right that objectification picks out something that is always bad[193] for women (setting aside that I disagree on this for now), then it is important for us to be able to determine whether something is objectification or not. Bauer's position suggests that the way of determining whether something is objectification is to defer to feminists/use our intuition *as* feminists, who will know it when they/we see it. There is a simple problem here: if two women, who both consider themselves to be 'lit up' feminists, have opposing intuitions on whether something is objectification, for Bauer, *both must be right*. This means that the thing they are talking about both is and is not objectification; this at worst impossible, at best unhelpful. One route a defender of Bauer's position could go down is to say, 'That's fine, it is objectification for the first woman, and isn't for the second', but this makes 'objectification' mean very little. Objectification has become subjective in a way that makes it an impossible concept to track, which is little help if we want to make any claims about objectification and ask questions about when it is wrong and what we should do about it. This amounts to *an indeterminacy problem*.

Perhaps Bauer would accept this consequence, but it seems to me to sit uncomfortably with the claim that our goal is to help women in some way, when this may (should?) involve determining where objectification harms women. While this approach may help some women understand their experiences, it will not leave room for any analysis of the problem (if it is one) and any exploration of solutions. If we accept these consequences, we cannot make any claims about objectification. By contrast, accounts that produce a list of features of objectification allow us to make claims about the nature of objectification and when/if it is harmful, and allow us to explore how to remove any such harms. It is as if Nussbaum, Langton, LeMoncheck and I have tried to come up with a list of features of the colour red, and Bauer has said, 'Those of us with a certain kind of vision know red when we see it', and concluded that our list of features for red is unhelpful.[194] However, if we want to find out whether the colour red is harmful or wrong, we had better have a list of features to refer to, as the assertion that we know red when we see it can't help us with that.

This problem becomes more urgent when we recall that Bauer is approaching objectification as a concept which helps women understand *bad* or *harmful* experiences. Imagine that the two feminists in the above example who disagree on whether objectification is present further disagree with a third feminist, who thinks that a particular thing is *objectifying and benign*. The defender of Bauer's position must either say that all three are right, which would mean throwing out the motivating

[193] "The feminist concept of *sexual* objectification, on the other hand, has always had negative connotations." (Bauer 2015b, 28)
[194] Thanks to Lewis Brooks for making this clear to me.

principle behind this position (that objectification is a concept which helps women understand *bad or harmful* experiences), or they must say that one of these feminists is wrong. This latter option is a very unattractive move, as it would involve saying either that having the right set of background beliefs does not in fact mean we know objectification when we see it (which is crucial for her position), or it would involve saying that the third feminist is mistaken in thinking that she is a 'lit up' feminist possessing the right set of background beliefs. We do not want to go down a road which implies that there is one set of beliefs which is *correct* feminism, and other strands of 'feminism' are made up of people who merely think they have feminist beliefs.[195] Apart from anything else, this does not seem as if it is in the spirit of Bauer's position.

Let us pause on this for a moment; if I am going to criticise other accounts on the basis that they involve telling some women they are wrong about objectification, I had better spell out why this is less of a problem for my own account, given that *any* account will involve this. Firstly, as I claim below, my account is at lower risk of this than many accounts, and is less likely to have to judge many women to be mistaken, given that it is grounded in popular intuitions. In comparison with Bauer's however, regardless of who has to tell the highest number of women they are wrong, in my case the stakes are just much lower. In Bauer's case, as I argued above, if you have to say someone is wrong about whether x is objectification, that involves also saying they are not a 'lit up' feminist with the right set of background beliefs. This is claiming that someone is wrong in a much more serious way: not only is the person supposedly wrong about x, they are also not a real feminist - this is not an acceptable consequence. Further, if someone says 'x is/is not objectification', yet my account says different, this does not involve saying that person is wrong about whether x is importantly *harmful*, because my account does not build in harm. My account does not involve telling someone they are unfeminist, or telling them they are wrong about whether they've had a morally bad experience, because my account lacks all of that baggage; these things can all be/not be the case irrespective of whether objectification is taking place.

In the next chapter, I explore and explain the case in which people believe that objectification is *always or usually harmful,* in a way that does not involve suggesting such people are gravely mistaken. Instead, I show why it makes sense that people see objectification this way even though

[195] This is not to say that all feminist positions are equal. Transphobic feminists have, I believe, some incorrect and misogynistic beliefs, but I also do not want to say that only my set of feminist beliefs represents good ones, and that anyone with a different combination is not a feminist. The expectation of uniformity (which I suggested above is implied by the lighting-up account) among feminists leaves no room for either different branches of feminism or for personal growth and learning. The middle-class feminist was still a feminist before she learned how austerity affects working class women differently to her, though some of her beliefs are different (and better-informed) now. We can say something like: 'Cathy is a feminist, she has a set of feminist beliefs about work, politics, the family, sex and relationships that are all distinctly feminist beliefs. Amongst these are some incorrect and perhaps bigoted beliefs'. The bigoted beliefs are inexcusable, and Cathy is morally responsible for them, but they need not prevent us from referring to Cathy as a feminist. More importantly, to do this would invisibilise the roles that some feminists have played in oppression of various groups. Designating any potentially flawed beliefs as not-in-fact-feminist serves to culpably ignore wrongs committed in the name of feminism, including mainstream feminism's racist history, and the oppressions which still occur in many branches of feminism right now.

objectification is not necessarily harmful. For now, I shall consider one more specific way in which my account might imply telling some people they are wrong about objectification. On my account, Casual Sex (as described in my specific example in Chapter Three) is objectifying, but harmless. If a feminist had an experience identical to Casual Sex but said, 'I find it neither harmful nor objectifying', I would have to say that she is partly wrong about her experience (it was not harmful, but it was objectifying). Given what I say above, I should be hesitant to want to say this. However, I am not too concerned about this. This is because I think outside of projects like this thesis, it is generally okay for people to use terms in varying ways, for however it is useful to them, unless their usage causes harm to others (I argue at the end of this chapter that using 'objectification' to mean 'necessarily harmful' might do this). However, our purposes here are to work out when objectification is harmful and so be in a better position to decide what to do about it, which requires (1) a concrete, not fluid, definition, (2) grounding in popular usage, given that it's people in the world that we care about (ethically and epistemically).

ii. My Account's Extra Protections from Bauer's Criticism

Bauer's implication that accounts like Nussbaum's and LeMoncheck's do not present the concept of objectification in a way that adequately helps women understand their experiences does not apply quite so strongly to my account. Given that one of my criteria for a good account of objectification is that it captures common intuitions among feminists, my hope is that it is more likely to do a good job of capturing women+'s experiences. It was a key part of my rejection of these other accounts that they do a less good job of capturing popular intuitions and ordinary usage among feminists, and a key part of my defence of my own account was to test its compatibility with such intuitions (see Chapter Three, Part Three). Additionally, it need not be the case that Bauer's explanation of how certain worldviews make concepts meaningful should suggest an *alternative* to a list of features of objectification; rather, Bauer's account can be an *explanation* for why there is some amount of convergence on what different thinkers (inside the academy and out) believe counts as objectification. Feminist worldviews prompt certain *similar* intuitions as to which things are objectification, and my account of objectification aims to reflect these intuitions as far as is possible, as well as (in Chapter Five) to explain some differences in them.

Despite this, it might still be the case that Bauer is right that accounts like Nussbaum's obscure the concept of objectification and make it more difficult to identify. This does not, I think, apply to my account, for three reasons. Firstly, this does not preclude the right kind of account *not* obscuring the concept, but should motivate us to make our accounts more responsive to popular intuitions, and less wrapped up in complex frameworks and jargon. Secondly, we must accept that concepts will never track *everyone's* intuitions (compare 'what is a chair' – two people may strongly disagree on whether a beanbag should count); we can only try to capture as many intuitions as possible. I think rather than accounts *creating* a difficulty in identifying a concept, accounts can instead *expose* a difficulty in identifying a concept, by making differences in intuitions visible through examination, especially examination of marginal cases. This might mean that in some cases (for any concept) we

do need to work to establish if such concept is present; there are ambiguous cases for any phenomenon. Finally, generally, people still manage to do a good job of identifying instances of a concept fairly easily, even when its definition is technical (the definition of lager might be technical, but we still have little trouble identifying which things are lager for the most part).

Bauer's approach, while it sets out to criticise accounts like mine, I think fails to count against my account. This is both because of features of my account that protect it from Bauer's concerns (i.e. the central role of popular usage), and because of internal problems with Bauer's approach (i.e. the indeterminacy problem above).

Part Four – Papadaki

The Usefulness of a Negative Conception of Objectification

Papadaki (2010b) offers a hybrid account of objectification which takes Nussbaum's account and limits it to only those cases in which a person's humanity is denied (thus honouring Kant's, MacKinnon's, and Dworkin's understandings of objectification[196]). Denying (i.e. *not acknowledging* or *damaging*) a person's humanity is, for Papadaki, what makes objectification problematic. Thus, Papadaki argues that we should understand objectification as an exclusively *negative* phenomenon; by this I mean that for Papadaki, objectification is to be understood as always pernicious and objectionable - I borrow the phrase 'negative objectification' from Papadaki, which she contrasts with 'benign/positive objectification'. I am not going to spend a great deal of time on Papadaki's account, as I have effectively engaged with half of it in discussing Nussbaum's account in Chapter Three; however, the harmful-only/humanity-denial part of her account is motivated in part by an argument which poses a challenge to accounts like mine.

> "[O]nce this concept's association with the negative and morally problematic is weakened, and it becomes, as in Nussbaum's case, something ordinary, widespread, and in many cases a positive and wonderful part of our lives, there is a further risk: the risk that the fight against (negative) objectification is undermined. The plea to end this objectification vividly put forward by Kant, MacKinnon and Dworkin will no longer sound so urgent and pressing: it might even sound misguided… It seems to me that objectification would be a more useful concept if restricted to the negative…" (Papadaki 2010b, 30)

This position, that 'objectification' is more *useful* when understood as a negative phenomenon, is also gestured at by Bauer. Of Nussbaum's account, Bauer says:

> "By expanding the definition of sexual objectification to include such cases [those cases like Oliver Mellors and Connie Chatterley, where objectification can be 'wonderful'] Nussbaum empties the concept of political oomph." (Bauer 2015b, 36)

The idea is that if we have a broader definition of objectification which includes examples of neutral, good, or wonderful objectification, then we may undermine the fight against negative

[196] The difference between Papadaki's account and these three thinkers is that MacKinnon, Dworkin, and Kant see 'objectification' only describing when humanity is *damaged* or *harmed* rather than the broader category of *denied* (Papadaki 2015, 2010b).

objectification. Pragmatically then, if it is important to us to combat objectification that is harmful, our understanding of objectification should be as a negative thing.

I think Papadaki and Bauer are mistaken here for three reasons. Firstly, how useful is it *really*? If what you want to do is target sexist adverts from car companies, will it really make your campaign any harder if you have to say something else instead of 'This is objectifying (and that's why it's bad)'? You might, instead, need to be more specific about the harm it is doing. Perhaps that requires more thinking before articulating, but that is hardly a bad thing.

Secondly, and more importantly: yes, I really do want to undermine the campaign against negative objectification. This is because the casualties of the campaign against negative objectification have not been the big car companies which use objectifying images, they have been people in the sex industry, they have been women+ who are sexually assaulted, they have been predominantly the people that the campaign is aiming to protect, harmed by the unintentional but entirely predictable slut-shaming and sex-negative myths that are propagated by these kinds of campaigns. First, campaigns against objectification usually take the form of campaigns against pornography, strip clubs, and other sex work, rather than campaigns against lager or car companies. The people who take the biggest material hit as a result of these campaigns are the sex workers who lose their income and have to find new ways to survive. When the campaigns are not directed at the sex industry directly, for example the campaign in the early 2010s in the UK which saw the end of The Sun's Page 3 feature, it is still not the powerful who feel the consequences, but the models themselves.[197] The Sun is today as successful as ever, and is able to be just as sexist in its writing as it was able to be in its imagery. Perhaps there was an intangible impact on how men see women in general as a result of the end of Page 3, perhaps there was not, but we have a further reason to think these campaigns often do more harm than good. As I touched on in Chapter One, and will explain more fully at the end of Chapter Five, there are prevalent pernicious myths that women who are seen as more sexual (those who wear more revealing clothing, or have more non-reproductive sex, work in the sex industry, or talk more openly about sex) are somehow dirty, dangerous, corrupting, and deserving of poor treatment, especially sexual assault. Campaigns against Page 3, and similar campaigns against strip clubs, trade on and reinforce these pernicious myths. When the TV panel 'Loose Women' addressed the No More Page 3 campaign, presenter Lynda Bellingham had this to say:

> "You look at kind of some young people on a Saturday night now and think you're not doing yourself any favours … life isn't about flashing your boobs … It's degrading … 30 years ago to get your whatsits out and flash them was degrading … it's the lowest form of entertainment." (Bellingham 2010, 01:14-03:22)

Even if Page 3 were in fact an example of 'negative objectification', the kind of messages being perpetuated around the campaign are clearly harmful, not just to models, but also to all 'young

[197] "These individuals were taking away our dreams because how they thought we felt, instead of actually engaging in conversation and celebrating our sexuality alongside us." (Davies 2018)

people on a Saturday night' who do not meet traditional misogynistic standards of decency and purity. The same campaign groups which have treated strippers as collateral damage (mentioned in Chapter One) put their weight behind the Page 3 campaigns (plasticdollheads 2020). These campaigns against particular forms of objectification, whether those forms of objectification are good or bad, have always harmed sex workers and contributed to pernicious misogynistic myths. If moving away from a negative conception of objectification undermines these campaigns – and that is a big empirical 'if' anyway - then this is not necessarily a bad thing.

Finally, as discussed in Chapter Three, fat and disabled women, and others who are excluded from being seen as legitimate targets of sexual desire, can find the *lack* of sexual objectification to be dehumanising, rather than the presence of it. If feminists are to say, 'Let's prioritise political and pragmatic goals', they had better not leave out the political and pragmatic goals of groups of women who are further marginalised, in favour of solely attending to the political goals of the feminist groups from whom the concept originated several decades ago. Even if there were strong political reasons for using 'objectification' one way, if there are also different strong political reasons for using 'objectification' another way (as I have shown here, there are at least two: impact on sex workers and capacity to capture experiences of those denied legitimacy as sexual beings), then both sets of reasons must be given consideration. It should then be considered that if it is the case that the political goals which motivate using 'objectification' in a negative way can be achieved *without* using 'objectification' this way and clashing with these other political goals, as I think it clearly can,[198] then it would be hard to justify using it in a negative way.

Contra Bauer and Papadaki, then, I suggest there are good reasons not to use objectification in a purely negative sense, and so to favour an account like mine which leaves room for cases like Casual Sex which are benign.

Part Five – Summary

In this chapter I mean to have offered reasons to prefer my account to those competing accounts of objectification in the literature, largely through identifying shortfalls of these competing accounts, but also through showing that the challenges these accounts' proponents offer against accounts like mine do not hold up.

I first described the distinction between two kinds of accounts of objectification: 'imposition' accounts and 'treating-as' accounts. I situated my account as one of the latter, and argued that we should set aside the former here, as they do not capture popular usage, which I aim to do in this thesis. Secondly, I looked at LeMoncheck's account, taking it apart and showing that it failed to capture popular usage and paradigm examples and was insufficiently determinate. I drew

[198] It would be a poor political campaign indeed if its success were entirely dependent on using one controversial term in a particular way. I think it helps our causes to be as specific as possible, and to be willing to abandon particular concise terminology as we learn it does not always mean what we intend it to mean, in favour of describing those features of the world in a way that captures what you mean and avoids hurting your allies.

comparisons throughout with my own account (explained in the previous chapter), to show that the problems I identify with these accounts are problems that my own account does not suffer.

Thirdly, I considered the case from Bauer that accounts like mine which attempt to define objectification only obscure the concept. I argued that Bauer's 'we know it when we see it' approach failed to accommodate and explain differences in feminist approaches to objectification, and makes locating harms more difficult. I showed that the case Bauer makes against accounts like mine do not in fact apply to my account. Finally, I looked at an argument suggested separately by Papadaki and Bauer, that a 'negative' conception of objectification is more useful, as an approach which accommodates benign objectification undermines campaigns against pernicious objectification. I argued that undermining these campaigns was an acceptable consequence given that these campaigns as they currently exist tend to harm rather than help, precisely because discussing sexualisation as negative reinforces the sorts of sexist myths feminists want to be dismantling. Avoiding using 'objectification' in the purely negative sense can also encourage us to be more specific about what it is that is harmful, to ensure that any criticisms of genuinely harmful objectification do not inadvertently harm sex workers and women+ in general.

Now that the case has been made for accepting my definition of objectification over those competing definitions and approaches, we can take this definition forward and apply it, to establish when objectification is harmful, and how this fits in with pornography.

CHAPTER FIVE

Is Objectification Harmful?

In this chapter I address the *moral* dimensions of objectification. Recall from Chapter Two that I am discussing whether objectification is *harmful* rather than *wrong.* This is because we are principally concerned with harms to women+; wrongs that are not also harms (if they exist) are issues for attention elsewhere. I am not going to discuss where harm and wrong come apart, but I think it is intuitive to say that whether x is harmful is a moral question (at the very least insofar as identifying a harm raises a moral question) even if it does not perfectly line up with wrong in all uses.

It may seem that whatever your conception of right and wrong, establishing whether a harm has taken place does not get us very far, given that even if wrong is entirely based in harm, in any one practice there are multiple harms and benefits at play, which are decisive only when we can see all of them. The idea is that even if we show one harm does or does not occur, there may be so many other harms or benefits that we are only a fraction closer to an overall judgement. However, it is precisely this base-level, fine-grained, identification of individual harms which is missing from popular analyses of objectification. Many accounts of objectification which discuss objectification as wrong, or harmful, or bad, or whatever, yet never say precisely *how*, have skipped to the end. This thesis aims to get things right by bucking that trend. This chapter aims to identify whether and when there are any harms in objectification, and to provide some of the tools needed to make all-things-considered judgements on pornography and other topics in sexual ethics.

A quick terminological reminder: as explained at the beginning of Chapter Three, I will here be referring largely to *sexual* objectification, rather than non-sexual objectification. Some of the arguments that follow will carry over for non-sexual objectification (i.e. if it is the case that there is at least one example of non-harmful objectification, that will undermine the claim that objectification (broadly) is necessarily harmful), but this is less clear for harms which are related to the sexual nature of the examples I discuss. For those cases, the reader should assume I am speaking only about *sexual* objectification, though I will continue to use 'objectification' for brevity.

In Part One, I argue for the claim that objectification is not *necessarily* harmful. In Part Two, I address the intuition that there is something harmful in a great deal of objectification, by exploring explanations for this. In this section I show why competing explanations do not cut it, before offering my own in Part Three. In Part Three I offer an account of what it is that generates harms in some (common) cases of objectification; harm is generated when any of these three other things are occurring: (1) Consent Violation, (2) Context-Creeping, (3) Oppression. (We will see that these overlap a great deal.) Finally, in Part Four, I discuss the implications for pornography, and show that in pornography, none of these three factors occurs in a way any more worrying than in other media.

Part One – Objectification is not Necessarily Harmful

This section constitutes the fourth premise of the following argument, where premises one, two, and three were defended in previous chapters.

1. Pornography is understood as pieces of media which meet at least two of the following conditions:
    a. *It is sexually explicit [content]*
    b. *It is aimed at/intended for sexually arousing viewers [intention]*
    c. *It tends to be understood as intended for the purpose of arousing viewers [audience reception].*
2. Harm is understood as *the thwarting, setting back, or defeating of an interest, where an interest can be thought of as a welfare interest.*
3. Objectification is understood as *reduction to body or appearance, often characterised by instrumentalisation.*
4. Objectification is not necessarily harmful (given [2] and [3]).
5. Pornography is not necessarily harmful insofar as it involves objectification (given [1] and [4]).

1.1 The Scope of 'Necessarily'

For objectification to be *necessarily* harmful, it must be always harmful across all possible worlds, rather than just always harmful in the current context. 'All worlds' *includes* our current world though, so if it is the case that objectification is *not always* harmful in our current world, then it is *not always* harmful across *all* possible worlds, and, therefore *not necessarily harmful.*

It will help though, to set out the parameters of the claim I am discussing. I am discussing first whether objectification is always harmful across all possible worlds where a few key things remain fixed: our concepts of bodies, reduction, harm, consent, agency. Basically, whenever the terms I use mean roughly what they mean for us here and now, I intend arguments I make on this to apply. In Section 1.2 I will show that (insofar as these concepts are meaningful) objectification is not necessarily harmful. Since the examples I use to show this are from *our* world, my claim is a stronger one: it is not only in possible worlds (where things may be more egalitarian) that harmless objectification can happen, but in our current world too.[199]

After establishing that objectification is not *necessarily* harmful, I will narrow the scope, to examine ways in which objectification can be harmful in our world. In doing this, I consider important contextual factors which make certain kinds of harms more likely or more potent. (This is similar to Debi Sundahl's (2001, 176) view that objectification is fine in particular contexts, and to Marino (2008). Marino sets out to identify the contexts which render objectification harmful, I differ from this framing slightly, as I am not convinced that doing something *non-consensually* is best described as a feature of 'context', as Marino frames it. More on this later.) In sections 3.1 and 3.2 I discuss

[199] For the positive claim: 'x is necessarily harmful [in all worlds]', the 'necessary' version will be a stronger claim than 'x is always harmful [in just our world]'. However, for the negative claim: 'x is *not* necessarily harmful [in all worlds]', the 'necessary' version will be *weaker* than 'x is *not* always harmful [in just our world]'. So I am making both the stronger and the weaker negative claim in drawing my examples from our world, and so countering both the stronger and the weaker positive claim.

harms related to objectification which occur as a result of rape culture, patriarchy, white supremacy and fatphobia (and other -phobias and -isms). In doing this, I address the intuitions of those who might say, 'sure, objectification might not necessarily be harmful, but it looks like a lot of harm is still being done here'. In Part Four, I apply this work to pornography. There I again consider the current oppressive contexts, and particularly stigmatisation of sex workers, to argue that treating pornography as uniquely harmful[200] in our current context does more harm than good.

1.2 A Harmless Example

To demonstrate that it is not impossible for objectification to be harmless, we must give at least one example of something that fits the definition of objectification, but is not harmful. This may seem too easy; if all I have to do is show that there is one example of objectification that is not harmful, and we have our question answered, then why has this question been so troubling? After answering the question in this easy way, I then do the difficult but illuminating work of explaining why it is that we are still so worried about objectification being harmful, and what is peculiar about the harms of objectification (when present).

At least two of the examples from Chapter Three look like they may be harmless objectification.

- *Casual Sex:* Two consenting adults enjoy a one-night stand after meeting briefly in a club; the main reason they decided to spend the night together was the physical sexual appeal of the other person.
- *Squeeze 2:* At a party, a man discreetly squeezes his girlfriend's bottom, to communicate that she looks sexy.

Intuitively, this appears harmless, but just to be sure we will look at the definition of harm we are working with, and see how they match up.

> *We define harm as* ***the thwarting, setting back, or defeating of an interest,*** *where an interest is:*
>
> *In this category are the interests in the continuance for a foreseeable interval of one's life, and the interests in one's own physical health and vigour, the integrity and normal functioning of one's body, the absence of absorbing unpleasant pain and suffering, emotional stability, the absence of groundless anxieties and resentments , the capacity to engage normally in social intercourse and to enjoy and maintain friendships, at least minimal income and financial security, and a tolerable social and physical environment, and a certain amount of freedom from interference and coercion.*[201] [202]

[200] By 'uniquely harmful' I mean harmful in unique ways, or harmful to a greater degree, than other things, particularly other media.
[201] This is the modified version of Feinberg's account (1984, 34), defended in Chapter Two of this thesis.
[202] As mentioned in Chapter Two, this list looks complete to me, but I am not ruling out anything else being added to it with adequate justification.

In the case of Casual Sex, since it is stipulated that the two *enjoyed* a consensual encounter, I mean this to imply that neither participant feels as if[203] their interests have been set back. If we consider each interest above, it certainly seems possible to have casual sex that does not set back any of these. This is unlike in Squeeze 1, for example, where the woman squeezed by the stranger had her interest in bodily integrity set back, as well as freedom from interference,[204] and absence of suffering if the experience is distressing. (It may seem that in Casual Sex their interest in bodily integrity is still set back, but this cannot be so for *consensually* entering someone's personal space, as otherwise every time anyone touched another person we would have to call it a harm. We should conceive of 'bodily integrity' as *being the person in control of one's own body and boundaries*, which is not set back by consensual touching.) Since nothing from the list of interests above[205] has been set back, no harm is done here.

As with Casual Sex, if we assume that the touching in Squeeze 2 is consensual (which I intended it to be, driving the contrast with Squeeze 1), then again it looks like none of the above interests is being set back.

We saw in Chapter Three that Casual Sex and Squeeze 2 can come out as objectification on our account. In Casual Sex, the two participants have reduced one another to their bodies. (We also saw in Chapter Three, Section 3.3, how consensual reduction to body works). They treat each other as little above their bodies in the context of the sexual encounter, and given that they are relative strangers, they do not have a relationship outside the sexual encounter in which they treat one another differently.[206] So this means Casual Sex is an example of *harmless objectification.* I suspect that we would arrive at the result that Casual Sex is harmless on other accounts of harm as well; it is not my aim to demonstrate this here, but given that it seems intuitive that Casual Sex is harmless (other than to the sexually conservative thinker[207]) it is likely that this will serve as an example of

[203] This is subjective at this stage because I do not want to be accused of jumping the gun. Given that it is at least possible to be harmed without realising, I do not want to declare these two have not been harmed until we examine our list of possible harms (i.e. our list of interests which can be set back), so we can be sure no harms have flown in under the intuitive radar. This is a point of my approach: rather than making vague claims about when objectification is bad/wrong/harmful without defining these, I do low-level analysis to gain clarity on whether harm has been done and how.

[204] Remembering from Chapter Two: I see the distinction between these two as being as follows: a setback to *freedom from interference* covers things which violate our boundaries, whereas a setback to *bodily integrity* covers specifically things which violate *bodily* boundaries. The former is related to, but not identical to, coercion.

[205] I claim that we would be unlikely to find an interest being set back in this case even if the list of interests were expanded to include other plausible welfare interests.

[206] This demonstrates a point of difference between my account and Nussbaum's: she suggests that a context of a loving relationship can make objectifying sex not harmful or wrongful, whereas I (along with Marino (2008)) see the relationship between participants as less important, and consent as more so. More on this shortly.

[207] Such thinkers might have the view that sex outside marriage is inherently damaging. I do not entertain this view, partly because the conception of harm I have defended does not fit with an understanding of degradation (or similar) necessary for such a position, but mainly because it is steeped in outdated, dangerous, and misogynistic attitudes to sex in general. Further, it is worth noting that if this view were right, there would

harmless objectification for those using a different understanding of harm, providing they subscribe to my understanding of objectification.

Similarly, if we understand the man in Squeeze 2 as foregrounding his girlfriend's body parts, and squeezing her bottom because of this, rather than as some kind of 'charitable' act to just make her think he finds her sexy, then Squeeze 2 is objectifying. I am sure there are many other similar objectifying acts in the context of similar sexual relationships (taking naked photos of each other, dirty talk, etc). Again, this provides us with an example of *harmless objectification*, and again, I suspect these kinds of acts would come out as harmless on other accounts of harm too.

I will not spend any more time on this, as this is not the space for defending the claim that these examples should count as objectification (that was Chapter Three), but I will briefly say this: I expect that some might really want to conceive of these examples as *not* objectification, precisely *because* they intuitively see them as harmless. Given that many people see objectification as usually harmful, they may feel the need to justify cases like Casual Sex as *not objectifying* in order to preserve their intuition that Casual Sex is *not harmful.* I am showing here that this is unnecessary, as in this chapter I provide an explanation for why people find so much objectification to be harmful, which preserves the intuitions both that acts like Casual Sex are harmless and that they are objectifying.

This means that we can now take for granted that objectification is at least *not always* harmful. Remember: if it is the case that objectification is *not always* harmful in our current world, then it is *not always* harmful across *all* possible worlds, then, therefore *not necessarily harmful.* So, objectification is not always, and not necessarily, harmful, so how can we explain the intuition that there is something wrong in many cases?

Part Two – When is Objectification Harmful?

2.1 Competing Explanations

While objectification is not harmful 100% of the time, we still need to explain what makes objectification harmful some of the time, and why many people have strong intuitions about its harmfulness. If we take people's intuitions to be reliable, there is only one question here; if they are not, then there are two questions here (i.e. 'when *is* it harmful?', and 'why do we *think* of objectification as usually harmful?'). Given that my whole approach has been to capture the intuitions of feminists, I will be taking the answer to the second question to reliably track the answer to the first question;[208] I will answer 'what explains our intuitions that objectification is harmful' *via*

be little point talking about pornography, because if all sex outside marriage is harmful, or all recreational sex is harmful, then pornography is a drop in the ocean of harmful sex.

[208] Note, this does not mean that people's intuitions are 100% right: we have shown that objectification is not harmful 100% of the time, so I have already committed to the fallibility of some intuitions, i.e. the intuition some have that it is *always and necessarily* harmful. This can instead mean that people's intuitions generally track something true, but can be imprecise; for example, it could be the case that people think of objectification *itself* as harmful because objectification usually happens in a context which makes it harmful, but objectification *itself* can be harmless. In this case they are accurately tracking the prevalence of the harm,

answering 'when is objectification harmful', and so implicitly accepting the general (though not absolute) reliability of our intuitions.
There are four ways of explaining what is going on when objectification yields harm:

a) Objectification is generally always harmful, but there may be a couple of exceptions to the rule;
b) Objectification itself is sometimes harmful;
c) Objectification sometimes involves some other thing that is always harmful;
d) Objectification is never the harmful thing; harms that occur alongside objectification are coincidental and unrelated to it.

In the next four sections, I will look at three explanations which all take one of these routes. The Vaguely Kantian Views take route (a), Nussbaum takes route (b), (Marino takes either (b) or (c) depending on how you read her), and in Part Three I will take route (c). I will not consider route (d) as I think that does not give enough weight to popular intuitions around objectification (and its prevalence)[209] - remember in Chapters One and Three I argued for prioritising popular usage (outside the academy) and intuitions in defining terms in feminist philosophy.

In both (b) and (c) the harm is related to the objectification and is not merely external/incidental/coincidental. On (b), there is something about the objectification *itself* that is harmful. (This can work on a cluster view of objectification – like Nussbaum's – where something can count as objectification by virtue of possessing certain features, and some of those features are harmful, but other things can count as objectification by virtue of possessing some different, benign, features. This way, you have both harmless and harmful objectification, where in the harmful cases, the harm is directly from a feature of the objectification itself – even if that feature is only sometimes harmful, as long as it is the feature of objectification itself that is harmful, this is distinct from (c)). On (c) there is nothing harmful in the definition of objectification, but in particular contexts, objectification is likely to happen together with some other thing that is harmful, or happen in particular kinds of ways that are harmful. This is my view; there is something about how the objectification interacts with societal norms that makes certain kinds of harm more likely than others, but that harm is not necessary, nor is it intrinsic to the objectification.

To avoid having to make this cumbersome explanation every time I mention a harm associated with objectification in the way it is under description (c), and also to avoid confusing claim (c) with claims (b) or (d), I will from now use the following phrasing consistently: on my (c)-style account, I may say 'some objectification is harmful'. By this I will mean that the objectification has interacted with context, or occurred in such a way that harm is done. This contrasts with (b) accounts, under which I would instead say 'objectification is *itself* harmful'; the presence or absence of 'itself' is the key difference between (b) and (c). Describing (c) as 'some objectification is harmful' rather than as

---

but there is a minor error in that the harm is contingently associated with objectification, rather than objectification itself.

[209] If (d) were the case and harm were coincidental, we would expect to see relatively few instances of harmful objectification, but feminists are discussing a widespread phenomenon.

'objectification sometimes occurs in such a way or interacts with particular contexts in such a way that harm occurs' is both helpful for brevity and for making obvious the distinction from (d) 'objectification is never harmful; harms near objectification are merely coincidental'.

To anticipate precisely what I will argue for later, and also make these descriptions clearer: objectification is not necessarily harmful, but there are three factors which make much objectification harmful. These are as follows: (1) harm is done when it is non-consensual. (2) Our context (of particular norms) makes non-consensual objectification more likely. Non-consensual things are always harmful, but context again means further harms are generated in non-consensual sexual things (including objectification) than would be generated in non-sexual things.[210] (3) Objectification is often done in a way that utilises harmful stereotypes and is oppressive. I should note here: 'oppressive' may not be quite the right word, as 'oppressing' may be something that can only be done with certain authority conditions. However, I use it here to capture not just instances of objectification which enact oppression, but also instances of objectification which trade on or reinforce oppression. For example, someone making a homophobic catcall might not have the power themselves to oppress me, but their catcall draws on and endorses homophobic oppression.

The difficulty in making it clear that the claim is 'objectification sometimes involves some other thing that is always harmful' (rather than 'objectification is sometimes harmful') is in determining whether 'being non-consensual' and 'being oppressive' are *features* of objectification, or *other things* which happen alongside. These are kind of in-between, they are the *way* it happens, but they are not intrinsic to it. The harm occurring in a non-consensual thing is not generally from the thing itself, but from the breach of consent, and further, the way non-consensual x happens may be different (and harmful in particular ways) from the way non-consensual y happens. If consent is more likely to be breached because of some contextual factor, you get (c) 'objectification sometimes involves some other thing that is always harmful', rather than (b), where, as in Nussbaum's account, the objectification itself is sometimes harmful or (d), where any harm is irrelevant to the objectification.

Before moving on, I shall lay out a brief analogy to help make these distinctions clearer: take 'owning property'. (a) would be the view that owning property is almost always harmful, (b) would be the view that depending on internal features (say there are three kinds of ownership, 'sole material ownership' 'joint material ownership', and 'immaterial ownership',[211] and two kinds are always bad and one is not) owning property might be *in itself* harmful, (c) would be the view that owning property is often harmful, but it is so in virtue of contextual features that often accompany it, and those contextual features are always harmful (say, people often own property they do not need, that others could otherwise use to survive. Preventing someone from accessing essentials will always be harmful, so owning property will be harmful insofar as it happens in this way, but not 'in itself'), (d) would be the view that owning property is never harmful, and any harms that happen to

[210] This is why some of the arguments here will not carry over to non-sexual objectification.
[211] I have made these up to build the analogy, I am not offering an account of ownership!

occur around the ownership of property are unrelated to it, and we need make no reference to owning property in explaining them.

We are first going to look at some popular suggestions (which take routes (a) and (b) above) which I reject, before looking back at the examples and identifying three ways in which objectification can harm.

2.2 Vaguely Kantian Views

Objectification is generally always harmful, but there may be a couple of exceptions to the rule (explanation (a))

One explanation for the apparent harmfulness of objectification, could be that my list of 'interests' is missing something. It could be that 'not being reduced' or perhaps 'being always treated as a many-sided being' are also welfare interests. If this were the case, then objectification would (at first glance) be necessarily harmful in virtue of setting back these interests. This objection is what I refer to above as a Vaguely Kantian View, as it seems to involve an incorporation of the prioritisation of respect for autonomy and personhood present in Kantian approaches like Nussbaum's into my own framework.

To respond to this, I first want to note that despite the appearance of compatibility with my account, I think Kantian approaches will never sit well with my approach: while I do (as we will see next) prioritise consent, my account has little space for respect or personhood outside discussions of consent, and I have argued in this chapter and Chapter Two that our primary focus for normative questions around objectification should be elsewhere (harm). In Chapter Three I demonstrated that we can have cases of objectification that do not involve undermining autonomy, or instrumentalisation, as well as cases that do involve these but do not seem to be morally worrying. These features make the Vaguely Kantian View look less and less compatible with my picture. This is not sufficiently concrete to allow us to reject this position yet, though.

I have two more substantive responses to the Vaguely Kantian View. First, we must ask what we are to make of cases like Casual Sex. Casual Sex involves both participants being reduced to their bodies, but both participants are happy with the encounter. On the Vaguely Kantian View, it is either the case that these two participants are just mistaken about whether they are harmed; they feel fine (or think they feel fine), but they have actually had an interest set back.[212] Or, it is the case that Casual Sex is just an exception in that just in this instance participants temporarily lack the interest in not-being-reduced; there will always be the odd case that does not fit the rule, and this is it. Both of these routes are unappealing. In the first case, we are asked to move back from progressive approaches to sexual freedom and deprioritise people's understanding of their own experiences, and go down a road that involves committing to the kind of attitude that reeks of 'young women

[212] I take it that feeling fine is a good, but not flawless, indicator as to whether one has had an interest set back, in the same way that not having a fever is a good, but not flawless, indicator that you do not have the flu.

these days don't know what's good for them'.[213] In the second case, we must admit that our account does not capture one of our paradigm examples. Further, the claim that it is 'just one exception' does not hold. Casual sex is not a fringe case, it is not an uncommon activity, or deviant; it is extremely common. Further, much sex that does not count as casual will also involve reduction to bodies; people in all kinds of relationships (including long-term monogamy) can find joy in objectifying and being objectified by the person they are having sex with. (In fact, I think it is more difficult to show when reduction *is not* happening in sex than when it is. Remember: reduction involves treating someone as little above, or 'foregrounding', their body or appearance.) It would be a poor account of the harms of objectification that tried to pass off something so widespread as exceptions to the rule, where the rule is meant to capture a welfare interest.

Finally, a much simpler way to reject the Vaguely Kantian View is to say that, actually, we just do not have an interest in being treated as many-sided all the time. If I go to a job interview, expecting to be tested on my computer skills, and the interviewer spends half the time getting to know me as a person, asking about my family, complimenting my shoes, I would be annoyed. When I get the bus, I usually want the bus driver to treat me as nothing more than a bus passenger, not as someone sharp-witted, not as someone with whom to talk about your feelings, not as an average mathematician. I think we very often want most aspects of ourselves ignored, so that we can get on with our day. Being reduced to merely an order number in an Argos queue does not seem harmful or undesirable. Recalling Chapter Three: in many situations, we choose to *foreground* particular features of ourselves, and often want only those particular features paid attention to by others.[214] Problems can arise both when we are reduced to some features when we do not want to be, and when we are treated as many-sided when we want to be treated in terms of only some features.

2.3 Nussbaum

Objectification itself is sometimes harmful (explanation (b))

As we saw in Chapter Three, Nussbaum's approach to when objectification is harmful is not one hundred per cent clear. Recalling her definition of objectification: a thing counts as objectification if it possesses a sufficient number of features from a list. Some of these features (instrumentalisation in particular) will be harmful. This means that some things will count as objectification, and be harmful, by virtue of the same thing. (This is why for Nussbaum, objectification itself is sometimes harmful, rather than the harm being external to the objectification). Marino (2008) offers a

[213] While I have rejected simple subjectivism in Chapter Two, and accept the possibility of people being wrong about what their experiences count as, I think this position would be a bit much. It would involve denying the testimony of everyone who has enjoyed casual sex, marginalising sex workers and models, and forgetting all the reasons we have had for moving away from sex negativity. Further, as I show next, it is not just casual sex that has to be doubted; most of us are happy to be reduced in some way most of the time. It would be implausible to say that when the bus driver treats me as nothing more than a bus passenger, I am being harmed.

[214] Further, which features we want to be treated in terms of can change, as the situation changes. If I start having an asthma attack, I want my bus driver/sex partner to start treating me in a different way to how they were treating me before, and generally, because things have changed, they will do so.

characterisation of Nussbaum's account which I think is plausible; she identifies three features of a relationship which Nussbaum claims make (otherwise harmful) objectification between participants benign: *intimacy, symmetry,* and *mutuality.* To be clear, Marino is not endorsing this view; I am using Marino's explanation of Nussbaum's account here because Marino does an excellent job of making the unclear parts of Nussbaum's account much clearer. Nussbaum defends the significance of these features in discussing her Lawrentian lovers examples (Nussbaum 1995, 275, 290), but I will also use two examples from my own collection.

- *Squeeze 1:* At a party, a man discreetly squeezes a stranger's bottom, to communicate that she looks sexy.
- *Squeeze 2:* At a party, a man discreetly squeezes his girlfriend's bottom, to communicate that she looks sexy.

Nussbaum argues that in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* Connie and Mellors avoid malign objectification by having 'a context of mutual respect and rough social equality' and through the absence of instrumentalisation. These elements are tied together, as Nussbaum claims that the context of intimacy, symmetry, and mutuality (which appear to be what is meant by a 'context of mutual respect') can defang the instrumentalisation. This context of an intimate, symmetrical, mutual relationship could here also explain the difference between Squeeze 1 and 2; we see Squeeze 1 as intuitively harmful, but not Squeeze 2, because in Squeeze 2 that context of such a relationship is present, but absent in Squeeze 1. But what *is* this context? Marino explains that for Nussbaum 'intimacy' captures that the two people have some kind of 'narrative history' which is essential for avoiding treating a person as a mere tool (Marino 2008, 348). 'Symmetry' and 'mutuality' mean here that the objectification is not one-sided, and that the way the two people behave towards each is comparable and connected. Marino suggests, (acknowledging that Nussbaum's description is unclear), that *symmetry* means treating the other person in a comparable way to the way they are treating you, while mutuality "requires that each person's use of the other be linked together" (2008, 349), for example, in the first person's objectification inspiring self-objectification in the second person. These three features - intimacy, symmetry, and mutuality - involve, for Nussbaum, a 'regard for humanity' and 'rough social equality', though it is not wholly clear how all of these elements connect.

2.4 Marino on Nussbaum

Marino shows that Nussbaum's account does not work; here I lay out and expand on Marino's case against Nussbaum, before explaining Marino's own account of harmful[215] objectification. I will argue that we should diverge from Marino's position in a small but important way. First, I will briefly explain Marino's argument that bad instrumentalisation cannot be made benign by the addition of the three features of a context of respect. Second, I shall explain an example which demonstrates

[215] Marino actually works in terms of 'wrong' rather than 'harm'. I do not discuss this here as I have already made my case in favour of centring harm in Chapter Two, and I do not think this discrepancy in terminology has any bearing on the claims I make in this section.

that we can have intuitively morally acceptable objectification and instrumentalisation which does not involve the three features (intimacy, symmetry, and mutuality). Finally we will move on to Marino's alternative proposal: *consent* and *respect for autonomy* are what make the moral difference. I will briefly explain where I diverge from Marino, in leaving out 'autonomy', before further defending the consent condition in the next section.

Marino shows that we cannot find an understanding of instrumental use that is generally bad but made benign when combined with intimacy, symmetry, and mutuality. If someone were to be used as a *mere* means (which she refers to as *strong* instrumentalisation), the usual interpretation, Marino claims, is that this is not acceptable regardless of whether that person is usually not treated in that way (Marino 2008, 350, 351). If person A were to force B into a sex act, in order to satisfy A's desires, and with no concern for the converse interests of B; that is **never** okay, regardless of what else is going on. If A and B are in an intimate long-term relationship (satisfying *intimacy*), and B treats A similarly (*symmetry*) and responsively (*mutuality*) to how A treats B, this would not transform the sex act into a permissible one. The kind of relationship the participants are in makes no difference. One could say at this point, 'Okay, those three conditions can be met with this still being bad, but what about "rough social equality and regard for humanity"?' First, Nussbaum seems to think that these two conditions are somehow constituted by, or rhetorically equivalent to, the other three conditions, but regardless of this, their being met would not rescue this case: if A and B have rough social equality, and their relationship is generally characterised by regard for humanity, this incident will be more surprising to B, but no less wrong.[216]

Similarly for *weak* instrumentalisation (where a person is treated as means, but not a *mere* means), the instrumentalisation may not be harmful, but if it *is*, the relationship of the participants can do nothing to change that. Imagine if in Squeeze 2, the woman had asked her boyfriend (whom she is in an *intimate* long-term relationship with) before the party, 'Please don't touch me sexually this evening, I'm not in the mood', and imagine he still squeezed her bottom at the party. In this case he has definitely done something harmful: he has set back her interest in bodily integrity and freedom from interference by touching her non-consensually, and the fact that they are in a generally respectful relationship does not change that.[217] Now imagine that the woman had responded to the squeeze (knowing he does not want *his* bottom touched either) by squeezing her boyfriend's bottom, thereby meeting *mutuality* and *symmetry* conditions. This would not make his behaviour acceptable. This case meets all of Nussbaum's mitigating conditions, but just results in *both* parties having done something wrong, rather than *neither*.

[216] In fact, Marino argues that the context of a relationship like this can make instrumentalisation *worse*: it is easier to coerce and manipulate someone you have a standing relationship with, as the context of the relationship means that there are already at play actual or imagined responsibilities and commitments, such that saying 'no' to instrumental use may be more difficult (Marino 2008, 350).

[217] To anticipate the objection that this relationship probably is not that respectful, let us not meddle with the example and say that in this case, it is. It is surely possible for people who generally respect one another to nevertheless on occasion treat one another badly.

Conversely, in Casual Sex, the two strangers may consensually use one another for sexual gratification, while lacking intimacy in Nussbaum's sense,[218] and no harm is done. Marino, too, points out that *symmetry* and *mutuality* are unnecessary for harmless instrumentalisation:

> "Presumably the idea that symmetry and mutuality matter comes from an intuition that pleasure in sex should be spread around equally. But there is no moral rule that this must be so if the participants do not want it to be so, and certainly there are sex acts in which A may forego A's own pleasure to focus on B, purely out of excitement or the desire to make B happy. And this shows it is the choices of the participants that matter, not symmetry or mutuality." (Marino 2008, 353)[219]

The one-sided sex in this example from Marino, and the case of Casual Sex, both demonstrate that intimacy, symmetry, and mutuality, are unnecessary for: benign sex, benign instrumentalisation, and benign objectification.

2.5 Marino's account

Marino argues that instead of intimacy, symmetry, and mutuality, what is needed for benign objectification is *consent,* and a minimal *respect* for the other person. These two features are possible among people with all sorts of relationships, and may sometimes be easier between strangers than those in intimate relationships. Marino's view is that there is nothing inherently or necessarily troubling about objectification, while background conditions only matter insofar they render genuine consent more or less possible (Marino 2008, 346).[220]

To do this Marino first argues that consent to being used (*weak*[221] instrumentalisation) is possible, against those who hold that if one is consenting, one is not being used. This bears some similarity to the consent to harm arguments discussed in Chapter Two, and to the argument on the compatibility of consent and reduction discussed in Chapter Three, so we need not spend much time on it here. I think it is fairly intuitive that the bus driver consents to being used as a means to her passengers' ends, and for the sexual case, Marino gives the example of consensual BDSM wherein consent is constantly assured and being used can be an important feature of the interaction. Marino states this claim as:

---

[218] I.e. some kind of 'narrative history' (Nussbaum 1995, 287).

[219] Marino goes on to argue that it is an overly optimistic view of sex that considers good sex to always involve mutual sexual pleasure. I would go further than this, as I do not think the problem with this view is that it is 'optimistic'. It seems to me that good sex need not even *aim at* mutual sexual pleasure: say a person has a headache, and her partner, to try and distract her and relieve her pain, performs oral sex on her. Assuming the partner freely chooses to do this and feels good about doing it, this to me sounds like good sex which does not aim at *mutual* sexual pleasure.

[220] In this formulation her view is almost the same as mine, but I will later argue that there is something peculiar about the way objectification tends to happen in our current context that yields particular kinds of harms.

[221] Remember, strong instrumentalisation is already ruled out as always bad on Marino's account, since it always involves autonomy denial (Marino 2008, 351). In Chapter Three I showed that Nussbaum can claim that *strong* instrumentalisation always implies autonomy denial. Given this, consent to strong instrumentalisation seems unlikely to be possible, or at least meaningful, but I do not explore this here.

> "A uses B in the weakly instrumental way when A generally ignores B's particular desires and wishes, and uses B to pursue his own ends, but is attentive to whether B's consent – both to particular practices and to the use itself – is ongoing." (Marino 2008, 357)

So far, I am in agreement with Marino, and think this can help explain how consent and reduction to body/appearance are perfectly compatible as discussed in Chapter Three, Section 3.3. Marino then reiterates that consensual weak instrumental use can be benign in both sexual and non-sexual cases. As she does this though, Marino slips from talking about 'consent' to talking about 'respect for autonomy', as if they are the same thing/interchangeable. Earlier on in the paper, it seemed to be the case that respect for autonomy is important as it enables consent, and that consent is the moral difference-maker. If this latter interpretation of Marino is right, then when explaining what makes some objectification harmful, we only need one feature: absence of consent. 'Lack of respect for autonomy' need not be listed, as respect for autonomy is only relevant as a conduit to consent; if respect for autonomy were present but consent were absent, I expect Marino would agree that is not good enough. Meanwhile if consent and respect for autonomy are the same thing, then, again, we do not need to list both; consent does the job. My small divergence from Marino is to drop talk of 'autonomy' entirely, and leave 'consent' as the key feature here. As well as the important reason above, another reason I drop 'autonomy' and retain 'consent', rather than the other way around, is that, as I argued in Chapter Three, autonomy is a tricky concept, and much more ambiguous than 'consent' in these contexts (especially given that the importance of consent in sex is already well established outside philosophy).

That is not to say that consent is entirely simple. Marino notes that certain conditions make consent impossible; she claims that *genuine* consent is only possible where the parties involved have social and political equality (Marino 2008, 355). I worry though, that two people having total social and political equality is going to be very rare, if possible at all, but we do not want to say that no consent is ever possible. We also do not want to deny the role of social and political power in consent altogether. If A is B's boss, and A earns a six-figure salary and B earns minimum wage, and A is a white man and B is a black woman, and A tells B that she will get a promotion if she has sex with him, B may end up saying 'yes' to this because she feels unable to say 'no'. This is not to say that it is impossible for B to enthusiastically consent, but rather that *if* B had not wanted to consent, she may be more compelled to say 'yes'. I differ from Marino in thinking that consent across power imbalances is *possible*, but agree that power imbalances massively increase the likelihood of coercion, and make dissent more difficult. There are two connected reasons I do not want to commit to consent across power balances being impossible: firstly, as already mentioned, this would mean *most* consent is impossible, as power imbalances are everywhere and there are massive differences in power across all demographic criteria, and secondly, because this would in turn mean denying the testimony of most people who claim to have had any consensual experiences. I think doing so would deny the agency of most marginalised people in an unacceptable way. At the same time, we should be aware of the scale of coercive power that those with more privilege have over those with less, and acknowledge that power imbalances constrain the options of those with less power, making

invalid consent more likely. To deny this constraint of options would also be to deny the testimony of marginalised people in an unacceptable way.

To quickly recap: I agree with Marino that consent is important, but disagree that there is any need for 'autonomy' in explaining when objectification is harmful, when we already have 'consent' to work with. I also disagree that we need socio-political equality for all consent to work (which is fortunate, as I think it is rare if not impossible), but agree that inequality does bear on consent insofar as having less power can foster coercion and make dissent much harder.

Returning to Marino's position then; if we interpret her as using 'consent' and 'respect for autonomy' interchangeably, given that Marino is accepting Nussbaum's account of what objectification *is*, and that 'autonomy denial' is a feature of objectification, then Marino's position fits explanation (b) above: *objectification is sometimes harmful* (i.e. it is harmful when it is the kind of objectification which includes the feature of autonomy denial). If instead, we interpret her as using 'respect for autonomy' as merely a condition for consent, and consent as the sole difference-maker, then her position fits explanation (c) from the previous section: *objectification sometimes involves some other thing (consent violation) which is always harmful.*

I suggest then, with Marino, that we should reject Nussbaum's suggestion for when objectification is harmful, and instead should look to whether someone has *consented* to objectification for the difference-maker. Marino and I differ in two ways, first that I drop 'respect for autonomy' using only 'consent', second in that I think there are a further two ways in which objectification may involve harm (though one of these is also rooted in consent violation). Next, I elaborate on my position on the role of consent, and then move onto the other ways in which objectification can involve harm.

Part Three – My View

Now that we have looked at competing explanations for the (perceived or actual) harmfulness of objectification, I defend my own position. The reason people so often think of objectification as harmful is that it *there is often harm going on.*

In the following three sections, I argue that there are three things which often happen with objectification, rendering it harmful (*not in itself)*. Remember that these will be neither merely *coincidental* harms, nor harms *merely because* they are objectifying. Instead, these harms are related to how objectification often happens in our society. The relevant features of our society are important contextual factors that make certain kinds of harms more likely or more potent. When I discuss the three harm-making factors, I consider harms related to objectification which occur as a result of rape culture, as well as: patriarchy, white supremacy, anti-blackness, islamophobia, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, and fatphobia, as well as other widespread prejudices. After this, in Part Four, I again consider current oppressive contexts, and particularly stigma against sex workers, to argue that treating pornography as uniquely harmful in our context does more harm than good.

3.1 My View: Consent

My position will be as follows:

> *(c) Objectification sometimes involves some other thing [consent violation, context creeping, and oppression] which is always harmful.*

I propose that objectification is harmful when it is non-consensual, and since much objectification is non-consensual, much objectification is harmful. I do not think this will be particularly controversial; it is already present in the literature and should explain why it is intuitive to many that objectification is harmful. I do not mean to imply here that consent is an 'independent value';[222] objectification being non-consensual will not be harmful in exactly the same ways as something else being non-consensual. We shall look now at precisely what harms are involved and how, with non-consensual objectification.

As we have seen, Squeeze 1 and 2 are morally different, and this judgement lines up with *harms* specifically related to consent: in Squeeze 1, her interest in 'bodily integrity' and 'freedom from interference' has been set back (possibly as well as other interests)[223] because someone has touched her body without her consent. In Squeeze 2, no interests have been set back. It seems obvious, then, that Squeeze 1 is harmful in ways that Squeeze 2 is not in virtue of the consent violation. It is important to note that this it is an asymmetrical relationship: ***all* non-consensual objectification will count as harmful in virtue of the agent's interest in 'freedom from interference' being set back, this does not mean that *consensual* things are automatically harm*less* – there are still many other ways interests can be set back.** Further, if we remember that 'Objectification' means roughly 'reducing someone to their body or appearance' it becomes obvious that when objectification is harmful, it is more likely to involve the setting back of bodily integrity, because reduction to body will often involve doing something to or with the body. Setbacks to bodily integrity will be particularly important kinds of setbacks because of the implications for personal safety, as we will see.

To pre-empt an objection: it may seem that these explanations are a little weak, or coldly detached, considering how harmful being objectified non-consensually *feels*. An explanation of the harm you experience getting catcalled may not feel like it is quite captured by your 'freedom from interference' being set back. For example, a stranger hassling you with requests for a charity donation, and a stranger hassling you with requests to see your breasts, do not feel the same. I suggest that this is because in all non-consensual sexual objectification (regardless of whether there is bodily contact) it is easy and reasonable to feel threatened with non-consensual bodily contact

[222] By 'independent value' I mean that it does not interact with, or depend upon, other relevant factors. In saying that consent is *not* an independent value, I am claiming that it *does* interact with other factors, and non-consensual x may look different to non-consensual y.

[223] Given the world we live in (where women+ are very often touched without their consent, and where this abuse is largely unpunished), when a woman is touched without her consent her suffering goes beyond just the setting back of her bodily integrity. Usually, at least her interests in 'absence of suffering' and 'a tolerable social and physical environment' will also be set back, because of how it feels to live as someone who is particularly likely to be treated this way in a patriarchy with a 'rape culture'. More on this shortly.

and other violence. While catcalling in itself might not look like it causes harm beyond 'freedom from interference', given the patriarchal context we live in where women+ are extremely likely to experience sexual violence, and making certain kinds of comments (non-consensual verbal and non-touching objectification) justifiably increases women+'s fear of physical violence (Fairchild and Rudman 2008), what could just be a few words actually sets back our 'ability to engage normally in social intercourse', 'emotional stability', and 'absence of suffering'.[224]

Because women+ have lived under constant threat of violence from men, non-consensual sexual words and implications can do much more harm to us than non-consensual things which are not sexual. Having consent overridden may, in itself, only be harmful by virtue of one interest being set back ('a certain amount of freedom from interference'), but given the context of patriarchy, how much we value self-direction, and the implications for our safety, many more interests are being set back when consent is overridden.[225] A setback to bodily integrity will be a particularly important kind of harm, given the importance of physical safety to our wellbeing; setbacks to freedom from interference (like catcalls) which also imply potential setbacks to bodily integrity should be treated seriously by virtue of this implication. To put this in real terms: if a man is willing to sexually harass you verbally, what assurance do you have that he will not sexually harass you physically? (The same is not true for interferences that do not involve sexual objectification: we do not all know a girl who was assaulted after ignoring a request to sign a pledge for the environment, but women+ are regularly sexually and non-sexually assaulted for ignoring non-consensual sexual objectification in the forms of catcalls and advances).

This appreciation of context helps explain why a 'setback to interest in non-interference and bodily integrity' does not capture how bad non-consensual sexual objectification can be, in contrast to other non-consensual things. Different kinds of setbacks to bodily integrity can have differing impacts on one's general wellbeing (and so may snowball into setbacks to other interests, like 'absence of suffering', to differing degrees). For example, a friend flicking your ear non-consensually may be annoying but feels completely different to a friend non-consensually flicking your nipple. This amounts to a big difference between the two harms. Because of our (rape) culture, more setbacks happen when the non-consensual thing is sexual.[226] When these kinds of interferences happen, we feel profoundly unsafe, and suffer in a way that we do not when being flicked on the ear. Similarly, when we are subject to a setback to bodily integrity and/or freedom from interference from someone of greater social power than ourselves, we are also likely to experience (entirely reasonable) feelings of unsafety. If you are a poor woman living in rented accommodation, and your landlord non-consensually flicks you on the ear while reminding you your rent is due, you might

[224] Even in cases where one is not afraid of violence from a specific catcaller, the catcall may still increase fear of violence generally.
[225] This draws attention to a strength of my approach, and a place of departure from Marino: that the harmfulness of a thing moves with context.
[226] Rape culture may not be the *only* reason these things are more harmful; I only claim that it is *a* reason. Thanks to Robbie Morgan for drawing my attention to this.

experience additional setbacks by virtue of the power imbalance, rendering that interference more damaging to your feelings of personal safety and security than if a friend had flicked your ear.

So, objectification is seen as often harmful because objectification is often *non-consensual*, and non-consensual sexual objectification yields particular kinds of harms because of its sexual component and involvement of the body. The intuition that much or all objectification is harmful can be made sense of by the fact that so much objectification is non-consensual,[227] and consent violation always sets back some interests, and often sets back many.

Tricky Consent

Let us now return to another of our original examples, as it may be initially unclear whether the harm is captured by non-consensuality. I propose that it is still consent that is making the difference, and that it is the intuition that this seems non-consensual that motivates our judgement of it as harmful. We can see this by looking at different versions of this example. Recall Trophy Wife:

> A rich husband tells his young and beautiful wife that he expects her company at a party, to make him appear more successful and impressive.

Consider three different versions of this example:

a) *Trophy Wife A*: A rich husband tells his young and beautiful wife that he expects her company at a party, to make him appear more successful and impressive. She does not consent to this, but he coerces he into cooperating with his request.

b) *Trophy Wife B*: A rich husband tells his young and beautiful wife that he expects her company at a party, to make him appear more successful and impressive. She does not want to consent to this, but she does consent because she sees it as the better/safer option given the unequal power in their relationship.

c) *Trophy Wife C:* A rich husband tells his young and beautiful wife that he expects her company at a party, to make him appear more successful and impressive. She consents to this wholeheartedly and it is actively what she wants to do. She has the power in this relationship to dissent if she wanted to.

In Trophy Wife A, this is obviously harmful as it is entirely non-consensual, and her interest in a 'tolerable social and physical environment' is probably being set back in addition to the 'freedom from coercion'. So far, so obvious. In Trophy Wife C, if we treat the description above as entirely accurate, there seems to be nothing morally worrying about her situation. Trophy Wife B is tricky: some feminists will argue that these kinds of decisions are not consensual, as the power imbalance makes it impossible for her consent to be valid,[228] whilst others will argue that we should consider

[227] See Fairchild and Rudman (2008) for a collection of studies demonstrating how common harassment like catcalling is, and again Everyone's Invited (2021).

[228] Many feminists, such as MacKinnon (1991), have argued that various practices are 'not really' consented to, because the consent is taking place in a relationship where the power is so unequal that they could not freely

her consent to be genuine so as to avoid denying her agency (and acknowledging that most of our decisions are influenced by factors that limit our options). I do not think I need to make a commitment either way here,[229] though I do want to emphasise that consent to things we do not really want to do is at least possible; I consent to eating vegetables I do not like, and all the time people validly consent to sex they do not really want for overriding reasons such as attempting to get pregnant. If it is the case that Trophy Wife B's consent is not valid, then her situation is harmful in the same kinds of ways as Trophy Wife A's, as it is non-consensual. If Trophy Wife B's consent is valid, then it will still be harmful insofar as it is an unpleasant experience for her (she may have her interest in a tolerable social and physical environment set back, for example). If we assume that she does not enjoy going to the party (which is a relatively safe assumption given that she did not want to go) then she experiences whatever harms there are in having a miserable evening, and whatever other harms there are involved in being in a relationship where one feels unable to honestly express dissent.[230] At any rate, we do not need objectification to do the explanatory work in such a case.

I suggest that the reason we see the Trophy Wife example (the original example, without stipulations) as being an example of harmful objectification is that we assume it is either Trophy Wife A or B going on. I suspect that no-one, on reading the original example, assumed Trophy Wife C was going on. I suspect that many feminists find Trophy Wife C to be a very unusual case,[231] and see C as harmful in the ways that A and B are. This means that consent is still plausible as a fundamental difference-maker. Having said this, there are still some cases that need further exploration where consent appears to be present, but there is still some harm going on.

To recap: my intuition that much of objectification is harmful, and some people's intuitions that *all* objectification is harmful, can be made sense of by the fact that so much objectification is non-consensual. Non-consensual reduction to body always sets back some interests, and often sets back many.

3.2 My View: Context Creeping

The second kind of harm I describe explains the popular condemnation of objectification in examples like 'Model'. Recall the Model example:

> An advert for a new American Apparel store featuring a woman in underwear with her legs spread wide and her crotch in the centre of the picture, accompanied by the words 'now open'.

---

choose those practices. This approach has been taken to sadomasochism, and disproportionately to practices participated in by women of colour (Sati and footbinding are favourite examples). This should make us suspicious of this kind of argument in general, and examine who gets to have the luxury of agency under these accounts.

[229] Although given my concern in the previous footnote, I suppose it is obvious which way I lean.

[230] Perhaps again 'freedom from coercion' and 'a tolerable environment'.

[231] And perhaps, in trying to conceive of Trophy Wife C, find themselves seeing it as some version of Trophy Wife B.

We know that the model consented to be in the picture, and to the picture being used to advertise clothing. So at first glance the consent discussion cannot help us work out what is harmful here. There are, however, identifiable harms done, and these harms are in some way related to the objectification.

It seems plausible that adverts like the Model example contribute to and help sustain an environment where non-consensual sexual objectification, and sexual assault, are both widespread and treated as permissible (or at least not warranting serious punishment).

Remember, in Chapter Three, Section 1.2 we established that it makes sense to say that (a) a poster can *do* things (like objectify), and (b) it can do things to a group of people (like 'women and those read as women'). When people claim, 'that poster objectifies women', an element of that claim is that it contributes to many women's objectification. The idea here is that the poster makes it the case that other women (not just the one pictured) are objectified by other men in the world. So the existence of posters that demonstrate the objectification of a particular woman communicate that that is acceptable behaviour, and offer an example of how to treat women. This kind of claim can be explained using speech act theory (Langton 2009c)[232] or social ontology (Jenkins 2017), but all we need for our purposes is to demonstrate the plausibility of the claim that adverts and other media influence people. This is so intuitive (if adverts didn't influence people, then most companies would be wasting a lot of time and money!) that we do not have studies demonstrating such a general claim, though there are multitudinous examples of studies arguing that particular kinds of adverts are more effective at influencing people in particular ways, which implicitly means that adverts do, in general, influence people (for example Alpert, Alpert, and Maltz 2005). There is also evidence that objectifying adverts and television shows in particular have a harmful influence (Suarez and Gadalla 2010; Edwards et al. 2011; Lanis and Covell 1995), and this is supported by popular intuitions (for example, 70,000 people signed a petition criticising an advert for damaging women's body image (Baring 2015)).

But why is 'communicating that objectification is acceptable' harmful (to women other than the one in the picture) if not all objectification is harmful? Causing more objectification will only be a problem if the kind of objectification being caused is, for the most part, harmful. This is precisely the claim being made: *that the kind of objectification being caused by these posters is harmful.* What might seem puzzling is that if the poster leads by example, why would an example of consensual objectification encourage non-consensual objectification? Two reasons. First, while the woman who posed for the image consented to be objectified, the image may represent a non-consenting woman.

For example, a woman might consent to be pictured tied up and pulling a frightened expression, in which case the picture represents a non-consenting woman, while the model herself was consenting. The audience will see the non-consenting woman, so that is the example they learn

[232] Which could be assisted by McGlynn's explanation of how pornography can function as a particular kind of propaganda (McGlynn 2016).

from. Second, I propose that there is a phenomenon whereby many (albeit consensual) images of objectification in various contexts contribute to many cases of non-consensual objectification[233] because of their insidious spread through and embedding in non-sexual contexts.

I term this phenomenon Context-Creeping Objectification.

What these adverts do is put sexually objectifying content *outside of a sexual context.* Sexual objectification is entirely appropriate, if not unavoidable, in the context of sex acts. Selling clothes is not (ordinarily) a sex act. When we bring sexual objectification into the process of selling clothes, we communicate that it is appropriate to treat women as sex objects in the context of selling clothes, that is, *outside* of a consensual sexual relationship or encounter. If this happens in all kinds of advertising, all genres of television shows, movies, literature, then, I suggest, this contributes to many of the *non-consensual* sexual objectifications that occur. For example, it is much easier for a manager to stare at a job applicant's breasts during an interview if there are countless uncriticised examples of objectification of women in other non-sexual contexts. Why might this happen? The **context creeping** of objectification in adverts, music videos etc. contributes to a cluster of rape myths,[234] which can be represented by one in particular: that women are always up for sex. For ease I am treating that *particular* rape myth as representative of a group of rape myths, all of which only make sense with the background assumption that women are always up for sex and/or they are up for sex even when they are not explicitly expressing the desire to have sex, including:

- women mean yes when they say no
- women secretly want to be raped
- women doing certain things (smiling, accepting a drink, dressing a particular way) indicates willingness to have sex[235]

These examples of objectification outside of sexual contexts give the impression, through their existing in great number across a great many contexts, that women are happy to be sexually objectified regularly and across many contexts. This is not true: women only want to be sexually objectified some of the time. So what ends up happening is that women+ are objectified[236] regularly and in many contexts *when they do not want it.* It does come back to consent, then: I suggest that sexual objectification in a non-sexual context makes *non-consensual* objectification more likely, and is harmful in that way.[237]

---

[233] For recent evidence of how widespread sexual harassment, abuse, and assault are, see the site 'Everyone's Invited' (2021), which, as of 10/04/2021, contains 14,545 testimonies from students at school and university.
[234] There might also be a connection to other misogynistic myths which are not *rape* myths, like 'women are obsessed with their appearance' but I do not explore that here.
[235] See Edwards *et al.* (2011), McMahon and Farmer (2011), and Sleath and Bull (2015) for the prevalence of these kinds of myths.
[236] I am thinking here of cases like Squeeze 1, catcalling, and staring, which are done regularly to women in day-to-day life.
[237] It is additionally harmful in adding to widespread fear of non-consensual sexual attention and unfair treatment of women.

I propose **Context Creeping** as pointing to a particular pattern of objectification which covers treating women+ like sex objects in many contexts, where harm is generated down the line as women+ are treated as always available for objectification.[238]

I want to emphasise that this is not a prudish 'keep sex in the bedroom and out of sight' position; this is a claim that there is something wrong with treating women+ as appropriate targets of sexual objectification *all the time* rather than *only at the times which they indicate they want it*. On this view, a poster advertising a sex party using objectifying images might be totally fine,[239] but the American Apparel advert is not, because the former does not contribute to the belief that women generally appreciate sexual objectification *outside of a sexual context*. This is what I think is so uncomfortable about the American Apparel advert; it contributes to all of these non-consensual cases like being sexualised non-consensually in the office.

Is there any empirical support for this phenomenon? Yes! There are a few studies suggesting rape myth acceptance is affected by objectifying adverts (Suarez and Gadalla 2010; Edwards et al. 2011; Lanis and Covell 1995). There is also evidence that rape myth acceptance affects the likelihood of sexual assault (which counts – perhaps trivially – as non-consensual objectification) (Lackie and de Man 1997). Though more research on the effects of different media is needed, there is (a) evidence that there is plenty of objectification in all media[240] and (b) evidence that rape myths are extremely wide-spread (Sleath and Bull 2015; Suarez and Gadalla 2010; McMahon 2010; Edwards et al. 2011). I am proposing Context-Creeping Objectification as a link between, and a plausible explanation of, the existing evidence.

3.3 My View: Oppressions

As mentioned above, I am using 'oppression' for want of a better word, to cover instances which oppress, but also cases which trade on, reinforce, or endorse oppression. While the sexual objectification we have dealt with so far has been a general reduction to body parts or appearance, there are also examples of objectification in which the particular language used or ways in which body parts are emphasised carry other meanings.

A fat person can be reduced to their weight, and while doing this, the objectifier brings in stereotyped associations with greed. A Japanese woman can be reduced to her skin colour, and while doing this, the objectifier brings in stereotyped associations with submissiveness.

I do not suggest that this is a particular kind or sub-category of objectification, and I do not think different stereotypes and different kinds of oppression are reducible to one analytic (what this means will become clear shortly). Instead, I am claiming that if objectification is done in a racist or

[238] I do not talk here about what happens when men are objectified in the media, but it will be different. This is because there are different norms and myths for different groups and here I discuss particular rape myths about women (outlined above). These myths will affect people who are taken (correctly or otherwise) to be women.

[239] The other aspect of context is *where* the poster is; in the office, this would not be acceptable.

[240] Just turn on the television to see this: most TV shows, adverts and films have women in decorative roles.

fatphobic way, it is harmful for being racist or fatphobic. I do not think the objectification framework needs to add anything to these kinds of harms. To be clear, when objectification is fatphobic, it is harmful by virtue of enacting fatphobia, not by virtue of objectification.

That might sound like a strange thing to emphasise, but it is responding to a trend in the literature of seeing racist objectification (as the usual example in anti-pornography literature (A. Dworkin 1994, 153; MacKinnon 1987b, 199–200)) as an especially potent, bad, kind of objectification. Jennifer Nash (2008) explains how some feminists have described race as a *compounding* factor; that objectification of women is bad, and that racialised objectification is *even worse*. Along with Nash, I do not think this is a good move, not just because I do not think objectification itself is bad, but also because Nash is right in arguing that different oppressions do not straightforwardly stack along the same axis; misogynoir[241] is not just misogyny amplified, it is a distinct phenomenon. This point in Nash's case was intended to apply to the kind of account where the wrongness of objectification has already been established, and racism (of *any* kind) is seen as an exacerbation of the central issue: sexism. This treats different kinds of racisms as interchangeable, and as straightforwardly translatable onto the structures of sexism. Sexism does not have special status on my account: when objectification is sexist, it is harmful by virtue of enacting sexism, not by virtue of objectification[242] – more on this in a moment.[243]

Though an account like mine does not treat objectification as bad (or oppressive, or sexist) in itself, it is still important to ensure that in explaining *how* and *when* harm is done around objectification, I do not fall into the trap of treating different kinds of oppressions as interchangeable in attempting to enumerate ways in which objectifying things can harm. Fatphobia, transphobia, ableism, sexism, anti-blackness, islamophobia will all function in different and complex ways, so it does not work to say objectification is bad when it is oppressive in *x* way, where *x* tries to cover multiple kinds of oppression.

Instead, I suggest that if an example of objectification involves transphobia, our starting point needs to be looking at transphobia to see how that harm is working; starting with objectification will not do the work. For example, if there is anti-blackness in an objectifying deodorant advert, we need to talk about anti-blackness. Perhaps then we want to talk about how anti-blackness is manifested in media like this, or the ways anti-blackness can be expressed using objectification, but the point is that objectification as a concept cannot be the explanation for all oppressive media, speech, etc. which is objectifying. We cannot expect to use the same tools to explain (a) why a fatphobic beer advert is harmful and (b) why an Islamophobic catcall is harmful, just because they both use objectification as

[241] This term, meaning anti-black misogyny, is attributed to Moya Bailey (Bailey and Trudy 2018).
[242] Though it might of course be harmful by virtue of either of the first two harm-generating factors, as *any* objectification might be.
[243] This will mean that given this, and our examples of harmless objectification, if someone wants to claim that all pornography is sexist, then they have to show this is the case by virtue of something *other* than objectification.

a medium. This is what I mean in saying that different kinds of oppression are not reducible to one analytic.

However, I do think the prevalence of various stereotypes and oppressions in examples of objectification is relevant to our analysis here, insofar as this prevalence helps explain why objectification is treated as usually harmful. Since so much objectification is also racist, much objectification involves harm. The mistake is to see the harm as a feature of the objectification rather than the racism. (A mistake that helps white anti-objectification women escape their own complicity in racism, by seeing the racism as part of something they do not participate in and also suffer from: sexual objectification).

I will not attempt to elucidate all of the ways in which racism, fatphobia, ableism, etc. are harmful; that does not seem necessary for our purposes here as it should be uncontroversial that they *are* harmful. So we have the third way in which objectifying things can be harmful: when they oppress (though remember, this oppression is not best explained via objectification).

It might be contested that the third harm-making factor I offer leaves a window for the anti-objectification feminists to say, 'Aha, if any *oppressive* objectification is harmful, then any *sexist* objectification is harmful, and all objectification *is* sexist, so all objectification is harmful!' To which we can respond: all objectification is *not* sexist. Casual Sex is clearly not sexist (notice I did not gender the participants; imagine they are both cis men if that helps make this clear). Further, even if most objectification is sexist, it is not sexist by virtue of being objectifying. I leave the anti-objectification feminist the task of articulating precisely what is sexist about *all* objectification, and I would be very surprised if there were a justification of Casual Sex being sexist which met feminist commitments (i.e. did not collapse into a body-negative or sex-negative attitude rooted in misogyny). I am sure anti-objectification feminists can find plenty of media that are sexist and objectifying, and use the objectification as a medium for communicating sexism, but this is entirely consistent with all I say here.[244] If it is the case that many examples of objectification are sexist (for example, comments implying harmful myths about women), then this also helps explain the popular intuition that most objectification is harmful, because so much of it is sexist. The point I have made here is that the harm in objectifying and sexist media will lie in the *sexism* rather than the *objectification* (or in *consent violation,* or through *Context Creeping*).

In the last three sections I have articulated three harmful factors that are often present in instances of objectification, and which make it harmful. The first factor was Consent Violation, where I emphasised that objectification which violates consent may be more harmful than non-sexual kinds of consent violation, given the context of rape culture. The second factor was Context-Creeping Objectification, in which a particular rape myth is reinforced through the way examples of

[244] People may think all objectification is sexist because they think reduction to body is sexist. Reduction to body is not itself sexist, as our harmless examples show, but, given rape culture, women and those read as women *disproportionately* experience *harmful* reduction to body (in the form of non-consensual sexual objectification).

objectification permeate non-sexual contexts, giving the false impression that women want to be objectified any time, any place. The final factor is that much objectification is also harmful by virtue of being oppressive in different ways; many objectifying sitcoms are ableist, for example. I defended the position that the harm done in these cases is located in the oppression, rather than the objectification.

Part Four – What This Means for Pornography

Firstly of all, we can now say that *pornography is not necessarily harmful by virtue of objectification, because objectification is not necessarily harmful.* I have so far defended (1) – (4) of the following argument, from which (5) the conclusion follows:

1. Pornography is understood pieces of media which meet at least two of the following conditions:
    a. *It is sexually explicit [content]*
    b. *It is aimed at/intended for sexually arousing viewers [intention]*
    c. *It tends to be understood as intended for the purpose of arousing viewers [audience reception].*
2. Harm is understood as *the thwarting, setting back, or defeating of an interest, where an interest can be thought of as a welfare interest.*
3. Objectification is understood as *reduction to body or appearance, often characterised by instrumentalisation.*
4. Objectification is not necessarily harmful (given [2] and [3]).
5. Pornography is not necessarily harmful insofar as it involves objectification (given [1] and [4]).

I do not want to end my case there, though; those making a feminist case *against* pornography might say, 'Is there something about pornography which makes it more likely than other things to be harmful in the three ways above?' I argue next that (remembering our definition of pornography) for each of the ways objectification can be harmful above, pornography is not uniquely guilty of these, *and that it does not do these in a way which is any worse than other media.* Given this, I argue that this means we should not spend time asking what to do about the harms of pornography. In fact, I end by suggesting that asking these kinds of questions can *cause* harm instead of reducing it.

4.1 Does Pornography Do Any Harm?

One way out of concluding that pornography is not uniquely morally worrying is to circumvent this whole debate and show that pornography is necessarily harmful in ways other than objectification. I gave reason to disbelieve this in Chapter Two, but to reiterate: in looking again at the definition of pornography above, there is nothing in this definition which explicitly overlaps with our definition of harm, and, as suggested in Chapter Three, Section 3.5.iii and by Chapter Four, Part Four, often pornography can be *good*: gay men can find gay pornography affirming, and fat women can find pornography with bodies like theirs an important tool in fighting the internalisation of fatphobia.

Anti-pornography feminists cannot simply choose to elevate these examples to the status of erotica, because of the reasons discussed in Chapter One, Section 2.3.

But say our opponent has accepted that pornography does not necessarily do harm by virtue of objectification, they might still contend that a lot of pornography does do *contingent* harm, or it is particularly guilty of the three ways objectification *can* be harmful, described above. Our opponent could say that given this, we should still oppose pornography.[245]

I think that this would be a mistake. I shall show this by examining the three ways objectification can be harmful above, and showing that they do not show pornography to be uniquely harmful, and that treating it as uniquely harmful contributes to harms to sex workers and women in general.

4.2 Pornography is Not Uniquely Harmful

i. Consent

The production of pornography involves sexual objectification in a very obvious form: sex. (I do not mean to claim that all sex is objectifying – we would need to spend more time defining objectification to say that – just that a lot of sex is, given that we understand the Casual Sex example as objectifying.) Sex which violates consent (rape) is straightforwardly always harmful. So if rape occurs in pornography, that is obviously harmful, as it would be in any sphere. Is there any reason to believe that rape is more likely to happen in pornography than any other sexual context? I do not see any reason to think so.

Many anti-pornography feminists claim, or heavily imply, that most pornography is filmed rape. Linda Boreman was active in Women Against Pornography, and her experience of abuse in the creation of *Deep Throat* is heavily referenced in anti-pornography literature (for example MacKinnon 1987d). Her trauma is treated both as demonstrative of the reality of the pornography industry, and as emblematic of the subjugation of all women.

The following passages from well-known anti-pornography feminists describe the sex that takes place in pornography as non-consensual (and therefore rape).

> "Sex forced on real women so it can be sold at a profit to be forced on other real women… ." (MacKinnon 1987e, 147)
>
> "Those of us who know that pornography hurts women, and care, talk about women's real lives, insults and assaults that really happen to women in real life – the women used in the pornography and the women on whom the pornography is used." (A. Dworkin 1997, 128)
>
> "How can we stop rape and woman-battering by staffing rape crisis centres and refuges when there are thousands of movie houses, millions of publications, a multibillion-dollar business that promote the idea that violence and the rape of women is sexually exciting to men, and that *we* like it too? … To simply acknowledge rape, woman-battering, woman-

[245] Such a person might argue for getting rid of most pornography, or for 'reforming' pornography, such that it can only include certain kinds of scripts but not others, for example.

> hatred in pornography, and not *feel* outraged is another kind of unhealthy short-circuiting that goes on." (Russell 1980, 302–3)
>
> "Some models are actually sold by their parents. Sometimes their parents are the moviemakers. And some young women are kidnapped; others, broken down by the use of violence and/or drugs, become willing models.
>
> Whatever the route to becoming a pornography model, the women's vulnerability to abuse is also great. In one movie we saw, boiling candle wax was dripped onto a bound woman's breasts. Had she consented beforehand? Even if she had, this is clearly a violent act – one which was followed by her acting the willing and adoring lover of her torturer. Even when the models have consented to participate, they don't necessarily know what they're in for, and often they are in no position to maintain control." (Russell and Lederer 1980, 28–29)

Aside from the staggering misunderstanding of BDSM, this final passage clearly demonstrates an attempt to communicate that women in pornography are never *really* consenting (even when clear expressions of willingness are included in the film, suggesting that whether or not the content is a depiction of consensual sex, the anti-pornography feminists will frame it as promoting rape).[246]

There are no data on the prevalence of rape in pornography; I suspect that this is due to a greater interest among anti-pornography feminists in proving pornography is bad for women *outside* of pornography than those *inside* it. Whatever the reason, we have not yet seen any reason to believe that a greater proportion of sex acts in pornography are non-consensual than in other contexts.

In an interview with Melissa Gira Grant, Stoya discusses her public outing of James Deen as a rapist, and makes it clear that pornography itself is not the issue:

> "'It's not just a porn problem,' said Stoya. 'It's not just an entertainment problem. It's easy to look at Bill Cosby and think, oh, he had access. No. It happens fucking everywhere.'" (Grant 2015)

In the same article, Arabelle Raphael adds:

> "'In order for this stuff to stop happening in porn,' Raphael said, 'we have to get it to stop happening in society.'" (Grant 2015)

Rape and consent-violating sexual objectification happen everywhere, and, I suggest, we have no reason to believe it is more common in pornography than anywhere else.

But what about non-consensual objectification *caused by* pornography?

Some have argued that pornography contributes to rape myths, and thereby increases violence against women.[247] However, this is by no means settled. A handful of studies from the 1980s are

[246] Someone who understands BDSM could criticise *some* BDSM pornography by saying, 'We know this is consensual, but the viewer who is not clued in on the meanings and rigorous consent practices will get the wrong idea if consent is not explicitly communicated in the film.' But in the case described above, the consent was actually explicit.

[247] Awkwardly, including this author (Langton 2009c; Vince 2018; Russell 1988; Longino 1980). Examining these arguments in detail is beyond the scope of this thesis, and I do not need to do so for my conclusions here. Here I claim that *even if* pornography does increase violence against women via rape myths, we have no reason to believe pornography does this to a greater degree than other objectifying media.

frequently referenced in support of the hypothesis that pornography damages attitudes to women.[248] More recently this evidence has been challenged, both via scepticism about their conclusions, and by newer empirical research finding neutral and even positive relationships between pornography use and attitudes to women.[249]

Even if we assume for argument's sake that pornography *does* (contingently) play a damaging role in men's attitudes to women and rape myth acceptance, what reason is there to believe that this occurs at a greater rate than with romantic comedies and toiletries adverts? There are far fewer studies on the prevalence of rape myths in other objectifying media, precisely *because* of the stigmatisation of sex workers and disproportionate attention paid to pornography (more on this later). However, there are some studies demonstrating damaging effects in non-pornography media (see Wright and Tokunaga (2016) as well as the discussion of novels, adverts, and television in Edwards *et al.* (2011, 766)). The burden of proof is on anti-pornography feminists, not only to show that pornography has this effect, but also to show that it does so *to a greater degree than other media*. Absent evidence for the latter, there is no justification for a position which targets pornography as uniquely harmful, particularly when such an approach hurts sex workers – as we shall see later.

ii. Context Creeping

Our second harm-generating factor is not just 'no worse' in pornography; pornography is actually immune to this kind of harm. The way Context Creeping works is by examples of sexual objectification pervading non-sexual contexts, but pornography *is* a sexual context. The context of pornography, unlike the context of selling clothes for example, is precisely right for objectification. Debi Sundahl articulates a very similar approach to stripping:

> "Dancing nude is the epitome of woman as sex object. As the weeks passed I found I liked being a sex object, because the context was appropriate. I resent being treated as a sex object on the street or at the office. But as an erotic dancer, that is my purpose. I perform to turn you on… Women who work in the sex industry are not responsible for, nor do they in any way perpetuate, the sexual oppression of women. In fact, to any enlightened observer, our very existence provides a distinction and a choice as to when a woman should be treated like a sex object and when she should not be."[250] (Sundahl 2001, 176)

Given pornography's immunity to one of our harmful factors, we have reason to believe that not only is pornography *no more* harmful than other objectifying media, it may actually be *less so.*

iii. Oppressive Objectification

[248] See, for example Check and Guloien (1989), Donnerstein, Linz, and Penrod (1987), and Zillman (1989b).
[249] For example see Baer, Kohut, and Fisher (2015), Ferguson and Hartley (2009), Kohut, Baer, and Watts (2016), and Speed *et al.* (2021).
[250] This suggests another argument: that sex work helps to distinguish good from bad objectification. In pornography, the objectification is being volunteered by the objectified person to the customer (the objectifier), rather than taken, without consent, by the objectifier.

Some anti-pornography feminists relish listing the most offensive pornographic film titles,[251] meaning to demonstrate that pornography as a whole is irredeemably racist (usually) and should be opposed. I do not dispute that the pornography industry is racist; I question the move from this to opposition to pornography in general. Here I will look at the case that pornography is racist from outside the industry, then from the performers themselves, to show that if we consider the case made by performers we do not reach an anti-pornography position.

Patricia Hill Collins makes a case against pornography, arguing that black women's bodies are objectified, commodified, and treated as suitable targets of violence in pornography. She explains that black women's bodies are treated as objects for viewing or use by white men, referring to Sarah Baartman as a paradigm example.[252] She suggests that cases like Baartman's are the precursor to modern pornography:

> "African-American women's experiences suggest that Black women were not added into a preexisting pornography, but rather that pornography itself must be reconceptualized as a shift from the objectification of Black women's bodies in order to dominate and exploit them, to one of media representations of all women that perform the same purpose." (Collins 2009, 149)

Jennifer Nash argues that this picture leaves out questions of black pleasure and black spectatorship. Much anti-pornography feminism assumes the white male viewer of pornography, and leaves no room for attending to the sexual agency of black people of all genders, and both black and non-black women, as both spectators and performers.

Black women are pornography performers, directors, and consumers, and those in the industry have their own articulations of racism in pornography. Performers have criticised the way pornography films are titled and categorised, over which the performers often have no say. In discussing the category 'Ebony', Daisy Ducati says,

> "I would personally really appreciate being able to showcase my own talent without it being reduced to my race every time." (Foxxx et al. 2020, 1:05:20)

Lotus Lain adds,

> "I was wondering if like there's different categories, like you know how there's BBW category and it's based on body type, and then there's tattooed category and which is in a sense based on body type, if we categorise the rest of us by body type. Like Ana [Foxxx] would be 'athletic', I would be 'curvy', Gorgeous Aphro could be like 'voluptuous'… ."(Foxxx et al. 2020, 1:05:48)

Mickey Mod finishes,

> "…like the same categories they do for white people?" [Nodding and agreement follows from other speakers.] (Foxxx et al. 2020, 1:06:14)

[251] For example Russel and Lederer (1980, 124).
[252] Baartman was a Khoikhoi woman who, as young woman in the early nineteenth century, was displayed in exhibitions around Europe. After her death, her skeleton and a cast of her body were displayed in French museums until 1976.

On many sites performers of colour are reduced to their skin colour. While white performers find their scenes in categories describing the kind of acts the film contains (anal, lesbian etc.), or other physical descriptors (fat, tattooed, etc.), performers of colour find their scenes in categories that refer to skin colour (ebony, Japanese, etc). Both 'fat' and 'ebony' are objectifying, both are reducing the performers to their bodies, but as Lotus Lain clearly articulates above, the latter is doing harm that the former is not here. Gorgeous Aphro later suggests that some people may also end up offended by body size categories, but I do not think this challenges the central point: that there are particular harms from racialised categories to which black performers object (Foxxx et al. 2020, 1:06:50). Malcolm Lovejoy suggests "people should have the power to be able to define themselves" (Foxxx et al. 2020, 1:07:34).

Contra Collins, the issue for these performers is not that they do not want to be reduced to their bodies (Lotus Lane is happy to be called 'curvy'); it is that they do not want to be reduced to a particular racialised aspect of their bodies, and they want to have consented to or chosen the aspect to which they are reduced.

There is a common thread with Collins then; objectification which non-consensually reduces women to racialised aspects of their bodies is racist and harmful. However, for the performers, this criticism does not generalise into an 'anti- pornography' position. This difference in scope is clear in this interview with Daisy Ducati:

> "One time, I got called to LA for a standard boy/girl scene. It was a fun scene, went smoothly, and my partner — a white male — was great. I thought everything went well, but when the scene came out on DVD a week or two later, the title was 'Black Wives Matter.' I had no prior knowledge of that until I saw myself on the box. Later, I found out that no other performers knew. Even the director didn't know — the company that produced it just titled it on their own. Sh*t like that happens all the time. Things are given racist titles and promoted in a way I don't agree with." (Ducati and McGowan 2020)

The anti-pornography tactic of listing odiously named pornographic films is cast in quite a different light when we know that most of the people involved in a pornography scene have no control over the title, and that the title cannot be assumed to accurately track the tone of the content. Clearly Daisy did not do a racist scene, she did not consent to a racist scene, but then the title was plastered on later, colouring how the scene itself is understood despite there being nothing wrong with the content as it was created (before the producers got involved). I doubt the anti-pornography feminists who make this kind of racism-based criticism would accept that actually, their critique only extends to the particular pornography *company,* not the content, the people who create the scene, or the film as a whole. If they did, they would have to reimagine their goals; not to rid the world of pornography, but to put the means of production in the hands of the performers.

Performers also criticise pay disparity; black performers are often paid less than their white counterparts, and white women can earn more for doing scenes with black men. Clearly, this is anti-black, but again, asking for pay equality and unionising efforts does not get us to opposing pornography.

The mainstream pornography industry is like any other industry in that it is a capitalist structure, and there is racism built into that and sustained by individuals within it. Drawing attention to this racism is not a silver bullet against pornography. Sexually explicit material is not the problem; the (structural and individual) racism is the problem. If black performers wanted pornography to be banned, rather than racist categories to be got rid of, they would have said that instead.

So, the third harmful factor in objectifying media is oppression. Here we looked at racism in general and anti-blackness in particular in pornography, since racism is where the anti-pornography arguments often focus. We can establish that yes, pornography production companies and websites are racist, but this does not get us to an anti-pornography position. It is not sexually explicit media, or sexual objectification that is the problem here: it is capitalist white supremacy.

4.3 Stigmatising Sex Workers

Smith and Mac (2018) demonstrate thoroughly how sex workers are stigmatised and how that stigma connects to wider misogyny. They discuss how sex workers have been described as vectors of disease throughout history, and provide examples of comments from today's anti-sex work feminists in the same spirit, describing sex workers as disgusting (Smith and Mac 2018, 22–30). These comments from feminists are not unusual, nor are they intended as a straw man against anti-sex work feminism. They are common, have been heard first-hand by this author, and draw on misogynistic ideals of 'purity', wherein those who have more sex and for non-romantic reasons are less pure.

An example of this is anti-sex work group 'Save Our Eyes' (the name is revealing), who campaign for an end to the 'managed zone' in the city of Leeds on the grounds that the local residents do not want to see evidence of sex work. Their website (Save Our Eyes 2018) displays a collection of photos, mostly of condoms and needles, interspersed with covertly-taken photos (presumably without consent) of women in the area dressed in short skirts, whom the readers are meant to understand to be sex workers, and to join *Save Our Eyes* in finding them unpleasant to look at. Putting the pictures of women in amongst pictures of needles and condoms in the mud is such an obvious grotesquely dehumanising implication of equivalence, designed to paint the women as dirty and dangerous, like the objects on the ground.

This kind of pure-versus-dirty rhetoric obviously affects non-sex workers too, feeding into (and sustaining) misogyny. This distinction is, I think, the same phenomenon identified by Ellen Willis as "the good girl-bad girl split" (2014, 98) (mentioned here already in Chapters One and Two), which draws a line between 'good' and 'bad' women based on the extent to which they engage with pornography (and, in fact, men). Women who have casual sex and women who choose to wear particular kinds of clothing are treated as 'slutty' and are more likely to be blamed for sexual

violence against them, while 'good' women are innocent. (And with whom is innocence associated? Being cis, being straight, and, especially, being white.)[253]

Murderers who target sex workers attempt to defend their actions by describing sex workers as some kind of blight, in need of 'cleaning up'.[254] The attitudes of men who kill sex workers is plainly linked to misogyny in general, particularly the distinction between the good, innocent woman, and the dirty, deserving whore.

This sort of stigma fuels and is fuelled by victim-blaming rape myths. I suggest that treating pornography as uniquely dangerous risks contributing to the misogynistic stigmatisation of sex workers (and misogyny in general). When there are thousands of papers about how dangerous movies of women having sex can be, but no papers about how dangerous romantic comedies can be[255], a picture is painted of pornography as *uniquely dirty and dangerous*. The sheer volume of work discussing whether pornography is dangerous and harmful (to which, ironically, I am contributing) gives the impression that we should be significantly more worried about pornography than we should be about romantic comedies. I have given reasons to believe that we should not be more worried about pornography than romantic comedies, but here I go further, in claiming that all this worry about pornography, all of these vast bodies of literature, contribute to the belief that sex work is unlike other work, and that people who have sex for money are different, dirtier, and more dangerous, than 'ordinary people'. This last section shows that even without the work in the rest of this chapter (even if pornography were in fact more harmful than other media, or even necessarily harmful) we would still have good reason not to criticise pornography as uniquely or especially harmful.

To reiterate: I claim that an anti-pornography stance is not the way to go if the goal is reducing harms to women. Further expanding the anti-pornography literature is likely to cause more harm because of stigma against sex workers. If you want to fight harms from objectification of women, go after BMW, call advertising standards, go after Bic, go after Disney and NBC.

Part Five – Summary

This chapter has pulled together the conceptual work in the previous chapters, to argue that pornography is not necessarily harmful insofar as it objectifies. This chapter went further though, and argued that there are three ways in which objectification is often harmful which explain the

[253] "LGBTQ people, Black people, and deliberate prostitutes are often left out of the category of innocence, and as a result harm against people in these groups becomes less legible as harm." (Smith and Mac 2018, 60).
[254] The Yorkshire Ripper described himself as "cleaning up streets", Lenuta Haidemac's killer said "I killed a person… not a person, a whore", and the Green River Killer said "I thought I was doing you guys [the police] a favour, killing prostitutes" (all in Smith and Mac 2018, 100, 103, 115).
[255] Some authors mention that other media besides pornography might be harmful, but this is usually *in addition,* where pornography remains the main focus and especially culpable. For an exception, see Eaton (2012), who argues that the female nude may play a special role, perhaps above other objectifying media.

popular intuition that objectification *itself* is harmful, and further showed that we have no reason to believe pornography is any more guilty of these than other media.

In Part One, I used the examples introduced in Chapter Three, to show that objectification is not always harmful, and therefore not necessarily harmful. In Part Two, I considered possible explanations that do justice to the popular intuition that objectification is always or usually harmful. In Part Three I elucidated my explanation: that three factors can render objectification harmful, and objectification happens in these ways quite often, so much objectification *is* harmful.

I argued that for each of these three ways, it is not objectification *itself* that harms, nor is the harm coincidental; the harms are related to how objectification occurs in our society. First, objectification is harmful when it is **Non-Consensual**; consent violation is always harmful, but it is particularly harmful when a thing is *sexual,* and, given our rape culture, non-consensual sexual objectification is especially harmful. I then proposed a concept: **Context-Creeping Objectification**. This is the second harm-generating factor, whereby there are a great many examples of objectification *outside* of sexual contexts (e.g. car adverts), giving the impression that women are happy to be sexually objectified at any time and any place, rather than only in particular circumstances when they consent to it. This contributes to a particular rape myth, underpinning other rape myths: that women are always up for sex. This links back to consent, as the prevalence of this rape myth contributes to non-consensual objectification such as catcalling, sexual harassment, and sexual violence.

Finally (for Part Three), I suggested that another reason why people see objectification as being harmful is that much objectification also draws on, reinforces, or enacts **Oppression and Stereotypes**: since so much objectification in the media is also racist, many examples of objectification involve harm. Citing Nash (2008), I warned against seeing objectification which oppresses as a sub-category or particular kind of objectification, rather than attending to how different kinds of oppression take different shapes.

In Part Four, I argued that pornography is no more harmful than other objectifying media, by looking at each harm-generating factor in turn. On *Consent Violation*, I argued that there was no reason to believe that consent violation was more prevalent in pornography than anywhere else. I addressed the argument that pornography also contributes to rape myth acceptance, arguing that we have no reason to believe that pornography is worse than sitcoms and adverts (for example, but I also suspect sitcoms are especially likely to be worse for perpetuating rape myths). *Context-Creeping* Objectification cannot apply to pornography because pornography *is* a sexual context, so is immune to this phenomenon. Considering *Oppression*, I drew on the work of pornography performers and argued that racism cannot act as a silver bullet against pornography, and that racism is a problem with the industry (the capitalist structures and the individuals who sustain them), not with objectification or with sexual media *per se*.

Finally, I suggested that arguing for the harmfulness of pornography (neglecting other media) can contribute to the stigmatisation of sex workers, and that this focus is dangerous as well as unjustified.

CONCLUSION

In this final chapter, I lay out the positive contributions this thesis makes to the literature, and suggest directions for future work. First, though, let's remind ourselves of the overall argument this thesis has made:

1. Pornography is understood as pieces of media which meet at least two of the following conditions:
    a. *It is sexually explicit [content]*
    b. *It is aimed at/intended for sexually arousing viewers [intention]*
    c. *It tends to be understood as intended for the purpose of arousing viewers [audience reception].*
2. Harm is understood as *the thwarting, setting back, or defeating of an interest, where an interest can be thought of as a welfare interest.*
3. Objectification is understood as *reduction to body or appearance, often characterised by instrumentalisation.*
4. Objectification is not necessarily harmful (given [2] and [3]).
5. Pornography is not necessarily harmful insofar as it involves objectification (given [1] and [4]).

Over the course of this thesis I defend a number of positive contributions, which I synthesise to generate my central conclusion: pornography is not necessarily harmful by virtue of objectification.

The first positive account I offer is a definition of pornography. After laying out the 'sex wars' and criticising competing definitions of pornography in the literature, I offer the following definition, and demonstrate its compatibility with the various positions taken in the 'sex wars':

> *For a piece of media, x, to be pornography [or count as a 'pornographic artifact'], x must meet at least two of the following conditions:*
>
> *1) It is sexually explicit [content]*
> *2) It is aimed at/intended for sexually arousing viewers [intention]*
> *3) It tends to be understood as intended for the purpose of arousing viewers [audience reception].*

After this, I argue that we should abandon the pornography/erotica, feminist pornography/mainstream pornography, and pornography/misogynistic pornography distinctions, on the grounds that these distinctions do not track any meaningful differences in the production of the material and the experiences of performers, and that content-based distinctions are unhelpful and only serve to perpetuate classism and misogyny.

In Chapter Two I defend working in terms of 'harm' rather than 'wrong', for the purposes of the debates in which I engage in this thesis, and adapt Feinberg's (1984) understanding of harm into:

> *We define harm as the thwarting, setting back, or defeating of an interest, where an interest can be thought of as a welfare interest. A group can be harmed when something sets back the interests of members of that group by virtue of their group membership. Something can be necessarily or contingently harmful, depending on whether an interest is necessarily, or contingently, set back.*

In the category of 'welfare interests' are:

> *Interests in the continuance for a foreseeable interval of one's life, and the interests in one's own physical health and vigour, the integrity and normal functioning of one's body, the absence of absorbing unpleasant pain and suffering, emotional stability, the absence of groundless anxieties and resentments, the capacity to engage normally in social intercourse and to enjoy and maintain friendships, at least minimal income and financial security, and a tolerable social and physical environment, and a certain amount of freedom from interference and coercion.*

I defend working with these definitions, as they fit neatly with the literature: key writers clearly work in terms of harm rather than wrong, and interpreting claims from all sides in this way allows us to pinpoint points of disagreement – and agreement – more easily.

In Chapter Three I offer my own definition of objectification, which I arrive at by first picking apart Nussbaum's (1995) and Langton's (2009d) accounts, and arguing that not all of the features comprising their accounts are sufficiently relevant or determinate. I draw on their accounts, though, reworking a couple of features from their accounts to build my own; I use paradigm examples to show that the features I include are the most useful and intuitive, and that my definition works well:

> *Objectification occurs where either (1) or (2) of the following conditions is present:*
>
> 1) *Reduction to body: a) The objectifier treats the person as nothing/little over and above her body or body parts. b) The objectifier foregrounds the person's body or body parts.*
> 2) *Reduction to appearance: a) The objectifier treats the person as nothing/little over and above her looks/appearance to the senses. b) The objectifier foregrounds the person's looks/appearance to the senses.*
> 3) **Instrumentality: a) Means: The objectifier treats the person as a tool for his or her purposes. b) Mere Means: The objectifier treats the person as a mere tool for his or her purposes.*
>
> **(Note: (3) is not intended as a necessary criterion itself, but rather tends to correlate with (1) and (2) and should be considered as a guide for settling borderline cases.)*

In Chapter Four, I examine competing accounts of objectification from LeMoncheck (1985) and Bauer (2015a), as well as (briefly) a collection of accounts that I refer to as 'imposition accounts' (including Haslanger's (2012)). I demonstrate that my account better captures popular intuitions and

paradigm examples. At the end of this chapter, I challenge an argument present in both Bauer (2015b) and Papadaki (2010b); they suggest that if we understand objectification as morally neutral (or not necessarily harmful), then we undermine campaigns against 'negative' (or harmful) objectification. Building on arguments from the end of Chapter Three, and anticipating arguments from the end of Chapter Five, I argue that an understanding of objectification which leaves room for harmless objectification is desirable. Further, I argue that undermining current campaigns against negative objectification may also be desirable, given that they tend to harm sex workers and reinforce misogynistic attitudes more broadly.

Chapter Five draws the above definitions together and utilises the paradigm examples of objectification to demonstrate first that objectification is not *necessarily* harmful, given that it is not *always* harmful. I then offer a new picture of three ways in which objectification can be harmful:

1) *Consent Violation: Objectification is harmful when it is done non-consensually. Non-consensual objectification is especially common and likely to be especially harmful compared to non-sexual consent violations.*
2) *Context Creeping: There exists a pattern of objectification, whereby women are objectified regularly outside of sexual contexts (especially in adverts). This reinforces the myth that women are happy to be objectified any time, any place, and thereby contributes to the perpetration of non-consensual objectification by those believing this myth.*
3) *Oppression and Stereotyping: Objectification is often done in a way that trades on and reinforces different kinds of oppression. While these will obviously be harmful, how this works is not best explained via objectification, though the regularity of these occurrences helps explain why objectification is seen as always or usually harmful.*

Drawing This All Together and Future Work

I bring these definitions and lines of argument together to show that pornography is not necessarily harmful insofar as it involves objectification. But this is not all I do: I also demonstrate that even in terms of the ways in which objectification can be harmful, pornography is no more (and may even be less) guilty of these than other objectifying media. At the very end of Chapter Five, I draw attention to a way in which anti-pornography work may contribute to other harms to women, through contributing to stigmatisation of sex workers and misogyny – which would make it the case that even if pornography were in fact necessarily harmful, opposing it would not automatically be the best option. All of this serves to illuminate that if the goal is reducing harm to women, anti-pornography work is not the way to go.

At various points in the thesis I discuss claims about how harms to groups can work; in future I would like to develop this and examine both how harms are done to particular groups of people, and how such groups are constructed. I suspect that much of the time when people talk about 'harms to women', the extension of the claim is not usually in fact *all* and *only* women. I would be interested

to explore who tends to be excluded, and whether and when speaking of harms to groups in this way is helpful.

I demonstrate that, when looking at objectifying media, romantic comedies and adverts may do more harm than pornography. A fruitful future project would be investigating the extent of this. I would love to see the energy and resources previously reserved for researching pornography poured into examining the extent to which popular media like romantic comedies and sitcoms build and reinforce rape myths. If such research showed what I expect it to, a campaign to improve these media would be much better justified and do much less damage than a campaign against pornography.

In almost every chapter of this thesis, I discuss how purely 'negative' conceptions of objectification and/or pornography (i.e. definitions of things which build into the concept the claim that they are wrong or harmful) can contribute to stigmatisation of sex workers and misogyny more broadly. I also draw in particular on Ellen Willis' articulation of the 'good girl-bad girl' split, in which one group of women is identified with moral virtue, and another, vice (Willis 2014). This picture feeds into the idea that some women are credible victims who deserve our consideration and sympathy, and some women are dangerous, or corrupting, and do not deserve the support and consideration we grant to others. Future work in feminist philosophy and sexual ethics should not only make use of this illuminating concept, but also take care to introspect as to whether some version of such a split is being reinforced in our work. In Chapter One, I cite Misha Mayfair (2019) highlighting how this split can be pushed by drawing lines between 'feminist' and 'mainstream' pornography – I expect there will be further places where this happens that feminist philosophers have not yet identified. It could be the case that the 'good girl-bad girl' split is at work in other current feminist debates and campaigns, such as abortion, surrogacy and healthcare access, or policing, incarceration and immigration. Wherever there are discussions around who counts as a victim, or around purity and corruption, this phenomenon could be at work and bear illuminating.

I hope this thesis demonstrates how our conclusions can benefit epistemically and ethically from taking seriously the theoretical and testimonial contributions of sex workers, and more broadly, the principle of taking seriously the theoretical and testimonial contributions of those who are being theorised *about* in any project, especially when those people are marginalised. In future, I hope to see not only philosophers citing sex workers more often, but also sex workers being supported in academia (this is a jointly ethical and epistemic demand; sex-working staff and students deserve material support regardless of whether there is an epistemic benefit and whether they do their academic work on sex work, but also academic work on sex work will be better-informed and less harmful if sex workers both in and outside the university are materially supported, and compensated for the time they spend doing theoretical work from which academics benefit).

I propose that in future, we use tools like Context-Creeping Objectification to evaluate harms done by, for example, blockbuster movies, or we look at the prevalence of rape myths in sitcoms, and that

when we do talk about pornography, we foreground the perspectives of those in the industry, rather than discuss what pornography does symbolically to women outside the sex industry.

Alpert, Mark I, Judy I Alpert, and Elliot N Maltz. 2005. "Purchase Occasion Influence on the Role of Music in Advertising." *Journal of Business Research* 58 (3): 369–76. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0148-2963(03)00101-2.

Alvarez, Alex. 2016. "Sofia Vergara Shared Her Thoughts On Objectification, Diversity, And Boobs." *Buzzfeed*, February 5, 2016.

Baer, Jodie L, Taylor Kohut, and William A Fisher. 2015. "Is Pornography Use Associated with Anti-Woman Sexual Aggression? Re-Examining the Confluence Model with Third Variable Considerations." *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality* 24 (2): 173.

Bailey, Moya, and Trudy. 2018. "On Misogynoir: Citation, Erasure, and Plagiarism." *Feminist Media Studies* 18 (4): 762–68. https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2018.1447395.

Banerjee, Pompi, Raj Merchant, and Jaya Sharma. 2018. "Kink and Feminism - Breaking the Binaries." *Sociology and Anthropology* 6 (3): 313–20.

Baring, Charlotte. 2015. "Petition to Protein World 'Remove "Are You Beach Body Ready" Advertisements' ." Change.Org. 2015. https://www.change.org/p/proteinworld-arjun-seth-remove-are-you-beach-body-ready-advertisements.

Bartky, Sandra Lee. 1990. "On Psychological Oppression." In *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression*, 22–32. Routledge.

Bartky, Sandra Lee. 1984. "Feminine Masochism and the Politics of Personal Transformation." *Women's Studies International Forum* 7 (5): 323–34. https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-5395(84)90032-3.

Bauer, Nancy. 2015a. *How To Do Things With Pornography*. Harvard University Press.

———. 2015b. "What Philosophy Can't Teach Us about Sexual Objectification." In *How To Do Things With Pornography*, 21–37. Harvard University Press.

BBC News. 2018. "Mariella Frostrup: Men Face 'double Standard' over Celebrity Lust," May 29, 2018.

Bellingham, Lynda. 2010. "Loose Women | Is It Time For Page 3 To Cover Up? | 21st May 2010." X7tinkerbell7x YouTube Channel. May 21, 2010. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-91MRbNwjNY.

Bindel, Julie. 2004. "Gender Benders, Beware." *The Guardian*, January 31, 2004.

Birds Eye. 2017. "Birds Eye Salmon Fish Fingers - YouTube." Ads Seen on TV YouTube Channel. 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fBQpPsJwJVE.

Brink, David. 2018. "Mill's Moral and Political Philosophy." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, Winter 201.

Bronstein, Carolyn. 2011. "The Origins of Anti-Pornography Feminism." *FifteenEightyFour - Cambridge University Press*, August 10, 2011.

Buchanan, Daisy. 2016. "Is It Really Ever OK to Objectify Men?" *Marie Claire*, August 5, 2016.

Cahill, Ann J. 2014. "The Difference Sameness Makes: Objectification, Sex Work, and Queerness." *Hypatia* 29 (4): 840–56. https://doi.org/10.1111/hypa.12111.

Califia, Pat. 1987. "A Personal View of the History of the Lesbian S/M Community and Movement in San Francisco." In *Coming to Power - Writing and Graphics on Lesbian S/M*, edited by Samois

(Organization). Alyson Publications.

———. 2000a. *Public Sex: The Culture of Radical Sex*. 2nd ed. Cleis Press.

———. 2000b. “When Sex Is a Job.” In *Public Sex: The Culture Of Radical Sex*, 131–38. Cleis Press.

Carse, Alisa L. 1995. “Pornography: An Uncivil Liberty?” *Hypatia* 10 (1, Feminist Ethics and Social Policy, Part 1): 155–82.

Cawston, Amanda. 2019. “The Feminist Case against Pornography: A Review and Re-Evaluation.” *Inquiry* 62 (6): 624–58. https://doi.org/10.1080/0020174X.2018.1487882.

Check, James V. P., and Ted H. Guloien. 1989. “Reported Proclivity for Coercive Sex Following Repeated Exposure to Sexually Violent Pornography, Nonviolent Dehumanizing Pornography, and Erotica.” In *Pornography: Research Advances and Policy Considerations*, edited by Dolf Zillmann and Jennings Bryant, 159–184. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Collins, Patricia Hill. 2009. *Black Feminist Thought*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge.

Copyranter. 2013. “13 Of The Most Sexist Beer Ads Of All Time.” *Buzzfeed*, May 7, 2013.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 1989. “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics.” *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989 (1): 139–67.

Davies, Jess. 2018. “Tits up: The Rise (and Fall) of How I Became a Glamour Model.” Jabber With Jess. September 27, 2018. https://jabberwithjess.com/2018/09/27/how-i-became-a-glamour-model/?blogsub=confirming#subscribe-blog.

Delacoste, Frédérique., and Priscilla. Alexander. 2001. *Sex Work: Writings by Women in the Sex Industry*. Cleis Press.

Donnerstein, Edward I., Daniel Linz, and Steven Penrod. 1987. *The Question of Pornography: Research Findings and Policy Implications*. New York: The Free Press.

Ducati, Daisy, and Emma McGowan. 2020. “Daisy Ducati Thinks The Interracial Porn Tag Is Racist, Period.” *Bustle*, June 24, 2020.

Dworkin, Andrea. 1981a. “Objects.” In *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*, 101–28. The Women’s Press.

———. 1981b. “Preface.” In *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*, 9–10. The Women’s Press.

———. 1987. *Intercourse*. New York: Free Press Paperbacks.

———. 1994. “Why Pornography Matters To Feminists.” In *Living With Contradictions: Controversies in Feminist Social Ethics*, edited by Alison M Jaggar, 152–53. Oxford: Westview Press.

———. 1997. “Pornography Happens.” In *Life and Death*, 126–38. Virago Press.

Dworkin, Andrea, and Catharine A MacKinnon. 1988. *Pornography and Civil Rights: A New Day for Women’s Equality*. Minnesota: Organizing Against Pornography.

Dworkin, Ronald. 1993. “Women and Pornography.” *New York Review of Books* 40 (17): 36–42.

Dyer, Richard. 1985. “Male Gay Porn: Coming to Terms.” *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media* 30 (March): 27–29.

Eaton, A W. 2007. “A Sensible Antiporn Feminism*.” *Ethics*. Vol. 117.

———. 2012. “What’s Wrong with the (Female) Nude? A Feminist Perspective on Art and Pornography.” In *Art and Pornography: Philosophical Essays*, edited by Hans Maes and Jerrold Levinson, 277–308. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199609581.001.0001.

Edwards, Katie M, Jessica A Turchik, Christina M Dardis, Nicole Reynolds, and Christine A Gidycz. 2011. “Rape Myths: History, Individual and Institutional-Level Presence, and Implications for Change.” *Sex Roles* 65 (11): 761–73. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-011-9943-2.

Everyone’s Invited. 2021. “Welcome - Everyone’s Invited.” Everyone’s Invited. 2021. https://www.everyonesinvited.uk/.

Fabello, Melissa A. 2016. “Can Women Self-Objectify?” *Everyday Feminism*, February 1, 2016.

Fairchild, Kimberly, and Laurie A Rudman. 2008. “Everyday Stranger Harassment and Women’s Objectification.” *Social Justice Research* 21 (3): 338–57. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11211-008-0073-0.

Farrell, Susan A. 1991. “Gender, Sexuality, and the State.” *Contemporary Sociology* 20 (3): 350. https://doi.org/10.2307/2073658.

Feinberg, Joel. 1984. *The Moral Limits of the Criminal Law: Harm to Others Vol. 1*. Oxford University Press.

Ferguson, Ann. 1984. “Sex War: The Debate between Radical and Libertarian Feminists.” *Signs* 10 (1): 106–12.

Ferguson, Christopher J, and Richard D Hartley. 2009. “The Pleasure Is Momentary…the Expense Damnable? The Influence of Pornography on Rape and Sexual Assault.” *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 14: 323–29. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2009.04.008.

Finlayson, Lorna. 2014. “How to Screw Things with Words.” *Hypatia* 29 (4): 774–89. https://doi.org/10.1111/hypa.12109.

Fitzgerald, Rosie. 2016. “Women Tell Us about the First Time They Were Objectified.” *The Tab*, June 13, 2016.

Foxxx, Ana, Mickey Mod, Lotus Lain, Gorgeous Aphro, Tee Reel, Spookyfatbrat, Jada Silk, et al. 2020. “Ask A Porn Star: Listen to Black Performers.” WoodRocket YouTube Channel. 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kE6DdeoZrTk.

Fricker, Miranda. 2016. “What’s the Point of Blame? A Paradigm Based Explanation.” *Noûs* 50 (1): 165–83. https://doi.org/10.1111/nous.12067.

Grant, Melissa Gira. 2015. “How Stoya Took on James Deen and Broke the Porn Industry’s Silence.” *The Guardian*, December 4, 2015.

Green, L. 2000. “Pornographies.” *Journal of Political Philosophy* 8 (1): 27–52. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9760.00091.

Harding, Sandra. 1992. “Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What Is Strong Objectivity?” *The Centennial Review* 36 (3): 437–70.

Harvey-Jenner, Catriona. 2016. “This ‘big Booty’ Social Experiment Shows the Grim Reality of How Objectified Women Are.” *Cosmopolitan*, July 28, 2016.

Haslanger, Sally. 2008. “Changing the Ideology and Culture of Philosophy: Not by Reason (Alone).” *Hypatia* 23 (2): 210–23.

———. 2012. “On Being Objective and Being Objectified.” In *Resisting Reality*, 35–82. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199892631.003.0001.

———. 2017. “Objectivity, Epistemic Objectification, and Oppression.” In *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice*, edited by Ian James Kidd, José Medina, and Gaile Pohlhaus, 279–90. New York: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315212043.

Heldman, Caroline. 2012. “Sexual Objectification, Part 1: What Is It?” *Ms. Magazine*, March 7, 2012.

Holroyd, Jules. 2012. “Responsibility for Implicit Bias.” *Journal of Social Philosophy* 43 (4): 274–306.

Huffington Post. 2013. “American Apparel Adverts Banned: ‘Sexual And Objectifying’ Images Show Models Half Naked (PICTURES),” April 10, 2013.

Jacobellis v. Ohio. 1964. “378 U.S. 184.”

Jeffreys, Sheila. 1997. “Transgender Activism.” *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 1 (3–4): 55–74. https://doi.org/10.1300/J155v01n03_03.

Jenkins, Katharine. 2017. “What Women Are For: Pornography and Social Ontology.” In *Beyond Speech: Pornography and Analytic Feminist Philosophy*, edited by Mari Mikkola, 91–112. Oxford University Press.

Jenness, Valerie. 1990. “From Sex as Sin to Sex as Work: COYOTE and the Reorganization of Prostitution as a Social Problem.” *Social Problems* 37 (3): 403–20.

Jütten, Timo. 2016. “Sexual Objectification.” *Ethics* 127 (1): 27–49. https://doi.org/10.1086/687331.

Kant, Immanuel. 1997. “Of the Duties to the Body in Regard to Sexual Impulse.” In *Lectures on Ethics*, 155–62. Cambridge University Press.

Klocksiem, Justin. 2012. “A Defense of the Counterfactual Comparative Account of Harm.” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 49 (4).

Kohut, Taylor, Jodie L Baer, and Brendan Watts. 2016. “Is Pornography Really about ‘Making Hate to Women’? Pornography Users Hold More Gender Egalitarian Attitudes Than Nonusers in a Representative American Sample.” *The Journal of Sex Research* 53 (1): 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2015.1023427.

Lackie, Leandra, and Anton F. de Man. 1997. “Correlates of Sexual Aggression Among Male University Students.” *Sex Roles* 37 (5/6): 451–57. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1025613725757.

Langton, Rae. 2009a. “Projection and Objectification.” In *Sexual Solipsism*, 241–66. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

———. 2009b. “Sexual Solipsism.” In *Sexual Solipsism*, 311–56. Oxford University Press.

———. 2009c. “Speech Acts and Unspeakable Acts.” In *Sexual Solipsism*, 25–64. Oxford University Press.

———. 2009d. “Autonomy-Denial in Objectification.” In *Sexual Solipsism*, 223–40. Oxford University Press.

———. 2009e. “Projection and Objectification.” In *Sexual Solipsism*, 241–66. Oxford University Press.

Lanis, Kyra, and Katherine Covell. 1995. “Images of Women in Advertisements: Effects on Attitudes Related to Sexual Aggression.” *Sex Roles* 32 (9–10): 639–49.

LeMoncheck, Linda. 1985. *Dehumanizing Women: Treating Persons as Sex Objects*. Rowman & Allanheld.

LeMoncheck, Linda. 1997. “What’s Wrong with Treating Women as Sex Objects?” In *Sex, Love, and Friendship: Studies of the Society for the Philosophy of Sex and Love, 1977-1992*, edited by Alan Soble, 137–45. Rodopi.

Lintott, Sheila, and Sherri Irvin. 2016. “Sex Objects and Sexy Subjects.” In *Body Aesthetics*, edited by Sherri Irvin, 299–318. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198716778.003.0017.

Longino, Helen E. 1980. “Pornography, Oppression and Freedom: A Closer Look.” In *Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography*, edited by Laura Lederer, 40–54. New York: William Morrow & Co.

———. 1990. *Science as Social Knowledge: Values and Objectivity in Scientific Inquiry*. Princeton University Press.

Love, Heather. 2010. “Diary of a Conference on Sexuality, 1982.” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 17 (1): 49–78. https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-2010-016.

Mac, Juno. 2016. “The Laws That Sex Workers Really Want | TED Talk.” TEDxEastEnd. 2016. https://www.ted.com/talks/juno_mac_the_laws_that_sex_workers_really_want?language=en.

Mac, Juno, Hello Rooster, Misha Mayfair, and Lina Bembe. 2019. “Aesthetics vs Ethics: Expanding Definitions of Feminist Porn.” In *A Decriminalised Future: Sex Workers’ Festival of Resistance*.

MacKinnon, Catharine A. 1987a. “Desire and Power.” In *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law*, 46–62. Harvard University Press.

———. 1987b. *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law*. Harvard University Press.

———. 1987c. “Francis Biddle’s Sister.” In *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law*, 163–97. Harvard University Press.

———. 1987d. “Linda’s Life and Andrea’s Work.” In *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law*, 127–33. Harvard University Press.

———. 1987e. “Not a Moral Issue (1983).” In *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law*, 146–62. Harvard University Press.

———. 1987f. “Women, Self-Possession, and Sport.” In *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law*, 117–24. Harvard University Press.

———. 1989. *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*. Harvard University Press.

MacLeod, Duncan. 2016. “Coca Cola Taste The Feeling.” *The Inspiration Room*, January 24, 2016.

Maes, Hans. 2013. *Pornographic Art and the Aesthetics of Pornography*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Marino, Patricia. 2008. “The Ethics of Sexual Objectification: Autonomy and Consent.” *Inquiry* 51 (4): 345–64. https://doi.org/10.1080/00201740802166643.

McGlynn, Aidan. 2016. “Propaganda and the Authority of Pornography.” *Theoria* 31 (3): 329–43. https://doi.org/10.1387/theoria.16376.

McMahon, Sarah. 2010. “Rape Myth Beliefs and Bystander Attitudes Among Incoming College Students.” *Journal of American College Health* 59 (1): 3–11. https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2010.483715.

McMahon, Sarah, and G Lawrence Farmer. 2011. “An Updated Measure for Assessing Subtle Rape Myths.” *Social Work Research* 35 (2): 71–81.

McMullen, Amanda. 2021. “What Am I, a Piece of Meat? Synecdochical Utterances Targeting Women.” *Feminist Philosophy Quarterly* 7 (1). https://doi.org/10.5206/fpq/2021.1.10230.

McNamara, Brittney. 2016. “This Video Shows How Girls Are Damaged by Images of Objectified Women — #WomenNotObjects | Teen Vogue.” *Teen Vogue*, March 10, 2016.

Mikkola, Mari. 2017. “Pornographic Artifacts: Maker’s Intentions Model.” In *Beyond Speech: Pornography and Analytic Feminist Philosophy*, edited by Mari Mikkola, 113–34. Oxford University Press.

———. 2019a. “Introduction.” In *Pornography: A Philosophical Introduction*, 1–21. Oxford University Press.

———. 2019b. “Pornography as Liberation.” In *Pornography: A Philosophical Introduction*, 197–231. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190640064.003.0007.

Mill, John Stuart. 2003. “On Liberty.” In *Utilitarianism and On Liberty*, edited by Mary Warnock, 2nd ed., 88–180. Blackwell Publishing.

Miller-Young, Mireille. 2013. “Interventions: The Deviant and Defiant Art of Black Women Porn Directors.” In *The Feminist Porn Book: The Politics of Producing Pleasure*, edited by Constance Penley, Celine Parreñas Shimizu, Mireille Miller-Young, and Tristan Taormino, 105–20. The Feminist Press.

Nash, J. C. 2008. “Strange Bedfellows: Black Feminism and Antipornography Feminism.” *Social Text* 26 (4): 51–76. https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-2008-010.

Nussbaum, Martha C. 1995. “Objectification.” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 24 (4): 249–91.

———. 1998. “‘Whether From Reason Or Prejudice’: Taking Money For Bodily Services.” *The Journal of Legal Studies* 27 (S2): 693–723. https://doi.org/10.1086/468040.

Olberding, Amy. 2014. “Subclinical Bias, Manners, and Moral Harm.” *Hypatia* 29 (2): 287--302.

Papadaki, Lina. 2010a. “Pornography: Is There a Connection Between Treating Things as People and Treating People as Things?” In *Sex, Drugs & Rock’n’Roll: Psychological, Legal and Cultural Examinations of Sex and Sexuality*, edited by Helen Gavin and Jacquelyn Bent, 229–35. Inter-Disciplinary Press .

———. 2010b. “What Is Objectification?” *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 7 (1): 16–36. https://doi.org/10.1163/174046809X12544019606067.

———. 2015. “What Is Wrong About Objectification?” In *Current Controversies in Political Philosophy*, edited by Thom Brooks, 87–99. Routledge.

Pateman, Trevor. 1980. “How to Do Things with Images.” *Theory and Society* 9 (4): 603–22. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00148355.

Phipps, Alison. 2017. “Sex Wars Revisited: A Rhetorical Economy of Sex Industry Opposition.” *Journal of International Women’s Studies* 18 (4): 306–20.

plasticdollheads. 2020. “Page Three: The Naked Truth.” *Plasticdollheads*, June 19, 2020.

Reid, Rebecca. 2018. “Objectifying Men’s Crotches Isn’t Equality – and It Makes Sexism towards Women Worse.” *Metro*, February 12, 2018.

Ritchie, Ani, and Meg Barker. 2005. “Feminist SM: A Contradiction in Terms or a Way of Challenging Traditional Gendered Dynamics through Sexual Practice?” *Lesbian and Gay Psychology Review* 6 (3): 227–39.

Rubin, Gayle. 1993. “Misguided, Dangerous and Wrong: An Analysis of Anti-Pornography Politics.” In *Bad Girls and Dirty Pictures: The Challenge to Reclaim Feminism*, edited by Avedon Carol and Alison Assiter, 18–40. Pluto Press.

———. 2013. “The Feminist Sex Wars and the Myth of the Missing Middle: A Letter to The Feminist Porn Book’s Editors.” *Susie Bright’s Journal*, March 13, 2013.

Rubin, Gayle S. 2011. “Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality.” In *Deviations: A Gayle Rubin Reader*, 137–81. Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1177/096673500401200206.

Ruíz, Elena, and Nora Berenstain. 2018. “Gender-Based Administrative Violence as Colonial Strategy.” *Philosophical Topics* 46 (2): 209–27.

Russell, Diana E.H. 1980. “Pornography and the Women’s Liberation Movement.” In *Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography*, edited by Laura Lederer, 301–6. New York: William Morrow & Co.

Russell, Diana E.H., and Laura Lederer. 1980. “Questions We Get Asked Most Often.” In *Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography*, edited by Laura Lederer, 23–29. New York: William Morrow & Co.

Russell, Diana E H. 1988. “Pornography and Rape: A Causal Model.” *Political Psychology* 9 (1): 41–73.

Samois (Organization). 1987. *Coming to Power - Writing and Graphics on Lesbian S/M*. Alyson Publications.

Satz, Debra. 1995. “Markets in Women’s Sexual Labor.” *Ethics* 106 (1): 63–85.

Saul, Jennifer. 2006. “Pornography, Speech Acts and Context.” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 106: 229–48.

Saul, Jennifer M. 2006. “On Treating Things as People: Objectification, Pornography, and the History of the Vibrator.” *Hypatia* 21 (2): 45–61.

Save Our Eyes. 2018. “Save Our Eyes, Holbeck, Leeds. Managed Approach - Does It Work?” 2018. http://saveoureyes.co.uk/.

Saxena, Jaya. 2017. “I Tried Wearing a High Slit Dress Like Bella Hadid.” *Cosmopolitan*, July 11, 2017.

Slade, M. 2017. “Am I a Queer Woman Looking Through the Male Gaze? - Everyday Feminism.” *Everyday Feminism*, July 22, 2017.

Sleath, Emma, and Ray Bull. 2015. “A Brief Report on Rape Myth Acceptance: Differences Between Police Officers, Law Students, and Psychology Students in the United Kingdom.” *Violence and Victims* 30 (1): 146. https://doi.org/10.1891/0886-6708.VV-D-13-00035.

Smith, Molly, and Juno Mac. 2018. *Revolting Prostitutes: The Fight for Sex Workers’ Rights*. Verso Books.

Speed, David, Jordan MacDonald, Alyssa Parks, Hannah Doucette, and Keerthana Munagapati. 2021. “Pornography Consumption and Attitudes Towards Pornography Legality Predict Attitudes of Sexual Equality.” *Journal of Sex Research* 58 (3): 396–408. https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2020.1864263.

Steinem, Gloria. 1980. “Erotica and Pornography: A Clear and Present Difference.” In *Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography*, edited by Laura Lederer, 35–39. William Morrow & Co.

Stock, Kathleen. 2018. “Why Self-Identification Should Not Legally Make You a Woman.” *The*

Conversation, October 1, 2018.

Suarez, Eliana, and Tahany M Gadalla. 2010. “Stop Blaming the Victim: A Meta-Analysis on Rape Myths.” *Article Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 25 (11): 2010–35. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260509354503.

Sundahl, Debi. 2001. “Stripper.” In *Sex Work: Writings by Women in the Sex Industry*, edited by Frédérique Delacoste and Priscilla Alexander, 175–80. Cleis Press.

Talkspace. 2017. “Street Harassment and Its Affect on Women’s Mental Health.” *Teen Vogue*, December 4, 2017.

Utt, Jamie. 2013. “3 Ways To Tell The Difference Between Appreciation of Beauty and Sexual Objectification.” *Everyday Feminism*, April 18, 2013.

Vadas, Melinda. 1995. “Reply to Patrick Hopkins.” *Hypatia* 10 (2): 159–61.

———. 2005. “The Manufacture-for-Use of Pornography and Women’s Inequality.” *Journal of Political Philosophy* 13 (2): 174–93.

Vance, Carole S. 1992a. “More Danger, More Pleasure: A Decade after the Barnard Sexuality Conference.” In *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, edited by Carole S. Vance, xvi–xxxv. Pandora Press.

———. 1992b. “Pleasure and Danger: Towards a Politics of Sexuality.” In *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, edited by Carole S. Vance, 1–27. Pandora Press.

Vince, Rosa. 2018. “Testimonial Smothering and Pornography: Silencing Refusing Sex and Reporting Assault.” *Feminist Philosophy Quarterly* 4 (3). https://doi.org/10.5206/fpq/2018.3.5784.

“What It’s like to Be Pregnant in Philosophy | What Is It like to Be a Woman in Philosophy?” 2011. April 14, 2011. https://beingawomaninphilosophy.wordpress.com/2011/04/14/what-its-like-to-be-pregnant-in-philosophy/.

Wilkinson, Stephen. 2003. *Bodies for Sale: Ethics and Exploitation in the Human Body Trade*. Routledge.

Williams, Cristan. 2015. “Sex, Gender, and Sexuality: The TransAdvocate Interviews Catharine A. MacKinnon.” *The TransAdvocate*, April 7, 2015.

Williams, Zoe. 2018. “Hear Me Phwoar: Why It Is OK for Female Critics to Lust after Male Celebrities.” *The Guardian*, May 29, 2018.

Willis, Ellen. 1984. “Radical Feminism and Feminist Radicalism.” *Social Text* 9/10 (The 60’s without Apology): 91–118.

———. 2014. “Feminism Moralism and Pornography.” In *The Essential Ellen Willis*, edited by Nona Willis Aronowitz, 94–101. University Of Minnesota Press.

Wilson, Elizabeth. 1983. “The Context of ‘Between Pleasure and Danger’: The Barnard Conference on Sexuality.” *Feminist Review* 13: 35–41.

Wright, Paul J, and Robert S Tokunaga. 2016. “Men’s Objectifying Media Consumption, Objectification of Women, and Attitudes Supportive of Violence Against Women.” *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 45 (4): 955–64. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-015-0644-8.

Yakimovich, Dasha. 2016. “Sexual Objectification Isn’t Wrong, It’s Natural.” *The Tab*, February 24, 2016.

Yang, Eugene Lee, Keith Habersberger, Ned Fulmer, Zach Kornfeld, Allison Bagg, and Kirsten King. 2016. “Men Re-Create Iconic Photos And Get Photoshopped With Their Ideal Body Types.” *Buzzfeed*, May 16, 2016.

Zillmann, Dolf. 1989a. “Effects of Prolonged Consumption of Pornography.” In *Pornography: Research Advances and Policy Considerations*, edited by Dolf Zillman and Jennings Bryant, 127–57. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

———. 1989b. “Pornography and Men’s Sexual Callousness Toward Women.” In *Pornography: Research Advances and Policy Considerations*, edited by Dolf Zillmann and Jennings Bryant, 95–125. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.