



Opinions Exposed:

The Fetishization of Disabled Women

in Online Pornography

Master's Thesis

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examined the views of disabled women regarding disability porn. The need for a sociological examination of pornography, combined with the lack of literature on the views of disabled women themselves regarding disability porn, led to the research question, "*How do disabled women evaluate disability porn?*". The research was conducted through in-depth semi-structured interviews with 8 women with mobility disabilities living in Greece and the Netherlands. Most participants believed that disability porn objectifies disabled women, while the disabled body and disability are capitalized and become a spectacle. It was found that those who have watched disability porn hold a more positive stand about it, while participants who haven't are more prone to a negative side, mostly because of the way they think that the disabled porn actress is depicted and of the reflection of the societal stereotypes.

Keywords: Disability Pornography, Fetishization, Objectification, Feminist Movement

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Introduction

“*Amputee Nylon and Heel Crutching*” is one of the many videos on Pornhub showing a woman with an amputated leg walking in heels. Money & Simcoe (1984) introduced the term “*acrotomophilia*” as the sexual attraction to amputations and “amputees,” categorizing it as a type of paraphilia. Today, the term “*devotism*” is more commonly used to describe sexual attraction to disabilities without exclusively linking it to paraphilia or identity disorders (Limoncin, 2014).

Studies tried to explain the attraction to disabilities through a biological and psychological lens. Biologically, devotism was articulated as a fetishistic disorder through hormonal, neurological mechanisms, and cognitive-behavioral patterns (Perrotta, 2019). Psychologically, various theories have framed devotism as a type of paraphilia (Sullivan, 2008). Human sexuality, however, is not just biologically and psychologically shaped, but a complex phenomenon with a clear social side. Sexual preferences, fetishes, and behaviors are ruled and regulated by societal norms, including norms around beauty, and eroticism, as well as what is deemed distinctive and unique (Schnabel, 2018). In the case of devotism, although previous studies revealed a prevailing situation where a large proportion of devotees¹ are specifically attracted to people with amputations, there are groups “*fascinated by wheelchairs, crutches, braces, cerebral palsy, etc*” (Raymond & Aguilera, 2000). The focus on visible impairments and deviations from “normative functionality” is a notable feature of devotism.

It also uncovered a gendered power dynamic of mostly men feeling sexually attracted to disabled women (Limoncin et al., 2014). The fact that this is a highly gendered phenomenon reinforces the need for a sociological approach that moves away from ‘simply’ considering devotism a form of paraphilia to an analysis that takes the power dynamics and (re)production of social norms seriously at play in this sexual preference.

Previous research on the attraction toward disabled women has primarily focused on devotees, typically white, heterosexual men (Limoncin et al., 2014), with only limited attention to the perspectives of disabled women (Dixon, 1976). Studies have revealed that both men and women can be attracted to disabled individuals, suggesting that it is often the idea of disability

¹ Devotees: People who feel sexual attraction towards disabled individuals

itself that arouses, rather than the sexual act with the person (Bruno, 1997). This raises concerns about the fetishization of physical traits that the disabled individual has not chosen. Recent research has attempted to disconnect devotism from paraphilia, highlighting the stigma devotees face and questioning whether devotism should be considered normal (Sullivan, 2008). While some disabled women reject the fetishization of their bodies, others feel it makes them appealing and valued (Solvang, 2007). Earlier scholars recommended that the disabled community distance themselves from devotees (Bruno, 1997).

Sexual preferences and fetishes though are detected within pornography, serving as a space for the expression of human sexuality. When examined, online pornography transcends the simplistic dichotomy of being inherently good or bad, necessitating a multidisciplinary approach to understand its cultural and political implications (Dawson, 2014) while the phenomenon of devotism in online pornography reflects a convergence of desires, power dynamics, and social norms (Previtali, 2022). Moving beyond whether devotism is normal, this study delves into the attraction to disabled women in online pornography. Early studies took a staunchly opposing stance, viewing this attraction as a fetishization of “women’s vulnerabilities” (Elman, 1997). On the contrary, more recent research suggests that while disabled women may indeed be fetishized, visual material can normalize sexually active disabled bodies (Ebrahim, 2019) and challenge stereotypes of disabled individuals as asexual (Ebrahim, 2019).

Discussions on the intersection of disability and pornography within academia have yielded divergent viewpoints. Existing literature has focused on the dichotomy between objectification and representation, often overlooking the firsthand perspectives of disabled women. This study aims to analyze and present the opinions and stances of the women directly affected. The principle “Nothing about us, without us” emphasizes involving disabled individuals in disability-related matters. By incorporating the perspectives of disabled women, this research explores beyond the binary of objectification and representation and better understands the social implications of this phenomenon in online pornography as viewed by the women themselves.

While Third Wave Feminism has already taken a positive side about women participating in porn videos under the argument of free choice (Snyder-Hall, 2010), the intersection of feminism, disability, and pornography yields intriguing dynamics concerning the right to sexual autonomy, self-representation, and the concept of free agency. This study amplifies the voices of disabled women, investigates whether knowledge about pornography among able-bodied women applies to

"disability porn," and assesses whether feminist perspectives on pornography include disabled femininity.

Pornography significantly influences people's lives, both as a consumable product and a career choice (Attwood et al., 2018). However, research on this topic remains stigmatized, even within academia (Attwood et al., 2018). Despite this, sociological analysis is crucial, as pornography both reflects and shapes social phenomena and ethical considerations (Attwood, 2008). The time for simply debating whether porn is good or bad has passed; a multidisciplinary approach is now essential. This research, grounded in women's narratives, can inform public discourse and support evidence-based strategies for addressing the social challenges associated with pornography.

Although no literature specifically addresses the porn videos of disabled men, it can be denied that those videos exist. Previous studies have not deeply focused on videos featuring men, reinforcing the gendered dimension of this phenomenon. My focus is on women because they seem to be the central focus of the phenomenon of devotism (Previtali, 2022) and because they are a group that is talked about rather than participating in the discussion about them.

Through this line of reasoning and the lack of literature on the views of the women themselves, I aim to answer the following research question through a qualitative and inductive approach.

Through interviews and thematic analysis, I want to explore

“How do disabled women evaluate disability porn?”

1 Theoretical Framework

A core focus of this research is devotism in pornography, particularly the differentiation of disabled bodies. Interviews will be framed by the concept of the body, using an interdisciplinary approach, including reception theory, which explores how meanings are perceived, and opinions formed, and

objectification theory, which underpins arguments about disability porn. Additionally, previous feminist evaluations of pornography will be used to compare the perspectives of disabled women.

1.1 Theorizing the body

“The body has been made so problematic for women that it has often seemed easier to shrug it off and travel as a disembodied spirit.”

— Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*

The central axis of this thesis is the body, which has engaged numerous academics over the years, thus developing different approaches and theories regarding its essence and significance. A better understanding of the body as the surface where control was expressed, and fantasies were applied is a crucial tool for better understanding the following theories and this research itself.

From the perspective of positivist sciences, it has been biologically analyzed, recognizing, and monopolizing its function (Αλεξιάς, 2003). The body, historically and culturally constructed as a means of understanding social functioning (Berger & Luckman, 1984), has been addressed by sociology studies and, by extension, disability studies, as well as philosophy, feminist, and transgender studies. From the analysis of the body as the object of power imposition through bodily practices aimed at control and manipulation, by Foucault (Foucault, 1973 as cited in Αλεξιάς, 2003) to the acceptance of the body with impairments as part of human diversity by M. Oliver (1994), scholars have agreed that the body as a subject of study has been defined as the most suitable field where both control and stigmatization and marginalization are exerted.

According to Merleau-Ponty and the phenomenological approach, the body is not merely an object but the means through which we understand the world (Kelly, 2002). For instance, in a handshake, it is not just the sensation of the hand that provides knowledge, but the entire hand as part of the bodily experience. The body functions as a lived experience for comprehending the surrounding world (Kelly, 2002). In the context of pornography, it can be argued that individuals (devotees) perceive disabled bodies not just as objects but as carriers of social messages, desires, and concepts. This lived experience influences how devotees engage with disabled bodies in a sexual context.

The body has an active role in the process of perception and understanding (Kelly, 2002). Within the sexual context, the disabled body becomes grotesque and incomplete, which raises questions about their ability to perform their sexuality. This fact can explain the reason for its fetishization (Previtali, 2022). In pornography, the fetishization of disabled bodies can be a result of the projection of devotees of their desires and fantasies onto disabled bodies, viewing them through a lens shaped by social norms and personal experiences.

Building upon Merleau-Ponty's idea that bodies carry social meanings and desires and actively participate in the perception of the world, other disabled women may think of "disability porn" through their own lived experiences of their bodies. Specifically, due to the fetishization of the female disabled body, they may perceive disability porn as a carrier of problematic social messages that may reinforce the marginalization and stigma experienced by disabled women. On the other hand, their own body experiences may differ, and perceive disability porn more positively because their body becomes represented in the global industry of pornography. The main goal of this research is the different opinions that can arise from this perspective.

1.2 Perception Theory

Through this line of thinking about how the body functions as a carrier of messages and participates in the process of perception and acceptance of pornography, I will be led to the Theory of Reception. There are various theories of reception, mainly originating from the field of neuropsychology, which analyze the neuroanatomical, cognitive-psychological mechanisms behind perception and acceptance (Démuth, 2013). In this research, following a sociological approach, I will rely on Stuart Hall's Theory of Reception.

The Theory of Reception refers to how readers, viewers, and listeners perceive and interpret a product, independent of the creator's original intention (Hall, 1973). This theory shifts the meaning of a product from its static existence to being shaped by the interaction with its audience. For instance, the meaning of a book is determined by how readers perceive it rather than the author's intentions. Hall (1973) introduced the encode-decode model, emphasizing the difference between how a product is encoded by its creator and how the audience decodes it, a process heavily influenced by prior beliefs and experiences. He further argues that decoding not

only shapes existing beliefs but also enables the formation of new opinions based on new experiences.

In this research, Hall's theory can be applied to understand that the intention behind a pornographic video depicting disabled women may be perceived differently by viewers. For instance, if a disabled woman creates a video to contribute to the representation of the disabled female body in online pornography, other disabled women may not perceive it in the same way. This highlights the varying opinions that disabled women have about disability porn, as their perceptions and analyses are influenced by personal experiences. By connecting the body as a lived experience, this research explores how the body plays a role in perceiving these videos and which underlying beliefs are activated. According to Hall (1973), the awareness or viewing of this genre of porn can influence and reshape existing ideologies and beliefs about the body, pornography, and the fetishization of disabled women.

1.3 Objectification Theory

As has already been mentioned, previous studies mainly examined devotism in pornography through the binary of representation and objection. Therefore, one of the theories I will base my research on is the Objectification Theory, to examine whether disabled women relate to this belief or not.

The long history of objectifying or idealizing the disabled body provides a foundation for developing theories about the female disabled body. The involvement of disabled individuals in freak shows (Previtali, 2022) as a means of income, along with practices like eugenics and compulsory sterilizations (still permitted in some regions), reveals the stereotypes and norms imposed on the disabled female body. Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) introduced objectification theory to explore how societal conditioning and sexual objectification can lead to mental health challenges for women. They also introduced the concept of self-objectification, where individuals internalize external judgments about their bodies, particularly impacting women (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). This theory underscores the harmful effects of reducing individuals to mere objects and the need to understand and address these dynamics.

As Bartky (1990) stated “Sexual objectification occurs whenever a woman's body, body parts, or sexual functions are separated out from her person, reduced to the status of mere instruments, or regarded as if they were capable of representing her.” (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997, p. 175). Applying this theory to disabled women, one easily understands that woman’s “stumps”/ wheelchairs/ diapers, etc are objectified and sexualized and may this sexualization affect their mental health. Known (or not, as argued by Wekker, 2016) is the story of Sarah Baartman, a black African woman who was transported to Europe to participate in exhibitions due to steatopygia (unnaturally large buttocks) (Wekker, 2016). Although she died in 1815, her genital organs continued to be exhibited in Paris throughout the 20th century, until they were returned to Africa in 2002 (Ferrus, 1998 as cited by Wekker, 2016). The female body and genitalia have been exposed, “researched” and objectified because of women being valued through their appearance and their sexual function (Balraj, 2015).

In the context of pornography, objectification theory suggests that the portrayal of individuals primarily as sexual objects for the gratification of viewers can contribute to harmful attitudes. Disabled women seem to be highly sexualized and dehumanizing ways, focusing primarily on their physical appearance and sexual acts rather than their humanity, emotions, or agency (Gilman, 1985 as cited in Wekker, 2016). As Aaron Dawson (2014), quoted Grebowicz (2013) “*The task is to undo the reduction of women into bodies, to animate the pornographic body so that it becomes a person rather than a body and enters the public/political sphere, participating in the creation of new identities*” (p. 103).

1.4 Evaluation of Porn

As discussed in the Introduction, the evaluation of pornography as either a form of work or a consumable product has been a significant concern for the feminist movement globally. The Third Wave of Feminism has specifically addressed women's participation in pornographic material, recognizing the right of each woman to engage in and view pornography, if it does not involve illegal or non-consensual acts (Snyder-Hall, 2010). However, the feminist movement's long history of debates over pornography dates to the late 1970s, during the "Porn Wars" (Comella, 2015). Anti-porn feminists in the USA argued that pornography is inherently violent and promotes

violence against women, leading to the creation of organizations like Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW) to combat the dehumanization of women (Comella, 2015).

Current literature on women's views and attitudes towards pornography reveals a predominantly negative stance due to the unrealistic portrayal of female bodies (Senn, 1993), with many women feeling shame when experiencing sexual arousal from such material. Additionally, more conservative perspectives consider pornography harmful because it promotes violence against women (Senn, 1993). Conversely, some argue that pornography is not inherently harmful and that participation as an actor can be viewed as a form of work (Senn, 1993). More recent studies, while reflecting a broad range of opinions similar to earlier research, emphasize the politicization of personal desires and sexuality. Ciclitira (2004) found in her study on women's views within the feminist context of anti/pro-porn debates that women either rejected pornography through a feminist lens or became angered by the feminist movement, arguing it disrespected sex workers.

Although the studies mentioned above do not include the factor of disability and do not examine the identity of disabled women, they can be said to align to some extent with studies that focus exclusively on disabled women. As mentioned in the Introduction, the existing literature on the views of disabled women revolves around the dichotomy of objectification and representation. By utilizing the existing literature and previously expressed opinions, I will be able to determine whether the current views of disabled women align with previous findings regarding pornography. Additionally, I will examine perspectives on the feminist movement and the under-representation of disabled women within it concerning issues of pornography.

2 Methodology

2.1 Methodological approach

Research Question

“How do disabled women evaluate disability porn?”

Due to the nature of the study and the research question that emerged, the researcher judged that the best approach is qualitative inductive research. As Creswell & Creswell (2017) stated, qualitative research is the way to understand better how individuals or groups perceive, experience, or even feel a social phenomenon. The qualitative approach sheds light on the participants' perspectives, opinions, and experiences (Knott et al., 2022). Also, qualitative research is considered critically useful when the topic hasn't been researched in depth or the topic hasn't been researched through the aspect of a specific group of people (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Through a literature review in both Greek and English, as well as an investigation of videos on porn sites such as Pornhub, it was observed that the central focus of the phenomenon of devotism involves mostly women with amputated limbs. Even a quick search on social media reveals hundreds of groups named "devotees and amputees," where videos and photos of women with amputated limbs are posted, often without clear evidence of their consent.

Given these observations, the initial aim of the research was to examine the perspectives of women with amputations regarding "amputee porn". However, the process of finding participants proved to be extremely challenging. I contacted 27 organizations and associations of disabled individuals/ disabled women/ amputated women but received responses from only three. Many women were hesitant to participate due to previous negative experiences with devotees, as they informed me, and some organizations believe that the phenomenon of devotism (in and out of pornography) does not exist in their country.

Due to these difficulties, I decided to slightly change the focus of my research towards "disability porn" and, more broadly, disabled women with physical and sensory impairments. The decision to exclude intellectual and psychosocial impairments was primarily due to the cases of exploitation that appear in porn videos depicting individuals with these impairments. I believe that I am not the appropriate researcher, and this is not the proper research, to examine those cases.

2.2 Sample and Sampling Strategy

Based on interviews and in alignment with the research question, the study employed a highly targeted sample of participants. Specifically, it includes women (self-identified) with physical impairments (such as paraplegia, spina bifida, etc). Even though none of the participants were deaf or blind it was decided that the inaccessibility of pornographic videos shouldn't be used

this an additional exclusion criterion. Women should have the opportunity to express their perspectives on visual materials, even those that may exclude or disregard them.

The researcher interviewed 8 disabled women with physical impairments that affect their mobility. The researcher's previous study, work, and volunteer involvement with disability in their birth country allows them to engage with disabled women.

The Selection criteria for the participants were:

- To be over 18 years old
- To be a Woman (self-identified)
- To be disabled (physical and sensory impairments)
- Speak Greek and/or English

Purposive sampling was employed to achieve a diverse range of beliefs and perspectives (Knott et al., 2022). The researcher relied on her network, including her role as a member of the "Association of Diabetics" in the Regional Unit of Pieria, Greece, which is part of the Disabled Association of the Regional Unit, she contacted them to refer individuals who meet the criteria. Additionally, as a member of the Organizing Committee for the International "Reflection of Disability in Art" Festival in Thessaloniki, Greece, she reached out to their contacts because of their network of disabled individuals. To ensure diversity beyond Greek participants, she also contacted the "Feminists Against Ableism" Collective based in the Netherlands. Furthermore, she used social media to post invitations to groups of disabled individuals. As stated earlier, because of the difficulty of finding participants the researcher contacted 27 extra organizations/associations worldwide. The researcher also employed snowball sampling to reach the desired number of participants for this research (Knott et al., 2022).

2.3 Data Collection

The chosen data collection method was to conduct interviews with disabled women, based on the reasons outlined earlier. Initially, the goal was to interview 10-12 disabled women, but as mentioned above, difficulties in finding participants resulted in 8 interviews being conducted. In-

depth semi-structured interviews provided both the interviewer and the interviewees with the opportunity to explore deeper issues regarding the representation or possible fetishization of the latter in pornography. Additionally, the semi-structured questions offered a guide for discussion without limiting participants' ability to elaborate on their thoughts (Knott et al., 2022).

Due to the sensitive nature of the subject, through the interviews, I was given the space and time to create the appropriate environment and connection with the interviewee for them to feel more comfortable speaking about this issue. This is mainly achieved because in-depth semi-structured interviews, through open-ended questions, create a sense of discussion rather than a very structured closed-question interview (Rutledge et al., 2020). Additionally, although other qualitative research strategies could yield similar results (e.g., focus groups), due to the nature of the subject, I believe that the 1:1 approach is deemed significant for further enhancing the participant's sense of safety (Rutledge et al., 2020).

All meetings were conducted online and lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. While online meetings are less direct than face-to-face interactions, they can reduce the potential bias from the researcher's presence (Cresswell & Creswell, 2017). Due to my location in a different city and country from the participants, online meetings were the only viable option. Given the sensitive nature of the topic, which often involved sharing personal experiences, participants provided extensive details, frequently exceeding the research scope. I observed a strong inclination among Greek participants to discuss disability and sexuality issues, often requiring me to refocus the conversation on the research topic. As will be shown in the results, there remains a significant stigma and lack of discussion about disability and sexuality, even within the disability community.

2.3. Data Analysis

Data obtained from the interviews of 8 disabled women were analyzed using the qualitative software "Atlas.ti." to answer the research question "*How do disabled women evaluate disability porn*". From the interviews, 120 codes emerged and were organized into 9 code groups. Initially, I followed an open inductive approach to identify themes and patterns that unfolded while examining the interview transcripts. Afterward, I utilized axial coding to draw connections between the codes, and, in the end, I followed a selective approach. Through Thematic Analysis,

the interviews were coded. Based on the Interview Guide outlined in Appendix 1 I identified, and analyzed, patterns.

2.4 Ethical Considerations

As Knott et al. (2022) stated *“Before conducting interviews, researchers should consider harm minimization, informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, and reflexivity and positionality”* (p. 4).

Negative emotions are highly linked to the context discussed (Knott et al., 2022). In this study, where disabled women are asked about their potential fetishization or objectification due to their bodies and impairments, there is a risk of emotional distress or discomfort. To minimize psychological harm, the researcher used appropriate language and terminology and respected each participant’s limits, such as their preference not to answer certain questions or to end the interview. While the discussion was guided by the researcher’s questions, it followed the participant's lead. If any emotional change or reluctance to continue was observed, the researcher paused and inquired about the participant's preference for continuing.

Concerning anonymity and confidentiality, a consent form was provided before every session to inform the participants properly of their rights. Every participant has the right to know the goal of this research, who may read their answers, that a pseudonym will replace their name, that the interview will be recorded, and that they can stop the interview whenever they feel necessary. Additionally, they were informed about their right to withdraw completely from the study at any time.

Concerning reflexivity and positionality, the researcher acknowledges their bias related to the issue being researched. More specifically, I recognize that as a woman, I may relate to my participants' answers and may be influenced by them while taking notes during the interview. Additionally, as a person with a chronic illness, a member of the disabled community, and a graduate of Special Education who is actively involved in disability issues through my association, volunteering, and work, I realize that I am biased on disability-related issues.

I believe that people should not be fetishized for characteristics they did not choose, such as impairments, disabilities, skin color, and other appearance traits. While I recognize that sex

work is work and every woman has the right to participate, I also believe that disability porn and porn, in general, objectify women. It is crucial to include disabled women's voices in studies on pornography. Therefore, I am committed to remaining as objective as possible in my research while being mindful of my perspective as a non-disabled person when addressing disability issues.

According to the limitations of this study, the interviewer recognizes that studying in the Netherlands while they don't speak Dutch will also affect the process of this research. For the same reason, the races/ethnicities of the participants probably will not be diverse, and the researcher expects that most of the participants may be Greek. Also, the researcher acknowledges that due to the participants being located outside the Netherlands, online interviews also have limitations.

3 Results

Before presenting the results, I would like to introduce my participants. Eight women participated, seven of them are Greek while one is Dutch. All eight have a physical impermanent that affects their mobility. Their ages range from 20 to 60 years old. The Greek participants are all members of the same online community, so while I expected them to share similar views, this proved to be only partially true. However, my predictions regarding age and pornography consumption were correct, as consumption was not as prevalent among those aged 50 and above. Their experiences, both romantic and social, vary greatly, adding interest to the views expressed. In each interview, each participant approached the topic differently which sometimes may get off topic, but they managed to express different opinions. The names used are all pseudonyms.

3.1 What affects the perception of Disability Pornography

Before delving into specific perspectives on disability porn, it is crucial to first examine whether individuals are aware of the phenomenon of *devotism* and whether they have ever perceived a partner or an acquaintance as a devotee.

3.1.1 Familiarity with Term Devotism

All participants, except one, were familiar with the term "devotism" before the study, and all of them expressed curiosity to learn more about it from a scientific perspective. While most participants stated that they were aware of this phenomenon, they also mentioned that their knowledge was partial or that they had come across it accidentally, such as hearing about it randomly or seeing a documentary on television.

As Maria (28 years old, Greek citizen) stated:

“Yeah, okay I needed a little more information... at conferences etc. we would touch on this very superficially, so it wasn’t something completely new as a topic, but the more specific part, starting with the amputation part and going after all, I have never had such contact on it before.”

It should be noted that there is no term for “*devotism*” in the Greek language, so the Greek participants also expressed interest in learning about the English terminology for better understanding and further research.

3.1.2 Experience of Fetishization

As Hall (1973) stated, prior experiences significantly shape our perceptions of the reality around us. Consequently, it is crucial to examine whether participants have previously experienced fetishization and how this influences their perspectives on disability porn.

As illustrated in Table 1 “*Experience of Fetishization*” although most responses regarding whether participants have experienced fetishization were negative (6 out of 8), there is a notable overlap. One participant initially responded negatively but later expressed uncertainty about her experience. Similarly, another participant, who also initially responded negatively, subsequently disclosed that she had received online messages of a sexual nature related to her disability, which caused her significant discomfort. Except for three participants, the rest expressed a desire to discuss this matter with me, believing that my expertise and knowledge could provide better insight into whether their experiences constituted fetishization and revealed a general lack of awareness regarding the fetishization of disabilities. Aphrodite encapsulated this feeling suitably:

"I don't have an experience of fetishization, as far as I know."

Helen was the only one who confidently identified her experiences as fetishization. Notably, she was more knowledgeable about issues related to disability, pornography, and BDSM. She described her experience as follows:

"I think he might not have it very structured in his mind either, but it's something he's drawn to (disability), mainly regarding the scars and the fact that he had to help a lot with my mobility at that time. I consider myself a recipient (of fetishization) because, at some point, which is why I ultimately ended this experience, I realized that he was not engaging with me as a person. I felt that my body was being objectified, and my entire condition was being exploited for his pleasure."

She attributed the other person's excitement to her scars and the perceived "need" for assistance in everyday activities, linking it to normative disability standards and the non-disabled individual's need for dominance, power, and control which aligns with previous scholars who linked devotism to power and control (Elman, 1997).

Eva and Dimitra proved that fetishization can also happen online. When Eva delved into the world of Facebook, she was open about her disability, she started receiving many friend requests and, in the end, many inappropriate messages. On the other hand, Dimitra's car accident was the main thing on Greek TV at the time and everybody knew about it. As she stated:

«After I was discharged from the hospital I opened my messages with my dad, we were sitting and reading messages from relatives. Anyway, there were plenty, and one message came up that made me feel more embarrassed than I have ever felt in front of my dad. I mean, my dad was in the hospital with me when I was 21, seeing me in that condition, and I wasn't embarrassed. A well-known singer had sent me a message. He offered me money to keep him "company". Because he believed that now that I'm in a wheelchair, no one would bother spending time with me.»

On the opposite side, Klaudia who was never fetishized uniquely stated that she felt more than ok with being fetishized, within and outside of a relationship, as it meant that someone was interested in her. This reflects one of the prevalent stereotypes that disabled individuals face about their sexuality, which includes the notions of asexuality or being perceived as genderless or childlike (Ebrahim, 2019). As Sappho stated, without expressing support for fetishization:

«I think like in general people More often seem to think that people with a disability don't have any sexual sexuality at all, so that is more the thing I experience.»

The experiences of my participants corroborate the notion that stereotypes surrounding the sexuality of disabled individuals predominantly center on asexuality and the desexualization of disabled bodies (Kim, 2011).

In conclusion, most participants either did not experience fetishization or did not recognize it, highlighting a lack of awareness and empowerment among women and disabled women. Their views ranged from complete rejection of the idea of disability as a fetish to full acceptance of it, as it provides disabled individuals with the opportunity to be in relationships. In the middle are those who disagree with being reduced solely to their disability but simultaneously acknowledge that what attracts you isn't a choice. Experiencing fetishization directly aligns with Objectification Theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), which argues that women's bodies are reduced to objects for others' pleasure. While a disability fetish shouldn't directly mean that a woman is becoming a tool/object, it seems that in reality, this is how the women themselves perceive it.

3.2 Views and Stands on Disability Porn

After discussing the factors that influence their perception of disability porn, we delved into their actual beliefs. We examined whether their views align with the existing recorded opinions of other disabled women and explored their general attitudes towards the pornography industry. Before addressing their specific views on disability porn, it was crucial to first determine whether they had ever watched a pornographic video depicting disabled women.

3.2.1 Exposure to Disability Porn

The responses to this question were very clear, and it could perhaps be considered a closed-type question, but it was deemed necessary for the conduct of the research results.

Two out of the eight participants responded positively to the question, indicating that disability porn is not popular within my sample group. Specifically, Claudia and Dimitra had watched such content. Claudia's experience involved a porn video depicting a disabled man. When asked why she chose a video with disabled men rather than disabled women, she explained that her choice was based on her general sexual preferences.

Dimitra has watched disability porn mostly out of curiosity. As she says:

«Although I watched it partly out of curiosity, the person who conducted the training² was a man. I saw many aids that men use, and as I continued training on disability issues for both men and women, I began to see other things. So, I had come across and watched content involving amputations and wheelchairs, among other things, in general. »

When Dimitra delved into the world of "disability," she felt that the discourse surrounding women's sexuality was missing. She was trained by men on issues that primarily concern disabled women, and when she approached other disabled women to discuss topics like sex, she didn't receive the response she was expecting. This led her to watch disability porn.

The rest of the participants had never watched disability porn, and some were not even aware of its existence. As Maria stated:

"I didn't know about it, but since everything exists in porn, why not this too?"

This statement elevated porn to something universal, as it is, where one can find all fetishes, so it was expected that disability would also be present. It was mentioned that these topics should be discussed both in scientific circles and in disability communities, a fact that is not happening yet

² She refers to the training program she attended after her disability occurred. It is an educational program about daily activities for wheelchair users.

and confirms the stereotypes surrounding academic engagement with pornography (Attwood et al., 2018).

The rest of the participants, when asked why they had not watched this type of porn, primarily cited their negative perception of it and pornography in general. Their negative perception is related to how they imagine disabled women are depicted. Although I expected that pornography consumption would be more common among younger individuals, this proved to be only partially true. As anticipated, the older women's views on pornography were more negative. For instance, when Eva (50 years old) was asked why she hasn't watched disability porn, she responded:

“No, to be honest, I haven't gone down that path. If anything, I'm more afraid, to be honest, because of what I might see and where I might get involved. I mean, I don't know. I'm also at an age, you know, where it's not... I don't know if I want to fully familiarize myself with it ff).”

3.2.2 The Portrayal of the Disabled Porn Actress

Given the expressed concerns about how disabled women are portrayed in pornography, we explored how participants perceived or imagined disabled women in such videos, especially those who had not watched pornography. Drawing on Ponty's theory of the body as a lived experience (Kelly, 2002) and Hall's Reception Theory (1973), which suggests that a text can have different meanings for different audiences, I aimed to understand how the body influences the perception of these videos and the women depicted in them. This exploration naturally intersected with participants' feelings and their identification with the bodies shown in the videos. This overlap emerged during interviews as participants reflected on whether they relate to or imagine themselves in the depicted scenarios.

When asked how having the same body affects their perception of this type of porn, the responses varied. The predominant view was that they could not identify with what they saw because they disagreed with the portrayal of disabled femininity. Specifically, 5 out of 8 participants responded that the disabled woman is depicted as *the good girl, someone who needs*

a man, an easy victim, trying to appear less disabled, assuming a more submissive role, and always being in a submissive role (sexually). As Stephanie said:

“It’s the good girl, the girl who will have sex with you because she has no other alternative. The Girl who you can handle. She can do whatever you want. The woman who needs you can be your subordinate. The woman who has this need for care, I don’t know why, is dependent on the other person perhaps? Of course, dependence is that you need the other, in the context of patriarchy that qualifies.”

Within the framework of patriarchy, they believe that disabled women will always be presented as someone who can be dominated, and for this reason, they cannot identify with it.

Conversely, 2 out of the 8 participants (Claudia and Dimitra) stated that they do not believe that disabled women are always portrayed as submissive, but they also did not feel a sense of identification with them. It should be mentioned that those participants are the ones who have watched such videos, and their opinions may be based on realistic facts.

Stephanie, despite sharing a similar view with other participants on the portrayal of disabled women in pornography, articulated an exceptionally unique perspective. This viewpoint, though not echoed by any other participant, provides significant insight into the perception and interpretation of disability pornography. Specifically, she said:

“Because my body is the same as it was before, I don’t have anything different, so I don’t identify with a disabled woman. A woman with that (same) disability might relate to it, but I can identify with any woman.”

That statement prompted me to reflect on my perceptions of the disabled body and the stereotypes I bring into this study as a researcher. Indeed, her body has not changed in appearance; it remains exactly as it was before. The only alteration is in its functionality. Although a wheelchair is considered part of the body within the disability community, it should not be regarded as an actual change to the body itself. This conversation underscores the broader objective of this study: to provide a platform for all opinions to be heard and to challenge the generalizations made about the disabled community by non-disabled individuals.

3.3 Thoughts on Disability Pornography: Objectification – (Under) Representation – Visibility

At this point in the interview, we examined participants' views on disability porn and whether they agreed with the binary of objectification and representation established in previous research. The binary of representation and objectification remains evident in this study, with objectification being particularly prominent. Their mixed feelings and opinions about disability pornography underscore Hall's idea (1973) that perception is shaped by social contexts and meanings.

3.3.1 Objectification

As it turned out, most participants, 6 out of 8, do not view disability porn positively or are more inclined to see it negatively. One of the main reasons is that it objectifies disabled women and their impairments. As Sappho said about disability porn:

“Like people who watch this stuff, really like to watch this struggle and not necessarily like the sexual acts performed. Uh, some porn actress who was in a wheelchair and she said, like, OK, most people like turn it off before I do the sexual acts. But like these things, like getting into the bed, getting my pants off, those are the most watched things.”

On the same page, as Sappho, Helen stated:

“There isn't enough space given for disabled individuals to have, as I mentioned before, a more active role in this context that doesn't solely focus on their body. It should be more about sexual interaction rather than just being sexual. I think there is too much emphasis on the disability, highlighting it, whether positively or negatively, depending on how it's perceived and presented. But this emphasis certainly targets and stigmatizes the individual, for better or worse. There will

be stigmatization. What bothers me most is not so much the passive role itself, but the condescending attitude of "Oh, let's give them some happiness," like it's a favor being done."

Another reason why the participants think that disability porn objectifies disabled women is the capitalization of the body and the disabled woman as well as the transformation of the body into a spectacle. It was expressed that the capitalistic nature of the pornography industry leads to the commodification of disabled bodies and disabilities, turning them into a spectacle only for profit, which dictates how disabled women are portrayed and leads to their objectification. As Helen said:

"I don't criticize it as long as it's consensual—it's your body, you can do what you want. However, the social outcome of this will inevitably be objectification. Just as we can buy any object, this too can be purchased. And because I can buy it, I will buy it on my own terms, seeking it out based on my own perceptions. If not to claim it, I will demand it"

Like the previous participant, Loreen expressed her concerns about "making money out of your disability." She raised these concerns even for women who choose to engage in such activities as she believes that porn objectifies women. As she stated:

"Yes, if it were possible to get rid of the impairment, I would sell it too, but it can't be gotten rid of. Instead, it's turned into a spectacle—something that is a problem making your life difficult and that could have not existed. Instead of being fixed, it's displayed like something at a fair or a market."

Stephanie articulated a broader perspective on pornography, which she finds applicable to disability porn. She expressed her concerns regarding the depiction of her femininity. As she stated:

«I definitely believe that pornography objectifies, and I don't think it showcases our feminine side. It only highlights the sexual part, the fetishistic part. I don't think it brings out anything else»

Two out of eight participants noted that they had only encountered disability pornography through illegal or non-consensual means, which shaped their perceptions negatively. Although the first thing that comes to mind is some form of exploitation, when I specifically asked Eva's opinion on cases where it is a choice, she said:

“Look, if we're talking about a consensual situation, I have no problem with it. If a disabled person is making money from this scenario, from what we call pornography, I don't have an issue with it. How each of us chooses to present our body is a matter of personal freedom. The concern is whether they are being forced to do it.”

Most of the participants appear to align with the objectification side of the binary, as they believe that the body and impairment are objectified due to the way disabled women are portrayed in pornographic videos. The emphasis placed on their disability throughout these videos, often unrelated to the sexual act itself, contributes to this perception. Additionally, the transformation of the body into a spectacle and its commodification were cited as reasons for this view. Nevertheless, while these were the predominant opinions, they were not the only ones, as will be discussed below.

3.3.2 (Under) Representation – Visibility

In contrast, there were only two positive statements in favor of disability pornography, which argued that it can contribute positively to the visibility and representation of disabled people in the media. Klaudia was one of the two participants being positive about disability pornography and recognized that it reproduces stereotypes about female sexuality, she still believes that:

“Again, it's something positive because I believe there is visibility. It contributes to visibility. Yes, yes. Of course, in a minimal way, but even that is something.”

Disabled individuals are indeed underrepresented in society, particularly regarding sexual matters,

which are often shrouded in stigma (Kim, 2011). Consequently, pornography can be perceived as providing at least a "minimal" version of the visibility they seek. The same participant also mentioned that disability porn was helpful after her disability occurred, as it made her realize that she could still have sex and that she was not alone. This aligns with Dimitra's earlier statement, who turned to porn because she couldn't discuss having sex as a disabled person with other women. Dimitra also stated:

'Why should there only be straight porn, for men and women? Why should there be group sex scenes and only lesbian porn? Why should there only be gay porn and why shouldn't there be? For example, why shouldn't there be porn with disabled individuals?»

In terms of visibility and diversity, she supports that the porn industry should be for all and include all, though she was unequivocal that porn can never be fully representative. Dimitra's view seems to align with those of women who criticize feminism for stigmatizing sex work (Ciclitira, 2004), even though there was not a clear statement regarding disabled sex workers. This lack of highlights a need for further discussion on the intersection of disability and sex work within the feminist critiques of pornography.

Alternatively, the lack of representation was an issue that came up during every interview, and only Klaudia supported the idea that disability porn can be representative. All other participants stated that pornography objectifies disabled women because it can never be truly representative if it promotes stereotypes that do not reflect reality. The concerns were mostly about the way the disabled woman is depicted, as I have analyzed earlier in this study.

Another stereotype mentioned was helplessness, which aligns with how women are portrayed in more passive roles. Specifically, Sappho said:

«Yeah. Well, I think it enhances like the helplessness that's perceived. It's like you're less than your...Not good contribution to society because you can't participate as well. You always need help. Those types of things like. Yeah. Because you enhance the level of need like assistance. A level of assistance you need. That portrays a more disabled person, even though people with a disability often adapt.»

Helen also expressed concerns according to these stereotypes:

"If people are educated by pornography, I worry about the future partners I will meet"

Acknowledging that pornography can often serve as the sole source of sex education and that discussions about the sexual experiences of disabled individuals are even more scarce. Based on Merleau-Ponty's (Kelly, 2002) idea that bodies carry social meanings and desires and actively participate in the perception of the world, previous experiences of fetishization may reinforce the idea that disability porn carries problematic social messages.

3.3.3 Industry of Porn

Although it was not intentional, an issue that emerged was the examination of pornography as an industry. Seven out of eight participants share the same opinion. They consider the pornography industry and what it represents to be problematic. As stated by Eva:

"The objectification of women happens in every industry; you can ask the female doctors or better the female nurses about it. It is just the power of the image and the video that makes it more obvious".

A topic that was discussed extensively is that the pornography industry generally does not promote realistic sex and relies on scenarios. Within these scenarios, they believe that stereotypes are promoted that are either ableist or even dangerous. Helen stated that the main responsibility for the stereotypes created by disability pornography exclusively relies on the people who run those platforms because as she said:

"Of course, I think the greatest responsibility in all this lies with the heads of these platforms since they have allowed content where I have the right to upload sexual material involving animals, children, individuals who have not given their consent, and so on."

Because identities, such as those of disabled individuals, are constructed and "represented" in media (Hall, 1973), this aligns with the concern about the stereotypes produced and perpetuated by online pornography and the significant influence wielded by media, particularly porn.

3.4 Feminist Perspectives

The feminist movement has extensively addressed issues of pornography, as mentioned in the introduction, from the "Sex Wars" to the creation of campaigns against violence towards women, to the present day where sex work has been normalized, with opinions varying widely. However, in these discussions, there is no mention of disability issues, nor are these discussions accessible to disabled individuals. In the third and final part of the interview, we examined the extent to which the participants believe that the voices of disabled women have been included in the feminist movement.

Most participants (7 out of 8) believe that the voices of disabled women have not been included in the feminist movement. They acknowledge that some efforts have been made, but disability is still not mainstream in feminist spaces. A notable difference related to cultural background, as mentioned by Sappho, who is Dutch, is that she believes feminism in the Netherlands is primarily concerned with issues such as race, in contrast to the Greek participants, who identified gender and sexuality as the primary concerns. Aphrodite's comments on the inclusion of disabled women's perspectives in discussions on pornography highlighted a significant demand from the global disability community: the need for non-disabled people to refrain from speaking on behalf of those with disabilities when addressing disability issues. As she said:

"Have they been included? I haven't heard about them, of course, I haven't looked for them either, but wouldn't I have heard something? I don't know, I don't think so. I mean, they don't ask us about other basic things, like a proper ramp, you know. It's always the case that non-disabled people take the liberty and audacity to speak on behalf of the needs of disabled people. So yes, I think this is a general issue that spreads. I don't believe pornography is exempt from this."

One participant, Dimitra, expressed the view that she considers the feminist movement to be highly inclusive, and she believes it is the responsibility of the individual, in this case, the disabled woman, to actively engage in an organization, association, or similar group. As she stated:

“I am generally aware that women with disabilities are included in the feminist movement. However, I imagine that, just as they represent a small percentage of the global population compared to non-disabled people, there are, let's say, individuals with disabilities involved, but overall, it is a small percentage. Therefore, in most social groups and movements, there will inevitably be a smaller proportion. It is also a matter of choosing to become involved. For instance, I have friends and acquaintances from various backgrounds, including both women and men who are also transgender that are members of feminist organizations.”

Dimitra's statement demonstrates that opinions can be quite subjective, based on our personal experiences, even though the feminist movement globally has been criticized for being too "white" due to its exclusion of women who are not white and fully-abled (Moon & Holling, 2020).

Additionally, all agreed though that the exclusion of disabled women from the feminist movement is due to a lack of accessibility for all disabilities. Two participants expressed concern that even if accessible feminist spaces existed, they wouldn't know what opinions they would encounter.

Even though unique I judge that is worth mentioning, the view of Stephanie, who stated that just as she is excluded as a disabled person from feminist spaces, she is also excluded as a woman from the disability movement, leaving her with no place to belong. Disabled women indeed face double discrimination both of their gender and their impairment that affects their everyday lives leaving no space for them to belong (Emmett & Alant, 2006).

According to the previous debate about the concept of free choice and the reinforcement of patriarchy experienced by the feminist movement, most participants find themselves in the middle. They recognize the right to self-determination and believe that every woman should do what she wants with her body, but they also acknowledge that participating in porn videos contributes to the chain of objectification of disabled women, especially if following a script set

by the industry, which perpetuates stereotypes. Helen's words encapsulate what was said effectively:

“Without being within their control, there is a significant responsibility in this aspect of portrayal, in shaping the image that will be created in society. Of course, you cannot intervene in how each customer, viewer, or spectator perceives it.”

Her statement aligns with and confirms Hall's theory (1973), which suggests that audiences play an active role in decoding messages, drawing on their social contexts, and beliefs and their ability to reinterpret or alter those messages.

Unfortunately, it seems that feminist spaces continue to hold an ideal of the “white feminist” and do not include all women. All participants expressed a need for feminism to better understand and address the issues faced by disabled women in the context of pornography and fetishization. Even though disabled women seem to be disappointed by both the feminist and disability movements, they will still stand in solidarity and unity with every woman and will support the rights that every woman has on her body.

4 Discussion

Through the analysis of qualitative data obtained from interviews with eight disabled women, I aimed to address the primary research question: *“How do disabled women evaluate disability porn?”* To answer this question, the study also assessed the factors influencing the perception of disability porn. It examined whether the feminist movement, which has extensively addressed the issue of pornography, has incorporated the perspectives of disabled women.

Beginning with the familiarization of the term “devotism,” it was found that all participants, except one, were acquainted with it. However, this familiarity did not lead to any significant differences in their perceptions of disability porn. Conversely, the experience of fetishization, reported by three of the eight participants, appears to influence their evaluation of disability porn directly. Notably, Helen, who ended a relationship due to this issue, and Eva, both exhibit a more

critical perspective on the objectification of disabled bodies in pornography. Eva stated that she perceives financial necessity as the sole reason for a woman to engage in this profession.

The perception of disability pornography corresponds with the objectification highlighted by previous researchers, while a significantly smaller proportion believes that pornography contributes to the representation of disabled women in the media. The perspective on objectification appears to be grounded in the portrayal of disabled individuals, which is purportedly a result of the commercialization of the porn industry and its profit-driven motives, leading to the capitalization of disabled bodies.

A key finding is that individuals who hold exclusively negative views towards disability porn are typically those who have never watched it or those who, unfortunately, are aware of videos involving the sexual exploitation of disabled individuals without their consent. In contrast, the two individuals who hold a more positive stance are those who have watched such videos. The recognition that not all participants consume pornography was noted, but this did not preclude the conduct of the research. Instead, the diversity of opinions underscores that perspectives are often shaped by generalized notions about a topic. While I would not suggest that the participants overly generalize their views on pornography, they do perceive it as a reflection of societal stereotypes, such as the portrayal of disabled women in pornography as helpless or asexual. Pornography was depicted as a platform that both mirrors societal stereotypes and creates/promotes new ones, thereby amplifying its social impact. It appears that those who hold a more positive attitude towards pornography are the ones who have actually watched it and, at the same time, maintain a more favorable view of the feminist movement, fetishization, and attraction toward disabled individuals. On the other hand, those who hold a negative stance due to the objectification of the body tend to base their opinions on broader societal perceptions that exist about women and disabled women.

Furthermore, the discussion on feminism and feminist spaces (e.g., organizations) revealed that all participants are concerned about the exclusion they experience from feminist spaces and assert that their presence should not be an issue in 2024. They believe that accessibility is the primary reason for their absence from discussions on such issues, yet they acknowledge that making spaces accessible should not be challenging. Feminism has failed disabled women in both Greece and the Netherlands, and they feel that their perspectives on disability pornography have never been included. Specifically, they lament the lack of recognition of the objectification of

impairment and the disabled body. Additionally, they stress the importance of acknowledging the transformation of the disabled body into a "grotesque" spectacle.

In comparing the evaluations of pornography by disabled and non-disabled women, no significant new insights emerge. The views of my participants align with previous studies on objectification and representation while acknowledging the right to sex work. The limited research on how disabled women assess pornography hampers a thorough comparison of results. A key finding is the reasoning behind supporting objectification, the portrayal of impairment as spectacle, and the broader view of pornography as an industry. Both disabled and non-disabled women seem to have similar perspectives on pornography, highlighting the crucial role of gender in shaping these views. Both groups face societal stereotypes related to their gender and recognize sex work as legitimate. This shared perspective underscores that disabled women face challenges due to both their disabilities and gender, emphasizing the intersectionality of their experiences.

4.1 Recommendations

As this study comes to a close and its social relevance is being evident, I can officially say that the topic of this thesis remains taboo. As previously mentioned, research on pornography is still stigmatized, while the need for a sociological approach is more pressing than ever. Furthermore, when intersected with issues of disability, the stigma is doubled, without adequately examining the dimensions of disability porn.

Therefore, based on the perspectives of the women who participated in this study, I propose a more extensive exploration of disability porn by academics who focus on pornography. Larger-scale studies are needed to better capture how these women experience it. Additionally, while the feminist space could ideally serve as a platform for disabled women to express themselves, it continues to be marked by a reluctance to engage in further education and make reasonable adjustments for accessibility. Consequently, I recommend that the feminist movement should be educated on disability issues through organized initiatives and actively invite disabled women to participate.

4.2 Limitations

As we conclude this study, it is important to discuss its limitations. Being a qualitative study based on data collected from interviews and analyzed through thematic analysis, I acknowledge that the number of participants is a limiting factor. Specifically, with only eight participants, the amount of data generated is somewhat constrained. While we observed agreement and saturation on certain topics, I recognize that having the originally intended 10-12 participants would have provided richer data for the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Additionally, I understand that the predominantly Greek participation may affect the diversity of the results. If there had been a greater diversity of ethnicities, it would have provided a broader perspective, especially given the global nature of pornography. The age range of my participants varied significantly, which I acknowledge as a positive influence on the results, as each participant brought a different viewpoint to the topic.

As a result of the aforementioned factors, I believe that this may have impacted the validity and reliability of the study. Despite extensive efforts to include more participants, I recognize that the sensitive nature of the topic may have led to the withdrawal of three participants. Great care was taken to analyze the data in as objective a manner as possible.

5 Conclusion

This qualitative study aimed to examine the perspectives of disabled women on disability porn and, by extension, assess how and if they identify with the portrayal of disabled women. Through semi-structured in-depth interviews with 8 disabled women, the research question "*How do disabled women evaluate disability porn?*" was addressed. This study sought to fill the gap in the literature regarding the evaluation of pornography by disabled women themselves. Unfortunately, existing research has primarily focused on the perspectives of those who watch pornography, rather than the experiences of the disabled women who are the primary subjects of these discussions.

Most of the participants believe disability porn objectifies both disabled and non-disabled women more broadly. They attribute this objectification to the commodification of their disability and bodies, turning them into a spectacle. The analysis revealed that disabled women who view pornography negatively often see it as a reflection of societal stereotypes about the sexuality of disabled women. In contrast, the two participants who have watched disability porn did not perceive it as objectifying disabled women. The goal of the study was not to determine whether pornography objectifies women but to explore different viewpoints and investigate from the perspective of disabled women themselves. Therefore, it did not examine which group—pro or anti-pornography—was "right," but rather, focused based on their perceptions of pornography.

Finally, the complex interplay among objectification, societal stereotypes, and personal experiences, as conveyed through the perspectives of disabled women on disability porn, can inform the ongoing discourse from the viewpoint of this community, which often is marginalized. Continued and in-depth research on how disabled women are represented in pornography can enhance how they are depicted in the media more broadly.

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Appendix

Table 1 “Experience of Fetishization”

Positive	Negative	Uncertain	Positive (Online)
Helen	Claudia	Loreen	Dimitra
	Loreen		Eva
	Sappho		
	Dimitra		
	Aphrodite		
	Stephanie		

Interview Guide

Introduction

- Mention the scope of this study
- The rights of the participant
- Questions before starting the interview

Characteristics of participants

Because of the limitations of the study, as I only speak Greek and English and my network is mostly based in Greece, the place of residence affects to the variety of the participants. Also, I expect, that the consumption of pornography is less stigmatized at younger ages, and younger women may have seen and searched more about pornography than older women.

- Age

- Type of disability
- Place of residence

Devotism

- Familiarity with the term
- Previous experience (of fetishization) that can contribute to the perception of this type of porn

How they perceive this type of porn

- How having the “same body” as the one that is depicted plays a role
- Inside or outside of the binary of “objectification – representation”
- Thoughts on disability pornography

Feminist Perspectives

- Touch upon issues such as “Porn War”/3rd wave of Feminism and Sex Work (If there is no previous knowledge on this issue I will make sure that we can go through it together as I can explain what literature has told us before about this issue)
- In which ways did Feminism include or exclude the voices of disabled women on this issue

End

- Issues that the participant wants to touch upon that haven’t been discussed
- Questions
- Anything else they want to add

Ethics and Private Checklist



CHECKLIST ETHICAL AND PRIVACY ASPECTS OF RESEARCH

INSTRUCTION

This checklist should be completed for every research study that is conducted at the Department of Public Administration and Sociology (DPAS). This checklist should be completed *before* commencing with

data collection or approaching participants. Students can complete this checklist with help of their supervisor.

This checklist is a mandatory part of the empirical master's thesis and has to be uploaded along with the research proposal.

The guideline for ethical aspects of research of the Dutch Sociological Association (NSV) can be found on their website (http://www.nsv-sociologie.nl/?page_id=17). If you have doubts about ethical or privacy aspects of your research study, discuss and resolve the matter with your EUR supervisor. If needed and if advised to do so by your supervisor, you can also consult Dr. Bonnie French, coordinator of the Sociology Master's Thesis program.

PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION

Project title: *“Opinions Exposed: The Fetishization of Disabled Women in Online Pornography”*

Name, email of student: Dionysia Karga, 658786dk@student.eur.nl

Name, email of supervisor: Samira van Bohemen, vanbohemmen@essb.eur.nl

Start date and duration: 24/03/2024, 5 months

Is the research study conducted within DPAS: YES

If 'NO': at or for what institute or organization will the study be conducted?

(e.g. internship organization)

PART II: HUMAN SUBJECTS

1. Does your research involve human participants. YES

If 'NO': skip to part V.

If 'YES': does the study involve medical or physical research? NO

Research that falls under the Medical Research Involving Human Subjects Act (WMO) must first be submitted to [an accredited medical research ethics committee](#) or the Central Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (CCMO).

2. Does your research involve field observations without manipulations that will not involve identification of participants. NO

If 'YES': skip to part IV.

3. Research involving completely anonymous data files (secondary data that has been anonymized by someone else). NO

If 'YES': skip to part IV.

PART III: PARTICIPANTS

1. Will information about the nature of the study and about what participants can expect during the study be withheld from them? NO

2. Will any of the participants not be asked for verbal or written 'informed consent,' whereby they agree to participate in the study? NO

3. Will information about the possibility to discontinue the participation at any time be withheld from participants? NO

4. Will the study involve actively deceiving the participants? NO

Note: almost all research studies involve some kind of deception of participants. Try to think about what types of deception are ethical or non-ethical (e.g. purpose of the study is not told, coercion is exerted on participants, giving participants the feeling that they harm other people by making certain decisions, etc.).

Does the study involve the risk of causing psychological stress or negative emotions beyond those normally encountered by participants? YES

Will information be collected about special categories of data, as defined by the GDPR (e.g. racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a person, data concerning mental or physical health, data concerning a person's sex life or sexual orientation)? YES

Will the study involve the participation of minors (<18 years old) or other groups that cannot give consent? NO

Is the health and/or safety of participants at risk during the study? NO

Can participants be identified by the study results or can the confidentiality of the participants' identity not be ensured? NO

Are there any other possible ethical issues with regard to this study? YES

If you have answered 'YES' to any of the previous questions, please indicate below why this issue is unavoidable in this study.

Participants in this study must be disabled, as required by the research criteria. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, there is a risk of negative emotions arising from recounting personal experiences, though this may also have a therapeutic effect. Participation is voluntary, and participants can withdraw at any time. Given the research question, the researcher believes that an alternative sample is not feasible.

What safeguards are taken to relieve possible adverse consequences of these issues (e.g., informing participants about the study afterwards, extra safety regulations, etc.).

Participants by signing the consent form claim their right to stop the interview whenever they want or even totally withdraw. Also, their identity will remain secret. The research will automatically stop the process of the interview if the emotional change of the participant is noticed. The research will be extra careful with the used language and will respect participant's limits.

Are there any unintended circumstances in the study that can cause harm or have negative (emotional) consequences to the participants? Indicate what possible circumstances this could be.

Yes, it is mentioned above.

Please attach your informed consent form in Appendix I, if applicable.

Continue to part IV.

PART IV: SAMPLE

Where will you collect or obtain your data?

Through interviews, in person and online.

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

What is the (anticipated) size of your sample?

The researcher aims to have 10-12 participants

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

What is the size of the population from which you will sample?

The exact size of the population cannot be determined. Indicatively, the population of people with disabilities in Greece is defined at 22.2% (Eurostat, 2024) and in the Netherlands at 32.3% (Eurostat, 2024). It is crucial to note that each country defines disability and impairment differently, which affects the respective percentages. Because of the Greek ethnicity of the researcher, while she is studying in the Netherlands, she assumes that most participants will be either Greek or Dutch.

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

Continue to part V.

Part V: Data storage and backup

Where and when will you store your data in the short term, after acquisition?

Data will be stored in digital files in a locked device for a maximum of 10 years. All documents (data, consent forms, transcripts) will be stored in “One Drive” and will be double-safe locked.

Note: indicate for separate data sources, for instance for paper-and pencil test data, and for digital data files.

Who is responsible for the immediate day-to-day management, storage and backup of the data arising from your research?

Myself, Dionysia Karga.

How (frequently) will you back-up your research data for short-term data security?

Data will be packed up every week.

In case of collecting personal data how will you anonymize the data?

Data Pseudonymization will be used for each of the participant's names.

Note: It is advisable to keep directly identifying personal details separated from the rest of the data. Personal details are then replaced by a key/code. Only the code is part of the database with data and the list of respondents/research subjects is kept separat

Informed Consent Form

Standard EUR Informed Consent Form template

version 0.2 M. Nariman and M. Domingus, March 2017

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Project Title

Opinions Exposed:

The Fetishization of Disabled Women
in Online Pornography

Purpose of the Study

This research is being conducted by Dionysia Karga. I am inviting you to participate in this research project about the fetishization of disabled women in online pornography. The purpose of this research project is to explore how disabled women perceive and think about this type of pornography.

Procedures

You will participate in an interview lasting 45 minutes to 1 hour.

You will be asked questions about your beliefs about this type of pornography. Sample questions include:

“Did you know about those videos before this research, if yes then how did you find out?”

“In which ways you can relate to this type of content?”

“In which ways the disabled body is fetishized in online pornography”

“If and how this type of porn contributes to the wrong perceptions about disabled women?”

Requirements

You must be

- over 18 years old
- a Woman (self-identified)

- disabled (physical and sensory impairments)
- able to speak Greek and/or English

Potential Risks and Discomforts	No obvious physical, legal, or economic risks are associated with participating in this study. You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. Your participation is voluntary, and you are free to discontinue your participation at any time.
Potential Benefits	Participation in this study does not guarantee any beneficial results to you. As a result of participating, you may better understand. The broader goal of this research is to gather women's perspectives on this issue as they are absent from the global literature.
Confidentiality	<p>Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. No personally identifiable information will be reported in any research product. Only me, Dionysia Karga, and the supervisor of this study, Samira van Bohemen, will have access to the provided information. Within these restrictions, the results of this study will be made available to you upon request.</p> <p>As indicated above, this research project involves audio recordings of interviews with you. Transcribed segments from the audio recordings may be used in published forms (e.g., journal articles and book chapters). In the case of publication, pseudonyms will be used. The audio recordings, forms, and other documents created or collected as part of this study will be stored in the researcher's password-protected computer, on "One drive" (personal cloud storage) file is also protected with a password and will be destroyed after ten years of the initiation of the study. A minimum of 10 years of storage is required in case of publication of the research.</p>
Compensation	This research won't provide any compensation to the participants because participation in this study is voluntary.

Right to Withdraw and Questions Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw, the data you provided before will still be used in the research, but no new data will be collected.

If you have questions, concerns, or need to report an injury related to the study, please contact the primary investigator.:

Dionysia Karga
+30 6976920179
658786dk@student.eur.nl

Statement of Consent Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree that you will participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form.

I agree to participate in a research project led by Dionysia Karga. The purpose of this document is to specify the terms of my participation in the project through being interviewed.

1. I have been given sufficient information about this research project. The purpose of my participation as an interviewee in this project has been explained to me and is clear.
2. My participation as an interviewee in this project is voluntary. There is no explicit or implicit coercion whatsoever to participate.
3. Participation involves being interviewed by a researcher from Erasmus University. The interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes. I allow the researcher to take written notes during the interview. I also allow the recording (by audio tape) of the interview. It is clear to me that in case I do not want the interview to be taped I am at any point of time fully entitled to withdraw from participation. Also, I allow quotes from the interview to be used in the study.

4. I have the right not to answer any of the questions. If I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to withdraw from the interview.

5. I have been given the explicit guarantees that, if I wish so, the researcher will not identify me by name or function in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. In all cases subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies at the EU (Data Protection Policy).

6. I have been given the guarantee that this research project has been reviewed and approved by the supervisor of this study, Samira van Bohemen, and by the EU Ethics Committee. For research problems or any other question regarding the research project, the EU Ethics Committee may be contacted through email:

ethics@eur.nl.

7. I have read and understood the points and statements of this form. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

8. I have been given a copy of this consent form co-signed by the interviewer.

**Signature and
Date**

NAME PARTICIPANT

NAME PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

SIGNATURE

SIGNATURE

DATE

DATE