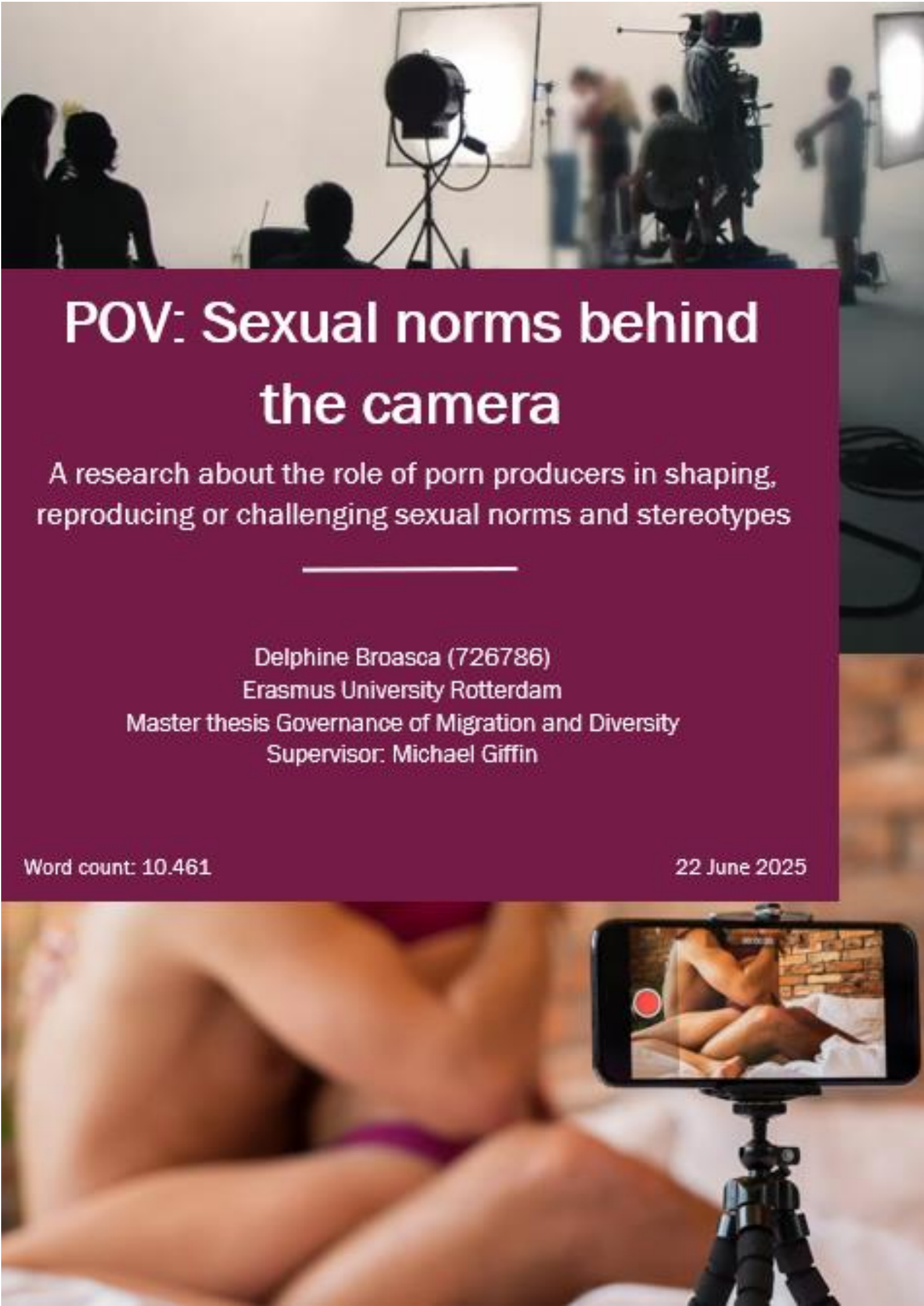




# POV: Sexual norms behind the camera

A research about the role of porn producers in shaping, reproducing or challenging sexual norms and stereotypes

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## Abstract

This innovative study shifts the focus from pornography consumers to pornography producers and aims to explore how producers navigate their role in reproducing or challenging sexual norms and stereotypes. The theoretical lens is based on the integration of the theories of Foucault (1976) and Bourdieu (1984). Foucault's theories of power and discourse help to analyze the context of pornography, while Bourdieu's theories of habitus and social reproduction demonstrate how pornography producers operate within this pornographic context. As expected from the theoretical framework, findings showed that the individual norms of a pornography producer are one of the main factors if a producer reproduces or challenges sexual norms. However, the in-depth interviews with eight Dutch and Belgian producers also reveal that the reality of reproducing and challenging sexual norms and stereotypes is far more complex and multifaceted than the theoretical models suggested.

*Keywords: Discourse; Habitus; Pornography producer; Sexual norms; Stereotypes*

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

While scientific interest in pornography seems relatively recent, society has been interested in pornography for a long time. Before the rise of the internet, pornography existed in texts, images, songs, and theater. At that time the Netherlands was one of the largest exporters (Broasca, 2023). Currently, due to the internet and smartphones, pornography is always accessible. Such unlimited accessibility has led to concerns about the effects of pornography consumption (Mulder, 2018). Individuals may adopt sexual norms portrayed in pornography as the standard, because of the large exposure to it. Thus, pornography can shape societal sexual norms (Stella, 2018).

Several studies have examined the relationship between pornography consumption and the sexual norms held by its (often very young) users. Research shows that pornography consumption among youth reproduces gender stereotypes (Stella, 2018), such as emotionally reserved, dominant men, and emotionally expressive, gentle women. Other scholars show that pornography consumption among boys leads to gender stereotypes and negative attitudes towards homosexual individuals, yet this effect is not observed among girls (IJland, 2018). Further research also highlights gender differences in pornography consumption (Cerbara et al., 2023). This study demonstrates that boys who often watch pornography hold more sexist attitudes and stronger beliefs in traditional gender roles. Conversely, girls who frequently watch pornography hold less traditional gender views and may sometimes experience a feeling of empowerment. Additional scholars who focus on teenagers emphasize the risk of pornography being a part of the development of adolescent sexuality (Yu et al., 2021).

The effects of pornography are not limited to younger users. Inconsistent views on the effects of pornography on adults exist. On one hand, research shows negative effects. One study states that individuals have a feeling that pornography promotes unrealistic expectations and does not consider female desires (Samardzic, Barclay & Barata, 2024). Moreover, pornography consumption is associated with objectification behavior (Willis, Bridges & Sun,

2022). These scholars show that individuals who frequently consume pornography are more likely to approve sexual objectification. On the other hand, research also shows positive effects of pornography. One study demonstrates that pornography can stimulate a more dynamic understanding of sexuality (Asman, 2020). Instead of reproducing dominant sexual norms and stereotypes, this research suggests that pornography can also challenge these norms.

In summary, from the existing literature it is evident that pornography consumption highly influences both younger as well as older individuals. Whether these effects are positive or negative, the sexual norms are shaped by pornography, according to earlier studies. Albeit the considerable amount of research on consumers of pornography, there has been a shocking lack of research done into the actual production of pornography. It is surprising that there is a significant lack of research on the role of pornography producers, especially when one considers that pornography would not exist without their involvement. Furthermore, the producers hold the power to shape the content that ultimately reaches consumers. Therefore, the aim of this study is to explore the perceived role of pornography producers in shaping, reproducing, or challenging sexual norms and stereotypes. In other words, the research question reads as follows: *'How do Dutch and Belgian pornography producers navigate their role in shaping, reinforcing, or challenging sexual norms and stereotypes within their films?'* Two empirical sub questions are formulated to answer the main research question. The first sub question is: *'What factors guide porn producers' decisions in reproducing or challenging sexual norms or stereotypes in their content?'* The second sub question reads: *'To what extent do porn producers feel responsible for shaping, reproducing or challenging sexual norms and stereotypes?'*

This research holds scientific relevance on multiple aspects. First, it contributes to existing literature on pornography and sexual norms by being the first study that addresses the role of pornography producers. It is crucial that this research gap is filled in order to further understand how sexual norms permeate society. Second, this study employs an interdisciplinary approach that integrates sociology and sexuality studies as theoretical foundations. This enhances the existing academic literature. Third, this study contributes to a

broader understanding of the role of pornography producers on a macro and micro level. This study includes the societal context as well as the individual behavior and decision-making of producers, by combining theories of power and discourse (Foucault, 1976) together with theories of habitus and social reproduction (Bourdieu, 1984).

Furthermore, this study is socially relevant. First, it raises awareness of the way sexual norms and stereotypes are produced, which is crucial for developing policies on, for example, sex education. This could in turn help teenagers and young adults become more aware of prevailing sexual norms. Second, through highlighting the role of producers, this study can open up discussions within the pornography industry itself on representation and ethical implications of the production. Lastly, this study is important for broader discussion about various forms of media, because pornography can be seen as a type of media. Not only pornography producers may shape or challenge norms, but producers of other media types may have similar strategies for navigating their role in shaping or challenging social norms.

In the next chapter the theoretical framework is outlined. Thereafter, the methodology is discussed, including data collection, respondent selection, and analysis design. Subsequently, the results are presented. The final chapter draws the conclusion, presents the discussion, and proposes future research suggestions.

## Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

This chapter lays down the theoretical framework by using two main theories: Foucault's theory (1976) of power, discourse, and sexuality, and Bourdieu's theory (1984) of habitus, field, and reproduction. The fusion of these theories is essential for addressing the research question. Foucault's theory enables an analysis of the way sexual norms and stereotypes are constructed within the broader context. Meanwhile, Bourdieu's theory enables an exploration of the way individuals internalize and reproduce these norms. By combining Foucault's macro-level perspective with Bourdieu's micro-perspective, this theoretical framework provides a thorough understanding of how pornography producers shape their practices within the context of pornography. The integration of these theorists is not new. Many existing studies gained valuable insights by fusing theories of Foucault and Bourdieu (Martin, 2022; Masquelier, 2018; Bang, 2014). Whereas earlier research used the combined framework in the fields of politics and education, this is the first study in which Foucault and Bourdieu are combined to examine the role of pornography producers.

### 2.1 Sexual norms and stereotypes

Before diving into the main theories, it is important to define the concepts of sexual norms and stereotypes. A sexual norm is a type of social norm, therefore shaping societal behavior and opinions (Gross & Vostroknutov, 2021; Álvarez-Benjumea, 2024). A sexual norm furthermore determines which actions are perceived as acceptable and which are not. Individuals try to conform to these norms because they expect that others will do the same. A stereotype is an oversimplified image or idea that is associated with members of a particular social group (Allport, 1954; Teo, 2014). Stereotypes are deeply-rooted in common beliefs and based on assumptions that are closely linked to social norms. For instance, stereotype threat may ensure individuals try to conform to the stereotype in order to gain social approval for their behavior (Steele, 1997).

Some scholars argue that societal stereotypes stem from pornography (Stella, 2018), while others reason that pornography reflects societal dynamics (Sukmana, 2024). Although the direction of influence may remain debatable, the interaction between social norms and pornography is undeniable. Research shows that mainstream pornography often portrays gender stereotypes with dominant men and submissive women (Richardson, 2018; Sukmana, 2024). These stereotypes are also seen in society, where men are expected to be forceful and confident, while women should behave gentle and emotional (Siegel & Meunier, 2018; Boahene, Reitz & Endendijk, 2022). Although gender stereotypes and norms primarily refer to heterosexual relationships, numerous stereotypes exist about LGBTQ+ individuals. Studies show that gay men are often associated with feminine traits such as caring and sensitivity. Conversely, lesbians are repeatedly associated with masculine traits such as independence and confidence (Van Meer & Pollmann, 2021). Besides gender stereotypes, racial stereotypes are also frequently studied. In pornography, Black men are often stereotyped as having large penises and showing a violent or animalistic sexuality (Smith & Luykx, 2017). These stereotypes have historical roots in racial exploitation. The authors argue that desire for sex with Black individuals stems from dehumanization of the Black other. As such, racial inequality is preserved through these stereotypes.

## 2.2 Foucault: power and discourse

Foucault (1976) is the first key theorist that is important to interpret the context of pornography. He emphasizes the importance of the concept of power. Foucault critiques the dominant, Western idea of power, which he defines as repressive, prohibitive, and censoring (Foucault, 1976, p. 67). Foucault argues instead that power is not repressive at all, but must be understood as productive. Power generates knowledge, norms, and behaviors (Foucault, 1976, p. 63). The scholar lays down four key elements of power. First, power exists at a specific micro-level and does not originate from a top-down structure. Second, the outcome of a power relation is not predetermined, because power is always dynamic. Third, society is



structured through the interaction of power relations. Finally, power can influence many institutions, such as governments, legal systems and dominant social norms.

Productive power is not something one can possess, rather it is given within a certain social context (Foucault, 1976, p. 66). Thus, obtaining power depends on social situations, not on individual characteristics. Moreover, Foucault states that power is relational, meaning that power exists in sexual, economic, and knowledge-based relationships. Furthermore, knowledge legitimizes power. Foucault emphasizes the deep interconnection of knowledge and power by introducing the concept of power-knowledge. Knowledge is produced within power relations and at the same time reinforces them. To summarize, power and knowledge are both productive and can create (sexual) norms.

Power and knowledge converge in discourses (Foucault, 1976, p. 31). A discourse is defined as a form of speaking and thinking. Yet, discourse is not only about language, but also about the power dynamics and knowledge that enable speaking. Like power, discourses are productive in nature. Moreover, they are not neutral. In fact, they determine what is regarded as the truth, and shape how specific subjects, like sexuality, are understood. Because discourses define what is normal and abnormal, they also function as a form of social control. Finally, Foucault stresses that discourses are polyvalent, meaning they can change and vary across different contexts.

As Foucault claims, power manifests within a specific context, such as the pornography industry. Within this context, power operates through dominant norms, particularly sexual norms. Both power and knowledge about sexuality merge in a discourse. This discourse can construct and reinforce sexual norms and stereotypes. Pornographic films depict a particular representation of sexuality and these sexual norms can be perceived as the truths of sexuality. Thus, pornography may play a crucial role in shaping societal understandings of sexual norms and what is perceived as normal or abnormal within the sexual discourse. Furthermore, research shows that discourses are indeed context-dependent and polyvalent, as Foucault stated. For example, mainstream pornography often reinforces an objectification discourse, which portrays women as passive and objectifies them by depicting them as body parts

instead of whole individuals (Marko, 2008). Pornography consumers may internalize these norms about female sexuality as the truth. Conversely, pornography with an ethical discourse promotes diverse body types, identities, and sexual orientations, thus challenging traditional gender roles and dominant norms (Ergen, 2018). Consumers of ethical pornography might be more likely to develop different sexual norms than those watching objectifying pornographic films.

## 2.3 Bourdieu: habitus and social reproduction

Like Foucault, Bourdieu (1984) argues that knowledge is not neutral. While Foucault conceptualizes knowledge through discourse, Bourdieu introduces habitus. Within a habitus, social norms become part of an individual's mindset and identity. Thus, habitus is an internalized system that shapes how individuals behave and perceive the world. In other words, it determines what is perceived as normal or abnormal, just like Foucault's subjective discourses. A habitus is formed by early experiences, like family socialization, and social environments, like education, work, and other institutions. Although habitus remains relatively stable, it is adaptable throughout one's life as it depends on social context rather than solely on an individual. Like everyone else, pornography producers also have a habitus. Since work also shapes habitus, producers in different contexts (such as mainstream versus ethical pornography) may develop a distinct habitus.

Bourdieu (1984) states that society is divided into various fields, such as art, politics, education, and sexuality. Each field has its own norms and power dynamics. Habitus and a social field interact reciprocally. While a habitus is shaped by the field, it can simultaneously reinforce or challenge the structures of the field. Consequently, just like a habitus, fields can change as well. Individuals whose habitus aligns with the dominant norms of the field reinforce existing structures, for example pornography producers who reproduce dominant sexual norms and stereotypes. Conversely, individuals whose habitus does not align may change

their habitus, or may challenge the existing dominant norms. The latter may possibly lead to changes in the field itself.

According to Bourdieu (1984) social norms are reinforced through symbolic violence and social reproduction. He illustrates how dominant groups impose their norms on marginalized groups to legitimize their own norms as normal. This symbolic violence operates subtly through language, education, media, and cultural institutions. This process naturalizes social differences. As a result, marginalized groups accept their inferior social position and internalize the norms of the dominant groups without question. Bourdieu (1984) emphasizes that norms are socially constructed and shows the danger of symbolic violence, which lets individuals believe that their norms signify merit. Social reproduction further maintains dominant norms and undervalues norms of marginalized groups. Bourdieu (1984) explains that this reproduction occurs because dominant groups have more familiarity with cultural institutions and higher levels of education. Since norms are internalized through habitus and cultural institutions, the dominant group's norms continue to exist.

Symbolic violence is also evident in pornography. A dominant norm that is legitimized within mainstream pornography is male dominance and female submission. Furthermore, racial representation illustrates symbolic violence, as individuals of color are often reduced to stereotypes rather than portrayed holistically. Additionally, the majority of pornography producers are men (Tokmetzis, 2014), resulting in the dominant group controlling the norms and stereotypes represented in pornography. This leads to social reproduction, ensuring that the norms of the dominant group remain prevailing.

## 2.4 Pornography through a combined lens

The intersection of Foucault's theory on the broader context and Bourdieu's theory on the individual behavior within this broader context allows for the emergence of several expectations about the reality of the pornography industry. These expectations are outlined in this section.

As mentioned before, discourses vary across different contexts, because power emerges at specific contexts (Foucault, 1976). Within the pornography sector, multiple discourses exist, including the objectifying and ethical discourses, which are reflected in different genres. Mainstream pornography often reinforces an objectifying discourse that emphasizes male dominance and female submissiveness (Marko, 2008). Conversely, feminist pornography reinforces an ethical discourse, which challenges traditional gender roles and promotes themes like consent, agency, and mutual pleasure (Ergen, 2018).

Such distinction suggests that various pornographic genres have unique discourses, through which each shapes and reinforces particular narratives about sexuality. As Foucault (1976) emphasizes, discourses are subjective and individuals construct their understanding of what is normal or abnormal within a framework of a given discourse. When applied to the pornographic context, this implies that sexual norms embedded in these discourses can vary by pornographic genre. For example, while mainstream pornography may normalize aggressive or dominant sexual behavior, feminist pornography may not normalize these norms and try to challenge heteronormative stereotypes.

Pornography producers operate within distinct discursive spaces, with each producer having its own unique, socially constructed, habitus. At this point Bourdieu's theory of habitus (1984) becomes relevant. While habitus is not solely individual, but shaped by broader structures, it can nonetheless vary among producers. This is because their upbringing, education, and exposure to different cultural environments may differ. Different habituses result in varied approaches in navigating their role as a pornography producer.

If a producer enters the mainstream pornography industry with a habitus aligned with the dominant norms of the discourse, the producer is more likely to reproduce existing, dominant sexual norms and stereotypes. This reproduction may occur through their decision about, for example, narrative choices, aesthetic preference, or implicit assumptions about gender. For instance, if a producer has a habitus that normalizes male dominance, he or she might unconsciously reinforce this norm in its work. Consequently, the dominant norms in the mainstream discourse are maintained. Such maintenance aligns with Bourdieu's concepts of

social reproduction, which describes the prevailing dominant norms across generations in a certain field.

However, if a producer enters the mainstream pornography industry with a habitus that does not align with the dominant norms of the discourse, two different outcomes can occur. On one hand, the producer may challenge dominant sexual norms by introducing alternative sexual norms. For example, feminist producers may attempt to challenge traditional gender roles by presenting mutual pleasure and consent, which could gain visibility and may shift the discourse over time. On the other hand, the producer's habitus may gradually adapt to the dominant discourse by internalizing the dominant norms. This process is known as Bourdieu's (1984) concept of symbolic violence, where the dominant norms are not questioned and internalized, despite an initial misalignment. For example, a feminist producer may want to challenge dominant norms, but due to financial pressures or audience expectations, the producer ultimately adopts its habitus. Rather than challenging the discourse, the producer conforms to it.

The interaction between Foucault's (1976) and Bourdieu's (1984) theories allows for creating expectations with regards to the reproduction and challenging of sexual norms within the pornography industry. First, the genre of pornography plays a crucial role in shaping sexual norms and stereotypes in a certain context, because the genre reflects a discursive space. In other words, the type of pornography determines which norms are likely to be reproduced or challenged. Second, a producer's habitus, shaped by background and experience, determines whether they maintain or challenge these norms. If the habitus aligns, the producer is more likely to reproduce existing norms, if it does not align, they may challenge the sexual norms. Finally, social reproduction is likely to occur, even if the producer's habitus is misaligned. Over time, they may gradually alter the discourse, which could lead to the reproduction of new norms. Conversely, if they adapt their habitus to fit the dominant discourse, they contribute to reproduction of dominant norms as well.

## Chapter 3: Data and methods

The present study employed a qualitative research design using semi-structured interviews. The interview format allowed for both in-depth exploration and the examination of theoretical concepts by structuring a topic list in advance. The interviews lasted approximately one hour and preferably took place in person. However, three interviews were online, due to the long travel time. The interview began with questions about the producer's personal and professional background. Next, the focus shifted to sexual norms and stereotypes within the industry and the producer's awareness of them, followed by questions on how they navigate their own role in relation to these norms. The last part was a discussion on their future outlook on pornography and its associated norms (see Appendix D).

The topic list was based on the theoretical themes of Foucault and Bourdieu. For instance, to examine the concept of discourse, the following questions were included: (1) *What ideas or themes are dominant in the pornography industry?* (discourse and dominant norms), and (2) *What kind of pornography do you primarily produce (genre/themes), and how do you differentiate yourself from others?* (i.e., does the discourse differ from the dominant genres/themes?). To explore the concept of habitus, questions included: (1) *To what extent does your social and cultural background influence how you portray sexuality in your work?* and (2) *What was your relationship with porn before you joined the porn industry?* Each theoretical concept was translated into at least one question in the topic list. While the researcher ensured that each core theme was addressed during the interviews, the conversations developed organically, which allowed for new, open-ended probing questions.

Interviews were conducted with eight respondents: five men and three women. There were two double interviews, and the rest of the respondents were interviewed individually. The selection process followed a purposeful sampling strategy, meaning that respondents are purposefully recruited based on their relevance to the study. The first respondents were found on LinkedIn, Instagram, and on their own websites. Additionally, snowball sampling was

employed by asking respondents to recommend other suitable candidates for participation. All respondents must meet specific selection criteria (see Table 3.1).

**Table 3.1** *Selection criteria*

| Criteria                                | Description                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Active pornography producers            | Respondents must be currently working in the pornography industry.                                                                                         |
| Different roles within production       | Respondents may have different roles, such as directors, producers and screenwriters.                                                                      |
| Experience                              | There is no requirement for the number of years a respondent has been a producer. Both experienced and emerging producers can provide meaningful insights. |
| Operating in the Netherlands or Belgium | Respondents must be active in the Netherlands or Belgium, as the Dutch and Belgian context is being researched.                                            |
| Diverse pornography                     | Preferably, respondents come from a variety of types of pornography, such as mainstream, alternative, feminist, queer, ethical, amateur, etc.              |

After conducting the interviews, the data was coded and analyzed for which the tool Atlas.ti was used. First, the data was transcribed (see Appendix E) and coded deductively and inductively. The deductive method applied a top-down strategy, constructing codes based on Foucault's and Bourdieu's theoretical concepts. For example, a code about the genre was created, since this reflects the discourse in which the producers operate. Another example of

deductive codes was the habitus (mis)alignment with the dominant industry norms, which was also expected to be found based on the theories. The data was then examined for these concepts. The inductive approach applied a bottom-up strategy and allowed codes to emerge directly from the data. This enabled the discovery of new and unexpected insights. An example of an inductive code was the critique that producers had on dominant industry norms about dealing with performers. Since the initial theory focused on the norms depicted within the films, it was not expected to find norms about the structure of the industry itself.

The coding process unfolded in two phases. In the first phase, the data was fragmented into distinct coding segments. Several coding types were utilized for this purpose. First, descriptive coding was employed to frame the topic of a given segment. Second, *in vivo* coding was applied when it was useful to label segments with the actual words of the participants. Third, interpretative coding was used to interpret the data. In the second phase the codes were reorganized into categories and themes to identify patterns. Various types of patterns were explored, including similarities (more respondents reproduce and challenge dominant norms), differences (the type of norms they challenge/reproduce varies), and frequency. From this structuring, a code tree emerged (see Appendix F).

Although the process consists of two phases, the phases were revisited iteratively: codes that initially appeared useful were later deleted, and new ones emerged. Therefore, analytical memos were maintained to track the process and reflect on the researcher's decisions. Furthermore, a codebook was developed, containing a list of all the codes and their descriptions (see Appendix F).

The analytical method employed is a thematic analysis, which aims to identify patterns within the data. This method built upon the second phase of the coding process, where themes were generated. However, the coding process was primarily descriptive, while the thematic analysis focused on the interpretation of these categories and themes. For this interpretation, the theories outlined in the preceding chapter served as the foundation.



### 3.1 Reliability, validity, and ethical considerations

To ensure internal reliability, maintaining consistency within the study is crucial. Given the qualitative nature of this research with in-depth interviews, this can be challenging. However, two measures helped safeguard reliability. First, the interviews followed a structured topic list with core questions, preventing significant deviations between interviews. Second, key concepts such as sexual norms and stereotypes are defined in the theoretical framework and consistently applied throughout the study. For external reliability, the study must be replicable. This is ensured through two measures. First, a standardized data collection process, including recording and transcription, was implemented (see Appendix E). Second, double coding was conducted by re-coding interviews at a later moment to verify interpretative consistency.

Internal validity is safeguarded in several ways. First, in-depth interviews allowed follow-up questions to reduce superficial or socially desirable responses. Second, researcher bias was minimized by phrasing neutral interview questions and aiming for neutrality during data interpretation. Lastly, respondents reviewed their quotes in the research to confirm accuracy of the interpretation of their statements. As this study is a qualitative study with a small sample size, findings will not have external validity. However, generalizability was enhanced where possible. First, diversity among respondents was sought, considering backgrounds, experiences, and involvement in different pornography genres. Second, theoretical generalizability was pursued by identifying patterns relevant to broader discussions on pornography and norms. Lastly, a description of the respondents' profiles allows other researchers to assess whether findings can apply to different settings.

Ethical considerations are addressed in multiple ways. First, informed consent is obtained through a signed consent form (see Appendix C), which includes a clear explanation of the study. By signing, respondents granted permission to participate. The form also stated that respondents have the right to stop the interview at any point or to decline answering specific questions. Second, the interviews and associated data are securely stored, ensuring that only the researcher has access (see Appendix B). All information is anonymized to

prevent the identification of individual producers. Finally, sensitive topics were approached with care, and respondents were explicitly informed that they may pause the interview. The interview was structured to ensure neutrality in wording, thereby minimizing the risk of reinforcing pre-existing biases.

## Chapter 4: Results

This chapter unveils the most important findings from the interviews with the pornography producers. It lays out how they navigate their respective roles within the pornography industry while reproducing or challenging sexual norms and stereotypes. Based on Foucault's theory (1976), the pornography industry consists of multiple discourses, which are reflected in pornographic genres that producers create. Each genre raises a particular narrative about sexuality. Consequently, the producers that work within these various subjective discourses (genres), form different understandings of what is considered normal or abnormal with regards to sexuality. Table 4.1 gives an overview of the profiles of the respondents, including their aims and the discourses in which they operate.

The interviews reveal that respondents vary in their awareness of the influence the sexual norms, as portrayed in their pornographic films, may have. While many respondents reproduce dominant sexual norms to some degree, it is also evident that some actively challenge these norms. The results are organized into four themes. First, it is demonstrated how the respondents describe their aims, and to what extent they are aware of the influence their films can have. The second subheading discusses how producers reproduce sexual norms and contribute to the continuation of the dominant norms. Third, it is shown how producers navigate challenging the dominant sexual norms. The final subheading highlights how producers reflect on social reproduction and the future of the pornographic industry.

**Table 4.1** Profile sketches of the respondents

|                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Respondent 1</b> (man)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>Respondent 2 and 3</b> (women)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>Respondent 4</b> (woman)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <p>This producer creates cinematic, feminist pornography, with a creative drive. He sees mainstream porn as genres like amateur and stepsibling. His work is not a political statement, but a personal expression in which beauty and complete creative freedom are central.</p> | <p>These producers create mainstream and feminist porn, with a desire to help people and also have financial motivations. Their productions are professional and respectful, with attention to female boundaries. They combine their values with what is popular and think critically about trends in the industry.</p> | <p>This producer makes amateur cinematic porn with the aim of changing the industry. She consciously turns away from mainstream porn, which she sees as hardcore. She wants to create respectful, realistic and passionate content that shows a healthier image of sex.</p> |

**Table 4.1** Profile sketches of the respondents

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Respondent 5 (man)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Respondent 6 and 7 (men)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Respondent 8 (man)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <p>This producer creates amateur pornography with a creative drive and personal interest. His films are relatable, and without fixed scripts or perfect body types. Although he has not an activist aim, he offers an alternative to the stylized ideal of mainstream porn with accessible, realistic content.</p> | <p>These producers create hardcore gonzo and follow their own path. They see mainstream porn as genres like comedy and interracial. They try to emphasize a safe, respectful work environment in which consent and boundaries are central, without wanting to completely change the industry.</p> | <p>This producer works in the amateur genre and has a creative aim. He sees mainstream genres like milf, interracial and submissive. He strives for a fair, safe industry, where respect for models and fun are central. He wants to contribute to a clean, future-proof pornography industry.</p> |

## 4.1 Navigating their role: aims, awareness and intentionality

The interviews revealed that the role of pornography producers is multifaceted, and individuals navigate their respective roles in complex ways. First, this section shows that respondents pursue different goals. This can be connected to the respondents' different habituses with different values. Second, it becomes clear that some respondents are aware of the influence a pornographic film can have on its consumers, while other respondents shift responsibility from themselves onto the consumer. Lastly, this section demonstrates that most respondents intentionally avoid certain stereotypes, whether they are aware of the influence or not.

Half of the respondents indicated that financial considerations play a role in their decision to create pornographic content. Respondent 5 stated: *'It helps my wallet. It's that simple.'*<sup>1</sup> Similarly, respondent 8 noted: *'You notice that it sells, so you just keep going.'* However, financial motivation is not the primary aim for any of the respondents.

Their reasons for producing content are more complex and connected to personal values. The two most significant motivations are creative expression and a desire to change the industry. The different aims based on values vary for the respondents but are not solely individual, which was expected from the theoretical concept habitus (Bourdieu, 1984). Five respondents, all male, emphasized that pornography mainly serves as a creative outlet. Respondent 1 explained: *'I don't care about trends. This is my artistic outlet. I film what I want to make.'* Respondent 7 compared pornography to music as an expressive form: *'Pornography is a kind of art. Sometimes, when I film women, it feels like playing guitar. It's a kind of flow. You're working with sexual energy, and that really excites me.'* For these respondents, the motivation to create pornography stems largely from artistic considerations. Noteworthy, this creative aim does not exclude financial motivations. Both motivations can coexist, which reveal that a habitus is not one-sided but can consist of many values (Bourdieu, 1984).

In contrast, three female respondents expressed a different primary motivation: the desire to change the pornography industry. Their activist aim could indicate a habitus with different values than the respondents who have creative motivations. Respondent 4 stated: *'I try to make a difference by showing ordinary things like kissing and fingering.'* She further added: *'I want to work with models who have natural bodies, just to break down stereotypes.'* These producers aim to challenge the dominant sexual norms, by representing alternative norms and more diverse forms of sexuality.

However, the distinction between goals is not entirely gender-based. Two male producers, respondents 6 and 7, explained that they invented their own label to create content on their own terms. They said: *'We're not trying to change the world, but we do want to improve*

---

<sup>1</sup> All quotations are translated by the researcher from Dutch to English.

*things within our own studio.*' They explained: *'We've had negative experiences with previous production companies and we didn't want that anymore.'* Although their intentions may not be explicitly activist, they nonetheless contribute to a more respectful and enjoyable working environment for their performers.

The respondent's awareness of the impact pornography may have on its consumers varied considerably. Some producers were aware of its potential influence. For example, respondent 2 stated: *'I believe the content we produce contributes to sexual norms, and I'm not ashamed of that.'* This awareness results in producers treating performers with care. Respondent 1 expressed a concern about the exposure of minors to pornography: *'Right now, we can't stop kids from learning the wrong things from what they see.'* These respondents acknowledge the productive power their films have, so the sexual norms portrayed are likely adopted by the consumers (Foucault, 1976).

On the other hand, some respondents offered a more nuanced perspective on their responsibility. Respondent 5 stated: *'If someone already has a screw loose and watches hardcore porn, things can go wrong.'* With this statement, the producer places its responsibility of pornography's impact outside of himself and onto the consumers. Respondents 6 and 7 acknowledged the influence but argued that upbringing plays a more crucial role. Respondent 6 argued: *'If someone's parents educate them well, they'll know that sex isn't just about banging.'* Remarkably, both admitted that pornography had strongly influenced their own sexual views in their youth. Respondent 7 shouted laughing: *'It fucked me up!'* Only one respondent claimed to pay little attention to the impact of his work, because he assumes that consumers understand that pornography is fictional. Nonetheless, he added that he hopes younger audiences avoid his hardcore content: *'I don't think that's an ideal example.'* By placing the responsibility onto the consumer, the respondents deny the productive power their films have in creating sexual norms (Foucault, 1976).

Almost all respondents mentioned that they intentionally avoid certain norms or stereotypes in their films, whether they are aware of the influence or not. For some, this stems from an activist aim. For example, respondent 4 aimed to reduce stereotypical depictions. She

stated: *'I would never cast a model based on stereotypical traits.'* Respondents 2 and 3 also mentioned that they often avoid certain stereotypes, but they did not specify which ones. Respondent 5 was more explicit and intentionally depicts body diversity: *'It doesn't all have to be a six-pack and a big dick. It can be different.'*

Other respondents are not politically motivated, but still avoid stereotypes in their content. Respondent 1 stated: *'I'm not politically driven in my art.'* Yet he consciously portrayed empowered female characters in his films, which he described as feminist. This approach challenges traditional gender roles. Similarly, respondents 6 and 7 noted: *'We like placing male actors in submissive roles.'* While the respondents are not driven by activism, but make choices based on their creative expressions, they still challenge dominant sexual norms.

In conclusion, these first three themes (motivations, awareness of influence, and the intentional avoidance of stereotypes) make clear that each pornography producer brings their own personal perspective to the films they create. This personal perspective is based on their habitus (Bourdieu, 1984). Whether the producers have activist motivations or not, they all intentionally avoid certain sexual norms and stereotypes in their films.

## 4.2 Reinforcing sexual norms and stereotypes

Although most respondents indicated that they intentionally avoid certain stereotypes, they also contributed to the reproduction of others. Interestingly, such reproduction occurred without their awareness. In other words, producers may unintentionally reinforce dominant sexual norms. This indicates a degree of alignment with, or internalization of, the dominant discourse within the pornography industry, which was expected based on the theoretical framework of Foucault (1976) and Bourdieu (1984). The most frequently reproduced stereotypes are traditional gender roles, idealized body types, and heteronormativity. At the end of this section, the ways in which the habitus aligns with dominant norms will be discussed. This occurred either through pre-existing alignment or gradual internalization of the dominant norms.



Traditional gender roles, which are often characterized as a dominant man and a submissive woman (Richardson, 2018; Sukmana, 2024; Siegel & Meunier, 2018; Boahene, Reitz & Endendijk, 2022), are primarily reproduced unintentionally. For example, although respondent 1 does not intentionally seek to convey any political message with his films, he recognized the presence of gender roles in his content. He explained: *'I grew up in a family with very traditional gender roles.'* With this comment he suggested that these norms are deeply-rooted. Respondent 4 also noted some deep-rooted aspects: *'I'm submissive myself and I'll never be dominant. I can try, but it just doesn't look right.'* Respondent 5 gave a similar, but opposite, explanation: *'I think I'm just naturally a bit more dominant.'* In these cases, the sexual norm is not intentionally reproduced, but through personal characteristics. In contrast, respondent 2 told that one company she works for explicitly chooses to depict traditional gender roles. Hence in some instances the reproduction is intentional.

Respondents also unintentionally reproduced the norm of the idealized body, which is typically muscular, slim or thin, youthful, and hairless (Prnjak, Pemberton, Helms & Phillips, 2019; Ibáñez-Zamacona, Poveda & Rebato, 2023; Biefeld, Stone & Brown, 2021). Respondent 4 reflected on industry standards: *'In porn, almost every actor has a big penis. Simply because it makes filming penetration easier.'* Although this is a practical consideration, she acknowledged that it also reproduced a particular bodily ideal. Respondents 2 and 3 similarly observed: *'Models don't have to be super beautiful, but they usually are.'* While they might not select performers based on the ideal body type, it still features idealized bodies and thus reproduces the dominant norm.

The reproduction of heteronormativity, where heterosexual sex is the default, is also evident. Particularly, respondents 6 and 7 unintentionally reproduced this norm. They explained: *'We're not excluding anyone, but we choose to make heterosexual content. There's nothing wrong with that. These days everything is really sensitive, and you're quickly labelled non-inclusive. But this is our creative outlet, and we don't want to make something we're not excited about.'* Thus, their preference is based on personal interest rather than an ideological

resistance to non-heterosexual sex. Nonetheless, this choice reproduced the dominant norm of heterosexuality as the default.

In summary, most producers reproduced dominant sexual norms unconsciously. Most likely, this is due to the alignment of their habitus with dominant sexual norms, as was expected from the theory (Foucault, 1976; Bourdieu, 1984). As previously mentioned, the traditional norms respondent 1 grew up with continued to influence his work. For others, their personal values and preferences aligned closely with dominant trends in pornography. For example, respondent 6 commented on the popularity of stepsibling films: *'That whole stepbrother and stepsister thing, it's fine to film. It's exciting.'* Several respondents referred to this genre as a dominant trend, and his acceptance of it suggests a normative alignment. Respondent 8 has a similar statement: *'There's a pretty wide range of stuff I find acceptable to shoot.'*

In other cases, producers' values were initially less aligned with the dominant discourse, but over time they internalized the dominant norms. This was also expected from the combined theories of Foucault (1976) and Bourdieu (1984). This was especially observable among respondents who have adopted a more relaxed view on sex since entering the industry. Respondent 1 reflected: *'I'm less black-and-white now about who you sleep with. I see performers having sex with each other and, most of the time, that works out fine.'* Although his perspectives have shifted, he does not necessarily adopt these practices himself. Respondent 2 explained that her views have become more open: *'If you love sex in any legal form, then go for it!'* However, she added that her acceptance is partially strategic: *'[Some norms in the films] aren't entirely my own norms and values. If things get too extreme, I just skim off the edges.'* Her statement suggests that the adaptation is not full internalization, but rather an adaptive response to the industry's discourse. This strategic adaptation is a surprising insight, because it was not expected. The theories expected internalization of, or challenging dominant norms if the habitus was not aligned (Foucault, 1976; Bourdieu, 1984).

To conclude, sexual norms and stereotypes are frequently reproduced in pornographic films. Due to the alignment of the producers' habituses with the dominant sexual discourses,

this reproduction is often unintentional. For some, the alignment was present from the beginning. For other producers, the habitus developed through internalization of the dominant norms within the pornography industry, which could mean their habitus has changed.

### 4.3 Challenging sexual norms and stereotypes

As demonstrated above, most respondents reinforced certain sexual norms and stereotypes. However, in some situations they challenged the dominant norms. Some producers intentionally challenged the norms, while for others challenging the norms is not on purpose. This section describes the types of norms that are challenged: performative sex, the ideal body, traditional gender roles, and the treatment of performers. Furthermore, the misalignment between the respondents' habitus and the dominant sexual norms are described, as well as the barriers to change and their perceived impact of their films.

Six respondents have criticized the way mainstream pornography depicts sex as performative. They stated that the sex in pornographic films often looks fake. These respondents challenge this by striving for "real" sex. Respondent 3 noted: *'If you wouldn't have to direct the scene, it would be the most beautiful film.'* Respondent 4 focused on authenticity: *'The normal stuff is one of my strengths. I'm just a very ordinary person, doing ordinary things. That makes it easy for people to relate to me.'* Respondent 5 made a similar statement: *'It's just everyday sex at home, in the garden, or in the kitchen. It's simple and not staged.'* Respondent 8 connected authenticity to emotional attachment: *'I think it is really important that the models enjoy themselves with each other.'* These examples show that the respondents move away from scripted or staged sex, with which they challenge the dominant norm of performative sex.

The stereotype of the perfect body is also challenged by multiple respondents. It is striking that the producers who actively challenged this norm, are typically performers who produce their own films. On the other hand, producers who solely produce, and do not act themselves, did not challenge this norm. Respondent 4 argued: *'I have a fuller body, natural*

*breasts, no lip injections, no fake eyelashes. Just fake nails, and even those look natural.'* Similarly, respondent 5 stated: *'It doesn't always have to be a six-pack. I've got a bit of a belly myself.'* These producers intentionally make an effort to normalize body diversity in the pornography industry by challenging the ideal body type.

Despite the fact that traditional gender roles are sometimes reproduced, several respondents also challenged this norm. Respondent 2 mentioned: *'I aim for equality between men and women.'* Respondent 7 described while laughing a bit: *'I really enjoy putting men who see themselves as dominant into a submissive role.'* Even respondent 1 focused on female empowerment, although he claimed that he did not want to convey any political message. He brings light to the complexity of challenging dominant norms when he also acknowledged that traditional gender roles could still occur unintentionally, due to his upbringing. This demonstrates that a complete detachment from internalized norms is not always possible when one aims to challenge the dominant norms.

Not only the norms portrayed in films are challenged, but respondents also expressed criticisms of the treatment of performers. Respondent 4 worried: *'A lot of young women enter porn out of financial need, and that blurs their boundaries. I see them agreeing with things they actually don't want to do. Some have even been abused on set but don't dare to stop because they're halfway through and fear they won't get paid. That's basically human trafficking.'* Respondents 6 and 7 offered a similar critique and highlighted the consequences: *'What happens next? The girl becomes totally hopeless. Then there's the risk of her turning to drugs or alcohol, or even worse, suicide. Something needs to be done about this.'* The critiques indicate ethical concerns and deeper resistance to the industry norms. Although the initial theoretical focus was on the sexual norms depicted in films, it is intriguing to observe that multiple respondents emphasize the aim to challenge other types of norms as well.

The reason for challenging various sexual norms (like performative sex, traditional gender roles) is the misalignment of the respondent's habitus with the dominant discourses in the pornography industry, which was expected from the theoretical framework (Bourdieu, 1984; Foucault, 1979). In other words, there is a conflict between the personal values of the

respondents and the dominant sexual norms. Respondent 2 exemplified: *'I don't want to do a rape scene, even if it's framed as a fantasy. That refusal comes from me.'* Respondent 5 also emphasized his boundaries: *'I once tried making a more extreme scene. It wasn't for me. I don't do that anymore. That's just not who I am.'* The most elaborated example came from respondent 4: *'I've always been very clear about what was okay and what wasn't for me. That's why I've had few problems on set. But you do get labelled as "difficult" pretty quickly.'* Setting her personal boundaries eventually resulted in leaving the mainstream industry and working independently: *'In one scene they called me fat ten times and told me to suck in my belly. I actually looked into liposuction, and then I thought: "Wait, no! I'm not doing that." I am who I am, and they'll just have to accept that. My body is fine that way it is. The stereotypes in porn are just insane, ridiculous.'*

Challenging norms is not that easy. Many respondents acknowledged various barriers that hinder broader change. Obstacles that were frequently mentioned include financial limitations, social stigma (especially the fear of being associated with pornography), legal restrictions, and limited reach or visibility. Respondent 1 stated: *'My kind of porn is hard to sell because it's not a popular genre.'* Respondent 4 mentioned: *'Even though it costs me financially, it's the only way I can stay sane and keep working.'* Respondent 8 addressed the stigma surrounding pornography: *'There's a lot of it. Like not being able to open a bank account or get a mortgage. People think the sex industry is dirty.'* Respondent 1 also pointed to the barriers laws can create: *'The laws are a major issue, they change every year.'* Respondent 5 noted: *'I don't even show up on the explore page anymore.'* These statements suggest that barriers often limit the impact challenging norms can have.

When asked about the potential impact their films can have, most respondents reveal uncertain thoughts. Respondents 2 and 3 noted: *'You don't really know if you're reaching anyone.'* Respondent 5 added: *'I don't know, you should ask my fans!'* This could mean that the representation of alternative sexual norms in their films does not necessarily shift the dominant norms, which was expected from the combined theories of Foucault (1976) and Bourdieu (1976). Yet, several respondents hoped that their work could contribute to change.

Respondent 2 stated: *'I do hope our films shape how people think about porn, I wouldn't be ashamed of that.'* Respondent 4 marked: *'I hope to make a difference through my own productions and collaborations.'* Respondent 5 added: *'I hope viewers understand that I want to move away from the perfect body ideal, especially because there's a lot of diversity in the models.'* This sense of hope might be an important motivation to continue challenging dominant sexual hopes.

In conclusion, norms can be challenged unintentionally, just like the reinforcement of sexual norms. However, in most cases producers actively try to challenge the dominant norms with their films. While producers have hope for broader change of the industry norms, almost all of them are unsure about the actual impact of their films.

#### 4.4 Social reproduction and future

While respondents actively tried to challenge dominant sexual norms, most simultaneously acknowledged the ongoing social reproduction of these norms. This was also expected from the theory (Bourdieu, 1984). It is observed that reproduction occurs through the portrayal of norms and stereotypes in films, like heteronormativity, and also through the structural organization of the industry itself. Respondent 8 gave a concrete example: *'It's always the same. When I was a teenager, the "Milf" stereotype was popular. It was less popular for a while, but now it's back again.'* Respondents 6 and 7 came to realize: *'Some producers will never change. They'll always target the audience that pays. As long as there are buyers, there will be producers catering to them.'* Respondent 5 added: *'Male creators often look for the same kind of women. They're usually slim, and preferably don't have tattoos.'*

Nonetheless, there are some signs of change within the pornography industry, which may indicate an end to social reproduction. The rise of platforms such as OnlyFans is perceived by some respondents as a potential shift in the industry's power dynamics. Some respondents explained that creators on these platforms have greater autonomy over their content. Respondent 5 observed: *'On the platform F2F, you see many different types of*

women. *There's a lot more variety.*' This comment shows that the norm of the ideal body type could be shifted. However, respondents 2 and 3 also noted the limitations of the development of these platforms: *'At first it was really interesting, because women became businesswomen instead of just products. But then agencies stepped in. It was one step forward and two steps back. It's disappointing to see.'* With the return of intermediaries, the respondents suggested that dominant norms are once again reproduced, despite the initial sight of change.

Many respondents expected that artificial intelligence (AI) will play an increasingly significant role in the future of the pornography industry. Some viewed the development positively. For example, respondent 7 stated: *'You can generate and collect content more quickly. It will become a lot more efficient.'* However, others expressed concerns about the rise of AI. Respondent 2 feared: *'With AI, you can take one image of someone, like a classmate, and put them into a porno video. That is terrifying.'* Respondent 4 stated: *'I think a lot of people in the pornography industry are eventually going to lose their jobs.'*

Still, a sense of hope remained among the respondents. All expressed some optimism about the future of the pornography industry. Some hoped for a change in the portrayed sexual norms and stereotypes, while others hoped for changes in the industry itself. Respondent 1 hoped for a greater emphasis on portrayed consent within pornographic films. Respondents 2 and 3 expressed a wish to see more depicted forms of realistic sex and genuine pleasure in films. Respondent 4 would like to see efforts to educate and inform performers, particularly about topics such as sexually transmitted disease testing. Respondents 6, 7, and 8 all hoped for stricter regulations. Respondent 6 exemplified: *'I hope there will be inspections to check whether studios are operating appropriately.'* Respondent 8 advocated for raising the minimum age of performers so that they are more mature. He also emphasized the importance of a clean and safe industry: *'I want to work with other producers to keep the industry clean and safe. It hasn't always been like that. Fortunately, the rotten apples are gone. We've got fresh fruit in the bowl now, and I want to keep it that way. And if I can help with that, I'll do it with all my heart.'*

## Chapter 5: Conclusion and discussion

This research aimed to explore the perceived role of pornography producers in reproducing or challenging sexual norms and stereotypes. Eight interviews with Dutch and Belgian producers, highlighted that sexual norms are both simultaneously reproduced and challenged. This final chapter answers the research question: *'How do Dutch and Belgian pornography producers navigate their role in shaping, reinforcing, or challenging sexual norms and stereotypes within their films?'* It also points out the strengths and limitations of the study and concludes with recommendations for future research.

### 5.1. Conclusion: the complexity of being a pornography producer

The theoretical framework demonstrated that the theories of Foucault (1976) and Bourdieu (1984) are reinforcing each other. Foucault's concepts of power and discourse contributed to an approach to study the context in which producers operate. Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and social reproduction contributed to an approach to study the way producers navigate their roles within this context of pornography. As expected from the theories, the findings confirmed this reinforcement of the theories.

It was anticipated that producers would navigate their roles through their habitus, which Bourdieu (1984) describes as values that are internalized through upbringing, education, and work. From the theories it was expected that alignment of a producer's habitus with the dominant sexual norms would result in the reproduction of these dominant sexual norms. Conversely, it was expected that misalignment of the habitus with the dominant norms would lead to challenging these dominant sexual norms. The findings indeed supported these expectations. Most of the time, dominant norms were reproduced by producers whose habitus was aligned with the dominant norms due to, for example, their traditional upbringing. Noteworthy, many producers were unaware of their reproduction of dominant sexual norms



and stereotypes. On the other hand, dominant sexual norms were challenged by producers whose habitus did not align with the dominant industry norms. In these situations, producers mentioned a clear conflict between their own norms and those of the pornography industry. Unlike reproducing norms, challenging them occurred intentionally. Some producers even had the primary goal of challenging norms. In summary, the role of pornography producers is navigated through the degree of alignment of their habitus with the dominant sexual norms. When their habitus align with dominant norms, producers seem to reproduce them unconsciously, but when the two do not align, they seem to actively challenge these norms.

In addition to these expected findings, some surprising findings emerged as well. When a producer's habitus did not align with the dominant sexual norms, the theories suggested that one of two outcomes could emerge: either the producer would challenge the dominant norms, or the producer would internalize these norms, which lead to the adjustment of its own habitus, which in turn would align with the dominant norms. Although both outcomes were observed, a third unexpected outcome also occurred: strategic adaptation. In some instances, producers reproduced dominant norms, despite the recognized conflict between their own habitus and the dominant norms. This reproduction happened because producers had accepted the conflict, did not internalize the dominant norm, and did not choose to challenge them.

The unforeseen phenomenon of strategic adaptation is a first glimpse into the complexity of the role of pornography producers. Reproducing and challenging norms are in reality not as black and white as the theoretical framework indicated. In practice, these two actions are often intertwined. Many producers simultaneously reproduce and challenge sexual norms. For example, a producer can unconsciously reproduce traditional gender norms, while consciously challenging the stereotype of the perfect body in the same film. Even more complexity arises when a producer argues that he or she challenges a particular norm, but in reality just a part of the norm is challenged. Other aspects of that same norm might still be reproduced. For example, a producer aims to empower female performers, yet simultaneously reinforces traditional gender roles. Comparably, another producer intentionally challenges the stereotype of the perfect body by portraying "normal bodies", yet she admits using actors with

larger penises for practical reasons. These examples reveal a paradox in the role of producers. Thus, challenging norms is rarely absolute and much more complex than the theoretical models of Foucault (1976) and Bourdieu (1984) suggested.

A last surprising finding is that producers frequently brought up the challenging of norms about the pornography industry itself. While this research initially focused on sexual norms and stereotypes depicted in films, many producers persistently emphasized issues within the pornography industry. Especially the treatment of young, female performers was often discussed. Even though producers acknowledged the impact of pornographic films on its consumers, they stressed that a more urgent problem lies within the practices of the industry itself. Multiple producers suggested stricter regulations to address the issue of performers who are unable to set boundaries. So, rather than focusing solely on films, it might be even more important to address the deeper systematic problems within the pornography industry. Recognizing the need for more regulation is a first step in creating policy that regulates the industry.

In conclusion, this study reveals that the role of pornography producers in shaping, reproducing, or challenging sexual norms and stereotypes is very complex, fluid, and contradictory. It encourages to look beyond simplistic models and welcome the multifaceted and paradoxical realities of pornography productions. In other words, while the integration of Foucault's and Bourdieu's theories has once again proven to be a strong framework, the model has also proven to have its limitations. When applied to the pornography industry, more nuance is at times required to the mechanisms. The findings of the present research could be useful for policy makers and, for example, creators of sex education. In both cases, society would benefit from increased awareness of the dominant norms reproduced in pornography.

## 5.2 Discussion: strengths, limitations, and future research

The current research has several strong points. A key strength is the innovative focus on the producer's perspective. Existing research has extensively examined sexual norms in

pornography and their impact on consumers, but the producer's side is lacking. Therefore, a shift in attention to the production of pornography is a significant contribution. Moreover, this research is highly relevant, given that pornography would not exist without its producers. Hopefully, this research will inspire future scholars to continue studying the role of producers in shaping sexual norms with their pornographic films.

Another strength is the combination of the theories of Foucault (1976) and Bourdieu (1984). Although their complementarity has been proved in multiple academic fields (Martin, 2022; Masquelier, 2018; Bang, 2014), their application in the context of pornography is new. With this study the complementarity of the two theorists has once again proven to be a powerful theoretical model. Despite the fact that the results show a more nuanced and complex reality than expected beforehand, the theoretical expectations based on the fusion of Foucault and Bourdieu were nonetheless significant.

A final strong point of this research is the in-depthness of the conducted interviews. The semi-structured interviews allowed for the emergence of new questions and probing during the interviews. Respondents were motivated to provide detailed explanations and nuanced insights, which contributed enormously to capturing the multifaceted and complex reality of being a pornography producer. Thus, the in-depth interviews were very useful in collecting a rich and detailed data set.

Besides these strengths, the study has some limitations. First, the restricted time frame and in-depth nature of interviews limited the number of producers who could be interviewed. It might be possible that the respondents were producers who are more aware of sexual norms than producers who did not participate in this study. This may have resulted in a sample that is self-aware about their practices. Nonetheless, elements of reproduction were seen even among the most self-aware producers, providing valuable insights. Future research would profit from an extended data collection period, which allows for the emergence of a more diverse sample of producers. For example, cross-country comparisons could be made. Such comparisons can be relevant because each country has its own legal framework and own cultural norms. Both can influence sexual norms significantly. For example, a study explores

the different sexual norms of Australia, East Asian countries and sub-Saharan African countries (Okeke, 2021). While it is normal to have casual sex in Australia, in East Asia sex is deeply connected to love, and in Africa sex is often connected with forced marriage. These different sexual norms could influence the norms portrayed in pornography as well.

A second limitation is that the study only highlights a snapshot of each producer's life and career. Longitudinal research could capture deeper insights, because producers are followed over a longer time period. Such an approach would allow for a more precise measurement of the habitus and its evolution. In this research participants' memory was trusted to measure habitus and the perceived changes of it. Furthermore, with the rise of AI, the findings of this study may become less relevant over time. Many scholars already emphasize its fast growth and have their concerns about increased gender inequality and child abuse generated with AI (Kardos, 2025; Zhevlakovich, Lukinskiy & Sumina, 2024). A longitudinal study could therefore better capture shifts in both the context as well as producers' habitus, ensuring that the results remain applicable for a longer period.

A final limitation concerns the research bias, which is unavoidable in any qualitative study. The researcher's own sexual norms and the choices made during the research process may have influenced the results. For example, the decision to use the theories of Foucault and Bourdieu might have led to a confirmation bias, especially during the deductive coding. An inductive coding approach was introduced to reduce this risk. Nonetheless, the theoretical framework remained present in the researcher's mind and analysis, which may have subtly directed the interpretation of the results. Moreover, the sexual norms of the researcher, shaped by habitus, might also have played a role. Certain topics that conflicted with the researcher's personal boundaries may have led to subconscious judgement. Although efforts were made to develop neutral interview questions and remain open-minded while conducting the interviews, it could still be possible that the researcher's own norms implicitly influenced the results.

To conclude, this study offers a valuable starting point. It has multiple strengths that can inspire future scholars. Additionally, the limitations highlight opportunities for future

research, and it is hoped that pornography producers will remain in the spotlight alongside consumers.

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## Appendix A: Use of GenAI

For this research I used GenAI as a tool in some instances. It is crucial to remain critical and reflective while using AI. Therefore, in this appendix it is laid out how GenAI was used and what I did to make sure it was used in an adequate manner. The use of AI is becoming part of our future, or even the present daily life, which makes it important to learn how to use it in a proper way. Consequently, I am for the use of it as a tool, and believe that a reflection of the use of GenAI is part of learning how to use it properly. Moreover, reflecting enables one to remain critical of itself and the use of AI.

Before I used GenAI as a tool, I checked which rules the university has written down for the use of this tool. Besides checking with the thesis coordinator, I also followed the document that was uploaded at the Canvas platform.<sup>2</sup> This document states that a student is allowed to use GenAI as a tool as long as the student guarantees its ownership of the thesis. That means that I am responsible and accountable for the content and wording I used in this thesis. This document shows two requirements for keeping the ownership of the text: source control and source referencing. This relates to the fact that one uses information from the original source (source control) and refers to this original source (source referencing). Furthermore, the document mentions examples of how a student can use GenAI: 'generating ideas, checking spelling and grammar, structuring the text, clarifying complex theories.'

When I made use of GenAI, I ensured to meet these rules and requirements. For this research ChatGPT was mainly used to check spelling, grammar and wording. Since English is not my mother tongue, writing academic English is quite a challenge, and can always be improved. I tend to write in a more informal style. For example, I would use the word 'today', but more formal would be 'currently'. Another example is that I would use the words 'at the same time', but the formal version would be 'simultaneously'. Besides googling synonyms, ChatGPT was often a good tool to receive more options for formal, academic synonyms. The

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<sup>2</sup> EUR (n.d.). Artificial Intelligence Responsible Use in Assignments, Reports, and Theses. Retrieved on 11 June 2025, from <https://my.eur.nl/en/essb/media/2025-03-genai-assignments-and-paperseng>

prompt that I would give ChatGPT was: *'Give me 10 formal synonyms for the word ...'*

Another way to check my text was by giving ChatGPT the following prompt:

*'How would you improve the following paragraph, by doing:*

*- make the text more formal (academic English)*

*- keep my own words*

*- keep all the content and arguments*

*- keep all the sources'*

The outcome was often a text that still had my own words, but consisted of sentences that were better structured and more formal. When I checked whole paragraphs in this way, I always checked if my arguments and the content I came up with myself still remained. Therefore, I never copied and pasted the outcomes of ChatGPT. I critically read it and checked which sentences I wanted to change and which I wanted to keep. As a result, I often partially used some words from ChatGPT and created my own new sentence with this. By using GenAI in such a way, it helped me with creating a good, readable text, and still keeping the ownership of my own content.

When I state that I used ChatGPT for help with improving academic writing and grammar, many assume that I used GenAI for other purposes as well. Therefore, I also want to use this section to clarify what I did myself and did not use GenAI as a tool at all. First, although I got some help from AI for some academic synonyms, the writing style is primarily my own. The structure that is used in this thesis is something I came up with myself. Just like the structure within the paragraphs, this is also my own work. I love writing (in Dutch) and worked as a chief editor for a newspaper. Consequently, structuring a text is one of my strong points. Creating a better text by improving the structure is one of the things I like to do and know I can do correctly. To conclude, I used ChatGPT as a tool to find better words, but the structure of the text is done all by myself. As such, I have fully kept the ownership of my thesis.

A second aspect that the thesis is in its entirety my own work, is the content, the ideas, the arguments, everything beyond the writing style. To begin with, the idea to focus on pornography producers stems from another paper assignment that I wrote about stereotypes

in pornography. While writing this paper I was wondering why we do not know anything from the producer's perspective. Instead of only recommending it as a suggestion for future research in the discussion part of that paper, I decided to investigate this perspective in my thesis. Furthermore, the argumentation and structure of the arguments are my own creation. I used original sources and with the APA references I made sure that both source control and source references were correctly implemented in this thesis. With information from the original sources, I came up with my own argumentation. Because I find it very important to keep the ownership of my thesis, I made sure that all my own argumentation was kept when I checked grammar and wording in ChatGPT.

The final element for the use of GenAI as a tool was to get some inspiration. At a certain moment I got feedback about connecting the theories of Foucault and Bourdieu more to each other. I have complimented my attempts to do so with the following prompt: *'How could you connect the concepts of power and discourse (Foucault, 1976) with the concepts of habitus and social reproduction (Bourdieu, 1984).'* The outcome was a detailed description of the similarities and differences of the concepts. However, I only used the main idea to employ the theory of Foucault for the macro-level and the theory of Bourdieu for the micro-level. Before incorporating this application in my thesis I looked in the online library of Erasmus University for articles that applied this combination on macro- and micro-level the same way. By finding multiple articles that use the integration of Foucault and Bourdieu this way, and referring and using these primary sources, I made sure that source control and source referring was maintained. This inspiration for the integration of the theories was the only time I used GenAI for generating ideas. For example, the application of the combined theoretical framework in the context of pornography does not come from GenAI, but consists of my own ideas.

To conclude, during the thesis process I used GenAI as a tool, while remaining critical of its outcomes. By ensuring that I kept the ownership of my thesis, that there was source control and referring, I can argue that I used GenAI in an adequate way. As long as you can continue to critically reflect on your own prompts and the outcomes, GenAI is a very useful tool. In my case, the tool ChatGPT was useful for coming up with academic, formal wording.

Ultimately, my thesis did become more readable and of higher quality, therefore it is likely that I will use GenAI in the future in this critical way.

## Appendix B: Ethics and privacy list



## 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](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 The role of porn producers in shaping, reproducing, or challenging stereotypes

Name, email of student: Delphine Broasca, 726786db@eur.nl

Name, email of supervisor: Michael Giffin, giffin@essb.eur.nl

Start date and duration: February - June

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? NO

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)? NO

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? NO

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

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

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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.

\_There are no unintended circumstances in the study that can cause harm or have negative consequences to the participants. The participants are professionals in their field and will be asked about the work they do. Furthermore, all data will be anonymized.

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*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?

I will send emails and contact pornography producers via their websites and via Instagram or Facebook.

---

*Note: indicate for separate data sources.*

What is the (anticipated) size of your sample?

10 participants

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*Note: indicate for separate data sources.*

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

\_\_\_I will look at all porn producers in the Netherlands. It is difficult to estimate how many producers there are in the Netherlands.

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*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?

The data will be stored on the secured computer of the researcher. Only the researchers has the password of this computer. Furthermore, the data will be stored in a secured folder with an extra password.

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*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?

Delphine Broasca

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

\_\_\_\_\_The data will be backed-up once every day

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

I will use pseudonyms or I will write it down as 'respondent 1'

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*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 separate.*

## PART VI: SIGNATURE

Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the ethical guidelines in the conduct of your study. This includes providing information to participants about the study and ensuring confidentiality in storage and use of personal data. Treat participants respectfully, be on time at appointments, call participants when they have signed up for your study and fulfil promises made to participants.

Furthermore, it is your responsibility that data are authentic, of high quality and properly stored. The principle is always that the supervisor (or strictly speaking the Erasmus University Rotterdam) remains owner of the data, and that the student should therefore hand over all data to the supervisor.

Hereby I declare that the study will be conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the Department of Public Administration and Sociology at Erasmus University Rotterdam. I have answered the questions truthfully.

Name student: Delphine Broasca

Name (EUR) supervisor: Michael Giffin

Date: 19 March 20225

Date: 21 March 2025

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Delphine Broasca', enclosed within a hand-drawn oval border.A stylized handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Michael Giffin, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke.

## Appendix C: Informed consent form

|                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Naam van het onderzoeksproject</b><br><br><i>Research title</i>                      | De rol van pornografieproducenten in het creëren, reproduceren, of doorbreken van seksuele normen en stereotypen.<br><br><i>The role of pornography producers in creating, reproducing, or breaking sexual norms and stereotypes</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Doel van het onderzoek</b><br><br><i>Research aim</i>                                | Dit onderzoek, onder leiding van Delphine Broasca, heeft als doel inzicht te krijgen in de rol van pornoproducten bij het creëren of doorbreken van seksuele normen en stereotypen. U bent van harte welkom om deel te nemen.<br><br><i>This study, led by Delphine Broasca, aims to gain insight into the role of pornography producers in shaping or challenging sexual norms and stereotypes. You are invited to participate.</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Gang van zaken tijdens het onderzoek</b><br><br><i>Procedure during the research</i> | <p>U neemt deel aan een interview waarin aan u vragen zullen worden gesteld over seksuele normen en stereotypen in pornografie. Een voorbeeld van een typische vraag die u zal worden gesteld: ‘Welke dominante opvattingen over seksualiteit en gender observeert u in de porno-industrie?’ ‘Hoe beïnvloeden uw achtergrond en ervaring de manier waarop u scènes creëert?’</p> <p>U dient tenminste 18 jaar te zijn om deel te nemen aan dit onderzoek. Ook dient u werkzaam te zijn in de Nederlandse of Belgische pornografiesector.</p> <p>Tijdens het interview zal, aan de hand van een topic list, dieper worden ingegaan op uw professionele achtergrond, stereotypen, uw rol, ervaringen, en meningen. Van het interview zal een audio-opname worden gemaakt, zodat het gesprek later ad-verbum (woord voor woord) kan worden uitgewerkt. Dit transcript wordt vervolgens gebruikt in het verdere onderzoek.</p> <p><i>You are participating in an interview in which you will be asked questions about [to be filled in by the research leader]. Examples of a typical question you will be asked: ‘What dominant views on sexuality and gender do you observe in the industry?’ ‘How does your background and experience influence the way you create scenes?’</i></p> <p><i>You must be at least 18 years old to participate in this study. You must also be employed in the Dutch or Belgian pornography industry.</i></p> <p><i>During the interview, based on a topic list, we will discuss your professional background, stereotypes, your role, experiences, and opinions. An audio recording will be made of the interview so that the conversation can later be worked out ad-verbum (word for word). This transcript will subsequently be used in further research.</i></p> |
| <b>Potentiële risico's en ongemakken</b>                                                | Er zijn geen fysieke, juridische of economische risico's verbonden aan uw deelname aan deze studie. U hoeft geen vragen te beantwoorden die u niet wilt                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

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|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><i>Potential risks and discomforts</i></p>                                   | <p>beantwoorden. Uw deelname is vrijwillig en u kunt uw deelname op elk gewenst moment stoppen.</p> <p><i>There are no physical, legal or economic risks associated with your participation in this study. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Your participation is voluntary and you may stop your participation at any time.</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <p><b>Vergoeding</b></p> <p><i>Compensation</i></p>                             | <p>U ontvangt voor deelname aan dit onderzoek geen vergoeding . Door deel te nemen aan dit onderzoek zult u zowel meer inzicht krijgen in uw eigen rol in het creëren of doorbreken van seksuele normen als in de rollen van pornografieproducenten in het algemeen.</p> <p><i>You will receive no compensation for participating in this study . By participating in this study, you will gain a better understanding of both your own role in creating or challenging sexual norms and the roles of pornography producers in general.</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <p><b>Vertrouwelijkheid van gegevens</b></p> <p><i>Data confidentiality</i></p> | <p>Uw privacy is en blijft maximaal beschermd. Er wordt op geen enkele wijze vertrouwelijke informatie of persoonsgegevens van of over u naar buiten gebracht, waardoor iemand u zal kunnen herkennen.</p> <p>Voordat onze onderzoeksgegevens naar buiten gebracht worden, worden uw gegevens anoniem gemaakt. Enkele voorbeelden hiervan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- uw naam wordt vervangen door een pseudoniem.</li> <li>- uw leeftijd wordt niet verwerkt.</li> <li>- uw woonplaats wordt niet gebruikt.</li> </ul> <p>In een publicatie zullen of anonieme gegevens of pseudoniemen worden gebruikt. De audio-opnamen en transcripten die in het kader van deze studie worden gemaakt of verzameld, worden opgeslagen op een beveiligde locatie op de computer van de onderzoeker. Uw gegevens zullen maximaal tot 1 september 2025 worden bewaard. Daarna zal de data worden verwijderd.</p> <p>In principe heeft enkel de onderzoeker toegang tot de data. De onderzoeksgegevens worden indien nodig (bijvoorbeeld voor een controle op wetenschappelijke integriteit) en alleen in anonieme vorm ter beschikking gesteld aan personen buiten de onderzoeksgroep; in dit geval aan een onderzoekscommissie van de Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam die hiertoe bevoegdheden heeft.</p> <p>Als u vragen heeft over uw data of privacy kunt u contact op nemen met de onderzoeker (726786db@eur.nl) of met Functionaris gegevensbescherming EUR (privacy@eur.nl).</p> <p><i>Your privacy is and will continue to be protected to the maximum extent possible. No confidential information or personal data from or about you will be disclosed in any way that will allow anyone to recognize you.</i></p> |

|                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                   | <p><i>Before our research data are disclosed, your data are anonymized. Some examples of this:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>- your name will be replaced by a pseudonym.</i></li> <li><i>- your age is not processed.</i></li> <li><i>- your place of residence will not be used.</i></li> </ul> <p><i>In a publication, either anonymous data or pseudonyms will be used. The audio recordings, forms and other documents made or collected as part of this study will be stored at a secure location on the researchers' (encrypted) computer. Your data will be kept up to September 1, 2025. After that, the data will be deleted.</i></p> <p><i>In principle, only the researcher has access to the data. The research data will be made available, if necessary (e.g. for a check on scientific integrity) and only in anonymous form, to persons outside the research group; in this case to a research committee of Erasmus University Rotterdam that has authority to do so.</i></p> <p><i>If you have any questions about your data or privacy, please contact the researcher (726786db@eur.nl) or EUR data protection officer (privacy@eur.nl).</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Vrijwilligheid</b><br><br><i>Voluntariness</i> | <p>Uw deelname is vrijwillig. U kunt op elk moment stoppen of weigeren dat uw gegevens worden gebruikt, zonder uitleg te geven.</p> <p>Als u vóór het onderzoek besluit niet mee te doen, heeft dit geen gevolgen. U kunt tot 5 werkdagen na het interview je toestemming intrekken. Uw gegevens worden dan verwijderd en vernietigd. Stoppen heeft geen nadelige gevolgen.</p> <p>Als u na de bedenktijd van 5 werkdagen stopt, worden de gegevens die u tot dat moment hebt gegeven wel gebruikt, inclusief de bescherming van uw privacy zoals hierboven beschreven. Er worden geen nieuwe gegevens verzameld.</p> <p>Als u besluit om te stoppen met deelname aan het onderzoek, of als u vragen of klachten heeft, of uw bezorgdheid kenbaar wilt maken, of een vorm van schade of ongemak vanwege het onderzoek, neemt u dan aub contact op met de onderzoeksleider (<a href="mailto:726786db@eur.nl">726786db@eur.nl</a>) of met de begeleider Michael Giffin (<a href="mailto:giffin@essb.eur.nl">giffin@essb.eur.nl</a>).</p> <p><i>Your participation is voluntary. You can stop at any time or refuse to have your data used, without giving a reason.</i></p> <p><i>If you decide not to participate before the study starts, there will be no consequences. You can withdraw your consent up to 5 working days after the interview. Your data will then be deleted and destroyed. Stopping will not have any negative consequences.</i></p> <p><i>If you stop after the 5-day reflection period, the data you provided up to that point will be used, with your privacy protected as described above. No new data will be collected.</i></p> |

|                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                       | <p><i>If you decide to stop participating in the study, have any questions or complaints, wish to express concerns, or experience any harm or discomfort due to the study, please contact the principal researcher (726786db@eur.nl) or the supervisor Michael Giffin (giffin@essb.eur.nl).</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <p><b>Toestemmings-verklaring</b></p> <p><i>Consent statement</i></p> | <p>Door dit document te ondertekenen, bevestigt u dat u 18 jaar of ouder bent, goed geïnformeerd bent over het onderzoek en de manier waarop uw gegevens worden verzameld en gebruikt, en dat u zich bewust bent van de mogelijke risico's. Als u vragen had, bevestigt u dat deze zijn beantwoord. U gaat vrijwillig akkoord met deelname en ontvangt een kopie van dit formulier.</p> <p>Ik ga akkoord met deelname aan het onderzoeksproject geleid door Delphine Broasca. Dit document legt de voorwaarden van mijn deelname vast.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ik heb voldoende informatie ontvangen over het onderzoeksproject en begrijp mijn rol als geïnterviewde.</li> <li>2. Mijn deelname is volledig vrijwillig. Er is geen expliciete of impliciete dwang voor mij om aan dit onderzoek deel te nemen.</li> <li>3. Ik zal geïnterviewd worden door 1 onderzoeker voor ongeveer 60 minuten. Ik geef toestemming voor opnames (geluid) en schriftelijke notities. Ik kan op elk moment zonder reden stoppen.</li> <li>4. Ik mag vragen weigeren en kan mijn deelname stoppen als ik me ongemakkelijk voel.</li> <li>5. De onderzoeker garandeert dat ik anoniem blijf in alle publicaties en dat mijn privacy wordt beschermd.</li> <li>6. Ik kan mijn eigen gegevens inzien en op dat moment corrigeren of wissen.</li> <li>7. Ik heb het formulier gelezen, begrepen en al mijn vragen zijn beantwoord. Ik ga vrijwillig akkoord met deelname.</li> <li>8. Ik heb een kopie van dit toestemmingsformulier ontvangen, ondertekend door beide partijen.</li> </ol> <p><i>By signing this document, you confirm that you are 18 years or older, that you are well-informed about the study and how your data will be collected and used, and that you are aware of the potential risks. If you had any questions, you confirm that they have been answered. You voluntarily agree to participate and will receive a copy of this form.</i></p> <p><i>I agree to participate in the research project led by Delphine Broasca. This document defines the terms of my participation.</i></p> |



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|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                               | <p>1. I have received sufficient information about the research project and understand my role as an interviewee.</p> <p>2. My participation is completely voluntary. There is no explicit or implicit pressure for me to participate in this study.</p> <p>3. I will be interviewed by one researcher for approximately 60 minutes. I give permission for audio recordings and written notes. I can stop at any time without giving a reason.</p> <p>4. I may refuse to answer questions and can stop my participation during the interview if I feel uncomfortable.</p> <p>5. The researcher guarantees that I will remain anonymous in all publications and that my privacy will be protected.</p> <p>6. I can view my own data and correct or delete it at any time.</p> <p>7. I have read and understood the form, and all my questions have been answered. I voluntarily agree to participate.</p> <p>8. I have received a copy of this consent form, signed by both parties.</p> |                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Handtekening en datum</b><br><br><i>Signature and date</i> | <b>Naam Deelnemer</b><br><br><i>Name participant</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <b>Naam Onderzoeksleider</b><br><br><i>Name research leader</i><br><br>Delphine Broasca                                     |
|                                                               | <b>Handtekening / Signature</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>Handtekening / Signature</b><br><br> |
|                                                               | <b>Datum / date</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>Datum / date</b>                                                                                                         |

## Appendix D: Topic list

The topic list is translated from Dutch to English, because all the interviews were in Dutch.

Estimated time: 70 minutes

### **Background and Producing [10 min]**

- Can you talk a little about your background and how you got into the pornography industry?
  - career
  - Was there any other career path you wanted to pursue but it didn't work out? Why?
- What motivated you to become a pornography producer?
- How would you describe your role within the industry?
- What are the daily tasks that you have?
- Can you talk me through how a porn film is made?
  - conceive idea (where do you get your inspiration from)
  - recruit cast
  - filming (location)
  - editing
  - release
- How do you get funding and who makes the decisions about a film's budget?
  - Does the genre influence the amount of budget you receive?

### **Context (Foucault) [15 min]**

- What ideas or themes are dominant in the pornography industry?
  - (discourse) (e.g. objectification or ethical pornography)
- What kind of pornography do you make primarily (genre/themes)?
  - How do you differentiate yourself from others?
- How much creative freedom do you have when making a film? What are limitations? (e.g., regulations, market trends, funding)

- In what ways do societal social norms influence your work?
  - Consider legislation, market trends and social attitudes about sexuality.
- How do you think your work contributes to forming ideas about what is “normal” sexually?
- Can you tell me something about the power relations between you (producer) and the actors?
  - Do they have a say in the ideas?

### **Habitus (Bourdieu) [15 min]**

- When/how did your interest in sexuality/pornography begin?
- What was your relationship with porn before you joined the porn industry?
- To what extent do you think porn influenced you (in terms of norms and sexuality) before you became a producer?
- To what extent does your social and cultural background influence how you portray sexuality in your work?
  - How do your personal values and background influence your work as a producer?
- What was your first experience making a film like?
- How do previous experiences in the industry influence your current way of producing?
- How does your environment (family/friends) react to your work?
- How do you balance your own views with audience expectations?

### **Sexual norms and stereotypes [15 min]**

- To what extent do traditional gender roles play a role in your films?
  - Or other stereotypes?
- Do you consciously try to break or reinforce certain sexual norms? Why yes/no?
- How would you respond to criticism that pornography is misogynist?
- How do you feel about the idea that young people might see your films as educational material? What responsibility do you feel for how your films affect consumers?

- To what extent do you think porn has influenced your standards and sexuality after you joined the industry?
  - [habitus may be changed]
  - Has working in the industry changed your own ideas about sexuality?
- (conclusion/reflection question) So how do you reflect on your own role in whether or not certain norms are maintained?

### **Social reproduction and change [10 min]**

- Do you think the dominant norms within the industry are mainly maintained or changing?
  - Which norms/stereotypes?
- Have there been times when you have consciously tried to challenge or change the dominant norms? If so, how?
- How do audiences respond to attempts to show alternative representations of sexuality?
- What barriers exist for producers who want to challenge dominant norms?
  - Own experiences?
- What norms/stereotypes keep recurring in your films?

### **Future [5 min]**

- How do you see the future of pornography and the representation of sexuality within the industry?
- What would you want to change in the industry if you had complete control?
- How do you see your role in the future?
- Is there anything you would like to add to this interview that we haven't discussed?

## Appendix E: Transcribing and recording procedure

Here are the procedures described for the recording and transcribing. These rules were applied for every interview to keep consistency.

### Recording

All the recordings were done on the phone of the researcher. The phone was placed in the middle of the researcher and respondent. It was the task of the researcher to make sure that the interview took place in a spot with at least as possible background noises.

The recordings are saved on the researcher's phone under a secured file with an anonymized name. All the names are as follows: Respondent number - date. The recordings will be deleted in September 2025 at the latest.

### Transcribing

The transcribing was done as quickly as possible after the interview. Most of the time this was done in the train on the way back from the interview place to the researcher's home, and the day after. All the transcripts are saved on a secured computer with an anonymized name: Respondent number - date. The transcripts will be deleted in September 2025 latest. During the interviews the respondents were asked if they wanted to check the transcripts, but no one felt the need to. Instead, some preferred to check the final version to check their statements.

#### Transcribing style

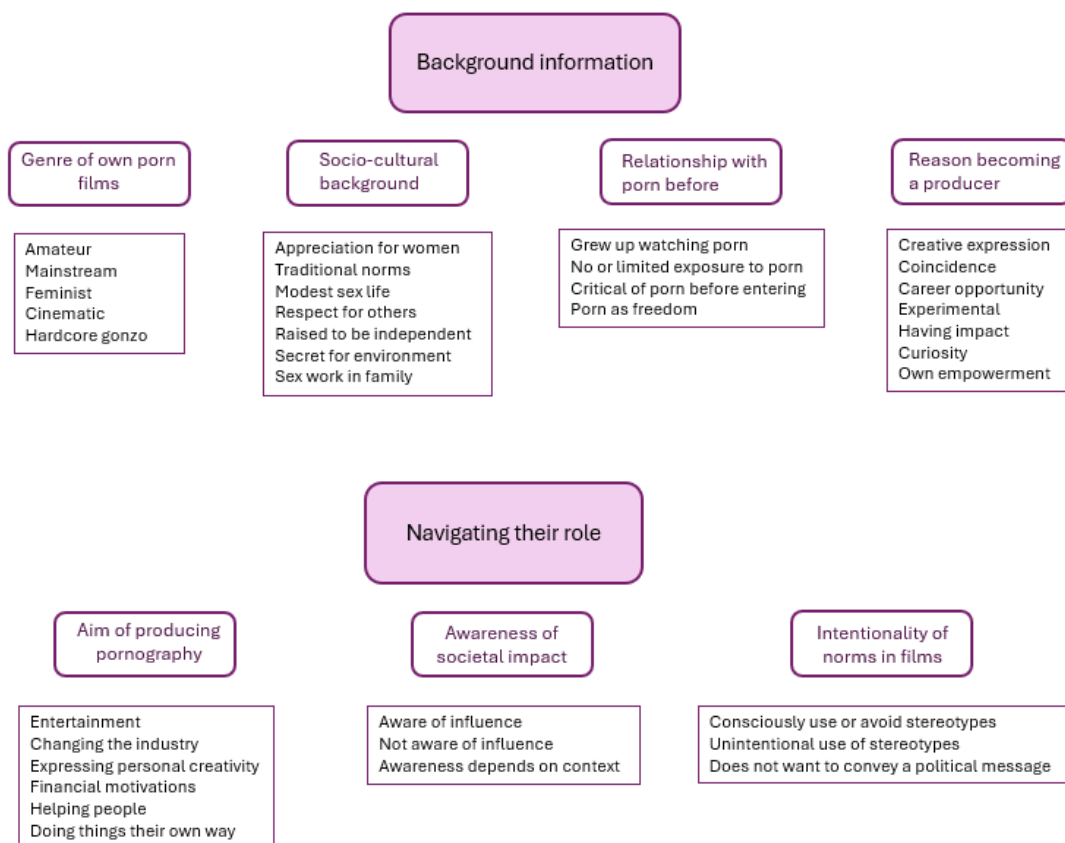
- The transcribing is done word by word
- The questions of the researchers are in bold
- The answers of the respondent are not in bold, but in normal text format
- Thoughts are written between single quotation marks → '...'
- Quotes are written between double quotation marks → "..."

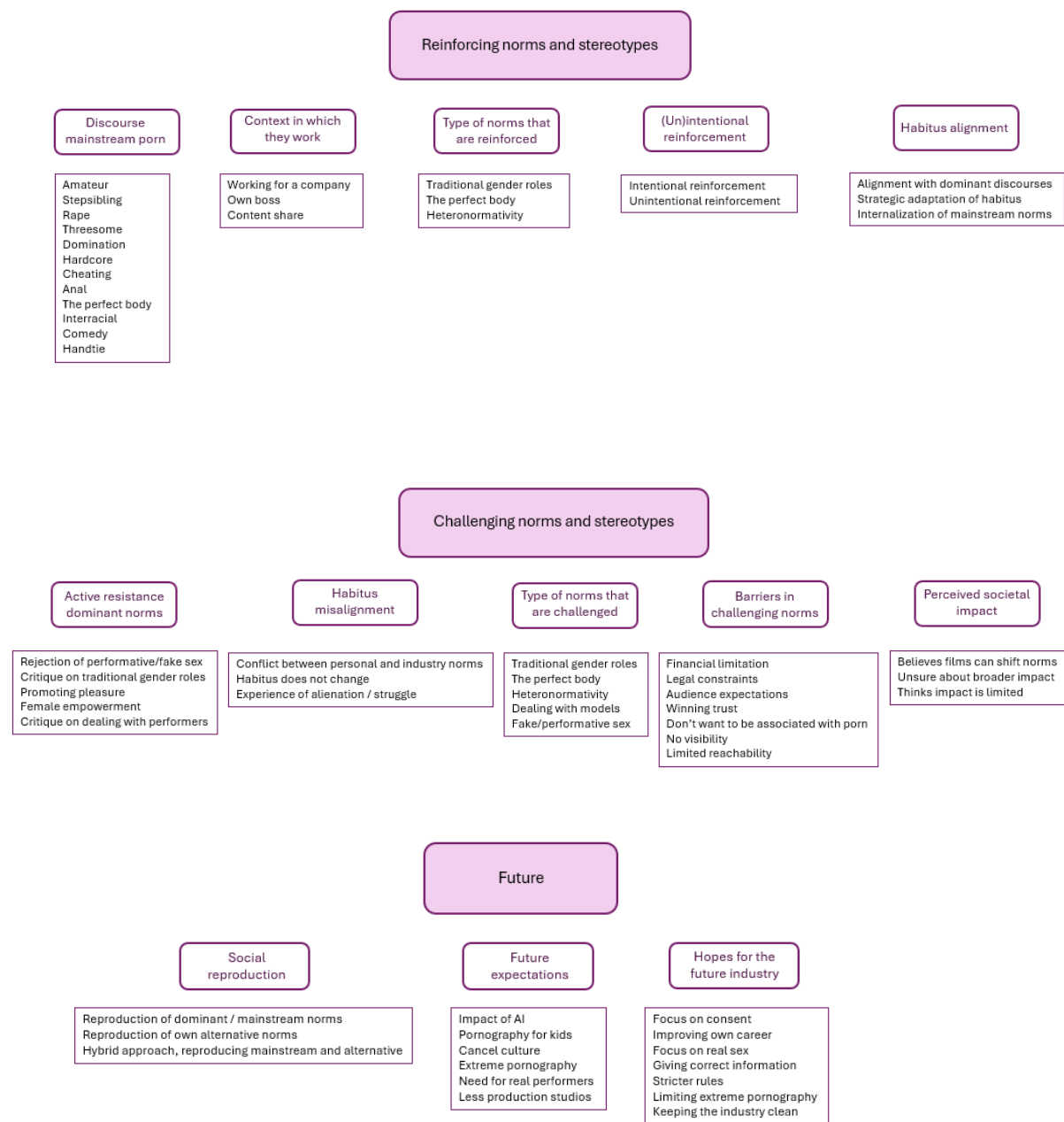
- Personal information is removed to anonymize the transcripts
- Unclear parts are shown between two square brackets with dots in between → [...]
- Additions by the researcher are shown between two square brackets → [ ]
- Emotions are shown between two curved brackets → { }

## Appendix F: Code tree and code book

Here the code tree and book will be presented. The code tree is the visual presentation of the code book. There are five themes, all have different categories and the categories consist of different codes. The code tree and book are the end results of the deductive as well as the inductive coding processes.

### Code tree





## Code book

### Theme 1: Background information

- Category 1a: Genre of pornography own films

[Def. This is the style in which the respondents produce their films.]

- Code: amateur
- Code: feminist



- Code: mainstream
- Code: cinematic
- Code: hardcore gonzo
- Category 1b: Reasons for becoming a pornography producer  
 [Def. The reasons are motivation to step into the pornography industry, which thus pre-existed before entering or creating an own label.]
  - Code: creative expression
  - Code: coincidence
  - Code: career opportunity
  - Code: experimental
  - Code: having impact
  - Code: curiosity
  - Code: own empowerment
- Category 1c: Socio-cultural background (habitus)  
 [Def. The background consists of everything the respondents recall about their upbringing and values, which can widely vary.]
  - Code: appreciation for women
  - Code: traditional norms
  - Code: modest sex life
  - Code: respect for others
  - Code: raised to be strong and independent
  - Code: secret for environment
  - Code: sexwork in family
- Category 1d: Relationship with pornography before  
 [Def. This relates to whether the respondents consumed pornography before entering the industry and their thoughts about it.]
  - Code: grew up watching porn
  - Code: no or limited exposure to porn before

- Code: critical of porn before entering
- Code: porn as freedom

## **Theme 2: Navigating their role**

- Category 2a: Aim of producing pornography

[Def. The aim is the current motivation of the respondent to produce its content, which might differ from the reason to enter the pornography industry.]

- Code: entertainment
- Code: changing the industry
- Code: expressing personal creativity
- Code: financial motivations
- Code: helping people
- Code: doing things their own way

- Category 2b: Awareness of societal impact

[Def. The awareness relates to whether the respondents believe pornography influences its consumers, with regards to their own films and other pornographic content.]

- Code: aware of influence
- Code: not aware of influence
- Code: awareness depends on context

- Category 2c: Intentionality of norms in own films

[Def. The intentionality consists of whether respondents actively use or avoid certain norms; the emphasis of this code is on the adjective 'active'.]

- Code: consciously use or avoid stereotypes
- Code: unintentional use stereotypes
- Code: does not want to convey a political message

### **Theme 3: Reinforcing sexual norms and stereotypes**

- Category 3a: Discourse mainstream pornography

[Def. The discourse is which trends the respondents see in the mainstream industry.]

- Code: amateur discourse
- Code: stepbrother/sister/mother/father
- Code: rape
- Code: threesomes
- Code: domination
- Code: hardcore
- Code: cheating
- Code: anal
- Code: the perfect body
- Code: interracial
- Code: comedy
- Code: hand tie

- Category 3b: Context in which they work

[Def. The context is whether the respondents work for themselves or for a company.]

- Code: working for a company
- Code: own boss
- Code: content share

- Category 3c: Type of norms that are reproduced

[Def. This category consists of types of dominant sexual norms the producers reinforce in their films.]

- Code: traditional gender roles
- Code: the perfect body
- Code: heteronormativity

- Category 3d: (Un)intentional reinforcement

[Def. This means whether the respondents reproduce the dominant norms on purpose or not.]

- Code: intentional reinforcement
- Code: unintentional reinforcement

- Category 3e: Habitus alignment

[Def. Habitus alignment means that there is agreement between the respondents' own norms and the dominant norms in the pornography industry; this category consist also of whether there was pre-existing agreement, or this has developed over time]

- Code: alignment with dominant discourses
- Code: strategic adaptation of habitus to dominant field pressures (e.g. economic)
- Code: internalization of mainstream norms (habitus changes)

#### **Theme 4: Challenging sexual norms and stereotypes**

- Category 4a: Active resistance against dominant norms

[Def. This category consists of the type of critique respondents have on certain dominant norms.]

- Code: rejection of performative/fake sex
- Code: critique on traditional gender roles
- Code: promoting pleasure
- Code: female empowerment
- Code: critique on dealing with performers

- Category 4b: Habitus misalignment

[Def. Misalignment means that there is a conflict between the respondents' own norms and the dominant norms of the industry; this category also consists of the consequences of this conflict.]

- Code: conflict between personal values and industry norms
- Code: habitus does not change under dominant field pressures
- Code: experience of alienation / struggle
- Category 4c: Type of norms that is challenged
 

[Def. This category consists of the type of norms that the respondents actively critique.]

  - Code: traditional gender roles
  - Code: the perfect body
  - Code: heteronormativity
  - Code: dealing with models is the industry
  - Code: fake/performative sex
- Category 4d: Barriers in challenging norms
 

[Def. This category consists of types of obstacles that the respondents face while challenging the dominant norms.]

  - Code: financial limitation
  - Code: legal constraints
  - Code: audience expectations
  - Code: winning trust
  - Code: don't want to be associated with porn
  - Code: no visibility
  - Code: limited reachability
- Category 4e: Perceived societal impact
 

[Def. Perceived impact means whether the respondents believe that the challenging of norms actually results in change.]

  - Code: believes films can shift societal norms
  - Code: unsure about broader impact
  - Code: thinks impact is minimal or limited

## Theme 5: Future

- Category 5a: Social reproduction

[Def. This category consists of whether the respondents see reproduction of dominant norms in general, or the see reproduction of alternative norms, which could be their own.]

- Code: reproduction of dominant mainstream norms
- Code: reproduction of own alternative, habitual norms
- Code: hybrid approach, reproducing mainstream and alternative norms

- Category 5b: Future expectations

[Def. The future expectations are thoughts about the upcoming years of pornography; while the answers producers gave were mostly negative, they could also give positive answers.]

- Code: impact of AI
- Code: porn for kids
- Code: cancel culture
- Code: extreme porn
- Code: need for real performers
- Code: less production studios

- Category: 5c: Hopes for the future of the pornography-industry

[Def. The hopes for the upcoming years are more positively focused, since the respondents had such negative answers about the future expectations.]

- Code: focus on consent
- Code: improving own career
- Code: focus on real sex
- Code: giving correct information
- Code: stricter rules
- Code: limiting extreme porn
- Code: keeping the industry clean