PORNOGRAPHY, SPECTATORSHIP, AND SEX EDUCATION IN THE VCR ERA

by

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES
(Cross-Faculty Inquiry in Education)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
(Vancouver)

September 2018

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The following individuals certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for acceptance, the dissertation entitled:

Pornography, spectatorship, and sex education in the VCR era

Submitted by Ingrid Rachel Olson in partial fulfillment of the requirements the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Cross-Faculty Inquiry in Education

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Abstract

Contemporary pornography studies focus largely on issues pertaining to the accessible, ubiquitous reality of portable, digital, Internet technology. What is lacking in examinations of the relationship between pornography and the industry’s uptake of media technologies is the significance of the technological advance of the videocassette recorder / player (VCR). In this dissertation I claim that video technology, particularly its ability to control the viewing of moving-image pornography, and the opportunity for private viewing, fundamentally changed the spectator’s engagement with pornography. Furthermore, the spectator’s engagement with and consideration of pornography via video technology can be understood as a kind of adult sex education. The movement of pornography spectatorship from the public adult theatre (Delany, 1999) to private home entertainment was revolutionary. Video technology provided the pornography viewer with the first opportunity to pause, watch in slow-motion, rewind, and re-watch, numerous times, sexual scenes of particular interest (Melendez, 2004). This level of control over spectatorship exceeds live theatre, cinema, or television. Moreover, the spectator’s control permits a personalized study of explicit sexual practices.

As foundational pornography theorist Linda Williams (2014) observes, there is little research on pornography’s viewers. The epicentre of this dissertation is a reading of the cumulative fan mail archive of legendary pornography star Nina Hartley. Hartley’s first video was released in 1984, concurrent with the rapid expansion of video pornography production and distribution (Greenberg, 2008; O’Toole, 1998; Williams, 1989). The Hartley fan archive contains over 15 years of fan mail, artwork, and ephemera. Hartley established the Nina
Hartley Fan Club in 1985 and, despite advances in digital technologies, she received postal mail into the 21st-century.

Personal letters can provide a window to the author’s curiosities, desires, fantasies, knowledge, practices, and questions regarding sexuality (Almond and Baggott, 2006; Garlinge, 2005). Selections from Hartley’s fan archive articulate what adult sex education the viewer garnered from pornography regarding explicit representations of sexual practices, gender, and bodies.

Pornography can be interpreted as the speaking of sex. This dissertation suggests that, while pornography can be understood as making sex speak, the letters of the Hartley archive represent the speaking of sex.
Lay Summary

The epicentre of this dissertation is based on a reading of the cumulative fan mail archive of legendary pornography star, Nina Hartley. This dissertation suggests that, while pornography can be understood as making sex speak, the letters of the Hartley archive represent the speaking of sex. Hartley’s first video was released in 1984, concurrent with the rapid expansion of video pornography production and distribution. What is lacking in examinations of the relationship between pornography and the industry’s uptake of media technologies is the significance of the technological advance of the videocassette recorder / player (VCR). This dissertation claims that video technology, particularly its ability to control the viewing of moving-image pornography, and the opportunity for private viewing, fundamentally changed the spectator’s engagement with pornography. Furthermore, the spectator’s engagement with and consideration of pornography via video technology can be understood as a kind of adult sex education.
Preface

This dissertation is an original, unpublished, intellectual work by myself, the author, I. Olson. The text of the dissertation has been revised through the supervision of my committee.

The data for this research came from material in an archive of personal correspondence. The owner of the correspondence and the directors of the non-profit organization where the archive is located approved the use of the material for this dissertation. The archive research was conducted independently by myself. Ethics approval was not required for the research.

Versions of Chapters 4 and 6. A version of this material has been accepted for publication as Olson, I. (forthcoming, 2018). Letters to Nina Hartley: Pornography, parrhesia, and sexual confessions. In T. Waugh and B. Arroyo (Eds.), I confess: An anthology of original essays on constructing the sexual self in contemporary moving image art, media and culture. Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen’s University Press. I conducted all the research and wrote the manuscript. The work includes three digital photographs of personal correspondence from the research archive taken by the author as part of the archive research for the dissertation. The letters have been digitally anonymized; no biographical information is included.
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Acknowledgements

I send heartfelt gratitude to my dissertation Co-Supervisors, Drs. Carl Leggo and Scott Anderson, and to dissertation committee member, Dr. Claudia Ruitenber. It has been my honour to complete my research under their supervision. I am humbled by their wisdom, dedication, and academic professionalism.

I thank the faculty, staff, and graduate students of the University of British Columbia who have assisted me, encouraged me, and inspired me to complete my research and this dissertation.

I send my thanks and gratitude to Drs. Carol Queen and Robert Lawrence, co-founders of the Center for Sex and Culture, and to the volunteers and board members for their assistance and encouragement, particularly Marlene, Dorian, Ian, Jacques, Tess, Anissa, and special thanks to photographer, Joie Rey.

Special thanks and love are owed to my wife, Alexandria, for her patience, encouragement, and for sharing the grief and joy that accompanies doctoral research and academic publications. I owe special thanks and love to my mother, Lil, for her support in more ways than I could list here. I also owe special thanks to my long-time friend, Rob, who also supported me in many ways. And to friends and extended family in Canada and the United States, thank you.

I also thank the staff of the Nelson (BC) Public Library for the many hours I spent at what they referred to as “your desk.”
Dedication

To Nina Hartley: activist, author, feminist, nurse, pornography star, provocateur, sex educator.

These nouns are arranged alphabetically because they are of equal value.
Chapter 1: Introduction

Diderot, and *The Indiscreet Jewels*

Denis Diderot, French author and philosopher, published a fictional story in 1748 titled, *Les Bijoux indiscrets*, or, *The Indiscreet Jewels*. While it was described as fiction, and regarded by many at the time as frivolous, in a recent translation Vartanian (in Diderot, 1748/1993) claims that Diderot’s tale masks the serious topic he intends to address: sexual confession, secret amorous desires, and clandestine relationships (p. ix). Succinctly, Diderot’s objective in *Indiscreet Jewels* is to simultaneously mock the surreptitious sexual liaisons of the French monarchy, and give voice to women’s sexualities, something transgressive for its time.

Diderot’s tale describes the relationship between a sultan, Mangogul, and his mistress, Mirzoza. The two have been lovers for years, and their relationship has grown beyond passion to that of intimate confidants, which includes Mirzoza sharing the salacious adventures of women in the court (Diderot, 1748/1993, pp. 9–11). Mirzoza recognizes that Mangogul has become bored and expresses her disappointment that she has no other sexual tales to entertain the sultan. The two discuss the possibilities for imagining the amorous adventures of women but admit to the limitations on accessing sexual knowledge of members of the court. Equally, the sultan questions who could know “the stories of all those foolish women,” and doubts that these tales could be retold better than by his mistress (p. 11). Confronted with the problem of sexual knowledge, Mirzoza suggests that Mangogul consult his genie, Cucufa, to direct magical power to fulfilling his sexual curiosities.
Mangogul is delighted with his mistress’ suggestion and immediately departs to meet his genie. The sultan informs Cucufa that he seeks the ability to “procure some pleasure at the expense of the ladies of (his) court.” His desire is for the women “to tell (him) of their amorous adventures past and present, no more” (Diderot, 1748/1993, p. 12). The genie is initially perplexed as to how sexual confessions could be summoned. After pondering the request Cucufa retrieves a silver ring from his pocket and hands it to the sultan. The genie tells Mangogul to put the ring on his finger, and states: “Every woman toward whom you turn the stone will recount her intrigues in a loud, clear, and intelligible voice. But do not imagine that they shall speak through their mouths” (p. 13). The sultan asks how it is then that the women will speak sex. Cucufa responds, “From the most honest part of them, and the best instructed in the things you desire to know. From their jewels” (p. 13).

Mangogul bursts into laughter, thrilled at the possibility of initiating sexual confession, and the idea of hearing sex speak from one’s “jewels”—their genitals. The sultan is instructed that the ring also has the power to turn the wearer invisible, thus being able to secretly hear the sexual confessions. Then, just before leaving the sultan, Cucufa warns to put the secret ring to good use, and to remember “that curiosity can be misdirected” (Diderot, 1748/1993, p. 13).

The narrative above occupies the first four chapters of Diderot’s fable. Following the genie’s sage advice, Chapter 5 is appropriately titled, “Mangogul’s Dangerous Temptation.” In this short chapter the sultan considers turning the ring on his mistress, Mirzoza, leading the two into a discussion as to how the potential confession might affect their relationship. The sultan agrees with Mirzoza that trust in their relationship is paramount, and he promises
not to betray her confidence. After this chapter, and the negotiation between Mangogul and Mirzoza, that they attend various social gatherings where the magical ring summons the sexual truths of numerous ladies of the court. In the next eight chapters, numbered six to 13, six of the chapters are titled for a “Trial of the Ring.” That is, Chapter Six is titled, “First Trial of the Ring,” and Chapter Thirteen is titled, “Sixth Trial of the Ring.” Each of the ‘Trial’ chapters elucidate a social scenario where Mangogul turns the magic ring toward a lady of the court, commanding her ‘jewels’ to speak sex.

As Diderot (1748/1993) writes, it is not long before people of Mangogul’s court hear stories of a woman’s sexual desires or adventures being spoken about publicly, often with a surprised and attentive audience. In the trials of the ring the woman’s husband or close friends are usually seated nearby, sometimes instructed by the sultan to remain and listen, and in some scenarios the sultan’s ring is turned toward more than one woman’s jewels (pp. 25–27). No woman is safe from speaking sex through Mangogul’s ring. At the end of Chapter 8 a young nun, with a “supposedly virginal jewel,” is questioned by the ring and confesses to sex with “two gardeners, a Brahmin, and three cavaliers” (p. 27). The chapter concludes with the jewel of a girl “of fifteen or sixteen years of age” admitting to casting “glances at a young officer” through the gate. The girl’s ‘jewel’ explains to listeners that the knowledge of the attraction was realized when her little finger “told me so” (p. 27), a metaphor for masturbation.
Denis Diderot, Michel Foucault, Linda Williams, and ‘Speaking Sex’

The genie’s cautionary statement on inquiry into sexual desires and practices, and the power of sexual confession is a cogent one. For persons conducting academic research on a topic related to sexuality, the reading and citing of Michel Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, is almost obligatory. The first page of “Part Four, The Deployment of Sexuality” in that text starts with Foucault’s (1978) reference to the work of Diderot: “The aim of this series of studies? To transcribe into history the fable of *Les Bijoux indiscrets*” (p. 77).

Foucault goes on to claim that for many years, “we have all been living in the realm of Prince Mangogul: under the spell of an immense curiosity about sex, bent on questioning it, with an insatiable desire to hear it speak and be spoken about…” (p. 77). He states that, much like Mangogul’s ring, the West has attempted to “invent” something similar to release the discretion of sex and hear it speak. Foucault (1978) suggests that our “problem” has been to identify the device that holds a similar power over us. And, moreover, how each of us has become aware and watchful of our sex, and the sex of others (p. 79).

Following from Foucault’s work, the first page of Linda Williams’ (1989) foundational work, *Hard Core*, describes the plot of Diderot’s fable: the genie Cucufa granting Mangogul’s wish and providing a magical ring that permits the sultan to hear the women in his presence confess their “sexual adventures” (p. 1). Williams notes Diderot’s attention to the voice that speaks sex, a woman’s ‘jewel,’ —the part of a woman that is “the most knowledgeable about the things you wish to know” (p. 1). In both Diderot and Williams’ work there is not only the desire to hear sex speak but confidence that the speaking of sex reveals knowledge: sexual truths of the speaker. Williams (1989) answers
Foucault that in “this quest for the magic that will make sex speak, the most recent magic has surely been that of motion pictures” (p. 2).

My research responds directly to Williams, following upon her response of film pornography as an answer to Foucault’s (1978) “problem” regarding the contemporary device that, similar to Mangogul’s ring, makes sex speak (p. 79). My response to Williams and, by extension, to Foucault is that, in addition to the pornographic film itself, the written word and utterances from pornography viewers in response to porn texts should also be understood as speaking sex. That is, pornographic film and video are representations of sexual practices. The authors of fan letters to pornography actors are people ‘speaking’ in response to those pornographic representations. Like Mangogul’s ring commanding a direct response from a woman’s jewels, pornographic videos summon some viewers to speak sex, to confess, to articulate sexual desires and curiosities. The pornographic film, while depicting real people having real sex, is a product of fictional production.¹ And by contrast to Diderot’s fable, in the context of pornographic movies, the speaking of sex is not limited to women.

The epicentre of this research is the cumulative fan archive of pornography star Nina Hartley. The Hartley archive contains over a decade of fan mail. In short, this research puts forth these letters as illustrative of the idea of speaking sex. Because Hartley’s career started in 1984, coinciding with the proliferation of videocassette technology, I suggest that (in that era) the VCR can be understood as Mangogul’s ring: the device that, when directed toward the pornography viewer, bids the viewer to speak sex.

¹ I say more about the interpretation of porn actors as real people and pornography as a fictional story later.
In the mid-eighteenth century the sexuality of European women had been repressed and controlled through an array of power relationships—religious, moral, and political—for centuries. Succinctly, Diderot’s objective in *Indiscreet Jewels* is to simultaneously reveal the secret sexual liaisons of the French aristocracy, and give voice to sexuality, and specifically to the voice of women regarding their sexuality. Beyond the initial reactions to regard *Indiscreet Jewels* as a meaningless, salacious work, Diderot’s political motivation has been theorized as commensurable within the context of Enlightenment (Vartanian, in Diderot, 1748/1993, pp. x–xi).

The Enlightenment was a period of social critique and voluntary insubordination against religious, moral, and political relationships of power. Foucault (1994c), citing Kant, defines Enlightenment as “a process that releases us from the status of ‘immaturity.’” According to Foucault, for Kant, immaturity is defined as “a certain state of our will which makes us accept someone else’s authority to lead us in areas where the use of reason is called for” (p. 45). The concept of Enlightenment, and Foucault’s citation of Kant’s definition, are important here in understanding the political and social critique in Diderot’s *Indiscreet Jewels*. Foucault (1994b) article, “What is Critique?” he offers a definition of critique as:

the movement by which the subject gives himself the right to question truth on its effects of power and question power on its discourses of truth. Well, then!:

critique will be the art of voluntary insubordination, that of reflected intractability. (p. 266)

Foucault's (1994b) definition of critique introduces the concept as an opportunity for rational but governed subjects to confront state authority and the knowledge paradigms that
work to interpellate citizens toward the goals of the state. That is, Foucault’s reference to Kant’s writing on Enlightenment and overcoming immaturity, coupled with the former’s definition of critique as voluntary insubordination and the power to question power, articulates a philosophical possibility for acting both against state legislation and against dominant discourses of sexuality and appropriate femininity. Diderot’s political motivation in *Indiscreet Jewels* can be described as voluntary insubordination. The idea of giving voice to sexuality, especially women’s sexuality, and in 1748, should be considered the subject giving itself the right to question discourses of sexual truths.

In Diderot’s fable the sultan’s ring literally commands a woman’s ‘jewels’ to ‘speak sex.’ More than two centuries following Diderot’s fable, the introduction of VCR and videotape technology quickly saw the subsequent production of video pornography. My research suggests that the VCR (playing video pornography) is a device that, similar to Mangogul’s ring, summons some viewers to speak about sex.

There is sparse ethnographic work on pornography spectatorship, and what does exist largely involves heterosexual-identified male viewers (Loftus, 2002). And, perhaps unsurprisingly, most of the letters in the Hartley archive are from writers that identify, or can reasonably be assumed to be given the content, heterosexual male viewers. In this research I have, however, included letters from women and from men who may be interpreted as not strictly heterosexual. I have also included letters from writers identifying as men of colour, and men with disabilities. I have done this in an attempt to bring some diversity and breadth to what may be general assumptions about the pornography spectator as a white, heterosexual, able-bodied male.
What is missing in academic work on pornography is the speaking of sex from the pornography spectator: the personal response of the viewer to explicit representations of sexuality. The Hartley fan archive contains hundreds of fan letters, a number of artworks, and other ephemera. My dissertation is unique in that it examines Hartley’s archive: a repository of pornography fans’ responses to viewing explicit representations of sexualities.

I realize it is precarious to compare social and political institutions and technologies of the body across epochs. In this case the potential comparison would be the writing of Diderot and Kant in the mid and late eighteenth century, against Foucault’s writing and Hartley’s fan archive from the second half of the twentieth century. Foucault (1984) stated in an interview that “you can’t find the solution of a problem in the solution of another problem raised at another moment by other people” (p. 343). I recognize Foucault’s concern and to note that my references to Diderot’s Indiscreet Jewels is not an attempt to ‘solve a problem.’ Rather, it is to continue and further examine the references to Diderot by Foucault in History of Sexuality, Vol.1 in 1978, and by Linda Williams in her 1989 work, Hard Core.

Research Project and Questions

In Diderot’s fable Mangogul’s ring provides the sultan, his mistress, and potential onlookers immediate, unrestricted, detailed information of the targeted individual’s secret, intimate, sometimes compromising, sexual desires, encounters, and relationships. From these non-consensual confessions the audience can receive a firsthand detailed account of the sexual encounter(s): with whom (ability, age, class, education, ethnicity, gender), where, when, endurance, frequency, sexual accoutrement, sexual practices, sexual positions, outcome. The
speaker’s disclosure, while non-consensual, is both performative and educational: it is a one-
person show of sex education. Similarly, this research project contributes to pornography
studies through an examination of the cumulative fan archive of pornography star Nina
Hartley. The objective of this research is to advance knowledge of Foucault and Williams’
work on the concept of speaking sex through a hermeneutic analysis of Hartley’s fan mail
written during the VCR era. More specifically, I suggest that the Hartley letters written in
response to pornography spectatorship are illustrative of a modern understanding of speaking
sex.

Following Foucault’s (1978) reference to Mangogul’s ring, and Williams’ (1989)
response to Foucault, I suggest that the utterance of the pornography spectator is a speaking
of sex. That is, while video pornography can be understood as a kind of speaking sex, it is
not restricted to the film itself; rather, it is articulated and appreciated in the reactions to
these films by the spectators, as found in their responses to films, such as Nina Hartley’s.
This dissertation offers a reading of the letters and materials found in the Nina Hartley
fan archive to show how the correspondence of her fans provides a useful ‘speaking of sex’ for
understanding the sexual curiosities, disclosures, knowledges, and questions of pornography
spectators. This project examines the importance of private pornography consumption of
professionally produced videos through home entertainment technology. The idea of
speaking sex in this research is located during the videotape era where pornography fans
generally had reasonable, affordable access\textsuperscript{2} to hard core pornographic video texts. My

\textsuperscript{2} Reasonable, in that even many small communities had video rental businesses. Sometimes these were small,
independent, private shops, sometimes large chain stores such as Blockbuster (Greenberg, 2008). Having said
that, there are jurisdictions in areas of the US that prohibit sexually explicit material. Affordable, in that in the
1980s persons of legal age could rent a pornographic video for approximately five dollars. And if the renter did
research also examines Hartley’s fan mail archive to analyze how explicit representations of sexualities and sexual acts available through video pornography can be understood as a kind of adult sex education.3 I further suggest that the written disclosures to Hartley regarding the writer’s sexuality communicate information regarding their sexual subjectivity: how it may have developed or changed in some manner through pornography spectatorship. I do not engage in a psychological assessment of the writer’s subjectivity as that is outside my academic background and my dissertation research. My research focus on video technology, however, particularly in Chapters 3 and 5, suggests that the spectator’s ability to control moving-image pornography viewing enabled an enhanced, personal engagement with sexually explicit scenarios that constituted an opportunity for considerations pertaining to sexual subjectivity. My dissertation examines the text of personal correspondence in the Hartley fan archive and cites excerpts from the letters as demonstration of the spectator’s considerations of their sexual subjectivity, and sex education.

In the modern context, and without possession of Mangogul’s ring, moving-image pornography provides an accessible option for persons desiring sexually explicit representations. As I discuss in Chapter 3, video technology and video pornography enabled fans to select the scenarios they want to view based on a particular genre (gay, lesbian, interracial, intergenerational, or transsexual, for example), or specific performers, such as Nina Hartley. While video pornography does not disclose someone’s private sexual

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3 For simplicity, I apply the term ‘sex education’ without reference to any particular age group, with the lower end of age referring to secondary school sex education. In discussing pornography as a kind of sex education I use the term ‘adult sex education’ to clarify that I am not suggesting minors view pornography.
encounters, it does provide the viewer with immediate, unrestricted, detailed information of sexual practices: the who, where, when, endurance, frequency, sexual accoutrement, and sexual positions of scripted pornographic scenarios.

My research suggests that, similar to Mangogul’s ring, pornography spectatorship offers an opportunity to view sexual disclosures and acquire new sexual information: pornography as adult sex education. As mentioned, ethnographic research on pornography spectatorship is sparse. The reading of letters from the Hartley archive offers research into personal information and insights into video pornography spectatorship, and the curiosities, desires, and knowledge of pornography fans. The theoretical and argumentative value of my dissertation examines the changes to pornography spectatorship enabled through video technology, and the (potential) effects on the spectator through video pornography technology.

With a particular focus on the archive of fan letters written to (pornography star) Nina Hartley, the dissertation asks:

- How did the introduction of the VCR and the availability of pornography for viewing at home change viewers’ engagement with pornography?
- How did this engagement constitute a form of sex education?

These two questions expand the body of research on pornography generally, and specifically, the issue of pornography spectatorship, and the possibility for pornography to provide a kind of adult sex education. More specifically, with regard to the first question, in the contemporary, digital context of portable electronic devices, access to pornography is vastly expanded geographically, reduced in cost, and largely without policing by age (Attwood,
What has been largely overlooked in academic work on pornography is the significance of video pornography: the movement of pornography spectatorship into the domestic sphere (Jennings, 2000; Kleinhans, 2006; Salgado, 1989). While ‘stag’ films and ‘loops’ were available from the early 20th century until the advent of video technology in the late 1970s (Di Lauro & Rabkin, 1976; Gagnon & Simon, 1970; Koch, 1990; Paasonen & Saarenmaa, 2007b; Waugh, 2004) this technology required a projector which was less accessible than VCR technology, and access to pornographic films which were not easy to acquire. That is, “(t)he technology for producing or viewing (stag) films was obviously very primitive for much of the twentieth century compared to contemporary standards” (McKee, Albury, & Lumby, 2008, pp. 14–15). In Chapter 3 I elaborate on the importance of ‘stag’ films as the first opportunity for modern, moving-image pornography spectatorship, and the potential for adult sex education. However, my dissertation suggests that the lowered production costs and expanded distribution commensurate with the advent of VCR technology marked video as the first widely available private pornography technology (Melendez, 2004).

The second question examines the possibility for and utility of pornography as a kind of adult sex education. The significance of this research is in part attributable to its examination of existing academic work on the interpretation of pornography as a kind of adult sex education. While pornography has been a contentious media genre (Dines, 2010; McKee, 2010), the sexually explicit content provides a practical, visual example of sexual practices (Albury, 2013; McInnes, Bollen, & Race, 2002; McNair, 2009b). As I discuss in Chapter 5, traditional sex education in secondary schooling has largely focused on education
regarding birth control and sexually transmitted infection (Tjaden, 1988). Sex education programs tend to be reluctant to discuss sexual practices or sexual pleasure (Allen, Rasmussen, & Quinlivan, 2014; Ollis, 2015). And in the contemporary context of portable, Internet-enabled, digital devices that can easily access pornography there has not been much advance in delivering open, honest education regarding pornography (Ollis, Harrison, & Maharaj, 2013, p. 1). Similarly, universities have not always been very welcoming to academic engagement with pornography (Paasonen, 2016; Rubin, 2011). The knowledge advance of this research question highlights the possibility of sex education through viewing pornography (Albury, 2014; Allen, 2006; McNair, 2012). This dissertation considers in which ways pornography spectatorship contributed to Hartley viewers’ sex education related to sexual practices, sexual devices and adult toys, sexual relationship schema, and representations of different bodies, for example, through a reading of the Hartley archive letters.

The methodology of this research is epistolary analysis: the academic study of letters and their formal characteristics, and letter writing. The theoretical framework of this research is spectatorship and located at its intersection with fan culture: the study of the relationship between a celebrity and their fans. These frameworks are discussed in Chapter 2.

Briefly, my research consists of a reading of hundreds of letters in the Nina Hartley fan archive. These epistolary texts reveal the thoughts, considerations, desires, and questions of the pornography spectatorship engaging sexually explicit representations. More specifically, this viewing occurred in the VCR era when the technology first permitted widespread access to private pornography consumption, which may have changed how pornography fans
accessed and viewed pornography. I consider many of the Hartley fan letters to be epistolary versions of speaking sex, some of which reveal the spectator’s knowledge regarding sex, and what kinds of knowledges they might have acquired through pornography spectatorship. In the following sub-section, I give some attention to two significant issues that lie outside the field of this research: anti-pornography sentiment manifested through activism – such as feminist protestation against pornography, and legislative – governmental regulation of pornography. These are serious concerns in the study of pornography and have been researched by many scholars, including myself. However, these are tangential issues to my research questions pertaining to video technology, pornography spectatorship, and pornography as adult sex education. I discuss each of these anti-pornography concerns briefly.

**Anti-Pornography Activism, Legislation, and Pornography Spectatorship**

Anti-pornography activism, particularly through what is referred to as anti-pornography feminism lies outside the focus of this research. However, the issue was prominent during the rise of Hartley’s career in the 1980s. And in pornography studies, generally, it is often expected to include recognition of anti-pornography criticisms, particularly anti-pornography feminism. Pornography studies and, more specifically, the spectatorship of pornographic material, has received anti-pornography criticism that condemns male viewers as not only objectifying women but also, through pornographic representations, degrading and humiliating women (Dworkin, 1989; Griffin, 1981; MacKinnon, 1993). This view is not limited to the voices of women; men have expressed solidarity (Tucker, 1990) with
“women's rightful denunciation of pornography as an instrument of antifeminist backlash” and the commodification of women’s bodies (Waugh, 1988, p. 30).

The three-plus decades of Hartley’s pornography career, beginning in 1984, has witnessed a transition in feminist politics. The relevance of that transition for this dissertation lies in its interpretations of and regard for sexual politics and, more importantly, the demarcation of ‘feminism,’ and the permissibility of pornography (Dodson, 2013; Smith & Attwood, 2013). Despite the political message for women to govern their own bodies there is a feminist discourse that is critical of pornography, one that is sometimes interpreted as generational (Brownmiller 1969; Dworkin 1989; Griffin 1981; MacKinnon 1993); it is not defunct and has resurfaced in the current century (Dines, 2010; Domonoske, 2016; MacKinnon, 2006; Paul, 2005; Smith & Attwood, 2013). The resurgence in anti-pornography feminism has been regarded as a transition in feminist politics from what is commonly referred to as ‘second-wave feminism’ to ‘third wave,’ in the ‘feminist porn wars’ (Dodson, 2013; Munford, 2009). The resurgence in anti-pornography politics is largely attributed to the movement toward and increase in sexualized images in mainstream media and marketing: what has been termed “pornographication” (McNair, 2009a, p. 67). Despite the transitions of anti-pornography activism and obscenity legislation regulating representations of sexualities, pornography continues as a particular kind of media genre.

One of the earliest concerns regarding pornographic material is that it is, or could be, harmful to specific demographic groups, particularly young people and women. “Arguments about ‘protecting’ various groups in society still survived” the so-called “sexual revolution” of the 1960s and 1970s (McKee, Albury, & Lumby, 2008, p. 14). The 1970s witnessed the
merging of “two very strange bedfellows: religious conservatives and radical feminists” (p. 17). This is a curious partnership because religious conservatives generally believe sex should remain a private act between married, heterosexual persons. Contrarily, radical feminists believe that “marriage and heterosexual intercourse are patriarchal institutions” that own women as property to be traded as “sexual currency” (p. 17). The antipornography, feminist movement of the 1980s (and beyond) was and remains successful in part due to its alliance with the conservative, ‘religious right.’ Together, these groups constructed the idea, that still exists, that pornography is the “degradation of women and the prurient documentation of the most horrific forms of violence waged against women” (Penley, 2006, p. 103). Two of the most published and best known radical feminists are Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon: Dworkin’s book *Intercourse* (1987) states that all heterosexual sex is a violation of women by men; MacKinnon’s work sought to “expand the definition of sexual harassment to include pornography” (McKee, Albury, & Lumby, 2008, p. 18).

This dissertation’s questions attend to pornography spectatorship and the potential for pornography to constitute a kind of adult sex education. Given criticisms of pornography from some feminist groups there are two interesting points I want to briefly include in this examination of anti-pornography feminism. First, I discuss the introduction and expansion of what is referred to as ‘feminist porn’ (McNair, 1996; Taormino, Parrenas Shimizu, Penley, & Miller-Young, 2013). Second, I examine the acceptability of pornographic representations of specific sexual acts for (some) anti-pornography feminists.

In response to anti-pornography feminism, and the idea that pornography is violence against women, there is a pornography genre, or at least an understanding, of what is referred
to as feminist porn. This genre is often produced by women for women and, contrary to much of the mainstream, heterosexual-centric pornography, includes scenarios focused on women’s sexual pleasure, non-normative sexual practices, or gender-variant and differently-abled bodies. It is possible to consider that the initial stages of ‘feminist porn’ occurred as an idea in the early 1970s. In response to the era known as ‘porno chic’ that witnessed *Deep Throat* (Damiano, 1972) and *The Devil in Miss Jones* (Damiano, 1973), feminist critics suggested that what the industry might “need is more female pornographers,” and an admission from a feminist film reviewer that she “had fantasies about making (her) own porn epic for a female audience” (Strub, 2011, p. 224–226). The 1980s witnessed a “growing number of female users of pornography” and the creation of a “distinct subcategory of pornography for women” (McNair, 1996, p. 114): ‘feminist pornography’ as a specific pornography genre. This subcategory saw movies produced by women as sexual entertainment for women, such as former pornography actress turned director, Candida Royalle (p. 114). More recently, *The Feminist Porn Book* (Taormino et al., 2013) articulates the proliferation from ‘pornography for women’ to an academic examination of pornography congruent with the gender and sexual political views of feminism. More recently, feminist porn not only includes pornography featuring lesbians, but also bi-sexual and queer-identified persons, transgender and gender variant performers, and disabled performers (Taormino et al., 2013); genders and bodies often exempt from mainstream pornography. These pornographic representations of different bodies can be understood as sexually important for persons in those marginalized demographic groups.
The second issue I examine here pertains to my dissertation’s attention to adult sex education. Specifically, the suggestion is that there exist pornographic representations of specific sexual acts that are acceptable for some anti-pornography theorists. In a 1973 article in the *San Francisco Chronicle* titled, “A Feminist Defends Porn,” Terri Schultz wrote that “pornography, far from being evil, has a valid and constructive place in our lives” that allows for the exploration of sexual fantasies (Strub, 2011, p. 226). I suggest that Schultz’s idea of the spectator ‘exploring sexual fantasies’ can be understood as the viewer’s consideration of certain sexual practices as a valid, constructive sex education. In Strub’s (2011) important work on pornography, the political right, and feminism, he includes attention to some of the rare common ground between anti-pornography feminists and pornographic material. He refers to Andrea Dworkin as “the antiporn leader,” and notes her 1979 description of pornography as “inextricably tied to victimizing, hurting, exploiting” (Strub, 2011, p. 213). Yet, as Strub (2011) reveals, even Dworkin found some “redeeming social value” a half decade earlier in the pornographic magazine *Suck*, and its endorsement of oral sex (p. 213). Dworkin and other feminists recognized non-penetrative sex acts as a kind of reciprocity and opportunity for “equal participation and gratification” between sexual partners (Strub, 2011, p. 225). In these scenarios “women are treated equally with the men” and “the clitoris is important and so is fondling and kissing” (p. 225). In Dworkin’s response to *Suck* she wrote that “the emphasis on sucking cunt serves to demystify cunt in a spectacular way—cunt is not dirty, not terrifying, not smelly and foul” (p. 227). Dworkin placed this admission within a rejection of *Suck* for its perpetuation of phallocentric imagery and sexual acts. I still, however, suggest that it is significant that Dworkin and other anti-pornography feminists
welcomed and celebrated a critique that included specific sexual acts as congruent with feminist ideals of nonsexist pornography. In accordance with my research question regarding pornography as adult sex education, I suggest Dworkin’s comment on equal gratification, focus on the clitoris, and the ‘demystification of the cunt’ can be understood as a kind of adult sex education for some readers of the pornography in *Suck* magazine.

I do not pretend that this dissertation will achieve harmony between pornography and anti-pornography feminism. I do, however, draw attention to these two regions – the proliferation of feminist pornography, and specific sexual acts – where the terms ‘feminism’ and ‘pornography’ might coexist. My intention in referencing Strub’s (2011) attention to examples of ‘anti-porn feminist’ acceptance and perhaps even enjoyment of specific sexual scenarios and practices in pornography is to serve as an example of pornography as a kind of adult sex education, in this case for anti-pornography feminists.

I also do not seek to dismiss anti-pornography activism or silence criticism of pornography; rather, I hope this dissertation will present an opportunity for a serious reading of responses in the Hartley fan archive by people who view pornography. I briefly outline and engage the voice of anti-pornography feminists above to articulate criticisms which remain valid, particularly in the contemporary context of improved spectator access via digital technologies. I want to make clear that I do not regard my dissertation in any way oppositional, hostile, or in conflict with anti-pornography feminist concerns.

I will not further rehearse arguments intended to criticize or support pornography in this research as those narratives have accompanied the trajectory of pornography technologies for the past half century. It is, however, important to be aware of radical
feminism’s critiques of pornography, and to recognize and be respectful of the opinion that pornography, as explicit representations of sexuality, is abhorrent to some persons. I introduce the relationship between pornography and feminism here in part due to Hartley’s strong identification as a feminist, and because, further on I examine the idea of pornography as a tool for adult sex education.

I concur with Williams’ (2014) suggestion that her 2004 edited volume, Porn Studies, is an opportunity “to put aside” well-worn debates between “procensorship, anti-pornography feminism and anticensorship” discourses (p. 30). Like Williams (1989) and Kipnis (1996), this research attempts to examine pornography as a specific media genre, investigating what pornography has to say, rather than engaging in debates about its permissibility. In my dissertation the active ‘voice’ articulating what pornography has to say comes from the letters of the Hartley fan archive. And, as Alilunas (2016) recognizes, video technology “would completely transform the adult film industry” (p. 7) beginning in the 1970s. The research questions stated above focus on the opportunity to garner an understanding of how video technology permitted greater access and private spectatorship of pornography, and how that spectatorship might constitute a kind of adult sex education.

I next give some attention to a second area of research pertaining to pornography studies that I largely do not include in the arguments of this dissertation: legislation as a governmental means of regulating pornography. The final section of this chapter does include attention to a 1969 US Supreme Court decision that concerns the legal status of owning and viewing pornographic film. That examination does not engage the greater social
and political movements to regulate and limit pornography, particularly those during the Republican presidential administrations of Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan.

In the very recent academic work by Alilunas (2016) on pornography, *Smutty Little Movies*, he examines the trajectory of pornographic movies from stag films and peep-show ‘loops’ to the advent of video beginning in the late 1970s, and the social and political attempts to regulate, limit, or eradicate pornography. In this succinct attention to the issue of legislation and attempts to control pornography I cite Alilunas’ personal story of a singular experience that captures, generally, the political climate in the US during the mid-1980s Reagan era.

The proliferation of video pornography occurred concurrent with the rise of Hartley’s career, and the Reagan Administration’s legislative move against pornography in the 1980s. The most acute sign of that move is the 1986 Attorney-General’s Commission on Pornography (Heins, 1993, p. 69). The Commission organized and staged what has been described as a series of premeditated and pre-judged testimonial meetings from rape victims, former sex offenders, vice police officers, and anti-pornography activists. Identical to the previous section on anti-pornography feminism, the most startling part of the Commission was the unlikely alliance between conservative politicians and anti-pornography feminists (Kendrick, 1987, pp. 213–239; Lewis, 2000, p. 253). Well-known anti-pornography feminists like Catharine MacKinnon were given “expert witness” status in detailing what they claimed as a causal connection between pornography and sexual violence (Heins, 1993, pp. 160–161). The report is generally regarded as a biased document with questionable testimony and
 predetermined recommendations, including a Pornography Victims Compensation Act (Green, 1999, p. 105; Lewis, 2000, p. 253).

The Introduction to Alilunas’ (2016) work on the technological shift from film to video is titled ‘Naked Girls and Ice Cream Bars.’ He describes a personal experience as a boy following his family’s weekly journey to Sunday church service in Moscow, Idaho in 1986. Alilunas entered a store with his father to purchase ice cream bars while his mother and older sister waited in the car. After receiving the ice cream bars Alilunas’ (2016) father unexpectedly asked to see the store manager. He watched as his father “politely” complained to the manager that there were copies of Playboy magazine visible behind the counter of the store; the manager “nodded and smiled” (p. 1). Alilunas writes that there was no discussion upon returning to the car; the family enjoyed their ice cream bars in silence on the trip home. Alilunas (2016), however, was anxious to privately discuss the ‘naked ladies’ publication with his sister, two years older, “and thus much wiser about such things” (p. 1).

Alilunas (2016) goes on to note his recollection of the incident over the years, and his analysis of the political mindset behind the conservative, religious obligation to protest something (Playboy magazine) that, by contemporary standards, seems almost innocent. He describes his lack of surprise regarding his parent’s anti-pornography stance given the weekly message from their church on “the scourge of pornography engulfing the nation” and the incident occurring in late 1986, “on the heels of the Meese Commission’s support of religious communities making just such complaints” and his mother’s subscription to Phyllis Schlafly’s “aggressively conservative (and antipornography)” newsletter (Alilunas, 2016, p. 1). Commensurate with conservative, religious groups’ gendered views of pornography,
Alilunas also ponders how his mother and (older) sister waited in the car while he and his father entered the store: was he “taken inside as a prop” to add “sincerity to his father’s complaint that it was “instructive” (pp. 1–2). His conclusion is that his parent’s actions were “symbolic;” it was a political and religious message, it “could have been anything behind that counter, as long as they believed it to be pornography; the act of protest is what mattered” (Alilunas, 2016, p. 2).

I end this brief attention to anti-pornography legislation here. While it is an important political issue affecting pornography spectatorship in the video era it lies outside the main analyses I include here. In Chapter 5, and its attention to the opportunity for private pornography viewing via video technology, I reference Alilunas’ childhood memory of ‘naked girls’ in 1986, and young peoples’ introduction to depictions of sex education for adults.

**Nina Hartley**

Who is Nina Hartley? And what is her significance in the pornography industry? Hartley has been described as a “trailblazer” (Comella, 2010). She is an author, an “outspoken feminist, sex educator and advocate for sexual freedom,” and has been described as “a guiding force for a generation of feminist porn stars” (Comella, 2010). Pornography theorist Lynn Comella (2010) describes Hartley as “a guiding force for a generation of feminist porn stars.” At the height of the “feminist sex wars” the phrase “feminist porn star was not yet part of the cultural vernacular” (Comella, 2010). As a teenager Hartley identified as a “feminist” and was influenced by the 1970s feminist phrase, “My body, my rules”—a call for liberated
women to enjoy their sexuality (Hartley, 2013, p. 228). She is, however, keenly aware of the socio-cultural conflict between her simultaneous identifications as a feminist and a pornography star (Penley 2013). I suggest that feminists (of any gender) interested in examining sex and gender roles, even outside the context of pornography, could understand and perhaps endorse Hartley’s stance regarding pornography. First, for non-heterosexual women, Hartley has, for many years, openly identified as a bisexual woman. Second, she has talked about pornography being an opportunity for women to openly express their sexuality, to ask for what they want, and not be judged under the rules and the manners in which mainstream society attempts to regulate women’s sexuality. Pornography is one of the few circumstances where women are ‘allowed’ and encouraged to initiate sex, have sex for the sake of sexual pleasure, and have multiple sex partners outside the conditions of a society that still has expectations of a ‘virgin bride,’ compulsory monogamy, and childbearing. Third, early in her life Hartley identified as non-monogamous and entered only into non-monogamous—but consensual, negotiated, informed, intimate—relationships. Hartley is currently married to a man for the second time. During her first marriage the couple had a triad partnership with a woman. At that stage of her life Hartley described her relationship status as having both a husband and a wife.

Hartley was born March 11, 1959, in Berkeley, California. Following high school she completed her R.N. (registered nurse) training at a university in the San Francisco Bay area. As a young adult, Hartley intentionally and enthusiastically sought a career in adult films, an opportunity for her to make a life out of having sex (N. Hartley, personal conversation, March 12, 2013). It would be fair to add that Hartley’s physical attractiveness contributed to
her porn success. Hartley is a California girl and, similar to pop culture stereotypes of Marilyn Monroe (Dyer, 2002) and ‘California girls’ in Beach Boys songs, she is an attractive, white, blonde, blue-eyed woman with a voluptuous figure. It suffices to say her attractiveness and physique immediately captured the attention of many mainstream, heterosexual-identified, male pornography viewers. One gets a sense of her physique’s suitability for mainstream pornography from contents in the hundreds of letters in the archive, where the most frequent comment (from both men and women) is that she has ‘the hottest ass’ the writer of the letter has ever seen.

Hartley has performed in hundreds of pornography films, starting with the videotape, *Educating Nina* (Anderson), in 1984, and continuing more than three decades later in *Couple Seeks Third, 8* (Pornstar Platinum⁴, 2018). At the time of this writing Hartley is fifty-nine, and her current pornography work is categorized as mature-themed. After more than three successful decades in pornography, with numerous adult film awards, Hartley continues to receive industry accolades, she was nominated for two XBIZ porn awards in 2016 and won the 2017 XBIZ award for ‘Specialty Release of the Year’ (XBIZ Awards).

As mentioned in the previous section, the advances in media technology over this time span deserve attention in this discussion of Hartley and her career. This dissertation focuses on the significance of the shift of pornography viewing from film in the public adult theatre to the VCR as private home entertainment. There is, however, a similarity in the trajectories of Hartley’s career and media technologies: her career begins with the development of the VCR and later DVD and Internet technologies. The year of Hartley’s
premiere, 1984, was early in the rise of the videocassette era and the subsequent explosion of pornography production for the home entertainment industry (Melendez, 2004). The media advance of videotape pornography is significant (Greenberg, 2008; Kleinhans, 2006), and particularly in feminist analyses as it increased women’s access to and viewing of pornography (Alilunas, 2016, p. 7; Juffer, 1998; McNair, 1996, p. 114). Media and technologies represent the (re)shaping of connectivities and relationships between bodies and sexualities. Connections and discussions of sexualities and pornography have moved from magazines and books to film and video, and now in HTML, IRC, and social media platforms. Similarly, Hartley’s work has crossed varied media genres: magazines, books, video, DVD, and Internet.

I end this section on Nina Hartley by briefly clarifying what I see as the connection between adult sex education and her pornography career. As I mention in the chapters below that examine excerpts from Hartley’s fan letters I believe much of Nina’s fan’s epistolary disclosures are in part because the author recognizes Hartley as a sex expert, one that is perhaps best articulated by her fans. In her book chapter proposing pornography as an “effective vehicle for sexual role modeling and education,” Hartley (2013) recalls explaining her congenital level of comfort with and enthusiasm for sexuality. In a conversation with her father after learning about her career in pornography he asked, “Why sex? Why not the violin?” (p. 228). She states that she did not have an adequate answer for her father at the time. Years later, Hartley recognized that she is “just wired this way,” that “a life of public sexuality” has been as natural to her “as breathing” (p. 228). Summarizing her sexual

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4 I was unable to find a reference for the director of this film, including personal correspondence with Nina Hartley, who could not recall the director's name. Therefore, the film appears in the References under the
proficiency and career in public sexuality, Hartley succinctly responds to her father’s violin reference, “I know now that I’m sexual the way that Mozart was musical” (p. 228).

**Research Project**

As mentioned in closing the previous section, I suggest that Hartley’s enthusiasm and recognizable enjoyment in her porn performances—noted in her fan mail archive—accounts for her dedicated fans. The longevity of her career is due in part to her sex-positive stance and attractiveness, but arguably more to her eagerness and passion to perform in porn, and her vibrant sexual energy. A 1990 letter from a man named Fred observes that Hartley has “a sexual magnetism that radiates from (her) like an erotic aura.” The Hartley fan mail archive is a repository of testimonies to that energy and passion. The letters respond to an unspoken invitation to porn viewers: an opportunity to correspond with and confess sexual desires, practices, and memories to a porn star.

In this dissertation I use the terms ‘speaking sex’ or ‘the speaking of sex’ to describe the writing of the authors in the Hartley archive. Similar to the sexual disclosures commanded from Mangogul’s ring in Diderot’s *Indiscreet Jewels*, the Hartley letters represent responses from pornography spectators. Speaking sex refers to the utterance or writing of sex by people, generally. The modalities of speaking sex include but are not necessarily limited to digital media, film, literature, text, or, voice. These communications or correspondence give voice to sexual confessions, curiosities, desires, or fantasies. The speaking of sex is the idea of people releasing the discretion of sex: permitting sex to speak freely, whether summoned by a genie’s magical ring in Diderot, or generated through...
viewing pornographic texts in the Hartley archive. What is immediately obvious is that,
unlike the power of the sultan’s ring, the Hartley fan letters are invited and sent consensually.
The Hartley letter authors are (mostly) self-described pornography fans who share
(presumably real) personal accounts of their experiences and thoughts. Diderot’s fable is
literature, intended for broad distribution and reading, and Mangogul is a fictional character.
I say more about Diderot’s motivations for the fable, and the relationship between ‘fictional’
characters and actual persons below.

Before moving forward, I want to make clear my comparisons in this dissertation
between Diderot’s fable and video pornography: I suggest both can be understood as
pornography and both have the potential to bid sex to speak. Video pornography is, of
course, pornography. And, as Vartanian (in Diderot, 1748/1993) states, following its 1748
publication, Indiscreet Jewels was “promptly suppressed as pornography” (p. xi). My
research concurs with Williams’ (1989) assertion that film/video pornography holds the
impetus to bid sex to speak, and with her suggestion that the pornographic text itself speaks
sex. She explains her position in that, furthering the desires of Mangogul, cinematic
representations of sex permit the silent, invisible, voyeuristic viewer to not only hear sex, but
to also see sexual acts. Williams’ claim can be interpreted as privileging visual pornography
above the auditory confessions initiated through Mangogul’s ring (p. 2).

In response to Foucault’s (1978) question of the “device” that holds the power to
release the speaking of sex, I argue in concurrence with Williams that film and video
pornography are the contemporary magic ring that invites sexual indiscretion. My research
differs from Williams in that I argue that the voice of the pornography spectator responding
to pornographic videos is also representative of the speaking of sex. The intention of this
dissertation is to add to Williams’ work in suggesting that the pornography viewer—curious,
desirous, or motivated to confession by the text—can be understood as speaking sex through
a personal discussion or the writing of a letter. This claim is realized in the Hartley fan
archive, which is a repository of questions, desires, and confessions spoken in response to
explicit representations of sexualities. This research posits the fan letters of the Hartley
archive as exemplars of “speaking sex.”

In consideration of the research question regarding pornography as adult sex
education, there are feminist and educational analytic axes to address. One of the main ideas
from Diderot’s (1748/1993) text that can be described as salacious is that the genie’s ring
does not command a woman to recount her amorous activities orally; the utterance originates
from her “jewels”—her genitals (p. 13). Williams (1989) writes that both Diderot’s fable and
modern hardcore “film pornography exhibit misogynistic regimes” of sexuality (pp. 30–31).
In Diderot’s fable the sexual confessions from the ‘jewels’ are of the woman’s pleasure,
while in Williams’ argument the invisible male spectator enjoys the cinematic spectacle (p.
32). In both versions the listener or viewer receives auditory confession or visual images
without being seen or heard. The majority of film and video pornography production is
created by and for men: the speaking of sex in film is by men. Similarly, although Diderot’s
tale centres on the involuntary confessions of women, Williams (1989) writes that these
sexual indiscretions “were written by men for men” (p. 229).

I do not question the accuracy of Williams’ claim that Diderot’s fable was “written
by men for men.” As I write in Chapter 2, mid-eighteenth-century literature was often
directed toward and read by women. It is plausible that *Les Bijoux indiscrets* was read and enjoyed by women. Contrary to Diderot’s fable and contemporary video pornography that represents confessions of sex written by men for men, Hartley’s fan mail is an archive largely of sexual disclosures written by men for a woman. More specifically, Diderot’s tale describes the singular sultan receiving sexual truths from many women, while the Hartley archive is the singular female porn star receiving sexual correspondence from many men. Furthermore, *Indiscreet Jewels* largely represents male fiction of women’s sexuality whereas Hartley’s archive largely consists of (presumably) non-fiction letters of male sexuality: letters from men regarding sexuality. Progressing from Foucault’s (1978) idea of ‘speaking sex’ as sexual truths, my research examines how pornography spectatorship can be understood as a kind of sex education through a reading of the Hartley fan letters.

**Letters to a Porn Star**

Letters sent via the postal system have been a relatively easy form of communication accessible to all classes of society since the introduction and expansion of postal reform in England in 1840 (Coase, 1939). Fans of pornography, like other subculture fans, sometimes correspond with a celebrity, and write letters of adoration, devotion, education, and confession. The letters in this research can be described as of interest to an array of academic axes: sexualities, dis/ability, diversity. However, commensurate with this research’s focus on Diderot’s *Indiscreet Jewels*, and Foucault and Williams’ attention to the idea of ‘speaking sex,’ the citations from letters in the Hartley archive are representative of the pornography spectator speaking sex. That is, regardless of whether the writer’s letter is fiction or a
recolicollection of fact, it is a speaking of sex. Furthermore, letters that specifically addressed video pornography, emerging video technologies, and access to the private viewing of pornography were selected.

In this section I provide an overview of epistolarity and its connection to the Hartley letters in this interdisciplinary dissertation. This dissertation positions the Hartley letters at the intersection of pornography studies, spectatorship, epistolarity, and sex education. These diverse academic constituents combine here to articulate the connection between sexuality, knowledge, and pleasure for the authors of the letters examined in this research. Hartley’s fan mail archive is a repository of sexual questions, desires, disclosures, fantasies, and representations of sexualities (Davidson, 2001). Epistolary work on issues of gender and sexuality in fan letters combined with connections between letter writing with both the author’s emotions and physical body invites an investigation into a pornography star’s fan letters.

The Hartley fan archive represents a collection of sexual questions and disclosures regarding knowledge of sexual practices. Like letter writing, most sexual acts involve the physical body; the author is somatically engaged in both activities. I suggest that for many of the Hartley letter authors there is, beyond the emotional connection, a significant connection of “letter writing with the physical body” (Bower, 1997, p. 57). The knowledge-pleasure connection has been described by Foucault (1978, p.77) as a “knowledge of pleasure: a pleasure that comes of knowing pleasure” (Williams, 1989, p. 35).

5 The next paragraphs discuss the connection between the writer and their letter. This is followed by a description of the Hartley archive and fan letters. And later in this chapter there is a section dedicated to Hartley's position in the porn industry in the 1980s and 1990s.
Letters of intimate correspondence can be understood to reveal the most private thoughts of the writer’s subjectivity (Bray, 2003; Siegert, 1999). Many of the Hartley fan letters contain intimate, sexual disclosures. Personal letters like these might be regarded as “the intimacy of heart and mind speaking to heart and mind across distance” (Kenyon, 1992, p. viii). Such fan letters can include hermeneutic and epistemic issues of sexuality and gender. The author may consider their interpretation, understanding, and knowledge of sexuality and/or gender (Cook, 1996; Garlinger, 2005). Letters of intimacy, “open-heartedness,” and “speaking freely” are presumed to represent an honest discourse between interlocutors (Foucault, 2001, p. 366).

Theorists working on epistolary research, the analysis of letter writing, claim that, starting in the late 20th-century, the writing of letters has all but “become a lost art,” replaced by cellular telephones and computers (Kauffman, 1992, p. xiv). In the contemporary technological context of telecommunications there are theorists who consider the choice of penmanship and letter writing as signaling the importance of the correspondence (Almond & Baggott, 2006). We no longer depend on “snail mail” for our everyday communication, personal correspondence is saved for notes of thanks or condolence, “expressions of feeling” (Gilroy & Verhoeven, 2000, p. 143). The intention of a letter is to speak directly, the act of writing is a “means of creating the illusion of presence” (Kauffman, 1986, p. 24).

The epistolary theory above references a number of scholars with diverse areas of specialization in epistolarity. I include a breadth of work from different scholars to capture some of the themes and possible considerations in reading the Hartley letters. These considerations include the significance of letter writing, the intimacy of personal mail, and
the private letter made public. The methodology of this research makes use of epistolary
theory while recognizing that Hartley’s fan archive is, almost exclusively, one-way mail from
a fan to the addressee. Succinctly, a fan letter is neither congruent with, nor fits easily into
the normative understanding of epistolary writing. The most fundamental difference is that
fan mail is unlikely to be answered by the addressee; it is not a conversation. And, unlike
some forms of epistolary fiction (Hall, 2011; Leigh, 2003; Richardson, 1985; Stewart, 1976)
the Hartley letters are not necessarily fiction. As I explain further below most of the letters
are one-time letters from a fan, an author unknown to the recipient, correspondence
unanswered by Hartley.⁶

In the introduction above I propose that letters of the Hartley fan archive can be
understood as speaking sex. In response to Williams’ idea of film and video pornography as
speaking sex I want to position Hartley’s archive of fan letters alongside the fictional stories
of hardcore pornography. Admittedly, the fantasy of film pornography can be somewhat
paradoxical; the pornographic story can be “both a legitimate form of culture and a fictional,
fantastical, even allegorical realm,” “mythological and hyperbolic”—its characters and
activities are not real, and yet they are (Kipnis, 1996, p. 163). That is, much of mainstream
(non-pornographic) film consists of dramas or comedies with a plot, narrative, and developed
characters that depict fictional stories or biographies and documentaries that describe actual
persons and events. In dramatic film scenes of violence or disaster these depictions are not
real, and generally not believed to be real: they are presented as best as possible to appear
realistic, but they are staged. And scenes of sexuality in mainstream film, while suggestive

⁶ In Chapter 4 I provide a more detailed description of Hartley’s relationship with her fans.
and possibly containing “some nudity,” are not explicit. It is extremely rare for actual sexual acts to take place, though sometimes filmed in a manner to simulate sexual acts (Jacobellis v. Ohio, 378 U.S. 184 (1964); Zamir, 2013, pp. 80–81), and it is somewhat uncommon for mainstream actors to even appear nude or semi-nude.

In pornography, however, while the story is fictitious and largely lacking a significant plot, the performers are real people engaging in actual sexual acts on camera. Porn actors may or may not be attracted to each other, as in intimate scenes in dramatic film, but the sexual acts in porn are typically real. As Williams (1989) has theorized, we can (broadly) compare porn storylines to those of musicals: both have relatively simple storylines without a deep plot. The format of both musicals and porn features navigate a simple story as a means to link scenes of musical/sexual performance (p. 124). Williams extends the comparison of musical/ porn performances by interpreting “masturbation” scenes as “solo song or dance,” one-on-one sex as a duet, ménage a trois as a musical trio, and orgy scenes comparable to “choral love songs celebrating the sexual union of an entire community” (p. 133). And, an issue examined in pornography studies has been the significance of the truth of sex through filming “the money shot” (Hillyer, 2004, p. 68; Williams, 1989, p. 180) of male ejaculation and the ways in which the invisible female orgasm is presented (Heath, 1981, p. 189).

The Hartley letter authors mention their real or fantasized practices of masturbation (solo), intercourse (duet), ‘threesomes’(trio), and group sex (choral/community) as described

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7 The Jacobellis v. Ohio, 378 U.S. 184 (1964) US Supreme Court decision struck down an obscenity charge against an Ohio theatre for screening the Louis Malle film, The Lovers. The charge was based on a scene that suggested oral sex was occurring. As Zamir has written, in the Bernardo Bertolucci film, Last Tango in Paris, a “scene involved (Marlon) Brando smearing butter on (Maria) Schneider’s nether parts and simulating (anal) penetration.” This level of simulated sex in a non-pornographic production can be interpreted as “primarily a means for generating additional sexual stimulation by catering to the projected voyeuristic curiosity of the audience.”
through musical analogy by Williams (1989). The almost obligatory ‘money shot’ of male ejaculation, representing the truth of sexual activity, is featured in pornography. It is often described in Hartley’s fan letters: details on the how, where, and sometimes when, the male viewer has ejaculated, or fantasizes about ejaculation. There are a couple of fan letters that contain the remnants of the fan’s ‘sexual truth’ as a tribute to Hartley.

I have discussed epistolarity broadly, and how the Hartley letters are related to issues of emotional and physical connection to the letter and Hartley herself. In the next section I describe the physical conditions of the Hartley fan archive and the details of my research of the archive.

The study of the Hartley letters is limited to an analysis of the contents of the letters written by Hartley’s fans. It is important to clarify that this research has not involved interviewing persons, analyzing video or audio recordings, or distributing questionnaires. The letters are presented as they are archived without further investigatory work, allowing the correspondence to speak for itself as written. Even if I had wanted to supplement the letters with interviews it would likely be quite difficult to locate and contact the letter’s authors given that many were written in the 1980s.

An accompanying methodology to epistolarity is fan culture, a cultural study of fandom, a variety of cultural studies. The connection between epistolarity and fan culture here is the uptake of pornography by viewers, and the subsequent writing of letters to Hartley. I examine epistolarity and fan culture in Chapter 2.

The Nina Hartley fan archive is stored in approximately one dozen archival file boxes that reside in the archives at the Center for Sex and Culture (CSC), a small, non-profit,
volunteer-run organization in San Francisco. In addition to a non-public sexuality archive, the CSC provides resources for sexual studies researchers, hosts events related to sex and culture such as art exhibits, readings, and performances, and maintains an extensive lending library of texts related to sexualities and gender.

The Hartley fan letters of this research are carefully preserved, most even retained in their original envelopes. That is, in most cases the envelopes were opened with a letter opener or similar device, unfolded, read, refolded, and returned to their envelope. The letters are stored in approximate chronological order within each file box as originally saved by the addressee. Because of the casual collection method, and lack of cataloguing, the letters were retrieved from each box, one at a time, in their physical order. Most of the correspondence are one-off letters; that is, a single letter from an individual fan, unanswered by the addressee. The letters represent disparate authors from diverse demographic taxonomy, across the United States and the globe, unknown to each other. Many narrate a desire for specific sexual practices, sometimes lying outside a normative understanding of good sex (Paasonen, Nikunen, & Saarenmaa, 2007, p. 13) and endorsing pornographic film industry representations of sexuality. Some of the letters narrate serious concerns regarding their sexual desires, their access to suitable sexual interlocutors, and the socio-political permissibility of their fantasies.

During six weeks in the summer of 2012 I conducted my research of the Hartley fan archive at the CSC. I was provided with keys so that I could enter the archives on my own at any time. Over the six weeks I read most of the letters in the Hartley archive. While I did not keep a precise count, I read more than a thousand letters. It was not possible to read all the
letters but suffice it to say I read and sifted through most of the Hartley archive. I was granted permission to compile a separate cache of the fan mail that I found interesting and intriguing. Over the course of the six weeks my specific research material reached approximately one hundred pages of letters. I will say briefly that it is a somewhat voyeuristic experience to read letters sent to a pornography star: the letters tell the reader “that what was being read, right now, was not addressed to him or her, and had been intended for other eyes” (Steedman, 2010, p. 75).

At the end of the research I spent three days taking several hundred high-resolution digital photographs of the selected Hartley letters, many with their original envelope. The archive boxes also contain artwork, ephemera, and small gifts sent to Hartley, and much of it was photographed as part of the research project. There are one or two boxes in the Hartley archive that do not contain fan letters at all, so this material was omitted from this research.

The next section, ‘Nina Hartley on her Fans and her Fan Mail,’ describes a presentation Nina Hartley and I gave at the Center for Sex and Culture regarding. Hartley’s contribution and responses to questions from attendees articulate not only her relationship with fans but also her philosophy toward sexuality generally, and pornography specifically.

**Nina Hartley on her Fans and her Fan Mail**

In March 2013, the Center for Sex & Culture (CSC) in San Francisco curated an exhibit of Nina Hartley’s fan mail. The exhibit was based largely on the collection of archive letters I was permitted to physically set aside in a folder (within the Hartley archive) specifically for the purposes of my research (N. Hartley, personal communication, March 12, 2013). As part
of the exhibit, Hartley and I gave a presentation together, moderated by Dr. Carol Queen, sexologist⁸ and co-founder of the CSC. I spoke about my research generally, why I had decided to conduct doctoral research on Nina Hartley’s fan mail, and what I found academically and pornographically intriguing about the archive. Hartley spoke about how she loved to receive fan mail, read the letters, and feel a connection to her fans. An attendee asked Hartley why she read all of her letters and, in some cases, wrote back. She responded, 

Partly guilt. They, they pour out their hearts to me, how can I just like not send something back, saying, ‘Thank you so much for writing.’ You know, it means a lot. They’re really, they’re sharing really personal, intimate things. They’re leaving their addresses, leaving their phone numbers, saying ‘Please write me back.’ (N. Hartley, personal communication, March 12, 2013)

Hartley admits that she did respond to some letters, and that there are fans that she continues to keep in touch with via mail, email, or phone conversations. I did not find any letters from fans that represent a continuing correspondence with Hartley, nor copies of letters Hartley sent to a fan. Although her response mentions guilt, Hartley acknowledges the honesty of her fans’ stories, confessions, and desires: “It’s really personal and very touching, and very real” (N. Hartley, personal communication, March 12, 2013). As some letters articulate, her enthusiasm for sex and pornography is palpable; there is an honesty about her enthusiasm. She is aware that fans “notice (her) enthusiasm,” adding that she often hears fans say, “‘You really seem to enjoy what you’re doing’” (Hartley, 2013, p. 233). And Hartley (2013) admits

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⁸ “Sexology is the scientific study of sexuality. A sexologist is someone who has studied all areas of sex including anatomy, physiology, sexual development, sexual orientation, the dynamics of sexual relationships, as well as the mechanics of sexual contact/acts” (Zebroff, 2014). See: http://artofconnection.org/about_dr_petra_zebroff/what-is-a-sexologist/.
that she loves sexual performance (p. 231). At the presentation, Hartley said that she wished for the opportunity to meet with more of her fans, and that she would have loved to have sex with many of her fans, saying,

All of us are able to experience sexual pleasure. Every one of us has reasons why it might be difficult. … I view myself as a facilitator. I don’t usually make love with my fans, I will facilitate an experience for them, and give them complete acceptance for what it is they like. Because you like what you like. I have no value judgement over what your body likes to go all the way there. (N. Hartley, personal communication, March 12, 2013)

In the presentation Hartley expressed her frustration, generally, with society’s conflation of and confusion between sexual pleasure and emotional connection. “Some people get to their bodies through their hearts, I get to my heart through my body. If my body likes your body, I want to know you more” says Hartley. She briefly described a relationship where a woman felt that because they were lovers this implied, and perhaps required, a deeper kind of emotional connectivity and relationship status. Hartley recalled her response to the woman, reminding her that she is a porn star and sex educator, and that she desires sex with different people; this does not denote a greater emotional connection. The woman was disappointed and unsatisfied with this answer. As Hartley stated, their relationship “was doomed” (N. Hartley, personal communication, March 12, 2013).

Nina Hartley loves sex, with different people, different bodies, different genders. I interpret Hartley’s enthusiasm and honesty as being connected to happiness with her life, generally. There is a philosophy that people should do what they love and love what they do.
By extension, living life doing what one loves means it is never considered work. Making pornography is her career. And, as I discuss below, and more specifically in the following chapter, Hartley’s pornography career contributes to sex education. Additionally, Hartley understands human physiology through her education as an R.N. In discussing her relationship with her fans, Hartley makes these connections clear. She states,

I became ‘Nina’ so that you can, as an intimate stranger… come up to me, ‘Nina, I’m a big fan. Now, about this thing I’ve always wanted to ask.’ Ask. You don’t have to pretend. No, ask, I’m here. I have sex for a living. You have seen all my bits, on camera…. I tell people, you know, I make porn for a living so you can’t embarrass me, and I’m a nurse so you can’t gross me out, so ask. So, I like the intimate stranger. (N. Hartley, personal communication, March 12, 2013)

As mentioned above, Nina Hartley has been described as an author, an “outspoken feminist, sex educator and advocate for sexual freedom,” and “a guiding force for a generation of feminist porn stars” (Comella, 2010). Her position as a sex-positive, feminist, porn star began when the term “‘feminist porn star’ was not yet part of the cultural vernacular” (Comella, 2010). Congruent with the adjectives and titles listed above, Hartley understands sex in different contexts: desire, education, profession. Having said that, perhaps the thing I remember most from the 2013 presentation is Nina Hartley’s professionalism: pornography as a profession. Hartley told attendees how she meets with actors before filming, something not uncommon in the film industry. However, she not only wants to discuss their scene(s) but to find out what the person enjoys and does not enjoy sexually. She said that she wants to know ‘what works’ for the person: what gets them hot. I believe this to
be what Hartley (1997) described two decades ago as “responsible hedonism:” the ethics of seeking sexual pleasure (p. 57). More recently, Hartley (2013) described her life as a professional pornography actress as “providing a perfect playground for [her] hedonistic indulgences” (p. 230).

Pornography in the Videotape Era

Hartley’s porn career began in 1984, coinciding with the proliferation of home videocassette technology, and pornography video production and distribution (Kleinhans, 2006; O’Toole, 1999; Salgado, 1989). Part of this research project, and one of the research questions, examines the importance of the VCR in pornography spectatorship. In Koch’s (1993) work on early twentieth-century pornographic cinema, she asserts that “porn houses are not the motor but the chassis” (p. 29). That is, the adult theatre can be interpreted as the ‘chassis’ that houses porn spectatorship; the ‘motor’ is the device that projects representations of sexual acts. I propose that in the video porn era the VCR can be regarded as the motor; the chassis having many more options: anywhere a VCR can receive electrical power to operate. More specifically, the VCR, as the motor, can be understood as the modern, physical version of Mangogul’s ring: the pornographic text can be thought of as the message the VCR sends, initiating an invitation for the viewer to speak about sex.

The invention, production, and distribution of the video cassette recorder (VCR) as home entertainment technology has been described as a “revolution” (Melendez, 2004, p. 402). Through widespread availability of the VCR, videotapes “replaced film as the primary medium of moving-image pornography.” Moreover, as Melendez (2004) observes, the
“lower production costs and broader distribution” permitted the expansion of niche genres of pornography (p. 402). Simply put, the VCR revolutionized pornography by enabling adult film to be moved from the public theatre and into the private home (Greenberg, 2008). The VCR allowed viewers in the 1980s, and beyond, to watch pornographic film at their leisure, repeatedly, and to review sexually explicit scenarios of interest for entertainment and analysis (Hoang, 2014b; Williams, 1989, p. 231). In this section I provide an overview of the evolution of pornography technologies leading to the video age, and finally, the significance of the VCR in pornography spectatorship.

This section is an overview of the development of moving-image pornography, from its humble beginnings as ‘stag’ film entertainment for what are described as men’s smoker parties and brothels (Greenberg, 2008, p. 51; Koch, 1993; Waugh, 2004), to the renaissance of film pornography in adult theatres in the 70s (Lewis, 2000; McNair, 1996), to the explosion of pornography production and distribution through the introduction of home entertainment videotape technology (Jennings, 2000; O’Toole, 1999, p. 100). The desire to view pornography for sexual thrills, of assorted kinds and genres has grown and evolved with media technologies that enabled greater production, distribution, and quality.

The origins of contemporary pornography are attributed to the invention of still photography in the early nineteenth-century, and the subsequent development of moving image photography and film (McNair, 1996, p. 44). The slow growth of film pornography rose from short, low-quality stag reel ‘loops’ to full-length big screen movies (p. 114; Schlosser, 2003, p. 126). Full-length film pornography in theatres reached what has been termed the golden age, or, “porn renaissance” in the late 60s and early 70s (Lewis, 2000, p.
218). This renaissance is linked to a short list of films including *Deep Throat* (Damiano, 1972), *Behind the Green Door* (Mitchell & Mitchell, 1972), and *The Devil in Miss Jones* (Damiano, 1973).

The growth of the mainstream film industry and the popularity of movies saw a decline of movie censorship in the mid-twentieth century (Jowett, 1996). However, the proliferation of hard-core film pornography in the 60s and 70s led to a greater taxonomy of film classification, with the introduction of X-ratings ultimately demarcating sexually explicit films from the Hollywood mainstream (Lewis, 2000). Theoretical work on hard-core film pornography and its relationship to the production of subjectivity has changed as technology has shifted the locus of pornographic depictions: from the public theatre, to the home video player, to the internet, and more recently, to portable electronic devices (Attwood, 2010; Greenberg, 2008; Jacobs, 2007; Williams, 2004). The technology advance during the time period examined in this research, significant for its time and for the focus of this research, introduced the pre-recorded movie video player into the home: the private realm. Moreover, the VCR not only allowed private viewing but opportunities for shared viewing “as a glorious revolution of greater access, portability” (O’Toole, 1999, p. 104).

**Pornography as Adult Sex Education**

Academic and legal work on pornography and its relationship to adult sex education is not new. In the 1950s the US Post Office kept an “index file” of banned books: fictional literature and nonfiction works addressing “sexual techniques,” “sexual behavior, and contraception” (de Grazia, 1955, p. 615). In 1968 US President Lyndon Johnson initiated the
National Commission on Obscenity and Pornography. The final report, released in 1970, recommended the decriminalization of pornography, in part due to findings that explicit sexual materials serve as sex education for many U.S. citizens (National Commission, 1970, pp. 54–57). Commission chair, William Lockhart, former dean of the law school at the University of Minnesota, recommended “the abolition of all general laws that prohibit distribution of obscene material.” The Commission also recommended “that the country get serious about sex education” (de Grazia, 1993, p. 552). And in 1985 a Newsweek magazine poll revealed that 52% of people surveyed in the U.S. think that “explicit sexual magazines, movies, and books provide information about sex” (Tjaden, 1988, p. 208). While the literature and contraceptive information prohibited by the US Post Office in the 1950s may not meet the contemporary standard of ‘pornography’ or ‘obscenity’ I include it here because some of the literature was considered obscene at the time, and contraceptive information can be interpreted as an integral yet regulated form of sex education.

Pornography as sex education has advanced from secondary schooling—‘pedagogy about porn’—to higher education—‘porn as pedagogy’ (Albury, 2014, p. 173). However, even in the university setting an academic engagement with pornography can be contentious (Reading, 2005; Smith, 2009). Yet porn has been endorsed as a useful resource for sex education for heterosexual adults (Watson & Smith, 2012). Albury’s (2014) recent work examining the relationship between pornography and/as sex education is most fitting for this research’s question at that academic intersection. That article starts with “the elephant in the room” metaphor to describe pornography (p. 172). This metaphor refers to a significant or
troubling issue that people are reluctant to address. In this research’s attention to pornography as sex education this metaphor seems apt (Burton, 2012).

In this research’s attention to pornography as sex education there is room for optimism. From the twentieth century into the twenty-first century the status of sex education has “shifted from an almost singular emphasis upon biology and the transmission of sexually transmitted infections” (STI’s) toward a more focused examination of sexuality and its relationship to pleasure (Stapleton, 2012, p. 372). However, the connection between sexuality and pleasure, physical and emotional, might be considered obvious for some persons, and not so for others. And, correspondingly, the relationship of sexual pleasure to sex education is discussed by scholars without agreement. There is scholarly work on “the missing discourse of desire” (Fine, 1988, p. 29) that highlights the value of including discussions of sexual pleasure and desire in sex education curriculum (Cassar, 2016, p. 3). Yet, programs linger where “the domination of public health outcomes” in school-based sex education overrides attention to “the role of pleasure in sexual development” (Ingham, 2005, p. 375).

There are definitions and categorizations under the heading of sex education that warrant some clarification here. The term ‘sex advice’ is intended to describe (as I have above) the publicly available information or recommendations dispensed through media: what can be thought of as a ‘public pedagogy of sex.’ I use the term sex education in this research in the context of pornography spectatorship as a particular kind of sex education. There is an age-related distinction regarding education and the ways of engaging pornography: “pedagogy about porn” is a descriptor for secondary school sex education, and
“porn as pedagogy” is primarily related to adults (Albury, 2014, p. 173). In Chapter 5 particularly I use the term ‘pornography as sex education,’ which can also be described as ‘porn as pedagogy.’

In this introduction I briefly include some contemporary academic work on sex education in response to the somewhat pessimistic comment on sex advice above. I do so to suggest that the status of sex education is capable of accommodating the proposition of pornography spectatorship as a particular kind of sex education. Moreover, given this dissertation’s attention to pornography, and to the Hartley archive specifically, I want to bring attention to the relationship between sex and pleasure, and the significance of sexual pleasure as it relates to sex education (Allen, Rasmussen, & Quinlivan, 2014). My study of the Hartley fan archive shows that learning about different kinds of sexual practices and techniques in obtaining sexual pleasure is an important and useful outcome of sex education via pornography spectatorship, separate from sexual entertainment and excitation from viewing pornography.

I suggest that pornography’s sexually explicit representations and discourse of sexual pleasure provides a significant opportunity for education in the contexts of ‘pedagogy about porn’ in secondary schooling and university, and ‘porn as pedagogy’ for adults. Teaching that includes pornographic representations of sexualities is largely impermissible and prohibited in secondary school settings. However, as I address more fully in the sex education chapter, advances in digital technology have greatly increased access to pornography by young people. And research indicates that while most cultures prohibit discussing sexual pleasure in sex education classes, there are public health benefits from “a greater acceptance of positive
sexual experiences” (Ingham, 2005, p. 375). The connection between sex education and sexual pleasure is described here as an unresolved issue in academia. More specific to my second research question regarding pornography as sex education, the unanswered, broader question(s) of the potential relationship for pornography as sex education seem a point of agreement for academics (Tjaden, 1988, p. 208). Put simply, my research concurs with academic work that understands pornography as a source for sex education. What is missing in current academic work on sex education, and a positive research outcome that this dissertation attempts to address, is identifying how pornography can operate as an “educator,” and “what” it is that pornography teaches viewers (Albury, 2014, p. 172). These questions echo Tjaden’s (1988) work several decades earlier where she inquires “how pornography teaches people about sex, whom precisely it teaches, or what it teaches people about sexuality” compared to other resources of sexual information (p. 208). These questions are complicated by the sexualities, gender identifications, and socio-cultural categorizations of pornography spectators (McKee, Albury, & Lumby, 2008) (Albury, 2014, p. 172). The most obvious and significant difference in these engagements with pornography is the mode of spectatorship: obligatory participation in the classroom versus voluntary private consumption.⁹

What makes my research of fan letters unique is the overlooked era of videotape pornography as a particular epoch for sex education for viewers. As such, my research questions are somewhat similar to those posed by Albury (2014) above: how pornography

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⁹ As a point of clarification, this dissertation examines pornography spectatorship by adults in the VCR era whereas much of the academic work referenced later in Chapter 5 attends to the concept of ‘porn literacy’: examining the critical engagement with pornography in the K–12 classroom (Albury, 2013; 2014; Allen, 2006; Fine, 1988; McKee, 2010; Tjaden, 1988).
may operate as an educator, and what might pornography teach viewers (p. 172). My research elucidates what sex education spectator’s have garnered from pornography through a reading of letters sent to the Nina Hartley Fan Club. This education is not necessarily an intended benefit from pornography productions. That is, while the purpose of pornography is to provide sexual entertainment and arousal through explicit representations of sexuality, acquiring knowledge of varied sexual practices, techniques, identifications, bodies, or relationships can be an outcome of viewings.

The anticipated question in response to my research on spectatorship in the VCR era is whether the potential for pornography as sex education is fundamentally different from that of theatre pornography, and if so, how. My answer is detailed in Chapter 3’s attention to the movement of pornography from the adult theatre to the domestic realm. Succinctly here, as mentioned above, VCR technology provided greater distribution and access to pornographic videos so that persons who, for various reasons, were unable to patronize an adult theatre would then have an opportunity to view video pornography. Secondly, VCR technology enabled the spectator to control the mechanics of their viewing through electronic features that enabled the pausing, rewinding, and forwarding of the physical videotape (Hoang, 2014b; Jennings, 2000; Kleinhans, 2006; Loftus, 2002; Melendez, 2004). I suggest greater access to pornography and the first opportunity for the viewer’s controlled, private engagement via VCR technology sets this epoch of pornography spectatorship as distinct from previous technologies. As such, the letters of the Hartley archive represent the first widespread opportunity to respond to what can be interpreted as pornography as a kind of sex education.
‘Pornography,’ ‘Obscene,’ and Obscenity Landmarks

In the final introductory section, I provide an examination of several of the key terms related to this research. This includes the etymology and contemporary definition of pornography, obscenity, and the more recent term, onscene. I also provide an overview of what I regard as the two most important obscenity decisions from the US Supreme Court related to pornography spectatorship generally, and specifically to the VCR era.

Although this research addresses the period 1984–1999, the first 15 years of Nina Hartley’s career, it is important in the context of ‘how did we get to here?’ to understand the history of present pornography available through contemporary research (Ford, 1999). For my research it is of particular importance in the context of pornography’s use of film and digital technologies discussed in Chapter 3, and the spectators’ engagement with pornography through these varied technologies. It is also useful to have an understanding of the important social and legal terms applicable to this research. This section is an historical framework. I start with an examination of the terms pornography, obscene, and the more recent term, onscene. I then provide a brief overview of what I believe to be the two most significant US Supreme Court decisions regarding obscenity and censorship relative to this research and to pornography spectatorship generally.

‘Pornography.’

This short section attempts to provide a working understanding of the term ‘pornography.’ It is not possible here to provide a robust definition of pornography. What I include here is
some theorists’ explanations of the difficulty in developing a widely acceptable definition of ‘pornography,’ and the etymological derivation of the term.

This research begins, in part, with Foucault’s brief mention of Diderot’s 1748 work, and Williams’ subsequent response to Foucault. Marcus’ (1965) important work on sexuality influenced the first volume of Foucault’s work on the history of sexuality. Marcus (1965) admits in a footnote that pornography is a not “a satisfactory term” to describe the sexually graphic historical writings in his research (p. 36). Pornography can not be contained or properly elucidated in language: pornography “tries to go beneath and behind language” to use profane language to depict images (p. 240). The language of pornography in literature is, to some extent, rendered less important with the introduction of film pornography.

While pornography is a substantive term in my research, it is difficult to summarize, even at length. It has been described as a “most difficult and politically charged term” (Williams, 1989, p. 2). Kendrick’s (1987) writing on the development of contemporary pornography provides a deft and thorough explanation of the origin of the terms that have been combined to create what we now refer to as pornography, and how varied definitions of pornography have been introduced into dictionaries (pp. 1–2). As Kendrick articulates in The Secret Museum the concept of pornography came into being simultaneous with an archive to hold erotic artifacts discovered in archaeological work in Pompeii (Dean, 2014a, p. 2). Kendrick does, however, stay clear of any clear contemporary definition of pornography, an ongoing problem for theorists addressing pornography. As Williams (1989) notes, even the voluminous 1986 Final Report of the U.S. Attorney General’s Commission on Pornography did not define the term (p. 17).
The Greek etymology of pornography: *pornei* or *porne* (prostitutes, or courtesans) and *graphos* or *graphe* (writing or description)—its literal attention to prostitutes—is attributable to a nineteenth-century historian describing sexually explicit artifacts that were found during the archaeological excavation of Pompeii (Heins, 1993, p. 138; Kendrick, 1987, p. 7; McNair, 1996, p. 44; Williams, 1989, p. 88). What is in question is the coherence of some authors attempting to articulate a logical trajectory that arrives at our contemporary understanding of pornography (Hunt, 1993; Williams, 1989, pp. 9–11). That is, does ‘writing about prostitutes’ (or words similar in meaning) accurately capture and define our contemporary explanation of pornography? Pornography is a sexually explicit media genre with producers and performers that are full-time employed professionals, similar to mainstream movies. It is also a business currently generating revenue in the tens of billions (US dollars). Is pornography, then, best understood as prostitution? This is, for the purposes of this research a somewhat rhetorical question that lies outside the scope of this research. I leave this attention to the concept of pornography here.

‘Obscene’ / ‘Onscene.’

The literal interpretation of the term obscene dissects it into etymological pieces: 'ob,’ that which should be off, and, 'scene,’ the stage of representation (Williams, 1989, p. 165). Off-scene, or off-stage, refers then to that which is not allowed onstage, to what is not to be viewed. This definition leads to contentious debates over what constitutes obscenity. Debates regarding pornography often become “emotional, symbolic, and polarizing stands that are not conducive to thoughtful and responsible discussion” (Downs, 1989, p. xvii).
Contrary to the idea of the obscene, pornography theorist Linda Williams (2004) proposed the term 'onscene'—that which is ‘on stage’—and the concept of onscenity. Williams states that in the “new public/private realms of Internet and home video” there is now a “paradoxical” state of sexuality she describes as onscenity (p. 3). She defines onscenity as the movement by a culture to position “organs, acts, bodies, and pleasures” formerly regarded as ob/scene into the “public arena” (p. 3). Where obscenity could once be designated as unspeakable sexually explicit acts, onscenity is the precarious demarcation that marks “the tension between the speakable and the unspeakable which animates so many of our discourses of sexuality” (p. 4). Examples of onscenity and the public speaking of sex range from U.S. political scandals such as the Clinton–Lewinsky White House investigation, tabloid media publishing semi/nude celebrity photos, Arnold Schwarzenegger fathering a child with a maid, to a large number of pedophile charges involving Catholic priests (Williams, 2004).

The term onscenity has been taken up in porn studies scholarship since Williams coined the term in 2004. A website created by porn theorists Feona Attwood and Clarissa Smith, founders of the Porn Studies Journal, is titled “Onscenity,” appropriately located at onscenity.org. While the obscene / onscene demarcation is not a focal point of this research I position the concept of onscenity alongside the development of home video technologies as a useful term in understanding the outcomes of widely distributed and privately viewed pornography.
US Obscenity Landmarks.

This research, broadly, examines video pornography during the time period 1984–1999, more than a decade of pornography spectatorship starting in the videocassette era. The movement of pornographic film from the adult theatre to home entertainment on a VCR changed viewers’ access to and geographic consumption of pornography. Pornography is sometimes deemed obscene and susceptible to obscenity legislation. In the context of this research, it is prudent to be aware of the status of applicable legislation for viewing pornography in the US. In the next section I provide an overview of the obscenity decision most applicable to the time period of this research, the 1969 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Stanley v. Georgia*. The *Stanley* ruling is significant for the attention this research gives to the impactful access to pornography via home video technology. Briefly, the *Stanley* ruling, is based in the U.S. First Amendment regarding freedom of speech and press, and holds that the Constitution protects the private possession and speech of such material from government prohibition on the basis of its obscene content.

I should clarify that while I am a Canadian citizen attending a Canadian university, only US obscenity legislation is included in this research because Nina Hartley is an American citizen, and her films are made and distributed primarily in the United States.

*Stanley v. Georgia 394 U.S. 557 (1969).*

I address the *Stanley* decision because it set a precedent in the US for viewing pornography in the privacy of the home, an important legal issue with the proliferation of pornography subsequent to videotape technology. Succinctly, the decision ruled that while pornographic
films are obscene and illegal to sell or purchase, it is permissible to possess them for personal viewing. That is, the Stanley decision is significant in that it provided a specific, spatial protection from potential prosecution.

The Stanley v. Georgia decision was handed down in 1969. Importantly, the Stanley decision preceded the release of the President’s Commission on Obscenity and Pornography report in 1970, which stated that there was no correlation between pornographic material and sex crimes; the report was immediately condemned by President Nixon.

The details of the case are as follows. Police officers authorized a search warrant for Stanley’s home (regarding alleged connection to gambling) discovered three reels of eight-millimeter film. The films were viewed using a projector and screen in the home, and were subsequently deemed as obscene by the police officers on site (Stanley v. Georgia, 394 U.S. at 558). Robert Stanley was charged with possession of obscene matter and found guilty by the state of Georgia. Stanley’s legal argument relied on the fact that the films were found in his home, and intended for private, personal use only, not for distribution or sale. The Georgia court rejected this argument citing the 1957 Roth v. United States, 354 US 476 decision on obscenity. Briefly, the Roth decision determined conclusively that obscenity is “not constitutionally protected speech or press” (Roth v. United States, 354 U.S. 483–485). Given the ruling in Roth that obscenity is not protected material the decision was based on the impermissibility of obscenity regardless of whether it was for home viewing or public exhibition, private ownership or distributed for sale.

The outcome protected the First Amendment right to receive information and ideas, and to view or read material unfettered by the state (Stanley 394 U.S. at 564). Justice Hugo
Black wrote that simply possessing obscene material, “cannot be made a crime by a State without violating the First Amendment” (Lewis, 2000, p. 258). The decision was a victory for pornography spectatorship, albeit a confusing one, for the possession and private viewing of pornography.

The ruling is important in judicial treatment of obscenity as it permitted private ownership of material—pornography—that might otherwise be illegal and subject to criminal charges. As retired Justice Stevens observes, the Stanley ruling can be thought of as a landmark decision regarding both privacy and pornography in that it upholds the “somewhat illogical premise that a person may be prosecuted criminally for providing another with material he has a constitutional right to possess” (Hixson, 1996, p. 149). That is, Stanley created a paradox in that the possession of obscene material was permissible contained within the privacy of the home concurrent with ongoing prosecution for the production, distribution, and sale of obscene material. In the Court’s opinion, Thurgood Marshall wrote that a prohibition on private possession of the materials interfered with an individual’s First Amendment “right to read or observe what he pleases—the right to satisfy his intellectual and emotional needs in the privacy of his own home” (Hixson, 1996, p. 104; Stanley v. Georgia, 394 U.S. at 557).

The somewhat confusing outcome of Stanley was to affirm the Roth decision that material deemed obscene did not have First Amendment protection. At the same time Stanley acknowledged the “right to receive” obscene material and the right to read or view that material in privacy (Hixson, 1996, p. 103). The ruling ultimately resembled something of a late twentieth century pornography version of, ‘don’t ask, don’t tell,’ where the public
were left to determine if Stanley’s right was to receive obscene material, or to freely view the material after having acquired obscene material by surreptitious means (Hixson, 1996, p. 104). The legal paradox is that if there is a constitutional right to possess and view pornography in private then there must be a right to purchase it. The potential legal argument as an outcome of the Stanley decision is that the right to purchase obscene material equals a right to produce, distribute, and sell such material (Hixson, 1996, p. 106; Woodward & Armstrong, 1979, p. 195). I give the Stanley decision substantial attention here as it represents the legal status of private pornography spectatorship in the VCR era. The details of the Stanley decision regarding 8mm reels of pornographic film and a projector are equally applicable to the VCR and pornographic videotapes.
Chapter 2: Methodology and Theory

Epistolarity

In this chapter, under the heading of epistolarity and epistolary analysis, I draw together some historic epistolary novels and recent academic work that analyzes these texts. The objective is to provide not only an elucidation of epistolarity generally, but to locate the analyses of particular texts as relevant to this research’s examination of Hartley’s fan letters. Fans of pornography, like other subculture fans, sometimes correspond with a celebrity, and write letters of adoration, devotion, education, and fantasy. It is significant that, in the contemporary technological context, people continue to write personal post correspondence (Almond & Baggott, 2006; Gilroy & Verhoeven, 2000). While postal mail was the only option during the beginning of Hartley’s career she continued to receive postal mail into the age of electronic mail. My research involves the reading of hundreds of personal letters sent to Hartley; the knowledge advance of this dissertation is acquired through reading the personal correspondence of others. While this is not ethnographic research, it is similar in that the written words of the fans are their voice. The connection I pursue between the fan mail of pornography spectators and the intimate correspondence of individuals is the acquisition of knowledge through the disclosure of personal thoughts on sexuality, desire, and relationships. Appropriately, then, the methodology of this research is an epistolary analysis: the academic study of letters.

What is the motivation for collecting letters? I can state that, for Hartley, her motivation in reading and collecting her fan mail is tied to her close relationship with her
fans. As mentioned, the letters are in various categories: confessions, desires, fantasies, and questions. She has mentioned in personal conversation that she loved to receive and read her fan mail.\(^\text{10}\) She kept the letters for years and eventually donated them to the archive of the Center for Sex and Culture rather than dispose of them.

There are many pornography performers. Why would pornography fans write to Nina Hartley specifically? Hartley’s position as a porn star and sex educator\(^\text{11}\) introduces the question of whether we can imagine Nina Hartley as a kind of expert or authoritative addressee for hearing sex speak. That is, in order to understand the significance of the letters in the archive, we have to understand how the letter writers might have conceived of Hartley herself, and what kind of characteristics they attributed to her. Presumably the authors wrote to Hartley without knowing her personally and based their various impressions of her from what they may have garnered from her pornographic videos, sexual education and instruction videos, strip club performances, fan-club mailings, and media appearances. I think that these varied kinds of connections provided some fans with the opportunity to consider Hartley in a different context: signing autographs and allowing photographs with fans is physically close and personal compared to watching a video. And watching Hartley’s strip performance in close proximity is live and explicit, while not necessarily personal. There are letters in the Hartley archive from fans describing seeing her perform at a strip club, or disappointed that they were unable to see her recent performance. There is a letter from a fan with a hand-drawn map and directions to his home from a venue where she was appearing, should she

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10 This conversation is described in detail in Chapter 4.
11 Hartley’s first pornography video was released in 1984 and her pornography career continues to the present. Her first sex education/instructional video was released in 1994 and continues to the present. Her first written
want to stop by and visit. I later discuss letters Hartley received with personal photographs of her with fans during promotional appearances.

In the Introduction I put forth Hartley’s fan mail as an example of speaking sex. And, commensurate with this research’s focus on Diderot’s *Indiscreet Jewels*, and Foucault and Williams’ subsequent attention to that text, most of the letters in the Hartley archive are representative of the pornography spectator speaking sex, and some represent a kind of confession. In Kavanagh’s (1988) examination of *Les Bijoux indiscrets* he notes the power of the ring provided by Cucufa in its ability to summon the truth from a woman, the speaker. His article, “Language as deception,” questions truthfulness in ‘the speaking of sex’ in the confessional relationship between the speaker and the audience (Kavanagh, 1988, p. 103). The magic of the ring is that it strips language—the speaking of sex—of its ability to deceive. The genie’s ring negates the speaker’s ability to omit, deny, prevaricate, or exaggerate, assuring the listener(s) of the truth of sex (p. 103). Contrarily, reading the Hartley letters, unlike the utterances of jewels summoned by Mangogul’s ring, does not provide us the totality of truth assured by the genie’s magic. Our understanding is limited by the reading of the text; that is, we can only assume so much regarding the author and the contents of the letter. The unsatisfying reality is that we really do not know anything about the author or the truthfulness of the letter. I say more about interpretations of the letters below, particularly in the section titled ‘Nina Hartley’s Letters.’

Academic work has addressed interpretations of authors’ sexuality or gender (Cook,
“Self-Writing” Foucault (1997) observes that the act of writing is for oneself and for others, and that writing is associated with the exercise of thought. With regard to this observation, Foucault states that writing is a method to “show oneself”—through writing, we project ourselves into view, as a means to appear in the other's presence (pp. 207–221). The text of the letter can be understood as both gazing toward the addressee, and a way of offering oneself to the other’s gaze. The second observation examines writing as an exercise of thought. The focus of this dissertation is the fan letters, so it is important to consider not only the writer but the physical act of writing, and the connection of the writer to their written words to a pornography star: disclosures of the self. The connection between letter-writing, the physical body, and sexuality has a history of academic attention (Eagleton, 1982; Garlinger, 2005; Kamuf, 1980; Kauffman, 1986; Steedman, 2001). In this regard Foucault (1997) references Seneca’s work on writing: when we write we read what we are writing, similar to hearing what we say to another. This is significant because, through the activity of writing, a letter acts upon the author, just as it acts on the addressee through reading it (pp. 207–221). “The letter is part of the body which is detachable: torn from the very depths of the subject, it can be equally torn from her physical possession” (Steedman, 2001, p. 74).

Thinking of the letter as part of the body is, of course, a metaphysical sentiment. The letters of the Hartley archive belong to the addressee, yet they are not attached to the writer’s body—the letters can be physically moved. Letters of a sexual nature are vulnerable to disclosure: “the letter comes to signify nothing quite so much as sexuality itself, that folded secret place which is always open to violent intrusion … (Eagleton, 1982, pp. 54–55)”
The starting point of this dissertation is Diderot’s (1993) 1748 fable, *Indiscreet Jewels*, a tale of sexual confession, secret, amorous desires, and clandestine relationships (p. ix). Unlike an obligatory kind of pastoral or judicial confession (Foucault, 1978), these letters—describing sexual identifications, practices, and desires—are confidential correspondence, sent without obligation, to a recipient the author trusted. In the context of Foucault’s work on Seneca and writing there is an implied relationship, even a reciprocal dialectic, between writer and reader. The possibility of flattery or narcissism exists for the reader upon “find(ing) oneself confirmed in another’s text” (Foster, 1987, p. 13). Hartley has described her delight in reading the fan letters she receives, but I would not judge her reading and interpretation of the letters as narcissistic, or vulnerable to flattery. Open, honest correspondence enables the reader to form an autonomous, independent interpretation, and avoid seductive language.

In most cases the Hartley authors have not had personal contact with the addressee; no prior relationship exists beyond spectatorship. This lack of personal contact, however, does not negate the fan’s feeling of closeness to the celebrity. That is, unlike Mangogul’s ability to summon a detailed narrative from the unwitting confessor, Hartley has no direct physical influence on the author’s content. Foucault writes that confession is “a self-referential utterance which requires a relationship with another” (Taylor, 2009b, p. 7).

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13 In this section I reference Foucault’s work on writing and the concept of confession, and several other theorists that build on or compliment Foucault. I want to make clear that I am not claiming that the Hartley fan letters are confessions, though some can be interpreted as such. Also, while Foucault’s work on confession is helpful here in considering the writer disclosing sexual desires or practices to a stranger who is virtually present, Foucault’s confessional framework is not appropriate for the Hartley letters and this dissertation.

14 I say more about celebrity culture later in this chapter.
However, he defines confession as “a ritual of discourse where the subject who speaks corresponds with the subject of the statement” (Foucault, 1978, pp. 82–83). Foucault (1978) further clarifies that this correspondence occurs within a “relationship of power, since one doesn’t confess without the presence, at least the virtual presence, of a partner who is not simply an interlocutor but the agency that requires the confession…” (p. 83). I will not attempt an ambitious claim here suggesting that Hartley requires confession from her fans; writing the Nina Hartley Fan Club is voluntary. I do, however, underline the idea of Hartley as a virtual presence through her pornography videos. Appropriately for my research, Foucault’s work includes “the practice of autobiographical writings” that can be delivered “to another in one’s imagination” (Taylor, 2009b, p. 7). It is the idea of the Hartley fan’s autobiographical writing delivered to the imagination of the pornography star that is the foundation of the epistolarity analysis of the Hartley archive. Furthermore, it is possible to interpret the Hartley letters as lying somewhere between a Foucaultian understanding of “the exigent nature of confession as a discipline” (Cryle, 2001, p. 127) and the idea of a letter as unsolicited correspondence that is sent from an autonomous author. In this section I examine the relationship between the letter-writer and Hartley, and the tension in discerning the letter as either an obligatory confession or a friendly letter, or somewhere in-between.

Imagining Hartley as a “virtual presence” (Foucault, 1978, p. 83) invites a questioning of the characteristics, and perhaps categorization, of oral, written, and video correspondence. Because I use the term ‘speaking sex’ in this dissertation I want to briefly discuss the idea of giving voice to sex, and the various methods of communication discussed in my research. Krondorfer (2010) observes the requirement of an audience for disclosure.
Historic sexual disclosures from men reveal “their sins, their shame, their shortcomings, their deceptions, their desires” (p. 2). Religious confession “allows men to talk about their intimate selves, their flawed and sinful selves, without having to condemn themselves entirely…” (Krondorfer, 2010, p. 3). While Diderot’s fable gives a literal voice to sexuality through the speaker’s ‘jewels,’ we might consider the “corporeality” of this voice (Kavanagh, 1988, p. 107). Historically, the ‘speaking of sex’ “originates in an oral culture,” it is a “private verbal exchange” (Brooks, 2000, p. 95). There are varied modalities of intimate, personal disclosure; in the case of the written word it might be letters or documents. More recently, however, it can be recorded and communicated. In the contemporary context, advances in media technologies have enabled the communication of confession via radio, television, videotape, the Internet, and other digital technologies, or, in the case of Les Bijoux indiscrets, the physical body. While personal disclosures are usually a private communication, in some circumstances ‘speaking sex’ has moved from the discrete context of religious practice or private dwelling to apologies and disclosures in the public realm (Bauer, 2008).

Beyond the modality of correspondence of one’s sexuality there are demographic factors regarding the speaking of sex. There is academic work that suggests diversity can play a role in one’s ability to engage in confessional writing. Education, ethnicity, gender, dis/ability, religion, status, and a sense of entitlement to address another regarding one’s self may limit access to revealing the intimate self (Krondorfer, 2010, p. 7).15 Citing Foucault on “the activity a statement generates,” Foster (1987) writes that discourse, and the apparatus of

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15 I discuss diversity and sexual representations of bodies related to the authors of the Hartley fan letters in Chapter 4.
governmentality that regulates the production of statements, are “limited by the cultural situation of the users” (pp. 13–14). As noted above, Hartley received letters from across the US and the globe, and from writers with varied demographic backgrounds.

I briefly include Foucault’s and, by extension, Seneca’s work on the significance of writing and, more importantly, the connection between author and reader to underline the relationship between Hartley and the fans who wrote to her.16 In the Introduction chapter I provided an overview of academic work on the writing of letters. In that chapter I noted the desire of the writer to feel a connection with the addressee (Kenyon, 1992) although “each letter, however private and personal it may seem, is a letter marked by and sent to the world” (Gilroy & Verhoeven, 2000, p. 1). That is, as Favret (1993, p. 19) observes, the “private moment” of the letter attempts to erase the outside world, ignoring time and space, and the personal encounter between writer and reader is “where the life of the imagination becomes more (is) more important than lived experience” (Perry, 1980, p. xiii). In Chapter 4 I discuss Hartley’s career and specifically her relationship with her fans. In citing the idea of writing a personal letter as a ‘private moment’ here I suggest the confessions, questions, and fantasies in the Hartley archive letters represent the fans’ desire to be close to her: a private moment where the imagination might be more important than the lived experience.

This overview is, of course, not an exhaustive account of epistolary research. And, though it is the methodological framework of this research, I do not attempt to provide a thorough examination of epistolary theory here. I next examine Diderot and his contemporaries in the context of epistolary literature: stories of people told through letters. The methodology of this dissertation is epistolary analysis so it is important to be aware of
the history of the letter as a literary genre, and how it is useful in reading and analyzing the Hartley archive. I think it is important to consider that while issues regarding dating, sexuality, virginity, and marriage, for example, in epistolary literature are fiction, the writers in the Hartley archive are real people sending inquiries and disclosures pertaining to their sexuality. In the next section I describe some of the major themes and issues included in historic epistolary literature, and to compare some similarities to the Hartley archive. This, of course, is not a strong comparison; rather, I suggest that there are some similarities to be found between historic, fictional, epistolary novels, and the writings of pornography fans. The value to be garnered from reading epistolary novels in the context of the Hartley archive research is to examine the respective author’s consideration of and responses to particular sexual encounters, relationship issues, and their seeking out expertise and guidance regarding potential changes in one’s personal, intimate life.

**Diderot and his Contemporaries**

In the mid-eighteenth century some of Diderot’s literary contemporaries were developing the genre of epistolary fiction: stories told through fictional letters (Charriere, 1993/1784; Fielding, 1747; Laclos, 1992/1782; Richardson, 2005/1748), a genre that continues today (Hall, 2011; Leigh, 2003; Wenderoth, 2000). Diderot’s *Les Bijoux indiscrets* is direct in its summoning sex to speak. Epistolary novels in the eighteenth century were, generally, less salacious than Diderot. These novels did, however, include characters and scenarios involving (in alphabetical order) issues of age, class, dating, education, employment, ethnicity, love, marriage, rape, virginity, and virtue. Because of sensitive topics such as rape

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16 I say more detail about Hartley’s relationship with her fans in Chapter 4.
and virginity there are contemporary academic texts that address novels of Diderot’s time, specific to the disclosure of sexuality (Cryle, 2001) and the censorship of 18th-century literature (Darnton, 1976; 2014; Korshin, 1976). Similarly, the Hartley letters contain issues regarding sexuality, but also issues related to age, class, education, ethnicity, marriage, and virginity. That is, the ongoing presence of issues such as age, class, education, and ethnicity as related to sexuality in both 18th-century fictional epistolary novels and Hartley’s fan mail. Eighteenth century authors intentionally included these topics as social education and direction for appropriate conduct, and appear in a different context in Hartley’s letters as related to fans’ personal and sexual conduct.

These contexts can be understood through a brief description of the following constituents. Diderot’s Indiscreet Jewels is a fable of sexual confession, inquiry, and morality. Hartley’s fan letters, discussed later, contain sexual desire, disclosure, fantasy, and inquiry. Early 18th-century circulations (Addison, 1892/1712; Addison and Steele, 1861/1709) included “requests for and offers of advice, descriptions of social life, theoretical dialogues, fable, and allegory” (Bree, 1996, p. 47). Similarly, Fielding’s 1747 work Familiar letters between the principal characters in David Simple and others is made up of 45 letters that include a “moral epistle, a fairy tale, fables, and original poems” (Bree, 1996, p. 46). In the time of Diderot, then, similar to Hartley’s fan letters, the literature included advice requests, fables, and fairy tales.

In the first part of this chapter I have discussed the significance of writing letters, and the author’s sense of, or desire for, connection to the addressee. And immediately above I introduce sexuality and the diversity of issues intersecting with sexuality related to intimate
relationships. The next section examines epistolary authors of the mid-eighteenth century: contemporaries of Diderot. Diderot’s *Indiscreet Jewels* is not an epistolary novel; however, epistolary fiction was a popular genre in his time, including one of the authors examined below. And, similar to Diderot’s *Indiscreet Jewels*, the work of the epistolary authors discussed below examined issues of sexuality, socio-cultural regulations of sexuality, and the speaking of sex. Specifically, then, this section examines the historical trajectory of letters ‘speaking sex’ from Diderot’s contemporaries to the Hartley archive.

**Diderot**

Diderot was well educated, intelligent, and attentive to the political reality of his time. Importantly, his writings occurred in the time referred to as the Enlightenment: philosophical, social, and sexual enlightenment. I include sexuality as a kind of enlightenment in large part because it was a time period when authors — Charriere, Crebillon, Diderot, Fielding, Laclos, and Richardson, for example — began to publish controversial work that openly discussed sexuality, and to question gender roles, rules regarding dating, marriage, and procreation, and transgressing social norms surrounding intimate relationships and issues of age, class, and ethnicity.

As I write in the Introduction chapter above, the Enlightenment can be described as a period of intellectual maturity. Goldberg (1984) writes in *Sex & Enlightenment* that Diderot’s 1748 publication can be positioned alongside the work of Enlightenment theorists. I include here authors Fielding and Richardson, and philosophers Hume, Kant, and Rousseau, for example. In this section I attempt to situate Diderot’s *Les Bijoux Indiscrets* among some
of his notable literary contemporaries. What I seek to highlight are literary influences and writings that can be thought of as navigating similar intellectual terrain as *Indiscreet Jewels*. Moreover, an examination of these works reveal commonalities with issues I include in this research: the diversity of pornography spectators.

Diderot’s introduction to *Les Bijoux Indiscrets* references a number of contemporary literary works: Crebillon’s *Tanzai et Neadarne* (2016/1734), Duclos’ *Acajou et Zirphile* (1744), and La Morlière *Angola, histoire indienne* (1781/1746), for example. These are texts Diderot was familiar with and, importantly for this research, they are pieces of literature that can be described as exotic tales of sexual desire in the eighteenth century. However, the primary intellectual relationship with Diderot I want to highlight here is that with Samuel Richardson. Goldberg (1984) writes that *Indiscreet Jewels* made use of the “Richardsonian model” of authorship, and, moreover, Diderot remains “the most sympathetic and perceptive reader of Richardson’s work” (p. 1).

Samuel Richardson was born in England in 1689 and, while not an educated man, he was well-read. He worked as an apprentice to a printer as a young man. In 1739 booksellers asked Richardson to write a book of sample business letters to assist less literate persons with important correspondence (Doody, 1980, p. 7). Richardson, surprisingly intrigued by the project, embarked on a novel based loosely on correspondence with one of his own daughters in service away from home. *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded*, was first published in 1740. Succinctly, *Pamela* is an epistolary novel consisting of fictional letters between a man and his daughter. The daughter, a “fifteen-year-old servant girl,” is in service to her dead mistress’ son, resists the master’s unwanted sexual advances. Pamela resists, and “preserves
her virtue from the persistent attacks of her master” (Goldberg, 1984, p. 24). Richardson’s second novel, Clarissa, or, the History of a Young Lady, first published in 1747, was also a fictional novel of letters. Similar to the focus on virtue in Pamela, Clarissa’s virtue is tested. In a similar context of tested virtue, Laclos’ (1782) Les Liaisons Dangereuses is a complex, scandalous epistolary tale of seduction and revenge. In the introduction to Charriere’s (1993/1784) Letters of Mistress Henley, Stewart observes that the presence of infidelity was a “standard component” (p. xix) of eighteenth century novels. And, of course, in this research’s attention to Diderot’s fable, the speaking ‘jewels’ disclose sexual secrets and infidelity.

Epistolary literature, as a story told through letters, invites the reader to imagine they have a kind of secret access to the private writings between two or more correspondents. Kauffman (1986) suggests that epistolarity “subverts … conventional dichotomies and explores … transgressions and transformations” (pp. 26–27). Public and pulpit reception of Pamela varied from religious authorities lauding its heroine’s exemplary dedication to virtue, while others questioned its attention to lust (Goldberg, 1984, p. 1). What Richardson achieved through his epistolary novels was to distract attention from what are described as “conduct books:” “manuals of spiritual guidance for practical life” (Goldberg, 1984, p. 28). These clearly differed from “courtesy books” of etiquette in that ‘conduct books’ had a “solidly religious basis” (p. 28). Richardson’s novels were very popular, and because they became known as “educational material, more likely to be read by young ladies than conduct books or Bibles, that the guardians of youthful morals worried” (Goldberg, 1984, p. 2).

Moreover, in the first decades of the eighteenth century English literature was represented
significantly by fictional novels, many written by women, addressing issues of love, courtship, seduction, and even rape (Doody, 1980, p. 8). Richardson used his own correspondence with a daughter, and read novels about women, written by women. Subsequently, his work was “viewed with some suspicion because he took the advice of women seriously” (Goldberg, 1984, p. 2).

Kamuf (1987) observes that there is an historic use of letters as the paradigmatic form of “moral instruction for women,” advice on “domestic economy,” and the creation of “natural” femininity (p. 2). The issue of education is present in some of the characters in Fielding’s (1827/1749) Governess. Education, sometimes a determinant of class and social status, can be an issue specific to access to marriage, and subsequently sex and sexual relationships. Epistolary novels have historically examined how the power dynamics of sexuality and class are inherent in relationships (Eagleton, 1982, p. 4). In the Introduction to Letters of Mistress Henley, Philip Stewart notes the “class-conscious” reality at the time of Charriere’s (1993/1784, p. xvi) work. The significance of class, education, and religion as it relates to courtship and marriage in Charriere’s writing mirrored her own woes with potential suitors (xvii). As Doody (1980) writes, when Richardson’s (1985) central figure, ‘Pamela,’ states that her soul is “of equal importance with the soul of a princess” it is a Christian statement on the inequities of class. However, it is also a declaration of equality that transcends across categorizations of class, education, and governance. And in Richardson’s (1985) subsequent work, Clarissa or, the history of a young lady, Clarissa is at risk, a prisoner, unable to contact the judiciary because her master is the local Justice of the Peace.
The epistolary novels discussed above describe circumstances of class, education, sexuality, and the relationships of power that create scenarios of seduction (Doody, 1980, p. 8), testing the character’s virtue, interest in a sexual relationship, and potential infidelity. The concepts of sexual virtue and fidelity seem quite distant from my research’s examination of pornography spectatorship. What I draw from the epistolary novels of Diderot’s era for my research are its connection to adult sex education and sexual conduct. As Goldberg (1984) observes, “conduct books” (p. 28) served a pedagogical function, as a kind of “educational material” (p. 2). The story of Mangogul commanding sexual confession is in stark contrast to conduct books and “moral instruction for women” (Kamuf, 1987, p. 2). The authors of the Hartley archive sent letters, much of them sexually explicit and that can be understood as articulating receipt of a kind of adult sex education through pornography spectatorship. The letters are not ‘conduct books;’ they are often, however, descriptions of sexual conduct. The second question of this research, addressed directly in Chapter 5, examines the idea of pornography as a form of sex education. Richardson was viewed as suspect by some for taking “the advice of women seriously” (Goldberg, 1984, p. 2). As Kauffman (1986) suggests, epistolarity subverts “conventional dichotomies” and permits an exploration of “transgressions and transformations” (pp. 26–27). As I discuss later, many fan letters in the Hartley archive, mostly from men, are representative of the pornography spectator seriously seeking advice and adult sex education from a woman. Moreover, a woman they recognized as an expert on sexuality.

It is the comparison between the epistolary work of Diderot’s contemporaries and Hartley’s fan letters as examples of speaking sex and sexual conduct that I highlight in this
section. In the next section I examine the significance of letters in conducting research. Richardson's (2005) introduction to *Clarissa* includes the idea of the “transparency of the letter” from the letter’s author. This transparency is described as “a document that authenticates the self” (p. 3). The idea of the letter as transparent can be connected to Foucault’s (1997) suggestion that writing is a method to “show oneself,” appearing in the other’s presence through writing (pp. 207–221). Being delivered to another’s “imagination” through writing is a virtual presence (Taylor, 2009b, p. 7). The virtual presence of the Hartley author is an opportunity to reveal “their sins, their shame, their shortcomings, their deceptions, their desires” (Krondorfer, 2010, p. 2). I think the Hartley letters reveal an openness, intimacy, and transparency of emotion. There are, however, other considerations in a collection of correspondence.

**Letters as an Object of Research**

In a section titled, “The Weight of the Reader,” Altman (1982) notes that in *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* letters are accumulated and “stockpiled as weapons;” correspondence wielded for purposes of betrayal, exposure, and vindication (p. 108). Altman highlights the epistolary binary in *Les Liaisons*: the “two poles of secrecy and publication” (p. 108). In the binary of secrecy and publication, letters are either hidden to prevent disclosure of a relationship, or disseminated and made public for ignoble means. There is, however, a mutuality between some of the epistolary interlocutors in *Les Liaisons* because although their actions are private, they require the other, an audience, for recognition and approval (p. 109). It is perhaps a similar relationship of mutuality between Hartley and the fan letter-writers in that,
while their spectatorship and sexual practices occur in private, they seek Hartley as an understanding audience for recognition and approval.

*Les Liaisons* is an epistolary novel, a story of a very different kind, so I do not intend to tether strong links to the fan letters of this research. I recognize that, similar to Altman’s epistolary extremes of secrecy and publication, my dissertation’s readings of Hartley’s fan mail trespasses the private / public divide of personal correspondence. The Nina Hartley letters have not been forwarded to other readers (to the best of my knowledge), and it is reasonable to assume few if any other people have been granted full access to Hartley’s fan letters other than perhaps an assistant. It seems reasonable that the authors of the Hartley archive prefer secrecy rather than publication. Yet there is a relationship in the Hartley archive, arguably one-sided on the part of the writer, that seeks recognition and approval. I further suggest that concomitant with the Hartley authors' expectation of secrecy, and desire for recognition, is a disclosure of sexual knowledge.

Similar to this dissertation, then, the knowledge advance described by Altman is acquired through reading the correspondence of others. The letters of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* are confessions of relationships, love, and desire. The connection between the fan mail of pornography viewers and the intimate correspondence of individuals in Laclos’ novel is the “acquisition of knowledge” through the disclosure of personal thoughts on relationships, desire, and sexuality (Altman, 1982, pp. 108–109).

As a conclusion to my elucidation on epistolarity, epistolary literature, and its connections to my research of the Hartley fan letters, I want to include a brief academic defence for the importance of the study of letters. While handwritten letters are increasingly
rare the examination of correspondence and historic letters continues in contemporary
research. Sometimes, like the Hartley fan archive, it occurs in the context of a Nietzschean
(1997/1887) or Foucaultian (1972) archaeological or genealogical project: sifting through
dusty boxes in an archive, museum, or institution (Steedman, 2001). However, in the age of
digital technology, like many other things, epistolary research has changed. A recent
Stanford Magazine article (in the ‘Breakthroughs’ section) describes the university’s
‘Mapping the Republic of Letters’ project. Beginning in 2008, the project transformed “more
than 50,000 pieces of correspondence, exchanged during the Enlightenment by thousands of
European and North American intellectuals, into topic-revealing visualizations” (Open
Source Opens Eyes, 2016, p. 27). The data visualization project revealed that “a French
philosophe’s only non-French connection was Scottish philosopher David Hume.” Hume, a
philosopher in the mid-eighteenth century, was born in 1711, and wrote in the
Enlightenment, as did Diderot (Goldberg, 1984). Diderot was known as a philosopher, was
born in 1713, and wrote Les Bijoux indiscrets in 1748. While we do not know, it is possible
that Diderot is the “French philosophe” whose sole “non-French” correspondence was to
Hume. And, if Diderot is not Hume’s correspondence from France I suggest it does not
diminish the significance of this research to the Enlightenment epistolary connection. As
Nicole Coleman, digital research architect for the project articulates, “We see the structure
of connections between people we might not have seen without (this technology).” She adds,
those linkages “instigate deeper original research into the way these figures influenced each
other and their ideas” (Open Source Opens Eyes, 2016, p. 27).
I include Stanford’s ‘Mapping the Republic of Letters’ project as an example of contemporary epistolary research, Hume’s interesting Enlightenment correspondence, its possible connection to Diderot, and, most importantly, for this dissertation’s attention to the epistolary connection between Nina Hartley and her fans. Across centuries, continents, and technologies, both a French philosophe’s correspondence to Hume and Hartley’s epistolary inquiries can be described as ‘breakthroughs:’ original research that reveal connections, and how “figures influenced each other and their ideas.” Although it is purely speculative, it is possible that there are future valuable linkages to be discovered in the Hartley archive.

**Spectatorship**

The cultural analysis of this research is a trajectory that begins with the pornography fan, as spectator, viewing film pornography. Hundreds of letters and ephemera were sent to Hartley, which she collected and stored for a couple decades. These fan letters are a subset of what can be described as fan culture, itself a subset of cultural studies. In fan culture people who hold a celebrity in some level of esteem or respect—‘fandom’—often correspond to give voice to their adoration. The spectator-performer and fan-pornography relationship of admiration can be theorized generally to help us understand how to make use of Hartley’s fan mail as a source of insight into the sexual knowledge garnered by her viewers from her films.

Theoretical work on spectatorship has been understood in the contemporary context to address the film entertainment industry generally, but it begins at least 25 centuries ago in Aristotle’s *Poetics*. Aristotle claims that imitation is a “natural” action for people, one we
develop at an early age, and is our first means of education (Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1448b6–8).
Regardless of the representation, people enjoy learning through imitation, coming to understand things. In this intuitive, early idea of imitation as art, as theatre, everyone learns as a spectator, and can also perform actions for others. In tragic theatre, Aristotle contends that the chorus should be understood as one of the actors, blurring the distinction between acting in a role and actively supporting the performance (Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1456a25–33). I include the reference to a lack of clarity between actor and spectator supporting the performance here as a continuation of the suggestion that pornography spectators might take up certain sexual practices from the performance.

It should be noted that Aristotle believed theatre produced for the general public was of a lower order: vulgar (Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1461b25–1461b28). Thus, it seems *a propos* to apply his remarks on theatre to pornographic films: pornography rarely targets artistic achievement; its objective is sexual arousal and entertainment via explicit sexual representations (McNair, 1996, p. 137; Zamir, 2013). What I want to put forth in this discussion of spectatorship is that imitation is a human instinct, and a means of learning. Imitation, and theatre, can question the roles of the performer and spectator when the viewer engages the performance and considers some level of imitation. The performances in film pornography can provide a kind of sex education where the spectator considers sexual activities, sexual and gender roles, non-monogamy, sexual negotiation, and sexual consent.

In the second half of this chapter I examine spectatorship generally, and specifically, the relationship of the spectator to pornography. The identity of the pornography fan as spectator directly affects the interpretation and meaning of the pornographic film, and this
interpretation can be understood as specific to each spectator. Accordingly, this interpretation, and the subsequent meaning assigned by the viewer, might influence the individual to undertake particular modifications to their sexual practices, as mentioned regarding Aristotelian theory.

Pornography, as a specific film genre, is intended as explicit sexual entertainment; presumably it is the viewer’s expectation. Yet as I discuss in Chapter 5 there are possibilities for sexual education regarding bodies, sexual identifications, orientations, relationships, and practices beyond pornography’s sexual depictions. Broadly, then, pornography should not be imbued with a particular totalizing meaning prior to its interpretation by the reader/viewer. That is, it should not be understood as holding a particular meaning antecedent to its consumption. The spectator’s assumption regarding the entirety of the film’s contents results from the determination of cultural products through an “always-already culturally activated object” awaiting consumption by an “always-already culturally activated subject” (Bennett & Woollacott, 2002, p. 16). That is, the spectator is perpetually shaped and influenced by culture through their consumption of pervasive, ubiquitous cultural objects. Cultural theory on the pre-determination of media consumption suggests that spectators of a particular culture feel that they know what to expect and what they will garner from the performance. That is, there is more involved in the consumption of pornography than is generally recognized; the explicit images can be less significant than “the feelings, thoughts and associations going on inside the viewer’s head” (O’Toole, 1998, p. 307).

Following from Aristotle’s work on spectatorship and the idea of imitation by viewers, I attend to the spectator’s engagement with pornographic performances and
potential subsequent influence on the viewer’s imagination. The average pornography spectator’s engagement with performance is hampered in that there is little inclusion of aesthetic education in secondary school arts education. The result is almost no educational background in experiencing and “processing performance” as a means to analyze and release the imagination (Prendergast, 2008, p. 27). In Prendergast’s (2008) examination of teaching spectatorship she observes that an overlooked pedagogical piece is the “development of the imagination as a desired end result of aesthetic education” (p. 26). The following section discusses the research of film and cultural theorists on the topic of spectatorship, starting with Judith Mayne. Mayne’s research is useful in examining several axes of spectatorship theory often developed into bifurcated viewpoints regarding fans’ engagement with film. I suggest these analyses are applicable to spectatorship related to sexually explicit videos.

In the chapter, “Paradoxes of Spectatorship,” Mayne (2002) examines the tensions between opposing analyses that often position viewers as either mere receivers of the cinematic message, or as rational, autonomous subjects capable of critiquing and resisting the messages received through media. The purpose of Mayne’s chapter is to make clear that it is erroneous to interpret spectatorship in a simplified, bifurcated cinema analysis that argues for an either/or between dominant ideology and individual resistance. That is, an interpretation of spectators as a choice between simple receivers of cinema’s message, or rational subjects critiquing the film. While Mayne’s analysis addresses mainstream film, it offers an analysis that is, I think, appropriate in considering the spectatorship of pornography fans. Viewers of pornography, like mainstream film viewers, are similarly situated to receive the dominant ideology or contest representations in the context of sexuality. Furthermore, as
I discuss in Chapter 5, the pornography fans’ potential uptake of what can be understood broadly as ‘sex education’ from pornography is, at least in part, by adherence to the dominant ideology regarding sexuality and sexual practices, or individual resistance to sexual norms.

A primary claim made by Mayne (2002), and one of significance for this research, is that various cinema analyses consider the gender and sexuality differences and relationship between the viewer and the image; that is, “spectatorship has focussed on sexual difference” (p. 77). That is, whether the spectator identifies as a man or woman or other, their sexual orientation, and, given their identification, the identification(s) of the persons they are viewing in the film. Mayne expands the focus of sexual difference to address the diversity of spectatorship analysis: ability, age, class, gender, race, and sexuality. One of the issues identified by Mayne is the conflict between the diversity of films addressed to specific demographic groups within the paradigm of cinema largely addressing mainstream society. Mayne’s analysis is divided into three sections: address and reception, fantasy, and negotiation. Address and reception meaning ‘address’ as the message, or expected message, the film intends to send, and the manner in which the viewer receives the message. The second section examines how fantasy allows a “more radical exploration of (the viewer’s) psychic investment in the cinema” (Mayne, 2002, p. 79). That is, how does a particular film affect the viewer’s existing scope and range of fantasy? Finally, negotiation, following reception, examining how the viewer’s response might be “used,” “interpreted,” or “appropriated” (p. 80). The viewer’s negotiation with the film occurs within the relationship of social and cultural paradigms. I make use of these three sections of inquiry by Mayne as a
template for interrogating how pornography spectators engage, and are engaged by, pornographic film, and how these analyses provide insight on Hartley’s fan archive. I contend that the Hartley fan letters articulate the spectators’ reception, fantasy, and negotiation of pornography: their responses to and engagement with pornography as sexual fantasy.

**Address and Reception**

Mayne (2002) defines address and reception as the space between the concept of an ‘ideal’ spectator and the actual viewer, stating, “there is no simple division between the cinema which functions as an instrument of dominant ideology, and the cinema which facilitates challenges to it” (p. 78). As Mayne observes, the “institutional matrix” of ideology is confronted by the complexity and diversity of real reader/viewer responses (p. 85). Like Mayne (2002), I reject a theoretical imperative that necessitates a separation of the “truly radical spectator from the merely complicitous one” (p. 86). The understanding of a film’s ‘address’ is the assumption, or generally regarded response, that the film is expected to generate. Reception, then, is the response of the viewer, and the ways this response either coheres with the expected outcome, or in ways that “contradict, reject, or otherwise problematize” the idea of an ideal spectator (Mayne, 2002, p. 79).

In her discussion on address and reception, Mayne introduces Janice Radway’s work, *Reading the Romance*: an analysis of women readers of romance novels. Although Radway’s analysis targets novels, Mayne (2002) contends that the research has “equal relevance to film studies” (p. 82). It should also be noted that in the era of the VCR the pornography spectator

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17 I provide an examination of diversity based on some of Hartley’s fan letters later in this research.
could view sexual representations in the privacy of the home, like novel readers. Therefore, Radway’s analysis of novel readers is appropriate to my research because, like VCR pornography, reading novels often occurs in the domestic sphere.

Building from the similarity between romance novels and VCR pornography as often located in the domestic sphere I suggest both hold the potential to consider non-mainstream representations of intimate relationships. Mayne’s work examines how romance novel readers constitute an appropriate group to highlight the tension between ideology and resistance: socio-cultural expectations and normativity versus the thoughts and emotions of the ‘real’ romance reader. The challenge in the address-reception of Romance elucidated by Mayne (2002) is the ideology of traditional, conservative conceptions of romance confronting an idea of romance that offers resistance: “the possibility of fantasizing solutions” to otherwise patriarchal, heteronormative relationships (p. 83). I suggest that fantasizing solutions is Mayne’s way of making clear the tension between adherence to social norms and expectations of intimate relationships: monogamy, marriage, and procreative sexual practices. The possibility of fantasizing solutions is similar to Williams’ (1989) suggestion in Hard Core that pornography as sexual fantasy can be interpreted as solving the problem of sex.

The similarities between romance readers and pornography spectatorship continues in the rather stratified demographics of their readers / viewers. Mayne points out that the romance reader group is not diverse. In fact, the rather homogeneous group of “white, heterosexual, middle-class women” is described by Radway as married, middle-class mothers (Mayne, 2002, p. 82; Radway, 1984, p. 12). For Mayne, the homogenized
demographics of Radway’s ethnographic group calls into question the possibilities for resistance to the women’s relationship to patriarchy, feminism, and themselves, including their sexuality. Mayne’s analysis regarding resistance centres on the idea that a lack of diversity prohibits a multi-perspectival engagement. That is, an array of ages, abilities, ethnicities, professions, and sexualities, for example, provides a greater breadth of experiences in analyzing the text(s). Similar to Mayne and Radway’s concern over the reader demographic in their research, the demographic of Hartley’s fan mail is heavily-skewed toward heterosexual-identified males.

Having said that, as I discuss in Chapter 4, even within the stratified demographic there is a diversity of educational backgrounds, professions, and sexual desires. The Hartley fan mail archive includes letters from a diverse spectrum of male viewers located under demographic categorizations of ability, age, class, education, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation, and knowledge of how these sexual bodies are represented (Fung, 1991; Kaufman, Silverberg, & Odette, 2003; Kroll and Klein, 1992; McWhorter, 1999; Mercer, 1994; Miller-Young, 2007). It can be argued that pornographic representations of masculinity illustrate how specific bodies and bodily performances possess value, and a rank order establishes a social hierarchy whereby some are valued more than others (Beynon, 2002; Connell, 1995). The term ‘pornography consumer’ may or may not be considered as a minoritarian, marginalized, or liminal identification. My analysis examines the intersection of pornography consumer with the minoritarian categorizations listed above and the assumption of pre-existent and separate axes of identity (Halberstam 2005; McRuer 2006; 18

18 In the introduction of the second edition of Romance, Radway responds to these criticisms by comparing her work to cultural theorist Angela McRobbie’s writing on working-class girls, and the “remarkable similarities” in
Munoz 1999; Penley, 2006; Shimizu, 2012). There are Hartley archive letter-writers self-identifying in the text as a constituent in at least one minoritarian group. While this does not necessarily situate the spectator as unique, they can be interpreted as statistically minoritarian, and, in terms of pornography consumers, underrepresented. Pornography spectators within minoritarian categorizations, processing sexual performances, have opportunities to garner an aesthetic education, and imagine the possibilities for the inclusion of other morphologically identifiable bodies.

In Zamir’s (2013) articulation of the uniqueness of porn he states that its “therapeutic potential lies in its power to show individuals that they are not alone” (p. 85). This ideal is achieved through “the most committed language of the exposed body, submitting itself to another’s fantasy” (p. 85). In this section’s attention to the issue of diversity in pornography—representations of different kinds of bodies—the idea of pornography viewers’ recognition that they are not alone is a succinct response to a question of its importance. It is also appropriate that, given the somatic and sexual realities of some porn viewers, Zamir (2013) uses the term ‘uniqueness.’ Put simply, some of the authors in the Hartley archive articulate their curiosity about bodies similar to their own being represented in pornography.

The work of Mayne and Radway considers the idea of an ideal spectator (Mayne, 2002, p. 79) or “ideal reader” (p. 85). In her examination of Romance, Mayne questions the idea of ‘real readers’ in an ethnographic study versus a theoretical ideal spectator. The concern is that the academic’s analysis of an ‘ideal spectator’ will be skewed through their

the way women in both studies resist traditional roles and expectations of femininity (Radway, 1991, p. 12).
own perspective, subsequently influencing the results. The subjective position of the theorist receiving and interpreting the responses might construct an “ideal reader” that is as dubious as that of theoretical models (Mayne, 2002, p. 85). Mayne makes clear that she is not criticizing or dismissing Radway’s analysis; rather, she offers a caution that the address-reception issue cannot be easily overcome through a different analysis model. This caution is valuable advice for the Hartley research and the interpretation of fan mail by the researcher / reader.

The analytic connection between romance readers and pornography spectators is appropriate in the context of this research’s examination of video pornography and spectators’ fan mail. Radway (1991) admits that romance readers face accusations that romance novels’ contents are thinly veiled pornography, and that like pornography, romance novels can be understood as a leisure activity that “does not harm others” (p. 54). Both pornography scenarios and romance novels offer viewers and readers a utopian framework for the imagination: the possibility for fantasizing solutions mentioned above. While film pornography consists largely of explicit sexual representations, an Aristotelian understanding of imitation, Radway (1991) claims that female romance readers are not interested in graphic sexuality, instead preferring to construct sexual scenario details for themselves (p. 66). Substantiating the claim, Radway cites readership survey results that show that 55% of romance readers reject novels that can be construed as pornographic. In the same survey, a majority of female readers reported that they enjoy descriptions of male physiques and sexual scenarios contained in many romance novels (Radway, 1991, pp. 70–72). The first

19 I address the idea of the ‘intimate stranger’ in examining spectators of Hartley’s videos; this is discussed in Chapter 4 below.
statistic, while a slight majority, reveals that 45% hold a different opinion of romance novel content. This potential for contradictory interpretations of romance versus pornography is resolved to some extent by the readers’ responses that descriptions of sexual encounters are permissible provided they occur between one man and one woman who are portrayed as being “in love” (p. 104).

I suggest the survey results cited in Radway’s work regarding female romance readers ‘rejecting pornography’ and concurrently enjoying descriptions of male bodies lead us back to Mayne’s contention that we should not reduce this analysis to a bifurcation between complicity with dominant ideology and individual resistance. The bifurcation in Mayne’s work describes a spectator / reader complicit with the dominant ideology, a person holding a cultural and political view commensurate with the majoritarian social norms of that time. That is, the majority of “married, middle-class mothers” (Mayne, 2002, p. 82; Radway, 1984, p. 12) did not want the romance novels to be interpreted as pornographic. I question whether this percentage might be representative of alignment with the traditional, conservative values of the era’s Reagan and Thatcher anti-pornography politics. Conversely, it is plausible that some of the married, middle-class, heterosexual mothers, and others who read romance novels in the 1980s, would have enjoyed more sexually explicit texts, and might also have enjoyed watching Hartley’s pornographic videos. Admittedly, this is conjecture on my part.

The early 1980s saw the rise of ‘family values’ politics from the conservative right in the US. This “family values” worldview prescribed “monogamous, procreative, married heterosexual families” (Strub, 2015, p. 132). Like the beginning of video pornography and Hartley’s career, Radway’s research on romance novel readers occurred in the 1980s, a time
when conservative political ideology endorsed sexual censorship of art (Adler, 2003; Heins, Cho and Commerato, 2003), music (Chastagner, 1999; Cutietta, 1986), speech (*Bethel School District v. Fraser*, 478 U.S. 675 (1986); *Hustler Magazine, Inc. v. Falwell*, 485 U.S. 46 (1988)), specific sexual practices (*Bowers v. Hardwick*, 478 U.S. 186 (1986)), and, of course, pornography (Attorney General’s Commission on Pornography, 1986; *Sable Communications v. FCC*, 492 U.S. 115 (1989)). The women romance readers interested in explicit descriptions of sexuality in romance novels might be understood, like pornography spectators, as holding a socio-political view resistant to the majority. The work of Radway and Mayne is useful here in articulating how, starting in the socially conservative 1980s, there was resistance to anti-pornography ideology. I suggest the Hartley letters are a direct, personal voice similar to some of Radway’s survey respondents.

**Fantasy**

The second theme Mayne (2002) presents in her analysis of the paradoxes of spectatorship theory is fantasy. Cinematic representations are capable of generating fantasy, both in the film’s depiction of imaginary, magical, or seemingly unbelievable scenarios, and the consideration of fantastical scenarios in the viewer’s mind. Mayne’s attention to fantasy is appropriate for an analysis of pornography spectators and pornography’s imaginative, magical, and sometimes seemingly unbelievable scenarios.

Fantasy’s “more radical exploration of psychic investment in the cinema” is relevant to pornography and sexual subjectivity (Mayne, 2002, p. 79). Mayne cites the work of Constance Penley in articulating the viewers’ relationships to and beliefs in fantasy depicted
in the film. Mayne (2002, p. 86) states that the theorization of fantasy in spectatorship studies “provides a complex and exhaustive account of the staging and imagining of the subject and its desire” (Penley, 1985, p. 54). In navigating this in-between space of ideology and resistance, and psychoanalytic theory on fantasy, Mayne (2002) questions fantasy in film with particular applicability in this research, which is: “how does the spectator come into place as desiring subject of the film?” (p. 88). That is, given the spectator’s imagination and desires, and the earlier discussion of complicity with dominant ideology versus resistance, how does the spectator become a desiring subject of the film (and its fantasies)? The relationship of the subject and their desire to the pornographic video is of particular importance in my dissertation’s focus on fan culture, spectatorship, and video pornography. More importantly, for the research questions I address, did access to VCR technology and video pornography change the pornography spectator’s engagement with the film? And does the spectator’s relationship to video pornography have a subsequent effect on their engagement with pornography as a form of sex education?

Mayne (2002, p. 89) notes the importance of fantasy that regards “positions of sexual identification” as not being fixed, static, unquestionable (Penley, 1988, p. 11). What Penley, and subsequently, Mayne, urge, and what I want to highlight here, is a rejection of assumptions regarding the sexuality of characters in film. And equally, in the analysis we should not hold assumptions regarding the sexuality of spectators. Fantasy allows for the possibility of assuming sexual identifications produced through the film. However, we must recognize that the concept of a spectator also consists of a demographic matrix comprised of categorizations such as ability, age, class, education, ethnicity, gender, race, religion, and
sexuality, making up an identity that exists outside the cinema (Mayne, 2002, p. 90). The various pornography viewers not only come with a unique identity, but also their own fantasies: their engagement with and response to the film’s fantasy scenario will be equally unique and personal (O’Toole, 1998, p. 308).

Fantasy, generally, is a concept many of us are made familiar with from an early age. Fantasy provides an opportunity to ponder activities considered magical or enchanted, and introduces the concept of being the spectator of fantasy (Bettelheim, 2010; Zipes, 2011). The fantasies of film viewers and romance reader provide an opportunity for escapism from realities, and possibilities for a specific kind of utopian bliss. For romance readers the value of fantasy is “in proportion to their lack of resemblance to the real world” (Radway, 1991, p. 100). Radway cites Bettelheim’s (1976) work on the utility afforded through fairy tales, their ability to provide the reader / viewer with options in navigating problems and deliberating solutions. The romance reader recognizes that, like fairy tales, the fantasy is unreal; however, it offers optimism, hope, and the “luxury of self-indulgence” (Radway, 1991, p. 100). What distinguishes romance from true fairy tales is that, while the romance novels are fiction, the fantasy of the romance is possible, it is not a completely mythical realm (p. 192). The sexual utility of fairy tales is articulated through Bettelheim’s (1976) argument that they suggest “a time when we must learn what we have not known before ... to undo the repression of sex. What we had experienced as dangerous, loathsome, something to be shunned must change its appearance,” and be realized as something positive, natural and joyful (p. 279). It is Bettelheim’s understanding of fairy tales as an opportunity to “undo the repression of sex” and experience it as natural and joyful that I want to link as a possibility through
pornography spectatorship.

The idea of escapism has been criticized for not being productive, for representing an unwillingness to engage reality. In her ethnographic research on women cinema viewers in the 1950s, Jackie Stacey (2002) defends the concept of escapism as significant in enabling individuals to cope with everyday issues (p. 428). The idea of consuming cinema for its utility as escapism somewhat echoes the romance readers in Radway’s research (1991). The viewers/readers of fiction and fantasy in the research of both Radway and Stacey enthusiastically endorse the social benefits and emotional utility derived from temporal escapism. The social and emotional efficacy of cinema, particularly in the early to mid-twentieth century, includes the experience of entertainment as an accessible gathering place for marginalized groups on the lower strata of social class: women, working class men, and immigrants²⁰ (Hansen, 2002, p. 391; Stacey, 2002). The sense of inclusion and belonging, while often antithetical to cinematic representations of marginalized groups, supports the idea of the theatre as a welcoming public space.

Taking up Stacey’s work on marginalized groups, cinema spectatorship, and the idea of escapism, I briefly turn attention to cinematic representations of marginalized bodies and sexualities as a kind of sex education. Contemporary analyses of fantasy in film focus largely on categorizations of gender, sexuality, and monogamous couples as normative concepts. A starting point for the idea of fantasy in film then might involve differences that are often distinct from normative, mainstream conceptions of sexuality. In my research of pornography spectators there is a diversity of bodies and sexualities with the potential to disrupt or question the spectators’ ideas of sexual roles, sexual practices, binary gender identifications
(Sycamore, 2006), compulsory able-bodiedness (McRuer, 2006), compulsory heterosexuality (Rich, 1981), heteronormativity (Warner, 1991), homonormativity (Duggan, 2002), compulsory monogamy (Easton & Liszt, 1997), and coupling as the compulsory basis for sexual relationships (Jenkins, 2016).

The inclusion and depiction of different bodies, sexualities, and relationship schema might constitute a kind of fantasy or utopia for some viewers. At the same time representations of a diversity of bodies can sometimes be interpreted as an exoticization of the Other. For others, mainstream, heterosexual representations may offer its own kind of fantasy. Fictional, sexually explicit scenarios in pornography can be taken up by spectators as adult fantasy. The idea of fantasy in pornography has been taken up in cultural studies as “a fictional, fantastical, even allegorical realm” (Kipnis 1996, p. 163). The idea of fantasy and enchantment in pornography as described by Kipnis can be understood as an adult fairy tale. And as an adult fairy tale pornography can influence the spectator’s engagement with sexual fantasies, especially those not formerly considered or having knowledge prior knowledge of (Frank, 2009; Reage, 1992). Like romance novel scenarios that seek escapism, adult fairy tales hold the “utopian potential of the pornographic imagination” (Jenkins, 1992, p. 190).

Porn theorists have created a variety of terms to describe pornography spectatorship as utopian or fantastical (Kipnis, 1996). Marcus’ (1965) work on Victorian sexuality uses the term, “pornotopia” (p. 216). Two decades later, in Kendrick’s (1987) research on archaeological discoveries of pornography, he cites Marcus’ term “pornotopia” (p. 76). Bauer’s (2007) more recent work modifies the term slightly to “pornutopia” (pp. 63–73), while O’Toole (1998) modifies Marcus slightly to ‘pornocopia.’ And Williams’ (1989)
foundational work on pornography evades conjunctions with ‘porn’ and simply describes a
pornographic “utopia” (pp. 154–155).

Similar to romance novels, pornography is a fantasy that represents a “sex that has no
past,” “no future,” and “virtually no present” (Jenkins, 1992, p. 190). In his account of
pornographic utopia, Jenkins (1992) writes that pornography fans can fulfill sexual fantasies
in sexual scenarios that have little or no plot, that may occur relatively spontaneously, often
depicting sexual encounters or relationships that are emotionally shallow or meaningless, and
without expectation or obligation to some religious, cultural, or social understanding of
relationship commitment between the sexual interlocutors.

Admittedly, engaging the theorization of fairy tales is moving tangentially away from
fan culture and spectatorship. In this section of Mayne’s work on fantasy in cinema
spectatorship I include academic work on enchantment and fairy tales, and Kipnis’
description of pornography as a fantastical and allegorical realm to highlight the analytic
similarities between reading / viewing romance, fairy tales, and pornography. I do so to
introduce the claim that pornography can be understood as an adult fairy tale, a sexually
explicit fantasy that allows and perhaps encourages the spectator’s imagination to consider
new ideas regarding sexuality. That is, similar to the young reader of fairy tales, or adult
female romance readers, the pornography fan garners pleasure from the sexual fantasy and
utopia of the pornographic imagination. And like the fairy tale or romance reader, video
pornography viewers have the possibility to engage their imagination in the private, domestic
realm, over again, re-watching their most cherished sections of the story.

Having argued for the importance of fantasy and imagination to the pornography
spectator I now introduce David Loftus’ chapter, “Reality versus Fantasy.” The purpose of including Loftus here is to provide a balanced adjudication of the pornography viewer’s ability to discern reality from fiction. Loftus (2002) states that contrary to claims by many anti-pornography critics, “most of the men” in his research were quite cognizant of the distinction between the pornography they viewed and “real life” (p. 137). Some respondents stated that the people in pornography were “unreal” because of their physical attractiveness and overt sexuality, but others read the open sexuality of pornography performances as indicative of “strong people with character and personality” (p. 139). Loftus’ ethnographic research on men’s responses to film pornography is comparable to Radway’s Romance in that it provides an array of views on spectatorship issues, and valuable because it specifically addresses hardcore pornography. Loftus (2002) suggests that like other forms of fiction—mainstream film, television, or novels—the average viewer/reader enjoys fiction precisely because it is an escape from their quotidian experiences (Hellekson & Busse, 2006). Moreover, unlike the homogenized sample group in Radway’s research, the respondents in Loftus’ work represent a breadth of age, education, ethnicity, and occupation, providing a more diverse group opinion.

Mayne (2002) closes her section on fantasy by claiming that it holds the potential for “engaging different desires, contradictory effect and multiple stagings” (p. 91). These multiple stagings refer to the diversity among individual pornography viewers, and the disparate fantasies each will produce from their unique desires. As Kipnis (1996) writes, hardcore pornography provides fans with a sexual fairy tale, one that is fiction, but scenarios that are usually possible, if not entirely plausible. The pornography spectator may respond in
various ways: it is a “distinctly personal and complex happening, involving not just the fantasy scenario on screen, but the viewer’s own fantasy extracts, projections and flashbacks” (O’Toole 1998, p. 308).

The different identities and desires of pornography fans point to a theorization of spectatorship that is diverse rather than essentialist. The diversity of bodies and sexualities described above assures that the viewer’s own fantasies are distinctly personal and complex. The Hartley fan letters in my research contain fantasies that can be interpreted as the author’s articulation of an adult fairy tale. Like fairy tales, these fantastical stories are created and written through pornography spectatorship and the imagination of the viewer developed from extracts, projections, and flashbacks: their most cherished scenarios.

Negotiation

Mayne (2002) defines negotiation as the varied ways that different texts are “used,” “interpreted,” or “appropriated” (p. 80). The diversity of negotiated viewings (or readings) of film or video texts is tied to the earlier questions raised under her interrogation of address and reception, and fantasy, respectively. The negotiation and response(s) to film by the spectator is based in part upon relationships with their particular social and cultural paradigms. As described in the overview to Mayne’s (2002) work, she makes the significant point in her analysis that the viewer’s negotiation and response to these texts need not be challenging. Simply put, a viewer’s non-normative interpretation of cinema is not necessarily “radical” or “contestatory” (p. 92). As we have seen above, the viewer’s negotiation may be considered congruent with disparate response positions: complicit with the dominant
ideology or, contrarily, as challenging socio-cultural norms. To summarize, then, Mayne suggests that all readings can be accurately categorized as either dominant or oppositional: complicit or resistant. Her theoretical position in spectatorship studies makes room for an in-between space, avoiding a bifurcation of categorizing texts and readings as either hegemonic or liberatory.

Having reviewed Mayne’s work, I want to introduce the idea of consumption, specifically the pornography fan’s consumption of pornography. In order to understand a viewer’s reception of a film, or pornographic video, it is useful to look at how the viewer ‘consumes’ it, which in this case means how the viewer appropriates and incorporates ideas and knowledge from the work into his or her activities, beliefs, and sense of self and others. That is, the concept of cinema viewing / consumption links to fan culture, fan mail, and pornography fans’ negotiation with the film: the ways they might incorporate ideas, activities, styles of dress, specific language, and behaviour, generally.

In the opening lines of McNair’s (1996) chapter on consuming pornography he recommends that we “get away from the habit of thinking in terms of what the media do to people and substitute for it the idea of what people do with the media” (p. 89). The movement in attention from the concepts of reception, fantasy, and negotiation in Mayne’s work, to consumption, is an examination of what pornography means in the actual lives and activities of fans. While the cultural studies use of the term consumption usually refers to the understanding of various cultural texts, in cinema studies consumption might refer to the promotion of consumerism via the cinema. Similar to Mayne’s description of negotiation, cinema consumption has an in-between space where the spectator is neither a transgressive
purchaser nor a dupe of consumerism (Stacey, 2007, p. 313).

The spectatorship of pornography and any correlative consumption recognizes both the making sense of sexually explicit film, and the inculcation of particular sexual practices, identifications, relationships, or products. This inculcation can be thought of as the “economy of celebrity,” a descriptor for the commodification of the celebrity, and the subsequent consumption by fans of not only the celebrity image, but sometimes products associated with their image (Turner, 2007, p. 193). With particular regard to this dissertation the adoption of specific elements of contentious celebrities, their products, and activities are indicative of their resonance with the spectator (Sandvoss, 2005; Staiger, 2000).

The consideration, appropriation, and adoption of specific ideas or images from film is perhaps the ultimate outcome from fan consumption (Lewis, 1992). In Textual Poachers, Jenkins (1992) describes the incorporation of cultural practices and iconography into the lives of fans. Jenkins argues there is something empowering about how fans “reclaim media imagery for their own purposes” and assimilate them into the particulars of their lives (p. 32). In the context of Jenkins’ analysis, the term ‘poachers’ works to highlight the way fans may “resist legal restraints on their pleasure and challenge attempts to regulate the production and circulation of popular meanings” (p. 32). Presumably pornography fans need not resist legal restraints on their pleasure, however, the idea of fans’ resistance to normative sexual representations is of particular importance for the ways viewers take up particular pornographic imagery for their own use.

A quarter century since the publication of Jenkins’ work on fan culture I suggest we might consider the idea of spectators ‘reclaiming’ media imagery into a more charitable,
pragmatic interpretation than ‘poaching.’ Pornography spectatorship is a pragmatic, personal context where a viewer might adopt a sexual practice / knowledge learned from pornography. In this context we can understand the viewer as utilizing knowledge acquired through pornography consumption. An example of this reclaiming, or utilizing, media imagery in the Hartley fan archive is a letter (that I revisit in Chapter 4) from a man intrigued by a ‘plastic device’ (sex toy) Hartley had inserted in her butt during a particular video scenario. The man asked what the device was, and where he could purchase one. The fact that the viewer was not only curious about the ‘plastic device’ but asked how he might acquire one suggests that this might be representative of a fan considering a move from viewing a media image to utilizing the image in some way for his own purposes.

There are numerous examples in the Hartley archive of fans writing pornography scenario ideas and co-star suggestions. These scripts and suggestions from fans display their consumption and negotiation with the celebrity, the story, and its character portrayals. Through “intense interaction” some fans engage in writing their own stories, or the creation of a new text for the character(s) (Jenkins, 1992, p. 52).

My research questions ask how VCR technology influenced pornography spectatorship, and how private pornography viewing might have constituted a form of sex education. I suggest private access to explicit representations of sexuality, and an interpretation of those representations as adult fairy tales—pornotopia, pornocopia, or pornographic utopia—invites an intimate engagement with pornography. This engagement with pornography exemplifies “what people do with the media” (McNair, 1996, p. 89). One of the things viewers can ‘do with the media’ is to consider the sexually explicit fairy tales as
an opportunity to “undo the repression of sex” (Bettelheim, 1976, p. 279), question their knowledge about sex and consider pornography as a kind of sex education.

Conclusion

I have connected film theory on spectatorship to academic work on fairy tales and fan culture to articulate how pornography might be “used,” “interpreted,” or “appropriated” (Mayne, 2002, p. 80) by fans. The fan letters in this research describe how fans sometimes “reclaim media imagery for their own purposes” (Jenkins, 1992, p. 32). While some pornography fans may be reluctant to be public with their media consumption I believe these spectators realize the same level of fantasy.

In this dissertation I asked how VCR technology changed pornography spectatorship, and how this technology and the opportunity for private pornography viewing might have contributed to understanding pornography as a kind of sex education. The next three chapters examine, in order, the movement of pornography from the public theatre to the private home, Nina Hartley’s fan mail archive, and pornography as sex education. Epistolarity, as the methodology of my research, is useful in considering the authors’ positionality in relation to a pornography star: the declaration of personal experiences and thoughts following pornography spectatorship, articulated through the connection of the author’s physical body with pen and paper. The viewers’ letters describe their consumption of pornography: responses to explicit representations of sexuality that often resist conformity to dominant ideas regarding sexuality and sexual relationships. The Hartley letters sometimes include the spectator’s thoughts on what can be understood as fantasizing solutions to sex. These
‘solutions,’ described following reception and negotiation of pornography, sometimes reveal the viewer acquiring a kind of adult sexual education.
Chapter 3: Pornography at Home: The VCR Era

Introduction

In this chapter I examine how VCR technology and pornography recorded on videotapes created a different distribution of and access to pornography than had existed before that time. I attempt here to elucidate and bring together perspectives from film studies, audience and spectatorship studies, sexuality studies, and pornography studies. The trajectory of these analyses starts with the brief statement above on the technological evolution of pornography, and its connection to the public/private divide in spectatorship of sexually explicit media.

The first section briefly introduces pornography’s adaption of new spectator technologies (Ford, 1999), the Hartley archive’s connection to these technologies, and to Hartley herself. The section includes a sub-section overview of ‘stag’ films, ‘loops,’ or ‘blue movies’ as the initial opportunity for private pornography spectatorship, and considerations pertaining to that technology. The second section examines the public adult theatre as a specific, demarcated site for viewing pornography, and the spatial considerations of those theatres. This section includes a subsection titled, ‘The Adult Theatre and the Unspeakable,’ which examines academic work on adult theatres, the sense of community for patrons, and the set of norms regarding sexual liaisons and personal safety. In the third section I examine the movement of pornography from public spaces to the private, domestic realm via VCR technology. This chapter attends to the logistical and sexual considerations concomitant with the physical viewing space and how this differed from adult theatres. The sexual considerations of viewing pornographic videos at home are captured in some of the Hartley
fan letters: viewers describing sexual practices they may engage in while watching pornography in private. I also note how VCR technology provided the spectator with control over their viewing: the ability to pause, rewind, slow-motion, or fast-forward, watching pornography when desired, repeatedly. The fourth section discusses the proliferation of VCR technology and its subsequent effect on pornography production and distribution. The rapid, nationwide distribution of pornographic videos in the US greatly expanded accessibility to private pornography viewing, particularly in rural regions without the population numbers to sustain an adult theatre. This is followed by a section on pornography spectatorship in the VCR era. The conjunction of excerpts from some of Nina Hartley’s fan mail (detailed in the following chapter) and academic work on pornography spectatorship divulge how sexually explicit videos provide an opportunity for the viewer to engage in sexual fantasy. The sequence of these sections on pornography spectatorship articulate the significance of accessibility, privacy, and answer the first research question as to some of the ways in which VCR technology changed viewers’ engagement with videotape pornography.

**Technology, Pornography, and Nina Hartley**

As a young adult Nina Hartley felt conflicted in attempting to reconcile her concurrent identifications as a feminist and a sex-positive person who wanted to explore and enjoy sexual pleasure. Hartley mustered her courage one day and ventured into an adult theatre in San Francisco, sat in the dark, the only woman, watching pornography on the big screen. Hartley recognized the spatial quality of the adult theatre prior to her first work in pornography. She describes the unspoken requirement in the adult theatre of optimizing the
available seating space between patrons (N. Hartley, personal conversation, March 12, 2013). The necessity for spatial dispersion was immediately intensified by the recognition by male patrons in an adult theatre that a female viewer had entered. Hartley humorously recalls the startled, awkward, and abrupt movement of male spectators within approximately five seats of her. Ultimately, during her first visit to an adult theatre, mesmerized by what she was watching on the screen, Hartley realized that she wanted to work in professional pornography (N. Hartley, personal conversation, March 12, 2013).

In this chapter’s attention to technological advances in viewing movies, particularly pornography, it is interesting to note that some of the fan mail addressed to Nina Hartley describes the VCR and other technologies related to pornography production and consumption. In fact, one envelope in the Hartley archive contains only a 3.5-inch floppy disk; there is no paper letter included. There are, of course, many Hartley fan letters containing the word ‘video’ or videotape.’ However, there are also several letters I have categorized because of their specific reference to viewing technology, though not always specific to the VCR. An undated letter from an author named Keith in Colorado tells Nina that “If it wasn’t for you I wouldn’t need a freeze frame on my V.C.R.” And a US Army soldier serving in Somalia in January 1993, mentions that he owns a laserdisc player, and wishes that more of her movies were available on laserdisc format. He tells Nina that, while laserdiscs are more expensive than videotapes, he believes more porn viewers will purchase laserdiscs because of the improved quality. Finally, a June 1995, typed letter from a self-identified bisexual woman in Hawaii loves Nina Hartley’s videos and states that she “hates
loops!” (8mm stag films). She then mentions videotaping a (repeated) news program on pornography star, Shauna Grant, and rewinding the tape to confirm that there was a short clip of Nina Hartley standing near Grant. The woman writes that she has an interest in biographies and asks if Hartley has considered an autobiography, or “having someone else write it?” She goes on to recommend that, because “we seem to be moving into the realm of cyberspace,” Hartley consider the possibility of releasing “the world’s first interactive biographical CD!” This 1995 letter is a fortunate Hartley archive research find for the attention here to media technologies given that the author mentions porn ‘loops,’ VCR rewinding, cyberspace, and CD technology in a single correspondence.

The first research question I pose in the introductory chapter was what role the home viewing experience, enabled by the introduction of VCR technology in the 1980s, played in the audience engagement with video pornography generally, and Hartley’s pornography specifically. Nina Hartley is an intergenerational pornography star. Beginning her career in 1984, and still active in porn more than three decades later, Hartley has many long-time fans. For some of these fans, Hartley was the star, or at least performed in, the first porn video they viewed. There are also younger fans familiar with her more recent work, and perhaps her earlier videos as well. As Hartley describes, the significance of fans who have followed her from the start (or close to her start) have, in a pornography context, ‘grown up’ with her (N. Hartley, personal communication, March 12, 2013). That is, much of what they have viewed, pondered, and learned about sexuality through pornography is connected, to some extent, to Hartley. She observes that, because her work started in the VCR era, viewed in the private

21 I will briefly add that the ‘letter’ from the soldier in Somalia is written on a piece of cardboard, a section of a ration box, I believe. Given the level of conflict in Somalia in 1993 it is fascinating that a US Army soldier took
home, that she is “there with them in a very private, personal moment, and (she is) giving them approval” (N. Hartley, personal communication, March 12, 2013). Hartley goes on to say that when men speak to her “they expose themselves emotionally with me because they have been with me so many times, and they feel close to me, they feel they know me.” Hartley adds that these fans are excited to meet her and “feel so free with me because they have been alone with me so many times” (N. Hartley, personal communication, March 12, 2013).

‘Stag’ Films and ‘Loops.’

My dissertation research puts forth video technology as the first widely accessible and affordable format for the rental or purchase of moving-image pornography for personal viewing. In this brief sub-section, I introduce the earlier technologies of moving-image pornography on short, silent, films known as ‘loops’ or ‘stag’ films. These films represent moving-image pornography in the pre-‘Golden Era’ or ‘Porno Chic’ (McNair, 2012) era of pornography in adult theatres, and prior to the advent of video technology. Stag films, or ‘loops,’ enabled pornography spectatorship and the potential for pornography to constitute a kind of adult sex education. However, as I describe below, the technology and ownership of stag films prohibited widespread distribution and accessibility to the potential adult renter / spectator based on class, ethnicity, and gender, for example. I suggest the distribution and access issues pertaining to stag films generally limits their influence on pornography spectatorship and adult sex education to audiences broadly.

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the time and effort to write to pornography star, Nina Hartley.
Early twentieth-century underground stag movies and ‘loops’ constituted the hardcore pornography market from 1908 to 1967 (Paasonen, Nikunen, & Saarenmaa, 2007, p. 3; Schaefer, 2004, p. 371). In citing Koch’s (1993) important work on the development of ‘stag’ films, McNair (1996) observes that these early pornographic films “were being made and shown in public as early as 1904” (p. 44). However, Alilunas’ (2016) recent research notes that “the risqué peep-show loop had been a staple of the penny arcade since the 1890s” (p. 45). From these varied sources, we can assume that stag films appeared sometime during the eclipse of the twentieth-century.

The term ‘stag’ or ‘blue movies’ applies to short, “illegally made, silent, one-reel films” (Juffer, 1998, p. 37). The term stag arose because their spectatorship was generally all-male contexts of such as ‘stag parties,’ strip shows, and reunions” (McNair, 1996, p. 58). Academic work on early moving-image pornography spectatorship captures the idea of “furtive traveling projectionists carrying suitcases of reels” of film, and perhaps the unpredictability of viewing (Di Lauro and Rabkin, 1976, pp. 54–57). These films would be transported to small-town stag parties, Legion smokers, and fraternity clubhouses and other men-only gatherings parties (Miller-Young, 2007, p. 36; Penley, 2006, p. 103; Waugh, 2004, p. 130). The projectionists and venue managers were ‘furtive’ of course because the films were illegal.

Contrary to the increased opportunity for pornography spectatorship, access was prohibited based on gender, class, and race. Spectators for these films was usually restricted to “wealthy clients in brothel-type establishments” (McNair, 1996, p. 44). As McKee, Albury, & Lumby (2008) observe, “the earliest porn films were stag movies that were almost
exclusively watched at private parties, in brothels or in sex shop booths by men” (p. 14). That is, many stag film screenings were for-profit ventures for the benefit of the projectionist or film owner(s), some gatherings were in or near brothels where the stag films served as a salacious motivator for prostitution (Koch, 1990). In this context, stag films differed significantly from private video spectatorship in that these screenings were neither private nor intended purely for the spectator's enjoyment; it was commingled with other sexual business ventures. Descriptions of stag film audiences include “the acculturation and initiation role of the group screenings” of stag films (Waugh, 2004, p. 131). Citing Gagnon and Simon’s (1973) work on stag film screenings, Waugh (2004) attends to the “tensions, anxieties, avoidance, and embarrassment of the group experience” for some spectators (p. 131). This anxiety and tension sometimes manifested in “the forced bravado of laughter and collective sexual banter,” deemed mandatory to “prove to their fellows that they were worthy of participating in the stag ritual” (Gagnon & Simon, 1973, p. 266). Congruent with the preceding descriptions, stag film screenings limited women’s access to pornography due to the film’s “illicit production, their private showings, and their association with prostitution” (Juffer, 1998, p. 37). Moreover, as Segal (2004) observes, in stag films produced for male pleasure the “question of women’s sexual pleasure was never an issue, as men gazed at the forbidden display of female genitals” (p. 60).

There are several key issues I highlight in this succinct attention to stag film spectatorship. First, stag film spectatorship was limited based on the unpredictable nature of stag film distribution and screening. Second, with the exception of female prostitutes, stag film screenings were restricted to men, and, in the early twentieth-century, usually affluent,
white men. Third, as one of the earliest moving-image pornographic productions made by men for the entertainment of men representations of female sexual pleasure (and some associated understandings of adult sex education) was minimal. Finally, as described by theorists examining stag films, the all-male, group viewing of stag film spectatorship manifested an almost obligatory, stratified, masculine response to the film. I suggest the idea of peer pressure and an audience that lacked diversity may have had a negative influence on a spectator’s consideration of sexual representations in stag films.

I close this focused but succinct attention to stag films here. It is accurate to state that these films were the first to offer spectators private pornography viewing and the potential for adult sex education. In the Introduction chapter I elucidate the significance of the Stanley v. Georgia US Supreme Court case that adjudicated the permissibility of private pornography spectatorship. It is important to recognize that Stanley won that case. However, the logistics of the case bear some attention: the viewer is required to own or have access to a film projector, and to pornographic ‘loops.’ These films were considered illegal for some time and continued to be illegal in some geographic regions. Stag films were advertised for sale in magazine advertisements but sending payment and waiting for controversial or illegal material to arrive via postal mail was somewhat dubious due to anti-pornography legislation regulating postal distribution of pornography (Copp & Wendell, 1983; de Grazia, 1993; Hixson, 1996; Makris, 1959; Schauer, 1976; Strub, 2013). I suggest the lack of a coherent, dependable distribution system, prohibited access to some demographic groups, and postal regulation of pornography distribution are genuine considerations in assessing the availability and subsequent impact of stag films in the pre-Golden Age pornography era.
Having said that, importantly for my dissertation, the lifespan of stag films was extended through developments in media technologies. As Alilunas (2016) observes, during the introduction of video pornography “a large selection of double features that were clearly peep-show stag films” had been “repurposed on video” (p. 120). In this significant connection between pornography and media technology, early 20th-century stag films can thrive on videotape or digital formats (Strub, 2015).

The Theatre, Pornography, and Spatial Considerations

The technological advance of 16mm film resulted in the introduction of mainstream theatres, and, as Schaefer describes (2005), 16mm film lowered “barriers to entry for the small storefront (adult) theaters that proliferated across urban America in the early 1970s” (Strub, 2015, p. 131). It is reasonable to suggest that a determinant in an individual’s decision to seek out and consume video pornography is its accessibility, and the level of privacy in consumption (Bolton, 2004; Juffer, 1998; Loftus, 2002). Beginning in the 1980s, the production and widespread distribution of video porn offered an opportunity of relative privacy for those persons who wished to view pornography. The context of relative privacy here means that, for the most part, pornography consumers could rent or purchase pornography videos from video shops that only require face-to-face contact to acquire the material. Beyond that, the consumer is able to view privately, rather than entering the large, shared space of an adult theatre. The opportunity for the private viewing of pornography was (and continues to be) important for those who experience some level of “shyness,” “uneasiness,” or “shame” watching pornography in a shared space (Koch, 1993, p. 25).
For many adults the XXX film houses in the 1970s, 80s, and into the 1990s,\textsuperscript{22} were the location where pornography could be viewed. Yet other adult film fans may have been prevented from patronizing an adult theatre due to their geographic location, physical limitation, or financial inability. The adult theatres of Times Square in New York, for example, became a space where some patrons found friendship, a community that looked after its members, codes of conduct, and sexual knowledges specific to that location (Delany, 1999b). Shame and shyness are, of course, not the experience of all patrons of adult theatres. My examination includes the spatial considerations for viewers regarding sexual and social activities within the adult theatre. The purpose of this overview is to describe the adult theatre as a precursor to home viewing via VCR technology, and help distinguish how pornography spectatorship changed through private viewing.

Mainstream cinema offers a shared space for film entertainment, an opportunity for open public discourse, and for dating, often regarded as a precursor to physical intimacy or sexual acts. The adult theatre, however, is best understood as a space for a different kind of “spectatorial behavior,” one that deviates from “middle-class standards of reception” (Hansen, 2002, p. 393). More specific to pornography spectatorship, adult theatres featured hardcore pornography, often with several films that would screen sequentially, allowing an extended, uninterrupted period of time for pornography spectatorship (Delany, 1999b). While adults were, and still are, legally eligible to view hardcore pornography, patrons may still be fearful to have their consumption of sexually explicit material known to their spouses/partners, friends, employers, co-workers, neighbours, or religious affiliates. Yet, as

\textsuperscript{22} There are adult theatres still in existence however video, DVD, and Internet technologies have greatly decreased their numbers. As Delany (1999) has written, the famous Times Square theatres in New York, while
Delany (1999a; 1999b) articulates, the spatial context of the adult theatre can be a desired space for social connection with other viewers: it is an opportunity to learn what one has not known before, to undo the repression of sex, and, perhaps, a place for clandestine sex.

I conclude this section on pornography spectatorship, the theatre, and its spatial considerations, and restrictions by referencing a letter from the Hartley archive. While it is a singular example the letter disrupts a simplified public/private demarcation of pornography spectatorship. The adult (pornography) theatre is a public space limited to persons of legal age, yet it is a shared space. Unlike viewing pornography (or any film) in the private, domestic realm, there are limitations, both legal and social, on conduct in a public adult theatre. Additionally, there are some less common spaces where sexual activity takes place while viewing pornography, spaces that are neither fully public nor fully private, such as sex clubs. These less common spaces might be work-related spaces not accessible to the general public. An example from the Hartley archive is a 1991 letter from a US Marine aboard a Navy ship near Korea. He mentions that his roommate is a huge fan of Nina Hartley, and that the roommate’s father sent two of Hartley’s movies on VHS video. The Marine’s letter describes the days of boredom aboard ship, and that watching her movies in the “squadbay” is a group activity for the Marines. He writes that they “often have ‘circle jerks’” where “everyone waits for (Nina’s) scene to blow their nut.” While a group of men masturbating together while watching pornography does not necessarily constitute a physical, intimate, sexual act between persons, it is a mutually engaged sexual activity amongst a group in a shared space. This letter articulates, rather explicitly, an alternative space for viewing pornography. The US Navy ship is not a public space, and the servicemen on board have

popular, were targeted by the Giuliani mayoral governance in the 1990s.
little if any ‘private space.’ Furthermore, the activity the author describes is organized in an agreed upon space: the squadbay. In this dissertation’s attention to pornography in the VCR era, I suggest the possibility for US Marines to view Nina Hartley videos while deployed on a ship near Korea exemplifies the far-reaching possibilities for pornography spectatorship.

The Adult Theatre and the Unspeakable.

In Delany's (1999a) article, On the Unspeakable, the narrative describes the Capri Theater, an adult theatre in Times Square, New York, and graphically depicts the activities that occurred in that darkened space. The “speakable” is the negotiation in the Capri Theater, spoken or motioned, the words uttered between sex workers and clients, while explicit sexual language is the unspeakable “between man and wife of thirty years” (Delany, 1999a, p. 62). And what is speakable between new lovers “is unspeakable between best friends of a decade” (p. 62). The speakable / unspeakable are the sexual conversations, negotiations, or activities that occur in the Capri Theater, in private homes, by the office water cooler, on dance floors, and talk shows; some are speakable, some are unspeakable, the demarcation is context-specific dependent upon the constituents of the conversation, and their relationship(s).

Based on his autoethnographic recollection of years attending and cruising for sex with men in adult theatres⁴³ Delany articulates the knowledge spectators acquire with the frequency of visits and time in the theatres: empirical knowledge of the porn theatre. Delany (1999b) uses the term “mores and manners” to describe the social expectations and spatial

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²³ I should clarify here that the men described in Delany’s work were located within adult theatres screening ‘heterosexual’ pornography. I make no assumptions on the sexual orientation or identification(s) of those men.
considerations regarding spectatorship and sex in adult theatres\textsuperscript{24} (p. 19). The (potential) benefits of viewing pornography in an adult theatre include a sense of community, friends and acquaintances who watched out for potential threats, including theft, unsafe patrons, or vice police, for example (Delany, 1999b, pp. 21–30). Although it is a public adult space the XXX theatre attendees’ empirical knowledge extends to recognizing which men did or did not want an audience while masturbating, how many seats a spectator should sit from someone masturbating, which men were ‘straight’ but accepted handjobs or oral sex from men, which men offered oral sex, which men were good/bad at oral sex, the prohibition of monetary exchange, the confusion and discomfort with a woman in the theatre, and the communication among ‘regulars’ when a stranger entered (pp. 21–30).

The theatre spectators Delany describes include sex workers, drug dealers, and working-class men, a diverse blend of identifications. What demarcates the individuals in this example as a collective group is their location within a porn theatre, and the collective, tacit consent that accompanies the activities of alcohol consumption, drug use, masturbation, and oral sex that occur there. The sexual activity in this theatre often takes place with complete anonymity. Delany’s (1999a) argument, however, is to point out that the things he describes as “the unspeakable” are not limited to the space of the adult theatre.

I reference Delany here not only for his foundational work on adult theatres and their patrons. In my research on viewing video pornography at home Delany’s work is also useful in that it articulates how what occurs in the adult theatres of Times Square is not limited spatially or temporally to those spaces. The unspeakable is not limited—it is not “a boundary

\textsuperscript{24} The ‘cruising’ and homosocial reception conditions described by Delany are also addressed in Waugh’s (2004) chapter, “Homosociality in the classical American stag film: Off-screen, on-screen.”
dividing a positive area of allowability from a complete and totalized negativity” (p. 61). Rather, the unspeakable “is mobile; it flows” (p. 66). This dissertation welcomes the video pornography spectator to engage sexually explicit material and to divulge what might be unspeakable in the company of family, friends, or co-workers. The ability to watch pornographic videos at home, in private, or with others, provides a spatial and temporal context for introducing the unspeakable: sexual curiosities, desires, and fantasies.

Like some of the patrons in the Capri Theater described by Delany, some of Hartley’s fan letters communicate the unspeakable: the sexual curiosities, desires, or fantasies they are unable or unwilling to discuss with a spouse, friend, sibling, co-worker, or religious authority. What I want to garner from the “Unspeakable” (Delany, 1999a) for my research is the idea of a spectator engaged in viewing explicit representations of sexual activities and communicating ‘the unspeakable,’ whatever that might mean to the particular viewer. As described by epistolarity theorists, the spectators / authors of the Hartley fan archive desiring to be close to the addressee mail the speakable to a pornography star.

**Pornography: From the Theatre to the Home**

Al Goldstein, publisher of *Screw* magazine, and producer of the ‘Adult Blue’ porn series, stated that his wife “hates porno films” (Greenberg, 2008, p. 95). However, when they watched a film in a porn theatre that “succeeds in turning her on” she was frustrated that they could not act on sex in the moment (p. 95). Private pornography viewing at home through VCR technology does not replace the community of patrons Delany describes. And home
viewing, while possibly a social gathering, is not public. In this section I describe the advent of private pornography spectatorship through VCR technology.

Why is the study of video pornography particularly interesting? Film pornography existed in ‘stag’ films in the early twentieth century (Greenberg, 2008, p. 51), and was screened in adult theatres in the mid and late twentieth century (Delany, 1999b; Williams, 1989). In 1991 the Internet launched, and in the mid 1990s it became a platform for explicit pornography websites. These sites could be viewed in private for persons with a personal computer and Internet connection. Pornographic movies on digital video disc (DVD) can be viewed privately at home on technology that has existed for more than a decade (Bolton, 2004; O’Toole, 1998, p. 100). And recent, rapid advances in portable, digital, internet-enabled devices make online / Internet pornography spectatorship increasingly accessible and almost ubiquitous (Attwood, 2010a; Dean, 2014a, p. 1; Jacobs, 2012; Smith, 2010).

In response to the question above on video pornography’s importance I put forth two reasons why the era of video pornography production and distribution is academically and historically noteworthy. The first reason the video pornography era is academically significant is because it is the first widely accessible technological format that permitted private, moving-image pornography consumption. In the contemporary context private pornography viewing is taken for granted. However, the introduction of video technology “altered the language of moving-image pornography” (Melendez, 2004, p. 402). In the early 1980s the pornography industry immediately adapted to the then-new video technology as a means of recording and distributing movies. Pornography producers and consumers alike realized the potential of “the advent of cheap, portable video technology” (Hillyer, 2004, p.
Videotape’s “lower production costs and broader distribution provided the ideal vehicle” for producers, and offered consumers the opportunity and convenience of private pornography viewing (Melendez, 2004, p. 402). The result was what might be described as a meteoric rise in the development of video pornography production for the rapidly expanding VCR market (Penley, 2006). Succinctly, as Melendez (2004) argues, the shift from film to video “altered not only the look and feel of the product but also the viewer’s relation to, and experience of, the image” (p. 405).

The second reason why the video pornography era deserves academic attention is because it was relatively short-lived as the premium, private, pornography viewing technology. Following soon after video technology the pornography industry moved forward with DVD and online technologies. Digital pornography became available through Internet websites and physical versions of digital pornography on DVD were equally private and accessible as video. And unlike video’s physical tape that could be damaged, digital technologies were not as susceptible to corruption through repeated viewings (Hoang, 2014b). Some pornography fans owned pornographic videos, and there would be continued access to rent or purchase video pornography for some time. And certainly pornography videotapes remain in homes today, and perhaps in some form of retail or rental circulation. However, while video was the first accessible technology for private pornographic movie viewing, it was relatively short-lived as a stand-alone technology. Furthermore, VCR technology has been largely overlooked in contemporary academic attention to the new reality of largely free, widespread access to Internet pornography, for professional and amateur producers (Jacobs, 2007).
Given Delany’s description of his porn theatre experiences in the preceding section, Goldstein’s frustration regarding spontaneous sex may not have been necessary, except for personal sexual boundaries. Pornography viewing at home, on the VCR, however, permitted what Goldstein describes as “the logical progression” of sex (Greenberg, 2008, p. 95). In my argument regarding the significance of the VCR for pornography spectatorship it must be made clear how it differed from other common entertainment technologies, specifically, movie theatres and television. The VCR represents an in-between space for spectators that is both geographically and socially demarcated. When people started purchasing VCRs, theatres and television represented “two very different contexts” of motion picture entertainment: the former as public, the latter, domestic (Greenberg, 2008, p. 92). Videotape technology, and subsequent DVD technology, is usually located in the private realm, similar to television. The technological difference is that television is a passive entertainment device where the viewer is reliant on broadcasters for viewing selections and options are, to some extent, limited, whereas VCR and DVD viewers purchase or rent specific selections. As Bolton (2004) states, “I, as the home viewer, am allowed more control over the text than the theatre/arcade patron.” I suggest that videotape, as a home entertainment technology, represents an in-between technology. That is, the VCR is located between the fixed sites of reel film in theatres, and the highly portable, digital Internet technologies. Though it should be added that the latter is reliant upon an Internet connection (unless downloaded) for viewing.

Home video technology emerged in the early 1960s, but it did not become “a mass phenomenon” until the 1980s with the development of the VCR “which defeated the
superior, but less accessible, Betamax” (Strub, 2015, p. 132). The emergence of VCR technology allowed the private viewing of pornography at home, or any location with sufficient electrical power to operate the VCR. Without making too much out of the possibility, this means video pornography could be viewed on an airplane, on a mountaintop, in a cabin in the woods, or with Marines on a US Navy ship, provided there was a source of electrical power and a television monitor. As Hoang (2014b, p. 70) discusses in his recent work, the VCR provided the pornography viewer with the ability to pause, slow-motion, rewind, and re-watch, numerous times, sexual scenes of particular interest. This level of control over spectatorship is beyond live theatre, cinema films, or television.

Viewing pornography at home via VCR technology allows spectators to indulge in the familiar comforts of home: pausing the video to use the bathroom, make snacks, or answer the phone, as well as the privacy to curl up on pillows wearing pajamas (Greenberg, 2008, p. 93). Moreover, viewing pornographic videos at home (or another secure venue) provided a safe option for women, a rapidly growing demographic group for pornography (Juffer 1998; O’Toole 1998, p. 104; Williams 1989, p. 283).

The emergence and rapid growth of video stores in the early 1980s was concurrent with blockbuster Hollywood films in mainstream theatres. Awareness of the popularity of both videocassettes for home viewing and new release movies in theatres sometimes manifested a hybridized marketplace for consumers: some theatres considered selling videos in their lobby, and one video retailer renovated the entrance of their store to resemble a theatre lobby with “arcade games,” “popcorn machine and candy concession” (Greenberg,

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25 Most of the Hartley fan mail authors self-identify as heterosexual men, but some letters are from (self-identified) women and female-male couples, representing women as pornography spectators.
2008, pp. 81–82). In the earliest days of VCR technology many retailers were unsure how best to promote videos. Some retailers regarded videos as a movie and promoted the idea of “creating a movie theater in the home” rather than simply a video to be viewed similar to a television movie (p. 81). A small number of video stores went so far as to organize their businesses to include small video theatres in the store, some complete with comfortable seating, curtains, and a concession stand. The retail logic was comparable to dining out: go to the video store to watch a movie as an opportunity to leave the home. This business strategy was short-lived, however, because it failed to reconcile consumers’ love of movies with the attraction of the ability to do so at home (Greenberg, 2008, p. 81). It also failed to provide a public movie entertainment experience that was distinctively different from going to a traditional theatre. And, with regard to this research, it seems dubious whether retail video stores would navigate the legal and social obstacles to accommodate viewing pornography in a retail video store.

For movie fans it was not a long wait before VCR technology afforded the opportunity to privately view movies on videotape and the creation of video as media entertainment. Greenberg (2008) references two popular films released on video in 1982 that perhaps signals the establishment of video technology. Twentieth Century Fox released Star Wars, intended originally only to be for rentals but due to consumer demand some dealers sold copies for $120. Several months later, Paramount released Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan for sale at “the unheard-of price of $39.95” (p. 85). The Wrath of Khan gamble paid off, setting sales records; soon after Paramount released film hits An Officer and a Gentleman and Flashdance (p. 86).
With the establishment and growth of video stores, the opportunity for video pornography rentals and purchase also grew. As mentioned, the geographic distinction between videotape and theatre represented two “very different contexts” for entertainment: the former, private, and the latter, public (Greenberg, 2008, p. 92). The context of a private viewing space means that the user does not experience shared emotional reactions to film: laughter, crying, or fear, for example. However, it also means that viewers are not distracted or disturbed by chatter, running children, or garbage left by other patrons. And, as mentioned above, academic work recognizes the significance of the theatre as a gathering space for marginalized groups and a popular option for dating (Hansen, 2002; Stacey, 2002), many video viewers opted for the convenience and comfort of viewing at home over a “romanticized” idea of the theatre (Greenberg, 2008, p. 93). The comfort and privacy of viewing at home, then, suggests the desired atmosphere for many spectators: those who would not (or could not) patronize an adult theatre (O’Toole, 1998, p. 104).

The VCR, and the Proliferation of Pornography

In early 1978 “the fledgling home video industry wasn’t yet big enough for the major studios to release their titles on tape; pornography led the way” (Jennings, 2000, p. 71). Video magazine reported that in 1977-78 “almost 70% of prerecorded tapes” were pornography (Jennings, 2000, p. 71). The pornography industry had immediately adapted to the new technology, similar to the pornographication of film in ‘stag films’ since the 1920s (p. 51; Waugh, 2004). Greenberg’s (2008) work on the history of the VCR supports this claim, stating that because “the major studios were not in on the development of the technology”
they were initially left behind (p. 21). The mainstream studios were undecided whether they wanted to release their films on tape and lacked the resources to do so. Therefore, in the first two years Betamax tapes were available “the only prerecorded tapes which users could legally buy were either public domain or pornographic” (p. 21).

The VCR revolutionized pornography, taking adult film from the public theatre to the private home. In his work, Pornocopia: Porn, Sex, Technology and Desire, O’Toole (1999) states: “When the full history of porn is finally committed to paper, video will be seen as a truly major event” (p. 103). As Alilunas’ (2016) significant, recent work on adult film and its connection media technology observes,

Ultimately, video revealed capabilities that might have been lurking within pornography all along, which is to say that the loop structure familiar from stag films and peep-show booths might have been the ideal form from the beginning. While the Golden Age of adult film might have tipped pornography toward a particular type of cultural legitimacy with its heavy emphasis on narrative and other familiar cinematic paradigms, video exploded in popularity in part because it was an ideal match for consumer desires and technological limitations. (p. 27)

My first research question asks how the advent of video technology and the opportunity for private viewing influenced pornography spectatorship. What is lacking in examinations of the relationship between pornography and the industry’s uptake of media technologies is the significance of the technological advance of the videocassette recorder / player. I claim that video technology, particularly its ability to control the viewing of moving-image pornography, and the opportunity for private viewing, fundamentally changed
the spectator’s engagement with pornography. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, references to video technology or specific pornography videos are common in the Hartley archive. The purpose of this section is intended, as the title suggests, to detail the emergence of video technology, video retail and rental businesses, and the commensurate proliferation of video pornography. This overview of the history of video technology development provides a framework for understanding the technological and commercial context of video pornography spectatorship.

The pornography spectator as an individual, solitary viewer conflicts with the idea of the cinema as a gathering place for a specific group, one that does not necessarily seek or intend social interaction or a sense of community due to the personal nature of human sexuality. In the following sections I address the first research question as to how VCR technology influenced pornography spectatorship. David Jennings’ (2000) autobiographical work, Skinflicks, emerges from his experiences in the pornography industry working behind the camera in the video era. Similar to Hartley, Jennings’ career started concurrent with the beginning of the X-rated video revolution. Jennings (2000) writes that his intention was to work in porn for “six months,” but he stayed for 12 years (p. xii). He attributes the longevity of his porn production career directly to the movement of porn from adult theatres to the selling of “Beta and VHS cassettes to video stores” (p. xii). A chapter of Jennings’ (2000) work on the pornography industry is titled, “The Smut Glut: Mid to late 1980s” (p. 223). Addressing what would be the first year of Hartley’s career, 1984, Jennings uses the term ‘smut glut’ to describe the adult industry becoming a “crowded marketplace” with varied constituents: the established “veterans,” the small, independent producers, and the “industry
newcomers” (p. 224). Whereas in 1983 there had only been “about a dozen” adult film producers, by 1985 Video Business magazine reported that number had grown by four times (p. 224). Accordingly, the number of adult videotapes grew from approximately 400 in 1983 to approximately 1,100 in 1984, and 1,600 in 1985: the ‘smut glut’ meant production exceeded the market. As Jennings (2000) observes, this growth was unsustainable: the pornography industry was close to imploding due to an overpopulation of producers and a correlative number of video pornography titles. Subsequently, it was a period of corporate competition that manifested “rip-offs, lawsuits, arsons, and even murders” (Jennings, 2000, p. 224).

As mentioned above, pornography producers were first to adopt videotape technology for their products (Jennings, 2000, p. 71; Greenberg, 2008, p. 21). Paasonen, Nikunen, and Saarenmaa (2007) state that the first level of social and cultural ‘pornification’ regards media technology, starting with Betamax and VHS videotape surpassing film. The authors claim that a primary reason for the financial success of VHS over its Sony rival, Betamax, was Sony’s refusal to license their product for pornography (p. 4). Video pornography quickly became a flourishing business, largely with the help of video technology and adult magazine advertisements of pornography productions. As early as 1976 potential customers could call a toll-free number to order films such as Deep Throat or The Devil in Miss Jones that had been recorded onto good quality videotapes (Greenberg, 2008, p. 52; Jennings, 2000, p. 79). The availability of video pornography expanded and changed in 1978 when Arthur Morowitz, president of ‘Video Shack,’ opened his first store at 49th and Broadway in New York. Believing retailers were not “merchandising properly,” his shop carried only videos,
no VCRs (Greenberg, 2008, p. 64). The video inventory was (respectable for 1978) six hundred titles, “the majority X-rated” (p. 64). From 1980 to 1984, (again, the year of Hartley’s pornography debut) the number of new adult movies available for rent or purchase “had risen from around 400 to 1,700” (Hilderbrand, 2009, p. 95). The growing pornography industry out-produced mainstream Hollywood at an outstanding rate. Williams’ (2004) chapter, “Proliferating Pornographies On/Scene” states that mainstream Hollywood produces about 400 films per year compared to a “10,000 to 11,000” figure for hardcore porn (p. 1). And the 2004 pornography viewing estimate was seven hundred million videos or DVDs per year26 (p. 1).

Concurrent with the proliferation of video pornography was the swift rise in VCR sales. As I discuss in detail later in this dissertation, the VCR allowed viewers in the 1980s and beyond to watch pornographic film at their leisure, repeatedly, and to review sexually explicit scenarios of interest for entertainment and analysis (Williams, 1989, p. 231).

Kleinhans (2006) states that at the start of the 1980s a mere one percent of U.S. homes owned a VCR; by the end of the decade 70% of households had a VCR (p. 157). Greenberg (2008), reporting similar statistics, writes that in 1980 “less than 3 percent of American homes owned a VCR,” and that four years later “this figure was close to 20 percent” (p. 72). And according to Hilderbrand (2009, p. 36) “only 5 percent of the American public owned VCRs in 1982,” but “50 percent had been surpassed by 1987, with a staggering 75 percent” VCR ownership in 1992 (Strub, 2015, p. 132).

I close this section’s attention to the VCR and the proliferation of pornography by

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26 I do not know the statistical gathering methodology. Presumably this statistic is based on the cumulative number of pornographic movies rented or purchased in stores, hotel rooms, etc.
returning to the division between the public and private, and considerations of sexualized spaces. The mainstream cinema was generally an entertainment venue where everyone (within film classification ratings) was welcome to gather, whereas adult theatres and pornographic videotapes are regulated by legal age. Briefly, I highlight how video outlets themselves produced and regulated demarcated spaces specific to particular video genres.

Greenberg’s (2008) work on videotape development includes an examination of the organization and demarcation of specific videotape genres and classifications. For persons who frequented video retailers and rental outlets, the extreme geographic division between the children’s section and the ‘adults only’ pornography section will likely bring a memory. As Greenberg (2008) observes, those two areas were “constructed as quarantines” (p. 95). These disparate video rental spaces featured distinct boundaries: the children’s area contained toys and games, and “served as a babysitter,” designed to keep adults out while the parents browsed (p. 95). Similarly, the adult video (pornography) section was often a back room, or a walled-off corner, with swinging doors, drapery panels, or a “beaded curtain” to block or obscure the view of both the patrons and the pornographic video box images (p. 96). Some video rental outlets also sold sex toys, available in the ‘adults only’ section. This bifurcation of the idea of ‘toys’ can be interpreted as completing the children/adult quarantine comparison.

The first sections of this chapter have examined the geographic shift in pornography spectatorship from the adult theatre to the VCR, and their spatial considerations. In the next section I build on the previous section’s explication of the development of video technology and proliferation of video pornography to examine pornography spectatorship specifically.
The VCR and Pornography Spectatorship

The first question of this dissertation addresses the impact of VCR technology to pornography spectatorship. This section examines the significance of VCR technology and the subsequent opportunity for private pornography viewing at home. Pornography, as a media genre, has evolved from ancient drawings (Kendrick, 1987) and fictional stories, to photographs, magazines, 8mm ‘stag’ films (Waugh, 2004), 16mm adult film in theatres (Delany, 1999b), to “peep booth” coin-operated projectors in adult shops (Greenberg, 2008, p. 51) to videocassette (Williams, 1989), DVD, and, most recently, the Internet (Attwood, 2010; O’Toole, 1998, p. 100). The introduction of videotape movies to the domestic realm changed spectatorship generally, and, as I discuss in detail below, changed pornography viewing greatly beginning in the early 1980s. The technology to view moving-image pornography in the home existed prior to videocassette technology. As elucidated in the Stanley v. Georgia decision in the Introduction chapter, the details of the case involve a film projector and reels of pornographic film in Stanley’s home for personal entertainment. Film projector technology for home use, however, may not have been easily accessible based on the viewer’s location and, more significantly, 8mm film ‘loops’ of pornography could usually only be obtained through adult mail order houses, or adult stores: ‘sex shops’ that rarely operate in small communities.

The experience of the pornography viewer differs from that of mainstream cinema viewers. And, beginning in the VCR era, consuming pornography became a largely private activity (Loftus, 2002; McNair, 1996; O’Toole, 1998). Sexually explicit material is a very
different form of entertainment compared to mainstream film, one that can be profoundly personal. There is more to pornography viewing than first thought, requiring an equal amount of “cerebral effort from the viewer” as with “other art forms” in order to take it all in (O’Toole, 1998, p. 15). O’Toole (1998) uses the metaphor of a deploying parachute to describe pornography as a delivery system of compressed information. The viewer is coupled to pornographic imagery, containing a range of sexual ideas, information, and gestures. Once viewing begins, the parachute deploys, pornographic information bursts out, decompressed, and deploying into something much larger than its original container (pp. 310–311).

Given the metaphor of a deploying parachute bursting with pornographic information I include academic work on the spectator-video relationship. The intended outcome here is to better understand the spectator’s engagement with and understanding of pornography, and the ways in which it might differ from viewing mainstream cinema. The previous chapter suggested that pornography can be interpreted as an adult fairy tale. This potential escape from reality can be understood as “pornography giv(ing) us a glimpse of a world in which the erotic erupts into everyday life, in which people break out of family, work, school...” (Tucker, 1990, p. 268). And Driver’s (2004) article on pornography states that, “Pornography leaks across disciplinary boundaries and blurs conventional distinctions between, private/public, subjective/social, work/play” ... and other “realms of experience.” This section’s ethnographic research reveals the pornography viewer’s experience as a “distinctly personal and complex happening, involving not just the fantasy scenario on screen, but the viewer’s own fantasy extracts, projections and flashbacks” from their sexual memories (O’Toole, 1998, p. 308). Loftus (2002) suggests that like other forms of fiction—mainstream
film, television, or novels—the average viewer/reader enjoys fiction precisely because it is an escape from their quotidian experiences. In response to critiques of pornography, like other forms of fantasy, the premise of such an argument that aims at the intentionality of the entertainment as carefree respite seems a less than ambitious analysis: the “lazy, idle” viewer described by Dewey (1934, p. 54). The significant point I wish to highlight from Loftus’ research is that concurrent with explicit sexual images and sexual stimulation the pornography spectator is most often capable of discerning fantasy from reality. That is, pornography viewers do not always situate themselves within the sexual scenario (Loftus, 2002, p. 138; O’Toole, 1998, p. 308).

Loftus’ ethnographic research on pornography spectatorship included interviews with almost 150 men in North America who watch pornography, providing valuable insight into male viewers' ideas about pornography. In the chapter, “Reality versus Fantasy,” Loftus (2002) states that contrary to claims by many anti-porn critics, “most of the men” in his research were quite cognizant of the distinction between the pornography they viewed and “real life” (p. 137). Some respondents stated that the people in pornography were “unreal” because of their physical attractiveness and overt sexuality, but others read the open sexuality of pornography performances as indicative of “strong people with character and personality” (p. 139). Loftus admits that the results of his research sound pro-pornography, generally. Yet there are references to anti-pornography feminists that reveal the male viewer’s understanding of and some agreement with feminist concerns regarding pornographic representations of heterosexual sex practices. Loftus’ ethnographic research on men’s responses to film pornography is comparable to Radway’s *Romance* in that it provides an
array of views on spectatorship issues, and it is valuable because it specifically addresses hard-core pornography. Moreover, unlike the relatively homogenized sample group in Radway’s research, the respondents in Loftus’ work represent a breadth of age, education, ethnicity, and occupation, for example, which arguably provides a more defensible group opinion.

Prior to concluding this discussion of video pornography spectatorship it is important to recognize the limitations and vulnerabilities of video technology. As described above, videocassettes are historically located between reel film and digital Internet technologies. Hoang’s (2014b) work on videotape pornography examines the connection between intergenerational viewers and technologies. This connection is located at the “convergence of video as a highly unstable visual material that inevitably degenerates” and the generations of viewers that are able to watch the same pornography through dubbed videotapes (p. 70). As Melendez (2004) notes, videotape was first used to recycle and easily distribute films (p. 402). Pornography fans can watch videos that had apparently been rented and viewed many times: the videotape quality diminished through extensive usage. Hoang (2014b, p. 70) describes his experience of watching a pornography video where numerous short segments of the video are corrupted and blurred. These “glitches” occur during intense sex scenes; Hoang (2014b) attributes the videotape damage to previous viewers considering these to be “the hottest” scenes of the video (p. 70). Moreover, there are portions where the damaged videotape momentarily “breaks down” and the monitor screen becomes blank (p. 70). In these moments the spectator views their reflection on the dark, black screen. In these moments the pornography spectator can be thought of as inculcated into pornography: their
reflection intermittently spliced in-between explicit pornographic scenarios (Hoang, 2014b, p. 70). This experience reveals the spectator’s connection to the pornographic production: “the erotic relationship between consumer and commodity” (Melendez, 2004, p. 402). As Hoang (2014b) articulates, in these moments the reflected viewer is present with the viewers before him, and those to come after him (p. 70). This articulation of video pornography spectatorship sets it apart somewhat from film and digital formats of pornography spectatorship, one where the viewer has the possibility to see themselves among explicit scenarios. Hoang’s description recalls Tucker’s (1990, p. 268) suggestion that pornography permits the erotic to erupt into everyday life.

Watching pornographic videos in private may provide the spectator with an opportunity to consider sexual practices they may not have previously been familiar with, or sexual practices they were aware of but were, for some reason, reluctant to pursue. Given the pornography spectator’s position as unfamiliar with or reluctant about a particular sexual practice, it is plausible the spectator considering or attempting a sexual practice in a Hartley (or other) pornographic video can be regarded as pornography, and perhaps the pornography star, giving permission to the spectator. This is, of course, speculation. It is, however, based on some of the letters I discuss in the following chapter, such as a male transvestite deciding to assume a female character’s role viewed in a video while having sex with men. The sexual context of permission-giving can be interpreted as an opportunity for the spectator to take up a pornography scenario as a kind of adult sex education. Moreover, recalling a chapter title from Loftus’ work, “Reality versus Fantasy,” the sexual permission-giving of pornography invites the viewer to transition from fantasy to reality.
Conclusion

In the Introduction I cited Paasonen, Nikunen, and Saarenmaa’s (2007) assertion that the first of three levels of social and cultural “pornification” is associated with media technology, starting with Betamax and VHS videotape surpassing film (p. 4). Furthermore, the authors claim that the financial success of VHS over its Sony rival, Betamax, is due primarily to Sony’s refusal to license their product for pornography (p. 4). I re-state the “pornification” reference here because, as the first level, it stresses the significance of videotapes and VCR technology in access to, and public engagement with, pornography. The research cited here is, like my own, specific to the VCR era. VCR technology is significant as the first widely available means for privately viewing pornography. This chapter largely addresses the movement of pornography from the ‘big screen’ of the adult theatre and into the home via VCR technology. It also seeks to articulate how viewing pornography at home changed porn spectatorship. Part of what I seek to highlight here is how the proliferation of pornography production and distribution increased accessibility generally. As mentioned, there are regions of the US where pornography is illegal and therefore not easily accessible. An example of this is a fan letter from Jimmy in Arkansas asking Hartley how he could order her videos because they are “hard to come by down here in the Bible belt.” In the next chapter I also include a letter from Charlie in Louisiana who specifically mentions legislation prohibiting sales or rentals of pornographic videos.

In this chapter I have cited described how VCR technology and the proliferation of videotape pornography (Greenberg, 2008; Salgado, 1989) permitted greater access to
pornography viewing. And, significantly, VCR technology provided the means for private pornography spectatorship. Persons interested in film pornography no longer needed to travel to a city large enough to financially sustain an adult theatre: porn could be brought into the home or other private venues. This increased accessibility was not only convenient and private, it enabled persons without the financial means, or having limited mobility issues, to view pornography. And persons homebound due to health issues could bring pornography into the home by mail order or delivery (where legal). Moreover, the proliferation of video pornography and the selection of its diverse genres accommodated a breadth of sexual orientations, sexual practices, and the kinds of bodies represented (Kipnis, 1996; O’Toole, 1998, p. 15).

My dissertation suggests that video technology represents a substantial advance for pornography spectatorship over stag films or loops. This is because of the technological advance of video itself, the improvements to accessibility through the adult film industry’s distribution logistics, and because of its affordability to consumers through pornography’s adaptation to a new and rapidly growing home entertainment technology. I intentionally repeat O’Toole’s (1998) bold claim that “when the full history of porn is finally committed to paper, video will be seen as a truly major event” (p. 103). VCR technology brought the capability to pause, rewind, put in slow-motion, and re-watch specific scenes repeatedly. As Prendergast (2008) writes, unlike live performances where our presence becomes somewhat entwined, when watching film or television “we are not sharing the same time or space with them” (p. 34). That is, there is no disruption from the spectator to the video performance. Unlike movie theatres in dedicated, static locations, and specific film times, video is
transportable: it can be shared and borrowed, available anytime.

Ethnographic research on the cinema as a sexually significant venue pre-dates Delany’s explication of the adult theatre, and the differences between public and private spheres of sexuality. Positioned in the beginning of this discussion is the recollection of a young Nina Hartley, not yet a pornography celebrity, and her first experience with hardcore pornography spectatorship in an adult theatre in San Francisco and the unspoken, spatial regulation of that space. The academic objective of this dissertation is, in large part, to highlight the largely overlooked significance of the videotape era of pornography. And, following from pornography spectatorship at home, to introduce Hartley’s fan letters from pornography viewers representative of sexual desires and fantasies: the speaking of sex commensurable with the Diderot-Foucault-Williams chain of intellectual thought. While the current chapter attends to the significance of VCR technology it is a step towards examining the research question regarding the sexual knowledge viewers have garnered or taken up from pornography: adult sex education.
Chapter 4: Nina Hartley’s Fan Mail

Introduction

This chapter examines sections of Nina Hartley’s fan mail—epistolary texts—and specifically the status of Hartley as a pornography icon and sex educator through the dedication and adoration of her fans. While pornography is often considered fictional, as Hartley describes above, pornography performers have an opportunity to teach about sexual practices and relationships. The passage of sexual information may influence the imagination of the pornography spectator. These potential subsequent considerations by viewers can be not only educative but empowering through the adoption of new or amended sexual practices. This chapter provides examples of pornography as adult sex education, broadly construed, through selections from Hartley’s fan mail in response to her pornography videos.

The letters I included in this chapter pertain, in part, to the two questions of this research. The first research question asks how VCR technology and the ability for viewing pornography at home changed spectatorship. I suggest the change in spectatorship is addressed in these letters directly—that is, many of the letters state, in a matter-of-fact way, how the viewer(s) enjoy Hartley’s videos, how they may watch her videos with a partner, the kinds of pornography videos they rent or purchase, or question Hartley as to how they can acquire a particular video. This particular correspondence, stated in an everyday manner, illustrates how the pornography spectator has come to take for granted his or her access to sexually explicit videotapes, the opportunity for home viewing, and ongoing access to pornography through home technologies.
The second question of this research regards acquiring adult sexual education via pornography spectatorship. In Chapter 2 I include references to Foucault’s (1997) work “Self-Writing” based in part on his study of Seneca. Foucault states that the act of writing is for one’s self and for others; writing is reflective, it is associated with the exercise of thought. Citing Seneca, Foucault discusses the connection between what one has learned and writing: the act of writing as a confirmation of the lesson. I suggest here that through watching explicit representations of sex—pornography—and then writing about it, we can understand the process as articulating a kind of adult sexual education: the viewer’s utterance in response to the pornographic text. That is, the Hartley letters can be interpreted as the viewer speaking through a written response of their engagement with pornography.

I included a breadth of Hartley’s fan mail to reveal significant excerpts from authors. My objective is to highlight the importance of access to pornography (through video technology) to some viewers, the adult sex education some have received through pornography spectatorship, and spectators’ desire to view sexual representations of bodies that are similar to theirs. This chapter starts with a historical background section that explains the creation of the Nina Hartley Fan Club, the process for fans to become members, my criteria in selecting letters to be included in this dissertation, and the approximate demographics of the fan mail authors. I briefly describe a couple letters Hartley received. The second section, ‘Letters to a Porn Star,’ provides an extensive selection of excerpts from letters across varied categories of sexuality. This section includes subheadings specific to ability, ethnicity, letters from women, class, and age, for example. The purposes of these excerpts are, first, to provide examples of the kinds of letters Hartley received and, second, to
articulate responses to the research questions regarding the change in pornography spectatorship commensurate with VCR technology, and how that spectatorship constituted a form of sex education. These fan letters include declarations regarding what can be considered adult sex education. For example, questions and issues regarding anal sex, sexual fantasies directly involving Hartley, and fetishistic fantasies specifically related to submitting to domination and humiliation by Hartley. I say more about these topics in that section. The third section, ‘Pornography, Spectators, and Diversity,’ introduces an analysis of spectators located within and across categorizations of ability, age, class, ethnicity, gender, race, and sexuality. The introduction to the diversity section provides theoretical work on these demographic categorizations to position some of the authors in Hartley’s fan archive in contrast to the prominent, mainstream, white, Anglophone, normative-bodied, heterosexual male pornography consumer. As mentioned above, the majority of the Hartley letters, and pornography consumers in the US generally, are heterosexual-identified white males. As mentioned, subsequent to the theoretical work, I included excerpts from letters related to the diversity of spectators described in Hartley's fan mail. Lastly, I describe some of the artwork sent to Hartley by fans. I then summarize and conclude the chapter.

**Historical Background: the Nina Hartley Fan Club, and the Archive**

Hartley’s pornography career began in 1984, and she created the Nina Hartley Fan Club the following year. Recruitment of members was done largely through advertisements in adult content men’s magazines. Membership required a one-time payment of $20. Members then received a package through the mail containing a welcome letter, a photograph of Hartley,
and several other pieces of correspondence. Members were also placed on a mailing list in order to receive occasional newsletters from Hartley with information regarding her recent videos, public appearances, and anti-censorship activism, for example. The Center for Sex and Culture (CSC) requested that the letters remain, as best as possible, in their original order in the archive boxes. The letters in a particular box were largely, but not always, in chronological order. For this reason there was never a count of letters by date. I (and several CSC volunteers) never undertook a thorough classification of letters by genre: military, prison, letters from women, etc. Below I offer a general estimation of the letter classification / genre by percentages. In terms of letters by year, Hartley started receiving fan mail in the mid-1980s shortly after the fan club was created. As with many projects, it took some time before reaching a significant size, in this case the latter half of the 1980s. The significant volume of letters continued into the 1990s, and even into the 21st-century. I suggest it is not only surprising but also endearing, in both a celebrity and research context, that Hartley continued to receive postal fan letters into the 21st-century, a time when writing personal correspondence was beginning to be regarded as outdated.

The Hartley fan archive consists of hundreds of letters, at least a couple dozen pieces of artwork, and assorted ephemera. I can only include a small percentage of the Hartley letters here. There are several criteria that guided my selection of letters to include in this dissertation. My first research question asks how video technology and the opportunity for private viewing changed pornography spectatorship. In response to this question I selected letters that made reference to the spectator’s rental, purchase, and information related to their viewing of pornography videos, or references to pornography media technology generally.
The second research question asks if video pornography spectatorship constituted a kind of adult sex education. Accordingly, letters that could be understood as the viewer receiving a form of sex education through viewing video pornography are included in this dissertation.

Under the heading of ‘pornography as adult sex education’ I also selected letters where questions or comments pertaining to sexuality can be interpreted as the writer’s recognition of Hartley as a kind of sexual expert. I say more about this below. Third, later in this chapter I include a selection of letters based on demographic diversity. The adjudication of ‘diversity’ in my research is based on the letter’s author’s self-identification regarding ability, age, class, ethnicity, or gender, for example. I also selected letters based on sexual diversity: sexual orientation, sexual practices, or fetishistic topics. Fourth, because of the dissertation’s attention to video pornography spectatorship and sex education, many of the letters I selected detail fantasies of a sexual encounter with Hartley, sometimes involving other persons. There are also explicit descriptions of sexual acts the author has participated in, or hoped to participate in. What I found particularly interesting are letters of sexual confession or fantasy without specific reference to Hartley or her videos. An example of this is a male-identified fan who described his recent exploration of transvestism and having sex with men while wearing lingerie, high heels, a wig, and makeup. The author and his lovers would often watch video pornography and sometimes enact scenes from a video, though not necessarily a video featuring Hartley. And the letter mentioned in Chapter 3 from the US Marine aboard a Navy ship shifts from his description of “circle jerks” to disclosing that he enjoyed watching a video scene of a “butch actress fuck(ing) (Hartley) up the ass with a vibrator.” The Marine closes the letter proclaiming, “There’s nothing greater, to me, then
[sic] watching two beautiful women please each other.” Many of these letters offer important contributions in answering my two research questions: how the availability of pornography for viewing at home changed viewers’ engagement with pornography, and how this engagement can be understood as constituting a form of sex education. Fifth, and lastly, while this is admittedly a vague descriptor, some letters were selected because of their uniqueness. An example of what I regard as a ‘unique’ letter comes from an inmate with access to the prison’s workshop who offers to build a “sex chair” for Hartley. These letters, however unique, contribute to understanding the breadth of writers and topics contained in the Hartley fan letters.

Approximately half of the letters I studied are succinct, one-page letters that express admiration, loyalty, and gratitude for Hartley’s work. Approximately 20% of all the archive letters are from incarcerated men, and approximately another 20% are from men serving in the Armed Forces. Approximately 10% of the total Hartley archive letters are assorted short letters that include requests to join the Nina Hartley Fan Club list, and requests for photos of Hartley. There are even a few fan letters offering Hartley vacation invitations. And a small number of assorted greeting cards and letters sent to Hartley are from other pornography stars, directors, and people working in the adult entertainment industry. Many of the fan letters include requests for Hartley to reply personally, and many others acknowledge that, while they would love a reply, Hartley would be unable to answer all her fan mail. There are

27 The inmate’s letter does not disclose the nature of their acquaintance with Hartley or her films. Presumably, he was familiar with her pornography career prior to incarceration. He may have been aware of her fan club mailing address prior to prison or received it while incarcerated. He also does not elaborate as to the definition or design of the ‘sex chair.’
28 With regard to the Hartley fan letters from men in prison, I assume they had Hartley’s fan club address before incarceration or received it somehow while incarcerated. And it seems likely that one or two prison inmates with Hartley’s fan club address would make it known to others.
also fan letters regarding Hartley’s personal life. For example, letters asking her about pornography as a career choice, or how the letter writer might enter the pornography industry. There are questions regarding ‘swinging’ and sexual invitations from non-monogamous couples, based on Hartley’s public discussion of her own non-monogamous relationships. In the 1990 letter from Fred (mentioned above) he states that he “admire [sic] the uninhibited pleasure” Hartley takes in her sexuality: her “non-monogamous lifestyle without jealousy or sexual possessiveness” and her “unconventional marriage with a husband and a wife.” The letters illustrate how Hartley’s disclosure of her non-monogamous relationship status subtly invites her fans to consider not only their sexual subjectivity and agency, but the possibilities for relationship schema, some that might lie outside normative, societal expectations (Easton & Liszt, 1997; Jenkins, 2016).

The balance of the letters are much more salacious: invitations for personal sexual encounters and, of course, letters of sexual disclosure: desires, fantasies, and inquiries. The letters I categorize as confessional are explicit sexual fantasies or inquiries describing the letter writer’s desires involving Hartley and/or others. Many of these letters detail a specific pornography scene the author wishes to see Hartley perform. The pornography viewer’s engagement with imagery of certain sexual practices invites an assessment of sexual knowledges, one’s own sexuality, and sexual identification (Stryker, 2006; Sycamore, 2006).

Given the hundreds of letters I read and photographed in the Hartley fan archive, what are the broad categorizations regarding the demographics of the letter writers? Of those who identify a racial identity, at least 75% of the male authors of Hartley’s letters identity as white. Of the men who identified as heterosexual, 75% are white, 15% as African-American,
and 10% as Latino. There is a small number of letters from couples, less than 5%, and another 5% from writers who identified as women. Several letters are not signed, and the text of the letter is such that the gender identity of the author is ambiguous. I did not read any letters from a trans-identified person; there is the man mentioned above who described his sexual activities while wearing lingerie and makeup, but he did not identify as transgender. And a small number of the Hartley fan archive consists of greeting cards and letters from friends, other pornography stars, and directors. The pornographic videos that Hartley appeared in, beginning in 1984, were similar to other mainstream pornography of its time: produced by and co-starring mostly white, able-bodied, heterosexual men for the entertainment of mostly white, able-bodied, heterosexual men (Loftus, 2002, McNair, 1996, Williams, 1989). As I mention later in this chapter, the early 1980s introduced the porn genre of interracial sex; perhaps a significant advance for some of the viewers in the Hartley archive that I examine below. And some of Hartley’s early videos included people of colour. To my knowledge there were no videos in Hartley’s early career that included persons with visible disabilities.

Letters to a Porn Star

In Chapter 5 I examine my research question regarding pornography as a kind of sex education through my reading of the Nina Hartley fan archive. Part of my argument pertains to the fan’s recognition of Hartley as a sex expert that they could trust with their inquiries. Part of the evidence for that claim is based on her prodigious pornography career and

29 There were pornography production companies that produced videos specifically featuring people of colour exclusively. I do not know if the videos featuring Hartley with men of colour co-stars were an attempt to market
celebrity status. She is an American, her videos are filmed in the US, and most of her fan archive letters are from white, Anglophone men. Yet she received correspondence from across the globe. I start with brief attention to several letters in support of my claim regarding Nina Hartley as an internationally recognized pornography star.

A 1993 letter from a man named Fady in Beirut, Lebanon, includes his address and phone number, imploring Nina to send him “the sexiest photograph” of her. Fady writes, “I want to meet you. Where, I don’t know!” An undated letter from Umar in Nigeria requests Nina’s fan club to send him “magazines and posters” though he does not include funding for the request. And a January 1993, letter from Paulo in Sao Paulo, Brazil, written in Portuguese, starts, “I hope when you receive this letter you can have someone who can translate it for you because unfortunately my English is not good.” Paulo goes on to say,

I’m what you could define as your biggest fan in Brazil, I’ve seen all of your movies that are available here, and I collect all interviews and articles about you. But I was not satisfied yet, so this time I’m trying to go further and make real my dream: meet you in person.

The letters from Fady in Beirut and Paulo in Sao Paulo perhaps exemplify the strength of the desire of fans to meet Hartley in person. And, for this dissertation’s attention to the significance of video pornography, it is worth noting that Paulo specifically mentions seeing all of Hartley’s videos available in Sao Paulo, Brazil. There are many letters from US fans hoping to meet Hartley in person. Given that she frequently danced at exotic clubs and attended promotional events at video retailers across the US, meeting Hartley was, during the period in which most of these letters were written, generally, not an unrealistic possibility for those videos to people of colour, or whether such exoticism is intended to further titillate white audiences.
fans in the US and elsewhere. I include the letters from Beirut and Sao Paulo in part because of the intercontinental recognition of Hartley’s pornography career, and the fan’s desire to be in her presence.

Letters reveal thoughts from private, personal moments, rendering the (remote) author emotionally exposed: the (perceived) intimacy between the pornography performer and spectator giving approval to the addressor. The letters examined in the above sections represent the reception and negotiation of the viewer to Hartley’s (and other) pornographic videos. These letters help us to answer the research questions asking how VCR technology changed pornography spectatorship, and how this spectatorship might be understood as a kind of adult sex education. There are letters describing where, how, and with whom the author viewed pornography, and letters questioning or detailing sexual knowledges.

In the following sections I cite extensively from Hartley’s fan letters. As I write in Chapter 2, this dissertation highlights the connection between academic work on epistolarity and spectatorship. Fan culture and spectatorship is particularly useful in articulating the manner in which pornography might be “used,” “interpreted,” or “appropriated” (Mayne, 2002, p. 80) by fans. The fan readings and spectatorship articulated in the letters describe how fans sometimes “reclaim media imagery for their own purposes” (Jenkins, 1992, p. 32). These purposes often take on the idea of pornography as adult fairy tales. Many of the excerpts below—subsequent to a fan’s consumption and negotiation with sexually explicit movies—can be interpreted as a form of adult sex education; some of these declarations are obviously indicative of attaining or inquiring regarding sexual knowledge, others are more subtle articulations. Part of the objective in this chapter is to demonstrate the importance of
pornography to some of its fans through the diversity of correspondence Hartley received. The letters show diversity not just in content but diversity in the authors' categorizations of ability, age, class, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, for example. The balance of this chapter reveals a breadth of Nina Hartley’s fan letters.

My analysis of the letters below attends to an understanding of Hartley as a porn icon and sex educator. The elevation of Hartley’s status as not only a porn icon but also a celebrity is perhaps revealed in some letters I include that lie outside a pornography context. The objective in the following sections is to present sections of letters that reflect their authors’ appreciation of Hartley as a kind of sex expert through viewer questions, and, second, to include descriptions of pornography videos that allow an interpretation of pornography as adult sex education. In the text of the letters included below ‘sex education’ may require a broad interpretation in that it includes a range of topics: from sex toys, to sexual health, to techniques of specific sex practices. As mentioned in Chapter 3, for some viewers, simply watching explicit representations of sexual acts can be an introduction to engaging in new or different sexual practices: the permission-giving effect of pornography.

The first example regarding Hartley’s videos as providing a kind of sex education, generally, comes from an April 30, 1995 letter from a man identified as Jack. Jack tells Nina that she has “helped [his] sex life,” stating he is now “not afraid to try new and different ways” of having sex. Jack adds that his girlfriend also enjoys Hartley’s movies and “she has learned to be more relax [sic] and enjoy sex more.” Similarly, John wrote to Nina on May 20, 1995, to say that he and his wife had experienced a “fairly conservative” sex life before they started watching her videos. He declares, “We have since opened up and have reached
heights we never could have without your help.” And a twenty-one-year-old man wrote Nina to say “WOW! You helped me transition from puberty to manhood.” The man has a son eight months old, and tells Nina that, when the son is old enough, he will share Nina’s videos to provide the youth some sexual education. The author states that during adolescence he realized the need to learn how to please a woman sexually; Hartley was “the first X-film star” he believed “wasn’t faking.” Similarly, Fred from Pennsylvania tells Hartley that he “enjoy(s) watching a woman who can exuberantly enjoy fucking for the pure sensual pleasure of it—and in your case, it’s nice to know that you are not just acting.” Under the heading of enthusiasm and truthful representations of sexuality, James tells Nina that the thing he enjoys most in pornography is “watching a woman having an orgasm.” He admits that it is a rarity in pornography, but describes his pleasure in seeing “that silly dazed look as it slowly subsides”—it is “really a definite turn on.” And Mark thanks Nina for her videos, and says that her “passion has influenced” both him and his wife in their “evening explorations.” Finally, a May 1991 letter from Gerald mentions that he attended a public talk by Hartley in California, and thanks Nina for her “positive and fulfilling” attitude about sex. Gerald goes on to quote Hartley regarding women’s sexuality and representations of women in pornography: “In porno movies you see women actively initialing [sic] sex, enjoying it and coming out alive and happy afterwards, ready and able to enjoy some more sex.” Gerald writes that before he heard Hartley say that he never considered “women enjoying their sexuality” as a part of what occurs in pornography. I include this letter because of the author’s recognition of the sexual positionality of women in Western society generally (in
hierarchies of power and privilege), and the potential for women to experience sexual pleasure in pornography.

These letters articulate the ease, casualness, and comfort most authors experienced in acquiring and viewing pornography at home. The letters above reveal, generally, the idea of pornography as a source of permission-giving: the letters from Jack and John mention becoming less conservative, open to trying new things, and feeling more relaxed about sexuality. Building upon the letters from Fred, James, and Gerald’s recognizing pornography as an opportunity to freely experience sexual pleasure for the sake of pleasure, and their own enjoyment at viewing explicit representations of sexual pleasure, and considering this dissertation’s attention to pornography as adult sex education, the following four letters discuss sexual pleasure as a particular kind of adult sex education.

Moving from letters speaking broadly of an ‘improved sex life’ through Hartley’s videos, I expand the letter topics to various sexual practices, starting with anal sex. I include some attention to anal sex here for several reasons. First, these letters respond to the first research question regarding pornography spectatorship in the VCR era by helping articulate the spectator’s engagement with video pornography generally and, in this subsection, with a particular sexual practice. And much of the content of these letters can be understood as ‘speaking sex.’ Second, there are a substantial number of letters in the Hartley archive, perhaps 5%, that either directly address or include mention of anal sex. Moreover, some of these letters solicit advice regarding anal sex practices from Hartley, which constitutes a form of seeking adult sex education. Third, anal sex continued to be considered sodomy, an illegal sexual act, in some US states until this century (Nussbaum, 2010), and to some extent
continues to be a contentious sexual act. In 1986, two years after Hartley’s first video, the US Supreme Court upheld the Georgia state sodomy decision in *Bowers v. Hardwick*, 478 U.S. 186 (1986). Following the *Bowers v. Hardwick* decision sodomy laws against anal sex, and in some US states oral sex, remained illegal, in varying forms, in 14 states until 2003. State sodomy laws were effectively invalidated following the US Supreme Court decision in *Lawrence v. Texas*, 539 U.S. 558 (2003). It is important to note that US state sodomy laws applied equally irrespective of sexual orientation or marital status. Given that anal intercourse was a contentious and sometimes illegal sexual act, I suggest that in the historic context of this dissertation pornography, generally—and Hartley’s videos specifically—acted as a kind of permission-giving via entertainment, albeit XXX-rated adult entertainment.

An undated letter from Richard in St. Paul, Minnesota, writes seeking advice on anal sex on behalf of him and his girlfriend, Kate; she “really digs anal sex,” but he describes himself as a “novice.” Richard writes Nina because she is “the sexual expert, sex educator, and nurse.” His question centres on the requirement of wearing a condom during anal sex because he experiences “diminished sensitivity.” Richard closes the letter by saying that Kate will be in the Berkeley area in the near future and includes both their phone numbers and his address in hopes that Nina will have time to meet so that Kate can “gain (Nina’s) special insights.”

30 The *Bowers v. Hardwick* decision upheld the Georgia state sodomy law that prohibited anal and oral sexual acts. The case regarded a gay man and a lover engaging in anal intercourse. A heterosexual Georgia couple applied to the Court to be added to the case, stating that they wished to engage in acts deemed sodomy. The Court rejected their application.

31 It should also be noted that the 2015 *Obergefell v. Hodges* US Supreme Court decision ruled in favour of fundamental same-sex marriage recognition. This civil rights decision does not address sodomy, however, following the *Lawrence v. Texas* decision twelve years earlier, it could be argued to confirm consensual sodomy.
A letter dated October 23, 1996, from Scott in Georgia represents a spectator’s interpretation of Hartley as a sex expert. As Hartley describes herself in the presentation at the CSC, she is a porn star who cannot be embarrassed, and a nurse who cannot be “grossed out.” Scott is aware Hartley has produced some instructional videos, and that Nina was a nurse prior to entering the adult film industry. He explains that his fiancée “enjoys anal stimulation” and that they have “tried to have anal sex” but his fiancée experiences pain when he attempts to penetrate her anally. Scott is concerned about hurting his girlfriend through anal intercourse. They purchased a “set of rectal / anal dilators from a medical supply store” but “don’t know exactly how to use them” and are seeking “advice” from Nina regarding anal dilation. He includes both his home and work phone numbers and invites Hartley to “call collect” in hopes she can educate them regarding the dilators. In closing, Scott encourages Hartley to “make an instructional video on anal sex” so that others can “gain a greater knowledge of performing anal sex.” Both Scott’s and Richard’s letters can be interpreted as seeking sex education through their engagement with pornography and situate Hartley as an expert who they feel comfortable consulting for advice.

In a different context of anal sex, Michael from Pennsylvania writes in a letter dated October 31, 1997, that he is “very disappointed” with the anal sex portion of Nina’s video, *Guide to Alternative Sex*. He states that he loves anal sex and clarifies,

I don’t mean putting my penis in my wife’s anus. I mean putting sex toys in my anus. In fact, there is a toy in there right now and I often wanted to have this done to me, so I bought my wife a dildo + harness but she won’t do it to me.

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32 In the following chapter I include discussion of Hartley’s sexual education / instructional videos, including *Nina Hartley’s Guide to Anal Sex* (Hartley, 1995).
Michael closes the letter by asking Nina why her *Guide to Alternative Sex* video did not include anal intercourse,\textsuperscript{33} and particularly, why she did not “do anything anal to the men?”

This letter deserves attention for its intersection with ideas of normative gender roles, particularly masculinity, sexual practices, and pornography as a form of sex education. Michael writes that he is “very disappointed” in that the sole focus of the video’s anal sex is on women being penetrated anally, not the men. The author raises a significant point in that, as suggested above, mainstream pornography at the time was produced largely by heterosexual men for the entertainment of heterosexual men; a reality that is frustrating Michael. His letter draws attention to the fact that a video titled *Guide to Alternative Sex*, while including anal sex as a topic, adheres to a heteronormative narrative where ‘penetration’ = women. Not only does Michael desire anal penetration, he also invited his wife to assume the role of penetrator. Moreover, it could be argued that, to some extent, Michael is in the role of sex educator here: he expresses his disappointment in Hartley's 'alternative sex' video and informs Hartley (and us) that he is a married man frustrated in his wife’s lack of interest in penetrating him. For most heterosexual persons this would likely be interpreted as a shift in gender roles and the sexual practices associated with traditional heterosexual roles. The author’s seriousness and dedication to anal sex as a practice that can be equally enjoyed by men is arguably represented through his use of a sex toy for anal penetration while writing the letter to Hartley.

\textsuperscript{33} While I do not answer for Hartley, it should be noted that at least one of her Adam & Eve ‘Guides to’ sexual instruction videos specifically address anal sex. These videos are discussed in the last section of the following chapter.
Finally, on the topic of anal sex, a February 12, 1990 letter from R.D. in Oakland inquires regarding a sex toy Nina used in the video, *The Willing Husbands*. R.D. recalls that in the video Nina “allowed the man in the male role to use some plastic divices [sic] on (her) delectable [sic] bottom.” He then asks, “What are they and where can they be gotten?”

The full title of the video that R.D. refers to is *Anal Annie and the Willing Husbands* (Webb, 1985), with Hartley in the starring role as ‘Anal Annie.’ Hartley’s role as ‘Anal Annie’ is submissive in that the movie includes a series of anal sex scenarios where men anally penetrate women, including Hartley. It is possible (for persons having not viewed the video) to interpret the film title such that ‘Anal Annie’ is in a dominant role with male co-stars, anally penetrating men: the ‘willing husbands.’

The letter from R.D. is in some way opposite to the letter from Michael. That is, while Michael is a fan of and practitioner in receiving anal penetration, including the use of sex toys, R.D. is unaware of the ‘device’ inserted in Hartley’s anus, or how one might acquire such a device. So, while anal sex toys would seem to be a new piece of adult sex education for R.D., Michael is seemingly well acquainted. The opposing levels of knowledge regarding anal sex between the two letters, and accompanying videos, continues: the sexual practices depicted in *Anal Annie and the Willing Husbands* leads to questions and perhaps confusion on R.D.’s part, whereas Michael experiences disappointment because there are no scenarios depicting the anal penetration of men in his viewing of *Guide to Alternative Sex*. Through the scenario involving an anal sex toy, R.D. experienced a kind of alternative sex, while Michael may have had expectations regarding the video producer’s concept of alternative sex.
I chose these particular letters because they provide some connection to the idea of pornography as a form of sex education. There are other letters that recall pornography scenarios or include personal fantasies regarding anal sex practices. I include excerpts from some of these letters below in the context of pornography as fantasy: adult fairy tales. I think it is important to note that, within the small selection of letters above regarding anal sex that they all address different sub-headings in the category: diminished sensitivity during anal intercourse, anal dilation, male anal penetration, and anal sex toys. It is also interesting in R.D.’s letter from Oakland in 1990 that the author could not, would not, or did not know how to locate a relatively close sex shop and inquire about the anal sex toy to a knowledgeable salesperson. And, in 1996, it would seem that Scott from Georgia was not aware that Hartley (1995) had produced an instructional video on anal sex in 1995. He could have ‘gone online’ to find sexual health information related to medical dilators and anal penetration, though that information was likely unavailable in 1996. Presumably, the medical supply store did not have medical staff for consultation, or Scott did not feel comfortable discussing the (intimate, personal) issue with a store clerk.

In the following sections I include a selection of letters across several categories that can be interpreted as articulating a particular sexual fantasy, desire, or identification, and in some cases, sex education. I have suggested that pornography can offer a kind of sexual permission-giving to spectators. The letters below are perhaps representative of the viewer’s understanding of having permission to send Hartley their sexual fantasies, not only to her, but some pertaining to her. Some of these fantasies also thank Hartley for her work, or express the author’s hope to meet her. The first letter is an example of a Hartley fan articulating a
specific sexual fantasy, interesting in that it is told through the author’s idea for a Hartley pornographic scenario he has conceived of directing.

In an August 19, 1997 letter from Robert he tells Nina that he served as a tank gunner in the US Army during Operation ‘Desert Storm’ in Iraq. He describes how he had a photograph of Hartley “standing with [her] gorgeous ass to the camera and looking over [her] right shoulder.” Robert had the photograph “wedged in between the firing trigger and gun camera computer box in the M1A1 tank” he served in. The picture of Hartley’s “hot body” kept him “company through the long hot days and cold nights in the desert.” Robert wishes he could direct a pornographic movie starring Hartley. He shares his Desert Storm fantasy scenario, describing how Hartley would be:

wearing nothing but an Army cap and bandana straddling the 120mm cannon of the M1A1 tank with a sweaty GI in your mouth and one pumping in and out of your pussy from behind while your tits rub against the metal of the cannon. The GI in your mouth cums at the same time as the GI behind you. Your face and ass get splattered with hot cum and it dribbles down your chin and ass onto the hot metal of the tank.

In closing his letter, Robert tells Hartley that beyond her “hot looks” he realizes she has “a good head on her shoulders” and commends her activism on “Freedom of Speech and Expression.” I include explicit excerpts from Robert’s letter because it represents the speaking of sex, and because, in this dissertation’s attention to the spectator’s engagement with video pornography, the fantasy of directing a pornography scenario represents the transition of the viewer from spectator to director and (potential) creator of pornography. Second, because Robert’s letter reveals a sexual fantasy through the would-be eyes of the
director he is not involved physically; he directs where and what kind of sexual scenario the
tank crew have with Hartley. So, while Robert states that this particular fantasy is his chance
to direct a Hartley pornographic film, it is curious that he did not include himself in the
sexual scenario. Third, it is a very personal conceptualization in that the scenario takes place
entirely on the type of US Army battle tank in which Robert served during war in Iraq. That
is, the M1 tank becomes sexualized as the performer’s stage in the scenario including Hartley
splayed on the gun barrel. Fourth, he uses the generic term ‘GI’ to describe the men having
sex with Hartley. Presumably the men Robert includes in the fantasy scenario are not friends
from the military, or they are but he did not feel it necessary to include their names. Fifth,
Robert describes the photograph of Hartley located inside the tank. I leave this reference to
the end of my engagement with this letter because I feel it says much more than a casual
reader might consider. Robert served as a gunner in an armoured vehicle in a war on the
other side of the planet from his home. In the letter he includes information on his military
unit and particular Iraq war battles he participated in; I have omitted that information for
anonymity. My point is that Robert, like many soldiers before and after him, was far from
home and in danger of being killed. As the gunner in a battle tank the location of Hartley’s
photograph—“wedged in between the firing trigger and gun camera computer box”—means
it was in Robert’s field of vision most of his time awake in Iraq. And, given Robert’s
articulation of his directing a Hartley pornographic film, it would seem she was in his
thoughts beyond that photographic image. As Robert says in his letter to Hartley, the
photograph gave comfort through long hot days and cold nights. I suggest that declaration to
Hartley says quite a lot.
In the next section I include two letters that can be interpreted as revealing a pornography spectator’s sex education, or quest for adult sex education. Chapter 5 addresses pornography as adult sex education; however, I feel it is important to include letters to Hartley representative of the various kinds of questions or revelations from her fans. These two letters stand out in the Hartley archive because they are (likely) from men involving sex education specific to women’s genitalia.

Hartley received an undated postcard with a famous black and white photograph of Marilyn Monroe. The author does not include their name or any language that indicates a specific gender identification. I originally assumed the postcard to be from a male writer due to a reference to “(o)ther guys.” However, I subsequently considered that it is possible that this correspondence is from a female fan. For that reason I use gender-neutral pronouns. The postcard starts, “Happy Valentine’s day.” The anonymous author states that they are “too shy to send [Hartley] anything else than a post card.” The card thanks Hartley for helping the writer “see the beauty of female genitals and oral sex! Other guys and girls have always told me going down on women was gross, but” Hartley changed their mind. The writer closes by hoping to someday “wind up with my head between your thighs” to return “some of the pleasure” they have received from Hartley. The writer closes, “I hope this made you smile, even a little bit. Have a nice day. Love, Me.”

The second correspondence is an undated, typed letter from Sam in California. Like the first letter, it is possible the writer is female: there is no distinguishing gender identification, and 'Sam' could be a shortened version of Samantha. However, because the letter asks questions regarding menstruation I assume the writer to be male. Sam states that
he has enclosed a cheque for $35 as payment per his request that Hartley send him a “panty that has your horney [sic] pussy come on it after being masturbated.” Below his signature and mailing address Sam prints in pen, “I am curious about menstrual period [sic]. You said you are horniest 3 day [sic] before your period. Would a tampon absorb your sexy vaginal secretions. Or would the crotch of a panty have a better flavor. Thanks. Sam”

These two letters, though quite different in content, reveal both a curiosity and knowledge about women’s genitals. The postcard from the anonymous writer is of particular interest for its transition (in the limited writing space of a postcard) from a sex education history from peers who described cunnilingus as a “gross” sexual practice to the bliss of discovering the beauty of oral sex with female genitalia. Moreover, the author states that it was not only guys but “girls” who described cunnilingus as gross. In a somewhat similar context of ‘grossness’ associated with female genitalia, and menstruation specifically, the letter from Sam broaches an issue that would seemingly be difficult to initiate with a woman in most contexts. That is, Sam’s curiosity, forthrightness, and enthusiasm enabled him to reach out for sex education on a topic that, presumably, would not have many existing resources. Importantly, both the anonymous author’s revelation about cunnilingus and Sam’s inquiry into menstruation were articulated through Hartley’s pornography career and fan mail.

I suggest these letters are somewhat similar to my anal sex discussion above regarding the letters from Michael and R.D. First, both the anonymous postcard writer and R.D. reveal their curiosity for sex education to Hartley. Similar to R.D.’s lack of experience and knowledge regarding anal sex toys, the anonymous author’s postcard is a thank you to
Hartley for welcoming or encouraging the author to consider oral sex with women, and discovering sexual pleasure in performing the act. Second, the letter from Sam is a solicitation for Hartley to provide him with her used underwear. However, he also seeks sex education regarding menstrual fluid and sexual arousal. Similarly, Michael is experienced with anal sex but seeks knowledge regarding videos where men are anally penetrated by women. I contrast these pairs of authors here because they are representative of particular kinds of sexual desire and desire for sexual education.

The following letters are located broadly under the heading of sexual fantasy and desire. The first several letters focus on the topic of sexual dominance and submission. These letters serve two purposes. First, to demonstrate the variety of topics from writers and, second, importantly, I suggest these letters pertain to this dissertation’s first question regarding how video pornography changed pornography spectatorship.

A July 1996, letter from Alan starts with the address, “Nina my Goddess.” The single page letter declares the author’s love for Nina’s ass, and his interest in coprophilia. He describes Nina as “the most beautiful anal queen in the world,” and states that he has watched her pictures “for over ten years,” locating him as a fan near the beginning of Hartley’s career. Alan writes, “Nina, Please, Please, don’t be upset at me, but I love your ass, and my biggest dream in the world would be to eat your shit.” He goes on to say that he has always been “in love” with Nina’s “beautiful anus” and describes the pleasure he would derive from rimming her. The writer says more about his desire and devotion for

34 Coprophilia is the sexual gratification from fantasies or acts involving human excrement. Also, sometimes referred to as scatophilia.
35 Rimming is the act of using one’s tongue to lick or kiss the anal rim of another person to give or receive sexual pleasure.
coprophilia connected with Hartley. Alan then closes his letter, “You are my Shit Queen, Beautiful Nina.”

In a similar but different context of submission, an October 1992, letter from M.B. begins with an admission that he has “never engaged in any form of S&M, B&D,\textsuperscript{36} or homosexuality but” his fantasy is to be a “slave” to Hartley and a man. M.B.’s fantasy takes place in a large hotel room that has a “sex swing” suspended in the middle. Hartley secures M.B. in the swing, face down, and anally penetrates him with “an 8 inch dildo” for “what seems like an hour.” After removing the dildo Hartley holds a butt plug in front of M.B.’s face and commands, “kiss it, little slut, it’s your friend, we wouldn’t want anything strange getting up in that hole.” Hartley inserts the butt plug into M.B., then puts on a strap-on harness and dildo and approaches his face. She commands, “Suck my cock, little slut, show Mistress Nina how good you are at sucking dick and if you(‘re) any good before I allow a real man to fuck you in the ass, I’ll let you lubricate his cock with your mouth...now suck!”

There are a series of sexual acts between Hartley and M.B. that include Hartley ordering him to lie on his back with his legs up on a sofa, and then masturbate, pointing his penis such that he ejaculates onto his face. Then Hartley performs oral sex on M.B. and, after he ejaculates, she gives him a “french kiss,” letting the semen “fall back into (his) mouth.” Later, M.B. is brought into the large hotel shower stall where a dildo with a suction cup is attached to the wall. Hartley orders him to close his eyes, bend over, and back himself against the wall until anally penetrated. She returns, tells him to open his mouth, and a man puts his penis in M.B.’s mouth. Hartley tells him to open his eyes, and, “Suck him, little slut,

\textsuperscript{36} These abbreviations mean ‘Sadism & masochism,’ and ‘bondage & discipline.’ In my analysis I use upper case ‘S’ for Sadism and lower case ‘m’ masochism as is common practice for S/m practitioners.
suck him and make him come.” M.B. follows her instructions and the man ejaculates “what must have been 3 weeks worth of sperm into (his) mouth.” The fantasy concludes with the three of them in various sexual acts. M.B. closes the four-page letter by requesting Hartley send him “a couple photographs” and, if possible, with her wearing “some mistress / leather garb with spiked heels or boots.”

There is a follow-up letter from M.B., dated New Year’s Day, 1993. He inquires why Hartley has not responded to his offer of servitude: “I hope it’s because I moved and not that my fantasy wasn’t hot enough or that, in some way, it just didn’t seem to interest you.” M.B. asks Nina to send a couple photos of herself dressed in “leather mistress garb (hi-heels, chains & maybe a whip) so I can dream of you really being here.” The letter ends, “Thank you, Mistress Nina.” “Your obedient slave, M.B.”

I end this selection of fan letters describing sexual subordination from a prison inmate named Ronny. In a three-page letter dated March 2, 1998 from a correctional facility Ronny wrote a detailed fantasy to Nina. The entire letter is printed in capital letters. The author describes himself as “WHITE; 29; SEXY; GOOD-L(ook)N; ... AN ADVENTUOUS MIND; AND A BIG, FAT, HARD, 8½-INCH DICK!” Following a detailed description of his physique, Ronny clarifies, “I’M STRAIGHT, RIGHT.” He then immediately starts his sexual fantasy with Hartley by stating his desire for her to DEVRIRGINIZE him by penetrating his “TIGHT, SEXY, VIRGIN BUTT” with a “BIG, FAT, HARD, STRAP-ON DILDO, RIGHT.” Ronny states he wants a mirror positioned so that he can look at Hartley and watch her fully penetrate him with a 12-INCH DILDO.” The desire for ‘pegging’ does not negate

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37 Pegging is the sexual act of a woman penetrating a man anally, usually by using a dildo or similar sex toy. Often the hydraulics of the penetration is achieved by the woman wearing a strap-on harness that secures the
the author’s identification as heterosexual. However, Ronny’s fantasy expands to include a man in the scenario: “I’D LOVE TO BE SUCKIN ON YOUR MAN’S BIG, FAT, HARD DICK, WHILE YOU TREATED ME LIKE A SLUT!” Ronny articulates a desire for bodily fluids: wanting Hartley’s “man” to ejaculate his “THICK, SWEET-TASTIN CUM ALL OVER MY FACE AND NECK!” The fantasy continues with Hartley squatting over him to “PISS DOWN (HIS) THROAT!” Then, “AFTER I SWALLOWED YOUR SWEET-TASTIN PISS, RIGHT,” Ronny writes that he wants to have intercourse with Hartley. Before closing, Ronny requests Nina to play with her “HOT, WET, SWEET-TASTIN, ZILLION-DOLLAR PUSSY” while she reads his letter. In the remainder of the final page the author sends good wishes to Hartley, an endorsement for her to be careful, enjoy life, stay sexy, and “THANKS!” He signs the letter, “YOUR FREAK/ Ronny.”

I question what motivated these male-identified viewers to send Hartley explicit, detailed fantasies of sexual submission. I recognize that these letters do not directly relate to my dissertation questions. However, as mentioned above, these three letters raise their own questions about pornography spectatorship and Hartley’s fan archive. This chapter examines Nina Hartley’s fan mail; I feel it is not only fair, but also obligatory to describe the breadth of letters contained in the Hartley archive. I also recognize that I could have edited (read shortened) the excerpts from these letters. I do not want these explicit excerpts to be interpreted as excessive or unnecessarily salacious. My decision to include the above excerpts is to provide the reader with a clear idea of the writer’s fantasy scenario: the participants, activities, and dialogue. In connection to this dissertation these three letters can

dildo to the wearer’s torso. The term is distinct from descriptions of bi- or homosexual men engaged in anal intercourse.
certainly be considered as the speaking of sex. I quote generously from M.B. and Ronny’s extensive letters for several reasons. First, while it is not for me to determine the sexual identification of the authors of the letters, it is interesting that the letter begins with Ronny declaring his heterosexuality (“straight”), then articulating his desire to be anally penetrated by Hartley while performing fellatio on a man, and have the man ejaculate on his face.

Similarly, M.B. states he has “never engaged in S&M, B&D, or homosexuality” but then articulates a lengthy fantasy about being dominated and humiliated by Hartley. It is possible, under the heading of pornography as an adult fairy tale, that these sexual fantasies involving Hartley (and a man in some cases) in a dominant position, articulate the viewer’s secret desires; this is speculation. While S/m pornography exists it is possible that this material was unavailable in the geographic region where these viewers lived, or that their living situation would not have allowed renting or purchasing those videos as an option. Second, the letters of both M.B. and Ronny not only place the author in a submissive role, the descriptions of the scenarios are pornographic. That is, the letters are detailed in their use of adjectives and verbs regarding descriptions of body positions, sex acts, sex toys, and the dialogue of the scenario. I suggest the level of detail in articulating the scenario can be interpreted as expressing both the significance of the fantasy to the writer, and their desire to make it sound ‘real’ to Hartley. The significance of the scenario to the writer is similar to Robert’s direction of the M1A1 tank scenario. With regard to scenario descriptions, I also think the literal text in Ronny’s letter is interesting. As mentioned, the entire text is printed in capital letters, written in ink, with much underlining. The underlining seems to be the author’s emphasis of sexually related nouns, adjectives, and verbs. Third, the terms used to describe personal titles
sexual roles / positionality for each of the authors is interesting in the context of non-homosexual, non-S&M identified men writing a largely mainstream pornography star: Alan addresses Hartley as his “Shit Queen,” M.B. identifies himself as her “obedient slave,” and Ronny uses the terms “slut” and “your freak” to describe himself. Additionally, each of the three describe ingesting one or more bodily substances: “shit” for Alan, his own and another man’s semen for M.B., and “cum” and “piss” for Ronny. The particular titles can be interpreted as demarcating their / Hartley’s sexual role; the consumption of bodily fluids and waste could be interpreted as indicating a strong level of servitude.

There are numerous fan letters from male-identified authors describing how they want to be dominated or humiliated by, or perform service for Nina Hartley. Interestingly, in my research I did not read a single letter where the author described wanting to dominate Hartley in what could be considered a fetishistic, or Sadomasochistic (S/m) context. Hartley has taken on many roles in her videos, and while she may assume different sexual characters, she is rarely portrayed, or known as, a Dominatrix. There are several adult sexual education videos produced by Hartley and her husband on topics of sexual domination (Greene, 2001a; 2001b), spanking (Greene, 2004b), and bondage (Greene, 2005)38. However, all three of these letters are dated at least several years prior to Hartley’s S/m-related videos.

I question what motivated these viewers to send Hartley explicit, detailed fantasies of sexual submission. In part, I wonder if it is connected to Hartley’s enthusiasm, sex-positivism, and her connection to fans that welcomed these viewers to share their sexual fantasies. Given the research questions on how VCR technology changed viewers’ engagement with pornography, and how this engagement constituted a form of adult sex
education, I have considered whether these spectators may have viewed explicit videos on Sadomasochism and turned their desire for these sexual practices to the attention of Hartley, a famous, mainstream porn star they found attractive. Admittedly, there is no evidence to support that hypothesis. It is also possible that these three authors were simply fans of Nina Hartley who identified as sexually submissive; the author of the first letter, Alan, states he has followed Hartley’s career for over ten 10 years.

In “Sex, Power, and the Politics of Identity” Foucault (1997) describes S/m as a “creative enterprise,” one that invites practitioners to invent “new possibilities of pleasure” (p. 165). These new pleasures can be produced “with very odd things, very strange parts of our bodies, in very unusual situations” (p. 165). It is likely that most persons, pornography fans included, are not interested in the sexual acts described by M.B. and Ronny. The S/m and humiliation practices described in the letters are generally regarded as non-normative sex practices. I say more about non-normative sex and its connection to sex education in the next chapter.

Lastly, though perhaps most importantly for this chapter’s attention to Hartley’s fan letters, are the conclusions from these authors. As mentioned, M.B. ends his first letter by requesting photographs of Nina, preferably while she wears Dominatrix garb. And several months later M.B. sends another letter wondering why Hartley has not contacted him, and hopes his fantasy has not displeased her. M.B.’s concern for Hartley’s reaction to his written fantasy is perhaps a testimonial of his dedication to her. Similarly, Ronny’s lengthy letter shifts from an enthusiastic, detailed, description of a sexual fantasy to a thankful devotion that urges Hartley to be careful and enjoy life. I highlight this because it articulates a shift.

38 I discuss Hartley’s sex education / instructional videos in the next chapter.
from salacious to sweet in the turn of a page. I do not regard this contextual shift in emotion as incongruent for the pornography fan; I contend it is not only possible for Hartley’s fans, the ‘intimate stranger,’ to experience both a strong sexual desire for her, and genuine concern and caring for her well-being as a public sexual performer.

The two Hartley letters from M.B. and Ronny, perhaps more than the others, exemplify the paradoxes of spectatorship described in Chapter 2. As Penley (1988, p. 11) observes, in fantasy the “positions of sexual identification” are not fixed (Mayne, 2002, p. 89). And as Mayne (2002) writes, the viewer consists of a demographic matrix and an identity existing outside of film spectatorship (p. 90). Of course, beyond the letters, I do not have knowledge of M.B., Ronny, or Alan; I reference the spectatorship theory of Chapter 2 only as a suggestion regarding the contents of their letters. My analysis here is that the three letters in this section reveal both the demographic matrix of the spectator: non-homosexual and non-S/m practitioners writing those letters, and the paradox of spectatorship: the reception and negotiation of Hartley’s videos did not include submissive males consuming feces.

As pondered above, how is it that the authors came to compose and send these particular sexual fantasies to Hartley? In the opening of this chapter I include quotes from the presentation that Hartley and I gave at the CSC regarding her fan mail and her relationship with her fans. In the presentation Hartley described how many of her fans feel a kind of closeness to her because she has been virtually present with them during their engagement with pornography and its associated potential for sexual fantasy. I suggest these letters were sent to Hartley because the writers felt she was a ‘safe’ addressee for their fantasies. Safe, in
that although most of Hartley’s pornography career has been mainstream, heteronormative (non-S/m) content, particularly during the years these letters were sent, these fans recognized and appreciated her discernible enthusiasm for pornography: recognition as not ‘faking’ her performance. This enthusiasm, coupled with her sexual freedom activism, might have positioned her as an understanding, respectful, and entertained recipient for their fantasies. I also suggest that these writers—Alan, M.B., and Ronny—are great fans of Hartley and, despite recognizing her largely mainstream pornography career, chose to share their personal sexual fantasy involving her. Lastly, given my analysis of these letters, I suggest they expand our understanding of the spectator’s engagement with pornography in the video era.

The next group of letters do not necessarily reside in the context of pornography spectatorship. Furthering my presentation of a breadth of Hartley’s fan archive I include letters sent to Hartley that do not pertain to pornography, or even to sexuality. I suggest that, in a dissimilar manner from the previous discussion, these letters are related to pornography spectatorship in the video era. More specifically, as discussed in the previous chapter, the proliferation of video pornography contributed to Hartley’s status as an adult star and a celebrity. Beyond pornography, Hartley appeared in magazines and on television to discuss free speech, sexual freedom, sex education, and non-monogamy, for example. These print and electronic media discussions and appearances contributed to her position as not only a prolific pornography star, but as a celebrity generally. It is because of her celebrity status and name recognition among persons lying outside of pornography spectatorship constituents that she received the following correspondence.
Perhaps my most memorable letter in the Hartley archive is from Melissa, who identifies herself as a “Cadette Girl Scout” from Texas. Melissa’s two-page letter is typed. The first page introduces her “Girl Scout project” on the issue of “Women Today.” She is asking for Hartley’s assistance in her project; the second page is a questionnaire of nine questions that includes issues of child care, women in US history, when a woman will be President of the US, and how the respondent sees herself remembered in history. Melissa explains that she is “writing to influential women and men throughout the United States” to help with her project. Only Melissa, her parents, and her Scout leader will see the questionnaires. She asks that, if possible, to include a photograph for the project; the questionnaires and photographs will be collected in a project binder. Melissa also offers to refund the postage for completing the questionnaire if desired. She closes the form letter, “Thank you for at least taking the time to read this letter. Whether you respond or not, I still give to you this BIG GIRL SCOUT ‘THANK YOU.’”

I have always been fascinated by that letter. How does a teenage Girl Scout think to include pornography star, Nina Hartley in her project? And where did she obtain the address for Hartley’s fan club? And what was Melissa’s expectation regarding the inclusion of Hartley in a “Women Today” project? What I want to draw from this letter is how a (presumably) teenage girl in Texas is a constituent in my research attention to VCR technology and its subsequent influence on pornography spectatorship. That is, it is possible that Melissa viewed Hartley’s videos at home or elsewhere. It is also possible that Melissa saw an interview with Hartley on television, or read a magazine interview with her; Hartley’s fan club ad and address were listed in men’s magazines. Clearly, Melissa was at least aware
of Nina Hartley as a pornography icon of the time, and in some small way this may have contributed to her sex education generally: Melissa decided that pornography star Nina Hartley was an appropriate addressee to contribute to important questions regarding the status of women in the United States.

A more formal request came to Hartley in 1997 on US Postal Service letterhead from a US Postmaster in New York who requested she send a photograph for a project in the Post Office. The Postmaster states they have received “many compliments from our customers and children who have visited our office with displays of sports players, sports announcers and celebrities, ... models, political leaders, corporate executives...” The letter ends with, “I would greatly appreciate your participation in this program.”

Similarly, but in a different context, Tim identifies himself as a high school teacher in Ohio. He writes Hartley asking for a signed photo for a “Wall of Fame” in the classroom. The theme is “Surround Yourself Around Successful People.” Tim writes, “Our students need as much encouragement and positive influence as they can get.” The letter ends with “Thanks so much for helping to motivate our future generation.”

My questions related to the NY Postmaster and Ohio school teacher are similar to that of Melissa’s questionnaire: how did these people consider writing to pornography star, Nina Hartley? If the last two requests are legitimate, how do the authors conceive of including Hartley among athletes, celebrities, and politicians? And have they considered potential backlash from persons who object to a pornography star’s photo positioned as a role model? These are rhetorical questions, of course; I do not have answers. My consideration of these questions is that, relative to the first question of this research
regarding VCR technology, perhaps in the mid-1990s some persons felt that pornography spectatorship had become so accessible and ubiquitous that porn stars had crossed over into celebrity culture generally? As the Postmaster letter states, alongside mainstream celebrities, models, and political leaders.

Finally, the singular ‘negative’ letter (n.d.) I found in the Hartley archive is from someone identifying as a “16 year old Roman Catholic” from Michigan. He signs the letter, “A concerned Christian who wants a [sic] end to products of Satan.” It appears he originally wrote his name at the top and then scribbled it out. The author writes that he saw an article about Nina in a magazine “because 2 kids at (his) school were reading it and laughing;” he then copied her address. His specific concerns are that, contrary to the article (interview?) that it is not “O.K. to cheat on your spouse and go to sex orgies.” Nina is described as a “slut” and a “devil” who is “going to burn in hell,” which is where porn “was born.”

I include this letter because it is from a minor, a person identifying as a sixteen-year old Christian. Besides Melissa, the self-identified Girl Scout, this is the only other letter from person self-identifying as under legal age to view pornography in the Hartley archive. Most authors either do not disclose their age, or identify as being of legal age, usually in the age range of twenties to sixties. The motivation for the 16-year old Christian to write Hartley seems self-explanatory. It is perhaps questionable why a 16-year old boy would feel so distraught that he would write to Hartley. And, of course, given his reference to people cheating on their spouse and attending “sex orgies” he read the magazine article in addition to writing out her mailing address.
I will briefly add that, under the heading of negative letters in the Hartley fan archive, and as a letter of particular interest, there is also an official form letter from the U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Prisons, dated March 1993. The letter indicates that the California prison is returning “unauthorized material,” specifically, “Sexually Explicit Personal Photos,” sent to an inmate named Andrew. The Department of Justice form letter does not belong to the same category as a 16-year old Roman Catholic boy calling Hartley a “slut” who is going to “burn in hell” but it can be interpreted as a kind of rejection.

**Pornography, Spectators, and Diversity**

In the next section I examine selections of Hartley’s fan mail in the context of diversity. These letters are from authors self-identifying in one or more minoritarian groups. I start this section on diversity with some theoretical work on representations of people of colour in media, particularly as it pertains to sexuality. I then examine several letters from the Hartley archive from fans identifying as people of colour. I then include some academic work on the intersection of disability and sex. This is followed by an examination of several letters from fans identifying as people with a disability. I then include letters from women viewers as an underrepresented and ‘diverse’ group from the majority demographic of male viewers. I then conclude with three letters, one representing the diversity category of ‘class,’ the second regarding ‘age,’ and the third representing ‘bisexuality.’

Beyond the self-identifying language, the content in some of the letters below could have been written by white Hartley fans. I include the following letters to give voice to underrepresented persons in the Hartley archive. The following selection of Hartley’s fan
letters articulate what can be interpreted as the fan’s desire to view representations of bodies similar to their own in pornography (Erickson, 2013; Fung, 1991; McClintock, 1992; Noble, 2013). As mentioned, these fans represent marginalized groups in the context of mainstream pornography spectatorship: disabled persons, persons of colour, trans or gender-variant persons, or people with particular somatic characteristics based on size, height, or genitalia, for example. The spectator’s identification with representations of bodies similar to their own in pornography is best understood as a kind of sexual belonging (Cossman, 2007). The desire to see bodies similar to one’s own in explicit representations of sexuality and the subsequent feeling of sexual belonging pertains to this dissertation’s first research question regarding how video technology changed the spectator’s engagement with pornography.

In his foundational work, “Looking for my Penis,” Richard Fung (1991) articulates the lack of representation of the Asian man’s penis “in relation to race” in gay pornography (p. 161). Fung describes white men as holding dominant, penetrative, sexual positionality, and Asian men are sexual ‘bottoms,’ to be penetrated and submissive. Because gay Asian males are cast as submissive and not in a role as ‘penetrator’ their penis becomes moot: it is visually insignificant. The central desire in gay pornography scenarios centres around ejaculation, privileged over the pleasure of anal intercourse (Fung, 1991, p. 153). While Fung’s work considers gay depictions the point of including his work here is to highlight his concern regarding the lack of masculine representations of Asian bodies in pornography.

Similar to Fung’s concern over ethnic representation of sexuality generally, Mercer’s (1991) important work critiques Robert Mapplethorpe's controversial artwork regarding representations of African-American men. Mapplethorpe’s artwork is static photographic
depictions, and while many consider his work pornographic it is a different medium from moving-image pornography. Nevertheless, Mapplethorpe’s artwork is well-known, graphic, controversial, has garnered significant academic attention, and includes famous representations of men of colour. For those reasons I include his work in this examination of representations of men of colour.

In reviewing Mapplethorpe’s work, Mercer (1991) was shocked to view the profile of a black man “whose head was cropped or ‘decapitated,’ so to speak, holding his semitumescent penis” through the opening in his trousers (p. 184). Mapplethorpe's art includes photographs of black men, often explicitly displaying “huge penises” (Sullivan, 2003, p. 186). Contrary to Fung’s critique of insignificance, Mercer’s claim is that African-American men are reduced to their penis.39 At a time when pornography distribution was flourishing via video technology it is important to consider the engagement by minoritarian pornography viewers with representations, or a lack of representations, of bodies and identifications similar to their own. The objective in this brief introduction to ethnicity in pornography is to provide a general understanding of the limitations on explicit representations of men of colour, and criticisms of those representations. Admittedly, this brief attention to representations of ‘race’ in pornography focuses only on men, and gay men specifically. However, as mentioned, most of the writers in the Hartley archive are male-identified so, for the majority of Hartley fans, this brief attention to sexual representations of men of colour suffices.

39 It should be noted that Mercer (1994), a gay man, revised his initial assessment of Mapplethorpe and his work following the artist’s death from AIDS-related illness.
In this section I connect the academic work from Fung and Mercer to some of Hartley’s fan letters to question the inclusion of representations of non-white male pornography actors. As mentioned, given the mostly heterosexual male demographics of the fan archive, I think of this examination, regardless of ethnicity or ability, in the context of Fung’s (1991) work: the viewer looking for representations of his penis.

‘Race’ and Nina Hartley’s Letters

There is a Hartley fan letter from a self-identified “black man” named Artis in Georgia. The text of the letter from Artis describes his “problem.” Artis states that his penis is quite large, measuring eleven inches in length, and three inches wide; he includes a traced outline of his penis on a separate page that includes dimension details. Artis states that because of the dimensions of his penis he has never fully penetrated a woman; he writes Hartley to ask if she knows how he can achieve sexual satisfaction. What is of greater interest here, given the research question regarding pornography as a kind of adult sex education, is that Artis writes to Hartley because he is seeking “some sex education.” Specifically, his sex education question for Hartley is whether he will find a woman capable of being fully penetrated by him.

Fung and Mercer’s academic work attends to the idea of men of colour depicted through exaggerated representations, or lack of representations, of their penis. Artis mentions that he is sexually active; his concern is not that he has not engaged in sexual acts, it is that it has been unfulfilling. Artis has a genuine sexual concern. Yet, unintentionally perhaps, through the outline diagram and measurements, to some extent, Artis has centred attention
on a representation of his penis. The genuine concern in the letter is his search for sex education and fulfillment defined by its dimensions. This letter is included here because it is from a writer identifying as a black man. Given the letter’s message seeking sex education, and the writer including an outline drawing of his penis, the letter warrants inclusion in this dissertation regardless of the writer’s demographic identification. Presumably, Artis considered that Hartley, as a pornography star, and perhaps as a sex expert, would be able to provide professional advice.

A man named Mario from Maryland wrote Hartley a one-page letter in February 1999. He states that he is a huge fan, having seen “just about every video” Hartley has performed in, and admits that he first saw Hartley in the video Coming In America (Farkas, 1988) when he “was around fourteen or fifteen years old.” Now, at 23, Mario writes that he gets “just as excited” watching Hartley as the first time. In closing the letter, Mario describes Hartley as a “beautiful lady with a ‘Bomb-ass-body.’” He includes his email address and invites Hartley to meet him if she is interested. In the last line of the letter Mario describes himself as “6’1”, 190 lbs., young black male, with lots of energy, endurance, length, and width!”

Mario’s letter declares his attraction to Hartley, describes his physical appearance, and his sexual prowess. The video cited by Mario, Coming In America (Farkas, 1988), includes African-American pornography performers Aja (female) and Billy Dee (male), and the video is categorized as including ‘interracial sex.’ Given that this video includes African-

40 The IMDb biography webpage for Billy Dee includes a quote attributed to Dee that states, “I am mixed race, I have Irish in me, Mexican, black, so I got away with it by basically not looking black.” The quote ends with Dee stating that it was better professionally to identify as white even though he had “an Afro and a mustache.” See: http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0214150/bio?ref_=nm_ov_bio_sm.
American and white actors having sex, and that Mario viewed the film at the age of “fourteen or fifteen years old,” it is possible that it had what can be described as a lasting impression on him. It is noteworthy that in the February 1999 letter Mario states he is 23 years of age; Hartley would have been a month away from her fortieth birthday. As a fan dedicated to viewing most of Hartley’s films, having first seen Hartley in an interracial genre pornography feature, and this dissertation’s question regarding the significance of video technology to pornography spectatorship, Mario’s letter is interesting in the context of this section’s attention to pornography fans of colour.

A two-page 1998 letter from Trace is unique in that the physical stationery is transformed into a pornographic text. That is, each of the two pages of stationery has a different sexually explicit magazine photograph of a man-woman couple engaged in intercourse photocopied onto the paper. And Trace’s equally explicit text is written upon these pages: pornographic literary text on visually pornographic text. Trace tells Nina that he thinks she is “the sexiest (undoubtedly tastiest) most beautiful woman” he has ever seen, and hoping that one day he could “meat” [sic] her. Trace continues,

Nina, I’ll do anything and everything for the opportunity to suck and fuck that delicious [sic] ass of yours. I’ve been told that I eat pussy phenomenally!!! And, I have a 7” brown dick that goes like the eveready [sic] bunny.

Trace closes his letter, “I’m a total nasty freak for you. Your asshole will love my tongue. Your #1 fan.” Similar to Mario’s letter, Trace describes the physical dimensions of his penis and declares his sexual energy and sustainability. Beyond the imagination and time to create pornographic stationery, I find Trace’s letter, like Mario’s, interesting for its unabashed
declaration that he possesses a sexual prowess and enthusiasm for Hartley, a pornography star.

I reiterate that, beyond the obvious demographic self-identifiers, these letters could just as well have been written by authors not identifying as “black” or “brown.” The objective in including these letters, and what I feel important, is to give voice to underrepresented constituents in the Hartley archive, and to make space in this dissertation for the diversity of Hartley fans, and to include these spectators in the first research question regarding their engagement with video pornography spectatorship.

**Dis/ability and Pornography**

Hartley received fan letters from men identifying with some form of disability. Some of them wrote that pornography was their only source of sexual pleasure. The importance of sexual desires and fulfillment is often overlooked as disabled people are rarely regarded as “either desiring subjects or objects of desire” (Mollow & McRuer, 2012, p. 1). In *Claiming Disability*, Linton (1998) contends that in discussions on disability and sexuality “the first error is the idea that disabled and nondisabled people have differing capacities and entitlements when it comes to pleasure” (p. 111). As excerpts from the letters below describe, some of Hartley’s fans were disabled persons who watched video pornography. Largely, they desired a pleasurable sex life, and inquired about and sought representations of bodies similar to their own in pornography. As Dean (2014b, p. 421) observes, “just as interracial porn emphasizes contact between phenotypically distinct anatomies … so
disability porn conventionally features extraordinary bodies in sexual contact with the more normatively bodied (Fiedler, 1978, p. 137).”

Fortunately, pornography has provided a medium for explicit representations of disabled persons congruent with the idea of sexual agency. In 1977 the hardcore, feature-length film, *Long Jeanne Silver* (de Renzy), was released. Jeanne Silver, a lesser known name in pornography, was born with a disabled left leg. In the introduction, Silver makes the declaration that she is “horny” and seeking sexual adventures (de Renzy, 1977). She narrates the film, and initiates and participates in each sexual scenario: indications of sexual agency and desire. Three decades later, Loree Erickson’s (2006) explicit, autoethnographic film, *Want*, premiered. Like Silver, Erickson, a disabled woman, articulates both her sexual desires, and the ‘want’ to be desired. In a marked demarcation between sexuality and quotidian life, *Want* shifts back and forth between sexually explicit scenes of Erickson with a lover, and her everyday negotiation of public spaces from a wheelchair.

Similar to the erotic declarations of Silver and Erickson, a number of letters in the Hartley archive are from self-identified disabled men who enjoy watching video pornography and seek sexual inclusion. These authors articulate sexual agency: a desire to pursue their sexuality.

I start with a letter from Charlie in Louisiana. He identifies as “a black guy, 24, who has never had sex.” It is worth noting that at the age of 24 most men in his age range are likely sexually active. Charlie states he is handicapped, has no car, and his “income will not allow (him) to travel to pick up (Hartley’s) material.” His physical, sexual, and financial situation garners attention from multiple axes of diversity. Furthermore, Charlie lives in a
part of Louisiana where pornographic videotapes and adult magazines are prohibited. His
disability and financial situation limits his access to Hartley through “T.V. talk shows,
magazines, or on tape.” Charlie clarifies his reference to “tape” was “a preview of about 4
second” [sic] of a Hartley video. He asks Hartley to “find it in (her) heart” to send him one of
her videos, preferably one where she is “having a threesome with two black studs” and
includes anal sex.

As a handicapped, 24-year old, “black guy” with no vehicle and little income the
succinct letter is located at the intersection of ability, class, and ethnicity. Perhaps Charlie’s
desire to view Nina having sex with “black studs” can be interpreted as imagining himself as
able-bodied, and fulfilling a fantasy for Charlie to imagine having sex with Nina Hartley, or
someone like her. This is, of course, speculation.

A March 1995 letter from Eldon in Colorado mentions that he saw Hartley perform at
a club that week and that he met her. He asks Nina if she has “experienced sex with [a] Deaf
adult film star or Deaf swinger.” Eldon does not disclose whether he is deaf, but states that
he hopes to meet deaf adult film stars. Eldon wrote Hartley less than a week after meeting
her at a performance. It seems likely that she made an impression on him, and that he seized
the opportunity to connect with her. Beyond her pornography career, Hartley is public
regarding her participation in and endorsement of ‘swinging:’ consensual, negotiated, non-
monogamous relationships. Presumably, Eldon is seeking community, a sexual community,
of deaf pornography performers and swingers. Given Eldon’s questions regarding Hartley’s
knowledge of or association with deaf adult film stars this could be interpreted as the Hartley
fan searching for representations of people similar to himself.
Another letter from Colorado comes from Joe in December 1994. Joe writes that he is a “big fan” and asks Hartley about her favourite video performance, and her favourite actor or actress to work with. Joe states that he is “confined to a wheelchair due to muscular dystrophy” and that, particularly in winter, he watches “a lot of X-rated and regular type of videos.” Joe asks, if not “to(o) personal,” if she has “ever made a video” or “had sex with a person in a wheelchair? If not, would (she)?”

A man who refers to himself as Davey ‘one step’ writes Nina that he is aware that she studied nursing before entering the pornography industry; he has “dreams” that centre on him in the hospital and Hartley is his nurse; he does not elaborate. Davey writes that he and his girlfriend watch Hartley’s videos together and that his girlfriend “gets turned on watchin [sic]” her. He mentions that his Nina Hartley video viewing includes the all-girl lesbian video Girls Will Be Boys 4 (Dumont, 1992). Davey has asked his girlfriend “to try lesbianism;” she responded only if the woman is Hartley. Davey closes the letter asking Nina, “Would you ever screw a guy with one leg? Once you do ya [sic] never go back.”

Davey’s letter is interesting for several other reasons. First, he refers to himself more than once as Davey ‘one step.’ And at the end of the letter he includes a ‘stick figure’ drawing of a man with one leg, reclined, with a smile on his face. Presumably, this discloses his comfort that he has only one leg. Second, similar to Joe in a wheelchair, Davey asks Nina if she would have sex with a man with one leg. Third, he states that he has urged his girlfriend to engage in ‘lesbianism;’ seemingly disappointed that she would only be interested in lesbian sex if it involved Nina Hartley. And, fourth, in the letter Davey mentions
having viewed Hartley’s 1992 video Girls will be Boys 4, a film Hartley starred in with an all-female cast. This is perhaps another reference for his interest in ‘lesbianism.’

In this section’s attention to the disabled viewer looking for ‘representations of their penis’ in pornography, the letters of Joe and Davey suggest this sentiment. That is, Joe asks Nina if she has “ever made a video” or “had sex with a person in a wheelchair?” Similarly, Davey asks if Hartley would “screw a guy with one leg?” I take these questions to suggest that, at a minimum, these spectators are attracted to the thought that Hartley would have sex with someone like themselves. And, given Joe’s question, perhaps they would be willing to perform in a video with her.

These four letters regarding ability are succinct yet I think it is important to recognize the sexual presence and desire in the situations of these authors. As Mollow and McRuer (2012) observe, the terms ‘sex’ and ‘disability’ are often regarded as incongruent. Yet these authors support Linton’s (1998) view that it is an error to believe disabled people have a different capacity regarding sexual desire (p. 111).

**Letters from Women**

I include women in this discussion of diversity of Hartley’s fans as an underrepresented group in terms of pornography spectatorship. As mentioned in Chapter 1 regarding Hartley’s feminist stance on sexuality, she viewed pornography as an opportunity for women to express their sexuality, initiate sex, engage in sex purely for sexual pleasure, and have multiple partners in a sexual scenario. This sexual philosophy may have contributed to Hartley’s popularity with women viewers.
A woman named Carole writes a succinct, single-page letter encouraging Nina to “do more amateur videos” and “especially using a strap-on to fuck the women.” More interestingly, she wants to see representations of women “with unique sex abilities like being fist fucked,” or women with “special physical features like big clits or distended pussy lips.” Carole’s focus on specific genitalia is interesting. She does not elaborate on why she desires these particular pornographic scenes or how they are of interest to her; we are left to speculate. Perhaps she was bored or dismayed from viewing ‘perfect,’ normative, pornographic women’s bodies. It is also possible that, similar to Fung’s idea of ‘looking for his penis,’ Carole hoped to view pornographic representations of women with genitalia similar to herself. In this section’s category of women, Carole’s letter steers the discussion of diversity toward specific issues of embodiment—genitalia—and the idea of normative bodies. That is, while the letters immediately above involve disabilities commonly discussed—deafness, loss of mobility, loss of a limb—Carole’s letter discusses physical features that are usually not seen: “big clits or distended pussy lips.” And, for persons with genitalia similar to that described by Carole, it is questionable whether the person would feel some discomfort, or be open to discussing it: a return to Delany’s understanding of ‘the unspeakable.’ It is also questionable if the mainstream pornography industry would be interested in productions with explicit representations of non-normative (aesthetically uncommon) female genitalia, though perhaps so in what might be considered an exploitative manner. In the context of this dissertation’s attention to pornography and adult sex education, the focus on the size and shape of genitals in Carole’s letter is somewhat similar to the above letter from Artis: his concern with the dimensions of his penis. As mentioned,
the text of Carole’s letter does not refer to her own genitalia so it is not known if her interest in viewing particular representations of women’s genitalia is a personal interest / fetish, or a desire to see pornographic representations of bodies similar to her own. Given the mainstream pornography industry’s parameters of heteronormative beauty standards and representations of normative bodies Carole’s desire to view big clits and distended pussy lips, and Artis’ concern for possibilities for sexual intercourse due to the size of his penis, could provide a kind of adult sex education for some pornography spectators: explicit representations of sexual acts involving genitalia described by Carole and Artis might broaden a spectator’s understanding of the diversity of human genitalia. Pornographic productions of this kind would also provide an education to Artis, and others, that there are women capable of sexual intercourse with someone similar to himself.

Another succinct letter comes from Elizabeth who identifies as a “22 year old bisexual woman.” She describes herself as “about 5’6” and 105 pounds, big tits, and a firm ass.” Elizabeth writes to Nina, “I have a video of you and I watch everyday [sic].” “You turn me on. I want to lap in your juices. You’re so sexy. I want to fuck you.” Elizabeth closes the letter with hopes that Hartley will write back to her.

Although the letter is relatively short there is much to draw from it pertaining to this dissertation. For my research attention to video technology it is significant that Elizabeth mentions having a video of Nina Hartley, and the connection between her desire to watch it daily and the technological ability to do so. This statement recalls the Chapter 3 discussion regarding the technological advance of video enabling the viewer to watch, in private, sexual scenarios of interest at leisure, repeatedly. Second, Elizabeth’s letter is similar in content to a
number of letters from male fans. Similar in that, like the 1999 letter from Mario in Maryland and the 1998 letter from Trace, for example, Elizabeth describes her own sexual attraction to Hartley. Second, like Mario and Trace, she includes a physical description of herself, not just dimensions but adjectives: her “big tits” and “firm ass,” perhaps as an invitation for Hartley to picture her, think about her, and find her attractive. The third similarity to some of the male fans, and my specific comparison here to Mario and Trace, is the articulation of her desire for Hartley through the frankness and explicitness of her text: “I want to lap in your juices.” “I want to fuck you.” Elizabeth does not clarify in the letter how she wants to fuck Hartley; this could be with her fingers, a sex toy, or using a strap-on harness and dildo, as Carole mentions regarding a pornography scenario she wants to see. Lastly, as with many male-identified authors, there is the hope that Hartley will correspond with the addressor.

Catrina in Texas wrote to express her disappointment at not attending Hartley’s recent performance in her city. Catrina states that she wanted to watch Nina’s performance at a “gentlemen’s club” and to hand her a rose, but that she was “not too terribly comfortable” and worried about feeling “conspicuous” as a single woman. She then asks Nina if female fans go to her performances. Catrina praises Hartley as “one of the most beautiful, sensous [sic] women” who makes her feel “proud to be a female.” Catrina tells Hartley that she loves watching her in films, embracing her femininity, and “women giving pleasure to one another.” Catrina endorses women having sex together: “Especially between boyfriends or after a disastrous affair of some kind. Who better to understand what we really need?” Women show “attention and affection.” She continues by regretting, again, that she could not
bring herself to attend Hartley’s live show: “I would loved to bring you roses and give you a hug for all the pleasure you given [sic] me.” She then asks Hartley what her show is like. Catrina starts the closure of the letter, “I must confess I’ve had quite a crush on you for quite a while!” “Respectfully & Affectionately, Catrina.”

I compared Elizabeth’s letter in content and writing to some of the letters from male writers, specifically, Mario and Trace. Contrary to the explicit, succinct letters from Carole and Elizabeth, Catrina writes a two-page letter that culminates with her admission of a crush on Hartley. She twice declares that she could not bring herself to enter a men’s club to watch Hartley perform, her concern with appearing “conspicuous,” perhaps still regretting her decision. Catrina does not state that she is bisexual or a lesbian, but it is clear she has pondered the emotional connection between women: understanding what other women need, and showing “attention and affection.” While very different from Carole and Elizabeth’s letters, Catrina’s letter is similar to those from some male writers in its (seemingly) shy, ‘respectful, affection’ for Hartley.

Finally, a letter dated May 17, 1993 from a married woman states that she and her husband love watching Hartley’s films together. The woman mentions enjoying the film where Nina “played a therapist who taught people how to butt-fuck.” The woman writes that her husband wanted them to try anal intercourse but that she was “afraid.” After viewing that video the couple “bought a butt plug to practice with.” The woman says she has not tried anal sex “yet,” but thanks to Nina she is “making the effort (smile).” She adds, “I do like the butt-plug, I’m sure it won’t be long before I can work with the real thing!” The author goes on to thank Hartley for her performances where she “learned how to move my ass while
doing it ‘doggie-style.’” The woman seems happy to inform Hartley that it drives her husband “wild!”

This subsection examines letters from women and, while I recognize that the writer indicates that she is married, she authors the letter. I decided it was appropriate to include it in this short selection of letters from women. There are several points from this succinct letter pertaining to this dissertation. First, similar to the letter from Davey ‘one step,’ the letter describes a couple enjoying watching Hartley’s videos together. This relates to Chapter 3 and the discussion of video technology changing access to and the convenience and leisure of pornography spectatorship. Second, the writers indicate a specific Hartley video that is important to them for a particular reason. For Davey, it is the all-girl feature *Girls Will Be Boys 4* (Dumont, 1992) and his desire that his wife explore ‘lesbianism.’ For this woman and her husband it is the video where Hartley “played a therapist who taught people how to butt-fuck.” Third, this letter is a good precursor to the following chapter’s attention to pornography as a kind of adult sex education. The writer describes several forms of adult sex education and a willingness to expand sexual practices in a single letter: anal sex, sex toys, body positioning, and body movement during sex. Fourth, similar to R.D.’s letter inquiry regarding anal penetration and the butt plug Hartley inserted into her ass, this woman’s letter identifies Hartley as a sex educator through her performance in an anal sex genre pornography video. Moreover, what is interesting in this woman’s letter is that it reads as genuine thankfulness for her acquisition of sexual knowledge through viewing Hartley’s videos, and an enthusiasm for what has been learned.
I have made some brief comparisons between some of the letters from women and other letters. What I attempt to articulate in my comments following the letter from Catrina, and the letters from Carole and Elizabeth, is that these resemble, in different ways, letters from men. There are letters to Hartley from both women and men that are sexually explicit, usually in describing the writer’s attraction to Hartley. These letters are similar in articulating the writer’s desire to have penetrative and oral sex with Hartley, and express their energy and enthusiasm to do so. And there are letters from women and men that are respectful and thankful for Hartley’s contribution to pornography, sex education, and sexual freedom activism. Having said that, as mentioned, most of Hartley’s pornography work is located in the mainstream, heterosexual genre of pornography made by heterosexual men for the viewing pleasure of men; these movies often include girl-on-girl scenes. And as mentioned above, the great majority of Hartley fan letters are from men. Given those realities, Hartley’s physical attractiveness, her sexual enthusiasm, and her public declarations as both bisexual and non-monogamous, the presence of sexually explicit letters from women is not surprising.

I conclude this chapter with three letters I suggest can be categorized under the heading of diversity. The first is related to class, the second to age, and the third to bisexuality. I include these letters at the end of this section because I believe they connect with letters discussed above in particular ways.

**Class**

On what can be considered the upper end of the economic spectrum I include a letter soliciting Hartley to perform at a private men’s club. The succinct letter, dated November
1992 is on letterhead from a prestigious gentlemen’s club on the East side of New York City. My cursory research shows that the club has a list of members that includes prominent former US politicians, entertainers, and wealthy entrepreneurs; it is listed among the most exclusive ‘members-only’ clubs in Manhattan. The author inquires if Hartley would consider dancing privately for the members of the club under “strictly professional circumstances.”

In 1992 Hartley had been working in pornography for eight years, appeared in dozens of videos, often as the star. She had appeared in men’s magazines and performed in strip clubs; Hartley had established herself as an adult entertainment star. Presumably her celebrity status and professionalism led to this gentlemen’s club soliciting her for a performance. And it seems certain this club had the financial means to arrange a private, members-only performance. My interpretation of the author’s use of the term “strictly professional circumstances” is to both assure Hartley that her performance will occur in a safe, dignified, appreciative environment, and that perhaps there is an expectation from Hartley that she will be ‘professional’ and exercise discretion and a level of confidentiality regarding her performance at the club. I do not know if Hartley agreed to perform at this club.

I discuss this letter briefly as a singular example of ‘class’ as a heading under diversity. In this discussion I use ‘class’ in the context of financial status and the social and political power that sometimes accompanies monetary wealth. This letter, on club letterhead, is the most obvious and striking singular example of class and wealth in the Hartley letters that I encountered. There are letters from fans inviting Hartley to join them on vacation—a sunny beach or a ski trip—but these letters do not make explicit the writer’s financial status.
or political power, for example. Put simply, in the hundreds of Hartley fan letters seldom are there indicators, blatant or latent, that disclose the writer’s educational, financial, or political status.

In this discussion of class among Hartley spectators I recall the letter from Charlie, the impoverished, disabled African-American man in Louisiana, as a comparison to the private men’s club letter. There are several reasons for including the concept of class and discussing the private club letter in my attention to diversity among Hartley spectators. First, to make clear the spectrum of economic disparity between Hartley fans. In this brief examination I include only Charlie in Louisiana, and the members of a New York gentlemen’s club. The letter from the private New York gentlemen’s club solicits a private performance by Hartley for its members. This implies a substantial level of class and affluence. That is, it seems reasonable that the members of the club would cover the travel and accommodation costs for Hartley in addition to her performance fee. And, beyond the potential private performance, presumably the club members could watch Hartley’s videos whenever they desired; cost would likely be of little concern. Contrarily, Charlie’s letter describes his dire level of poverty and asks Nina if she would consider sending him a videotape without cost to him. Second, in examining the first dissertation question regarding how video technology changed pornography spectatorship these two letters—Charlie and the private men’s club—represent the extremes in pornography spectatorship. Charlie’s location in Louisiana prohibits him from renting or legally acquiring video pornography. And, repeating a portion from the first response, Charlie asked Hartley if she could indulge his request for her to send him one of her videos at no cost. Beyond his lack of financial means,
Charlie’s situation is limited further by his disability and lack of access to transportation. That is, if he did acquire funds to purchase a pornography video in a neighbouring county or state his ability to travel is a concern. These two letters describe a stark difference regarding their possibility for pornography spectatorship and opportunities for adult entertainment. That is, to recognize the everyday impact of class disparity as it pertains to pornography spectatorship. The tertiary reason to compare these letters is to articulate the equality of desire among fans, irrespective of class, to view Nina Hartley’s performances. That is, it is plausible that Charlie and the members of the gentlemen’s club receive the same or similar level of enjoyment from Hartley’s performances. The concept of equality in this claim regarding the pleasure of spectatorship is perhaps the only instance of equality between these disparate Hartley fan constituents.

The final heading in my attention to diversity amongst Hartley fans is ‘age.’ Similar to the above letter from the New York Gentlemen’s club under the heading ‘class’ I include only one letter in this brief attention to the spectrum of ages of writers in the Hartley archive. The following letter is also connected to the discussion immediately above regarding class and access to pornography spectatorship.

**Age**

A man from New York named Vincent states he is 73 years of age, and in his letter to Nina Hartley informed her that he has a “constant erection.” I believe Vincent is the oldest (self-identified) author in the archive. This in itself is perhaps not very interesting, but coupled with the contents of the letter it is more so. Most of the self-identified authors in the Hartley
archive are located in the 20s to 50s age range. Earlier in this chapter I discussed the letters from Melissa, the Girl Scout, and the concerned 16-year old Christian boy. The diversity heading of ‘age’ here recognizes Vincent at the farther end of the age spectrum.

Vincent’s letter stands out for two reasons: he identifies as 73-years old man and, similar to the New York gentlemen’s club letter, Vincent’s letter is a solicitation. The letter solicits Hartley to organize and film five specific videos for pay. Of these five videos, Vincent’s description of the third is a ‘gang rape’ scenario where Hartley is to perform “anal and vaginal penetration singularly and double by well-hung black studs, as many as you can handle for multiple orgasms.” The second video request is for Hartley to “ride a large 14” or 15” dildo attached to a floor pedestal using anal and vaginal penetration” and also “riding the new ‘Sylvan’ electric dildo.” Vincent adds, “please feature rear views. High heels, net stockings please.” The three other video scenario requests are quite diverse, ranging from Hartley performing an “Afro-Cuban dance” while wearing an “aerobic costume and high heels,” to a “lesbian 2 hour feature with (pornography star) Tianna.”

Vincent’s letter in some way echoes Mercer’s critique of the portrayal of black male bodies for the racialized and fetishized enjoyment of white people. Presumably, the author would derive enjoyment from viewing Hartley being gang-raped by “black studs” and by her performing an “Afro-Cuban dance.” While Hartley is white these two specific video requests invite critical race theory commentary. Without dismissing the racial fetishization described, I include Vincent’s requests to exemplify his imagination.

41 Sylvan is one of the companies that build what are commonly referred to as ‘fucking machines.’ These are relatively large motorized devices, of various design, with a hydraulic arm that moves back and forth, at an adjustable speed, with a dildo attached. The primary function is to enable a person to be penetrated continuously, at a desired speed, without interruption, as long as desired.
In this research’s attention to changes in pornography spectatorship through VCR technology Vincent’s detailed video requests of Hartley would seem to say quite a lot about the specialization available to private pornography viewing I discuss in Chapter 3. While I do not know anything about the author it is interesting that he had such specific requests for personal videos. Vincent writes to Hartley that he is a “very avid fan of yours who possesses every VHS tape you made that is available.” Vincent does not disclose his financial status; he states he will “pay a huge amount of money $500+” to produce the videos. It is unclear if he means $500 total or per video. And while Vincent has the financial means to offer Hartley payment for explicit videos suited to his personal tastes it is unknown if this has any correlation to his age. That is, Vincent could be a member of a wealthy family, or he may not be wealthy but is making personal videos from Hartley a financial priority.

I gave some consideration to including Vincent’s letter in the above subsection of class. However, I thought it better for the breadth of this discussion of diversity in the Hartley fan letters to address age specifically. As mentioned, at age 73, Vincent’s letter is on the opposite end of authors identifying their age, such as Melissa, the 14-year old Girl Scout. Importantly, however, Vincent’s made-to-order video solicitation and the costs involved link this letter to the previous attention to class and its potential connection to pornography spectatorship. Vincent may not be of the class of the gentlemen in the private New York club. However, he seems to have the financial ability to request specific pornographic videos from Hartley. Again, it is not clear if he offers $500 per video or in total. In contrast to Charlie’s situation: poverty, disability, lack of transportation, and located in a region of the

42 I would guess, given her career standing and schedule, that Hartley would not produce the videos even at $500 each. Though that lies outside the scope of this discussion.
U.S. that prohibits pornography, Vincent is relatively affluent. Beyond Chapter 3’s mention of video pornography’s genres, Vincent attempts to take pornography production to the next level: on-demand scenarios. Like the discussion regarding class above, Vincent’s letter articulates not only the Hartley fan’s desire for pornography spectatorship, but elevates the desire to a level intended to bring the spectator a more intimate, closer connection to Hartley through her performing the specific sexual acts he requested.

**Bisexuality**

Nina Hartley is open about her bisexuality, and, in the past, has lived with both a husband and a wife at the same time. A number of letters in the archive mention appreciation for Hartley’s non-normative, and perhaps transgressive, openness about being bisexual, non-monogamous, and a sexual freedom activist, in addition to working in the pornography industry. However, there are few letters where the writer openly identifies as bisexual. The unidentified woman from Hawaii who discusses pornography media technology and suggests Hartley consider creating the first “interactive biographical CD” identifies as bisexual. As does Elizabeth, the woman discussed in this section, who writes that she wants to “lap in (Hartley’s) juices” and fuck her. And there are several letters from men who describe sexual acts with other men without identifying as bisexual (or homosexual), though of course there is no obligation to do so. These letters include the male-identified transvestite who watches video pornography and has sex with men, and the S/m fantasies of Ronny and M.B. that both include portions where they describe sex with a man. Given all of this, I decided it important to include the only Hartley fan letter (that I recall) from a man openly identifying as bisexual.
A one-page typed letter from Jon describes himself as 23 years of age, bald, with a beard, a solid stocky physique, and that he has been told he is attractive. Jon opens the letter by thanking Hartley for “all the wonderful entertainment” she has provided and her “very sound advice” in the adult men’s magazine “Excite.” He describes Hartley as “intelligent,” “charismatic,” and “beautiful.” Jon then moves to his question for Hartley,

Have you ever done movies with bisexual men? I was curious because I am bi and would love to see you play with some attractive men. Somehow, the thought watching [sic] you share a big cock with a hot guy makes me crazy.

Jon adds, “If you have done movies with bi men, please tell me some of the titles. I’d like to peruse them.” He concludes by admitting that he felt “compelled to share a fantasy or two but wasn’t sure if that was appropriate.”

This dissertation’s first question regarding video technology and its connection to pornography spectatorship is articulated succinctly and somewhat dramatically in Jon’s question to Hartley. That is, where can a bisexual man find pornography specific to his sexuality: featuring both bisexual women like Hartley and bisexual men? In examining other letters in this chapter I have asked how it is that the writer came to write a letter to Hartley. For Jon, I believe, though am not certain, that the answer lies in the opening to this examination of his letter: Hartley’s pornography celebrity status combined with her openness about her bisexual and non-monogamous identifications. In contrast to letters from both women and men declaring their attraction to Hartley and their sexual prowess and energy for her, Jon admits his excitement at the thought of Hartley in a sexual scenario with bisexual men, and suggests his fantasies likely include himself, Hartley, and other women and/or men.
Finally, in response to my opening on the heading of ‘bisexuality,’ Jon’s letter deserves attention under the heading of diversity for his solitary position as an openly bisexual male in the Hartley fan archive.

In the previous subheadings I have included a breadth of Hartley’s fan mail to reveal significant excerpts from authors under the heading of diversity. My objective here is to highlight the importance of access to pornography to some viewers, the sex education some have received through pornography spectatorship, and the spectator’s desire to view sexual representations of bodies similar to themselves.

Finally, I wish to include descriptions of some of the artwork sent to Hartley from fans. I suggest that, like letters of devotion and adoration, the Hartley fans who created original artworks demonstrate an equal if not greater admiration for Hartley, her work in porn, and her position as a sex educator and sexual freedom activist. The artwork sent to Hartley spans varied genres: drawing, painting, sculpture, wood cuttings, and comic book style colourings. A man in Texas sent Hartley a varnished wood cutting in the shape of the state of Texas. The cutting had a rectangular, bronze trophy plate in the center with an engraving declaring Nina Hartley as #1. Most drawings and paintings are representations of Hartley, mostly portraits. A relatively talented artist who signed his paintings, “The Italian Bullitt,” sent two large portraits of Hartley. A sculpture sent to Hartley, approximately 4” x 6,” is an accurate, detailed, life-size representation of female genitalia. One author, who referred to himself as ‘The Dragon,’ sent several substantive mailings to Hartley. Each of these packages contained a personal letter regarding the writer's life, and a multi-page, graphic comic-style story involving Hartley and ‘The Dragon.’ In these graphic comics ‘The
Dragon’ is a superhero with a secret identity who, in at least one issue, has a sexual relationship with Nina Hartley. And another artist of some talent sent a detailed, humorous drawing of Hartley represented as a sexual superhero. Sexual superhero Hartley is dressed in boots, tights, and cape, wielding a large vibrator rather than a weapon: a sexually exhausted orgy of conquests—men and women—lie behind Hartley, and a distraught Mistress in the background describes how her “minions” are “drained of their energy.”

Conclusion

This chapter has examined extensive selections of text from the letters in Hartley’s fan mail archive. I have included a broad selection of Hartley’s fan mail in order to present an accurate representation of the diversity of letters she received and the sexuality issues included. At the same time much of the contents from the letters cited in this chapter pertain to my two dissertation questions. First, to cite text from some of the authors to describe how videotape technology influenced their pornography spectatorship. Secondly, how the fans’ pornography spectatorship and engagement with Hartley can be understood as a kind of adult sex education. The previous chapter focused on the research question regarding video pornography spectatorship, and the following chapter focuses on pornography as a form of adult sex education and contains sections of letters specific to that research question.

There are letters above that are not specifically connected to video pornography spectatorship. Incarcerated fans such as Ronny likely do not have access to video pornography, though this does not preclude prior pornography video viewing. There are also letters such as those seeking direct participation in a project such as Melissa the Girl Scout,
the New York Postmaster, and the Ohio school teacher that do not directly reference watching Hartley’s videos. Yet these letters question familiarity with video pornography, the celebrities of video pornography, such as Hartley, and pornography’s content, generally. This might be interpreted as the early stages of what has become regarded as the mainstreaming of pornography into culture (Attwood, 2009). It is questionable whether the self-described “16 year old Roman Catholic” boy has watched video pornography, but it is possible. As described, he obtained Hartley’s fan mail address by borrowing a men’s magazine schoolmates were reading. The Roman Catholic boy’s condemnation was associated with performing in pornography generally, but he took umbrage specific to Hartley’s openness regarding her non-monogamous relationship and attending sex parties. This is connected to pornography and pornography spectatorship in that there is no expectation or concern that pornography performers are monogamous, or adverse to scenarios involving more than two persons.

This chapter cites text from many letters that reference videotape technology and its connection to pornography spectatorship. For example, early in the chapter I include a letter from a man exploring transvestism who watches Hartley’s videos at home with lovers and sometimes re-enacts scenes from a video. In my reference to international Hartley fans, Paulo says that he is Hartley’s “biggest fan in Brazil” and has seen all the Hartley videos available there. A letter dated May 17, 1993 from a married woman in the US states that she and her husband love watching Hartley’s films together. The woman, Catrina, who was too uncomfortable to attend Hartley’s performance at a club, writes that she loves watching her videos and “women giving pleasure to one another.” R.D. from Oakland wrote to Hartley to
inquire regarding an anal sex toy Nina used in the video, *The Willing Husbands*. Mario from Maryland wrote Hartley and disclosed that he first saw Hartley in the video *Coming In America* (1988) when he “was around fourteen or fifteen years old.” Similarly, a man with an eight-year-old son says he is planning to share his Nina Hartley video collection as a kind of sex education when the son is old enough. Joe from Colorado writes Hartley and explains that because he is “confined to a wheelchair due to muscular dystrophy” he watches a lot of X-rated videos during winter. Davey ‘one step’ tells Nina that he and his girlfriend enjoy watching her videos together, and that his girlfriend gets turned on by Hartley. A letter from John describes how he and his wife have “reached heights (they) never could have” without watching Hartley’s videos together. Michael criticized the anal sex component in Hartley’s video *Guide to Alternative Sex* for not including men being anally penetrated. Vincent, the man who solicits Hartley to produce videos specifically for him, states that he “possesses every VHS tape” Hartley has made. And Carole asked Hartley to do more amateur videos, and suggested specific kinds of women’s bodies she would like to see represented.

As mentioned, many of the letters in this chapter articulate the ease, casualness, and comfort most authors experienced in acquiring and viewing pornography at home. The most obvious difference, articulated in Chapter 3, is that these spectators viewed pornography privately, or with a partner, in the home. The leisure of viewing pornography at home, at any time, repeatedly, permitted a personal engagement with videos and scenarios of particular interest. Through this personal engagement with particular pornographic videos, some of these letters can be categorized as a kind of adult sex education.
For Hartley fans who were unable to view her videos due to mobility or financial restraints, their letters add a significant voice to the importance of pornography as a particular media genre. An example of this is Charlie, an impoverished, disabled black man in Louisiana who wrote asking Nina to donate a video to him. As Hartley (personal conversation, 2013) has stated, spectators of her films are the ‘intimate stranger,’ seeking a connection to the porn star.

There are also excerpts from letters that pertain to the viewer’s sex education through video pornography. For example, Kate and Richard in St. Paul write Nina seeking information on anal sex because she is “the sexual expert, sex educator, and nurse.” The married couple from a May 17, 1993 letter thank Hartley for the video where she helps people learn the pleasure of anal sex. The woman also thanks Hartley for teaching her “how to move (her) ass while doing it ‘doggie-style.’” The letter from Artis states that he is seeking “some sex education” from Hartley regarding the size of his penis and how he might achieve sexual fulfillment. The Marilyn Monroe postcard from an anonymous author thanks Hartley for helping them “see the beauty of female genitals and oral sex!” A May 1991 letter from Gerald mentions that he attended a public talk by Hartley. From Hartley’s talk he realized that pornographic videos depict women actively initiating sex. Gerald writes that he never considered “women enjoying their sexuality” as a part of what occurs in pornography. In a 1995 letter from Jack he tells Nina how she has helped his sex life: he is “not afraid to try new and different ways” and that his girlfriend is more relaxed. And another 1995 letter from John states that he and his wife had experienced a “fairly conservative” sex life. Through
Hartley’s videos they “have since opened up and have reached heights we never could have without your help.”

The following chapter addresses the research question regarding the potential for video pornography as a kind of sex education in more detail. I examine the status of sex education for young people in primary school and some barriers to providing useful, accurate sexual education. The ‘sex education’ sought, questioned, and pondered in the letters of this chapter, however, differs in that the authors are persons of legal age, seeking what can be interpreted as adult sex education. My dissertation specifically addresses video pornography spectatorship and viewers’ responses to their engagement with sexually explicit material. Video pornography was mostly unintended as a form of sex education. Therefore, I clarify that my examination of what viewers ‘learned’ from pornography spectatorship is based on explicit representations of sexuality not necessarily intended for the purposes of sex education. That is, the examination of sex education in the Hartley letters in this chapter, and Hartley’s sex education video in Chapter 5 discusses what sexual information fans have garnered from pornography.
Chapter 5: Pornography as Adult Sex Education

Introduction

“Adult Education” was a hit song by Daryl Hall and John Oates and, appropriately for this research, was released as a single in 1984, the year of Hartley’s pornography debut. The chorus lyrics include: “The student body got a bad reputation, what they need is adult education. Back to school, it’s a bad situation. What they need is adult education” (Hall, Oates, & Allen, 1984). The Hall and Oates song describes the frustration of the ‘student body’ in navigating the stultified norms of secondary school-age dating, its unfulfilling outcomes, and the desire to ascend to a more advanced understanding of sexual pleasure: “The senior with the Junior Miss, I wonder what the junior wishes, that she could graduate to adult kisses” (Hall, Oates, & Allen, 1984). In this chapter I promote Hartley’s oeuvre of pornographic work as an opportunity for adult sex education. I suggest this work is an example of the “adult education” Hall and Oates recognize as elusive for many young adults, and even not-so-young adults.

In the Preface of Sex Objects Jennifer Doyle (2006) describes how, at the age of 12, a 14-year old neighbour boy would leave advertisement catalogues for pornographic videos in their family’s mailbox (p. xi). The boy did so with the knowledge that Doyle and her younger sisters retrieved the mail after school. As she articulates, the boy’s motive in leaving the porn video flyers had less to do with garnering favour than declaring his own sexual knowledge. Doyle and her sisters, equally curious as the neighbour boy, took the catalogues into their bathroom to study the explicit photographs. When finished with the fresh offering of
pornographic imagery, the catalogues were ripped into pieces small enough to be flushed down the toilet (p. xi).

Doyle’s description of her young introduction to pornographic imagery might conjure reactions of innocence, shock, curiosity, desire, nervousness, disgust, fantasy, or a combination of these potential responses. And while unsolicited, it was delivered by a neighbour and consumed, presumably by choice, by Doyle and her younger sisters. It was also, however, a kind of sex education through explicit images of bodies and sexual activities.

In Chapter 1, I introduced recent work by Alilunas (2016) that includes his childhood memory of entering a store in Idaho in 1986, and his father’s complaint to the store manager that Playboy magazine was visible and available for sale. Alilunas was anxious to speak with his wiser, more mature, sister about Playboy magazine: seeking knowledge of the forbidden, yet mainstream, Playboy magazine and its contents.

Doyle did not solicit the pornography catalogues from the neighbour boy; they were an intentional display of his sexual knowledge. And perhaps attention to the catalogues contributed to the sex education of Doyle and her sisters. Alilunas did not search for Playboy magazine, it was displayed for sale in a store that sold ice cream bars. And attention to it was heightened by his pastor’s denunciation of pornography, and his father’s recruitment of young Alilunas (2016) as a witness to the protest against it. Perhaps it would have been difficult, not to mention illegal, for Doyle and Alilunas to acquire these publications on their own. Yet these disparate examples represent a desire for sexual knowledge, even at a relatively early age. The idea of explicit sexual images as a kind of adult sex education may
be shocking, disgusting, curious, or fantastical to some persons. Yet contemporary work on sex education includes the examination and interpretation of pornography as a kind of adult sex education (Albury, 2014; Allen, 2006; Cassar, 2016; Ingham, 2005; McNair, 2009b; Ollis, 2015; Taylor, 2009a). In this chapter I introduce the idea of pornographic videos as a particular media genre that can be understood as a useful media genre in adult sex education (Attwood, Barker, Boynton, & Hancock, 2015). The specific academic contribution I make in this chapter is the claim that there is a relationship between pornography and adult sex education. The caveat to this claim is that the acquisition of adult sex education through viewing pornography depends on the relationship between the specific pornographic films viewed and the pre-existing level of sexual knowledge of the viewer. As commodity advertisement disclaimers often state, results may vary. The interpretation of pornography spectatorship as sex education is indirectly based on my research of the Nina Hartley fan archive. While the Hartley fan letters are not the specific focus of this chapter, I include excerpts from letters pertaining to viewing pornography as a kind of adult sex education. A section of this chapter is dedicated to Hartley’s sexual instruction and education videos: her particular contribution to the idea of pornography as adult sex education.

Albury (2014) writes, “there is no universal consensus as to what porn teaches its consumers and how it works as an educator” (p. 172). In response, this chapter addresses the second research question, “How did the spectator’s engagement with pornography (given the availability of pornography for viewing at home) constitute a form of sex education?” This question is also examined in the chapter specific to Nina Hartley and her videos as delivering adult sex education. In addressing the second research question, I examine the concept of
‘sex education,’ and suggest pornography spectators can garner what can be understood as a kind of adult sex education. For simplicity, I apply the term ‘sex education’ without reference to any particular age group, with the lower end of age referring to secondary school sex education. In discussing pornography as a kind of sex education I use the term ‘adult sex education’ to clarify that I am not suggesting minors view pornography. I suggest that many adult viewers of video pornography receive some form of adult sex education from it, though perhaps different from that garnered by younger viewers. As described in the Introduction chapter, Albury (2014) uses the terms “pedagogy about porn” as a descriptor for secondary school sex education related to pornography, and “porn as pedagogy” as related to adults (p. 173). Similar to Albury’s latter term for adult sex education, Dean (2014b) uses the term “the pedagogy of pornography” to describe what viewers learn from pornography (p. 433). Dean’s definition of the pedagogy of pornography indicates that it is less about an “imitation of what one sees others doing on screen but rather the process of making visible a range of options—options that remain irreducible to mere consumer choices” (p. 433). The range of sexual options from the pedagogy of pornography “conspicuously broadens the opportunities for what one might do with one’s body and how one might generate pleasure” (p. 433).

Following the previous chapter’s excerpts from numerous Hartley fan letters, and the Foucault (1997) citation regarding S/m as the invention of new possibilities of pleasure, Dean’s (2014b) definition of pornography as adult sex education is applicable to this research. Dean expands the definition to include sexual acts that might be adjudicated as non-normative stating, “when it comes to nonnormative sex, porn always has a pedagogical
function” (p. 432). I take Dean’s use of the term “pedagogical function” to imply that the pornographic material is the instructor delivering sex education.

My examination of sex education here should be clarified as it relates specifically to explicit representations of sexuality. In this chapter I do not limit my focus strictly to video pornography. While the era of this research, 1984–1999, is the beginning of Hartley’s porn career, this chapter’s examination of pornography as sex education includes technologies before and after the VCR era: film, DVD, and Internet. The citation of Doyle’s childhood above relates to print media: catalogues. They are, however, catalogues promoting pornographic videotapes for purchase. Below I examine a famous adult film as an example of pornography as adult sex education because of its notoriety and the academic attention it has received. While recognizing the focus of this research on the oeuvre of Hartley’s video pornography career, attention to the print and film pornography examined here applies equally to the argument of pornography as adult sex education.

This chapter starts with a clarification of why pornography fans might have considered Hartley as a source for adult sex education. I then briefly discuss the multifarious public axes that distribute what is generally described as ‘sex education’ or sex advice. The purpose of this overview is to position the possibility of pornography as adult sex education against some of the accepted mainstream sources for sex education or advice. This is followed by a clarification of the difference between sexual health information and sex education. I next examine a 1988 academic survey to identify the status of sex education for young adults near the beginning of Hartley’s career. The second section, ‘Ars Erotica, or Scientia Sexualis,’ examines Taylor’s analysis of Williams’ 1989 work on pornography and
the former’s claim that pornography should be understood through pleasure rather than sexual science. I also critique Taylor’s assessment of pornography generally. Following Taylor, the next several sections examine barriers and issues regarding sex education in educational institutions of all levels. The first, titled ‘Radical Theories of Sexuality: Barriers to Sex Education,’ examines social structures that might encourage individuals away from sex education, or the individual’s refusal to consider sex education, in whole, or specific elements. The second heading, ‘Delivering Sex Education: What, When, and How,’ first examines a contemporary sexual learning program for secondary school students that discusses pornography. Moving from barriers to sex education, the fourth section of this chapter, ‘Pornography, Spectatorship, & Adult Sex Education,’ examines the idea of pornography’s potential for adult sex education. As an example of pornography as adult sex education, the fifth section examines the famous pornographic film Deep Throat. The sixth section, and final portion of ‘Delivering Sex Education,’ attends to Hartley’s sexual education and instruction video collection: pornography as sex education. This section, ‘From Educating Nina to Nina Educating, includes an examination of pornography as adult sex education.

Because my research material is the Hartley fan archive, I briefly revisit what I see as the connection between adult sex education and Hartley’s pornography career. In Chapter 1 I describe a conversation between Nina Hartley and her father years ago where he posed the question, “Why sex? Why not the violin?” (Hartley, 2013, p. 228). Her father’s question pertained to her career choice in pornography. Years later, Hartley recognized her congenital comfort, desire, enthusiasm, and sexual proficiency for pornography and public sexuality.
Her lucid response to her father’s question is knowing that she is “sexual the way that Mozart was musical” (p. 228).

In the contemporary context the idea of sex education has branched outward from the classroom and the doctor’s office to become a public pedagogy of sex through varied media genres: print, radio, television talk shows, and online versions of columnist “sexperts” (Rasmussen, 2006, p. 213), pedophile priest scandals, and politicians’ adulterous confessions (Bauer, 2008). While the public has some confidence in sex information and advice from commodified and commercially supported sources, it can be questionable. Albury (2002) writes, “At best, sex advice provides educational information and a bit of support” (p. 19). The idea of emotional support received at a time of distress or confusion is usually not considered a bad thing. However, as Albury cautions, “At worst, sex advice is narrow and restricts our sexual options into limiting ‘one-size-fits-all’ rules and checklists” (p. 19).

In the Introductory chapter I briefly describe the shift in the idea of sex education from the biological—reproductive health and sexually transmitted infections—to an examination of sexuality and its relationship to pleasure. In Talk Dirty to Me, Tisdale (1994) makes the perhaps obvious, but nevertheless important, point that film pornography separates sexual activities from reproduction, monogamy, marriage, and the idea of a normative, heterosexual relationship. In fictional pornography the scenarios are choreographed but the performers can engage in sexual acts free from normative sexual relationship obligations or expectations. Tisdale (1994) contends, “We learn virtually every skill by watching others do them . . . everything but sex.” It is the connection between pornography spectatorship, adult sex education, and sexual subjectivity that I intend to analyze.
Nina Hartley’s first video was released in 1984. In 1988 Tjaden published an article with research survey results on the status of sex education based on responses from a class of first year university students in the southeast of the United States. This section briefly examines Tjaden’s research in order to provide a general idea of the level of public sexual knowledge young adults might have received and considered prior to, or perhaps in conjunction with, pornography spectatorship in the approximate time of Hartley’s 1984 emergence into pornography.

Tjaden’s research is important for this dissertation because it shows that, while improved access to pornography via VCR technology was relatively recent, pornography was a significant contributor to sex education for young adults. I recognize that this research is now close to three decades old and, admittedly, it is a single study of sex education. Nevertheless, I suggest the survey provides a working example of sex education in the VCR era and during the time of Hartley’s burgeoning career. The objective here is to situate Tjaden’s research outcomes in comparison to a contemporary example. It must be noted that this is a general measure of sex education delivered via educational institutions; it does not and is not capable of accounting for private, quotidian discourses of informal sexual learning garnered through friends, family, and other sources.

Tjaden’s (1988) ethnographic research surveyed 48 freshmen in introductory sociology classes at a southeastern South Eastern US university: 24 male-identified, 24 female-identified. The mean age of the men was 20, 19 for women. The participants were mostly white, single, middle-class, and high school graduates. The survey included 16 “sex education topics,” and eight “sources of sex education” (p. 209). The sex education topics
included “sexual development, contraception, ... venereal disease, masturbation, arousal and orgasm, mechanics of sex, oral/anal intercourse, ... homosexuality, rape, and incest” (p. 209). The possible sources of sex education included middle and high school, “college, church, parents, peers, mass media, nonpornographic books and magazines, and pornographic magazines and films” (p. 209).

Perhaps unsurprising, the students in Tjaden’s (1988) research listed peers as the primary source for seven of the 16 categories of sex information, including “arousal and orgasm, mechanics of sex, sexual attractiveness, ... premarital sex, and rape” (p. 210). The research listed peers, parents, and mass media as major sources of sex information. And schools and parents were listed as sources of information for issues of physiology such as pregnancy and childbirth. For issues that could be deemed controversial, such as abortion or homosexuality, students again listed peers and mass media. Importantly for my research, Tjaden’s findings are that pornography was, at that time, a relatively significant factor in sex education with 17 percent% of the women and 54 percent% of the men reporting pornography as a source of sex information.

Tjaden (1988) includes caution on interpretations of the survey findings. First, it was a small sample size at 48. This sample group can also be interpreted as somewhat privileged as educated college students. Second, the students were allowed to self-define ‘pornography’ so it could be anywhere on the spectrum from Playboy to hardcore film pornography (p. 210). I do not want to diminish Tjaden’s findings, but it is important to note that the survey occurred in the socially conservative South East of the US, a geographic region where the distribution and accessibility of pornographic magazines and videos is limited, and in fact
prohibited, in some areas. I also want to highlight the topic heading ‘oral/anal intercourse.’

As I mention later in this chapter regarding HIV education, oral and anal sex acts seem to constitute a separate, contentious classification. Similarly, in Tjaden’s research oral and anal sex practices are a classification, distinct from vaginal-penetrative sex.

**Ars Erotica, or Scientia Sexualis?**

Speaking more generally now than the 48 respondents in Tjaden’s (1988) study: what might pornography teach us? Foucaultian philosopher Chloe Taylor (2009a) states that pornography “can play an educative role” and “a pedagogical function” for viewers (p. 27). Taylor’s academic objective is to identify the specific kind of education viewers garner from pornography: the mastery of pleasure: *ars erotica*, or psychological diagnostics: *scientia sexualis*. The pleasure / psychology binary Taylor addresses are a continuation of Foucault’s (1978) early work on ‘sexuality.’ To illustrate the issue of adult sexual education via pornography Taylor (2009a) cites a poll that found “eighty-six percent of respondents think that pornography is educational” (p. 27). However, citing anti-pornography theorist, Pamela Paul, Taylor (2009a, p. 27) cautions, “young men in particular may use pornography ‘to figure out what women want and expect from sex. In fact, studies show that men learn from and emulate what they see in pornography’” (Paul, 2005, p. 18). Taylor’s point here is that recognizing pornography’s educational potential leads us to ask what education it puts forth.

Taylor’s citation of Paul’s work invites attention here to consider not just whether pornography can provide sex education but also what kind of adult sex education viewers might garner from pornography. Pornography is an explicit form of adult entertainment. Like
other fictional film genres, pornography’s objective is to provide entertainment. And, perhaps unsurprisingly, sometimes the goal of entertainment takes precedence over the message the film’s scenarios depict. While my research is an examination of the Hartley fan mail archive, it is important to be balanced in recognizing that pornography spectatorship does not always yield what could be interpreted as positive results. As mentioned, pornography in the 1980s was largely produced by heterosexual men for the entertainment of heterosexual men; it is safe to state that it remains largely the same today. Often the results of these pornographic productions are scenarios directed toward entertaining the heterosexual male viewer. In these productions some of the concerns of anti-pornography feminists are valid in that the women are depicted as existing merely for the sexual pleasure of men. In this chapter’s examination of pornography as sex education I acknowledge academic work that questions what is ‘learned’ by some spectators. Specifically, while some viewers garner useful, accurate information via pornography—as examined in the previous chapter—there are bad lessons that can be drawn from some pornographic scenarios and exploitative representations of sexual relationships. That is, sometimes pornography as a fictional, fantastical, allegorical realm should not be adapted into our personal lives.

Shifting back to what kind of sex education pornography might offer, Taylor’s (2009a) work argues that an expertise level of knowledge on pornography attends to the issue of pleasure rather than sexual science (p. 20). In a direct response to *Hard Core* author Linda Williams (1989), Taylor (2009a, p. 20) argues that the manner in which pornography can be understood as part of Foucault’s (1978) foundational work on ‘sexuality’ is via consumption rather than confession. That is, “we must attend to the consumers rather than to what takes
place on set or on screen to see how pornography serves its disciplinary function” (Taylor, 2009a, p. 20). With an academic focus on pornography’s consumers, then, the idea of pornography as a kind of sex education is confronted; Taylor (2009a) writes,

Since pornography tends to be repetitious, it also seems unlikely that viewers continue to watch pornography for its educational function. After a short time, one has likely learned what pornography has to teach, but many go on watching pornography for other reasons, which reasons were probably the main motivation in the first place. (p. 28)

Taylor’s stance regarding pornography’s capacity for adult sex education is pessimistic in comparison to the potential I endorse in this dissertation. Taylor’s position is that there is a pedagogy of sexuality that we can garner, but that the educational value is short-lived because repetitiveness is a characteristic of pornography. Yet, because pornography is repetitive, once viewers have ‘seen it all’ they encounter sexual practices that they are already familiar with. Taylor’s succinct assessment seems to be that, for pornography viewers, soon there isn’t much new to ‘see.’ That is, for Taylor, pornography’s repetition of sexual positions, activities, and outcomes means that its potential for adult sex education is soon depleted.

I summarize Taylor’s consideration of pornography as adult sex education briefly here as an alternative interpretation. I suggest that this assessment is either based upon a limited examination of pornography, a limited variation in pornography’s genres, or both. I disagree with Taylor that repetitiousness is a necessary characteristic of pornography. I do, however, agree that due to a finite number of sexual positions and practices many
pornographic scenarios seem repetitious. As I mention elsewhere in this dissertation, in her foundational work *Hard Core* Williams (1989) argues pornography as a film genre is similar to musicals in that the sexual scenarios in pornography are the entertainment source of the movie like dancing and singing scenes in musicals, similarly tied together by a relatively simple plot. Therefore, like musicals and perhaps other entertainment forms, pornography can seem repetitious. Having said that, I would respond to Taylor’s suggestion regarding repetition that the expansive array of pornography genres, subgenres, and their varied specializations regarding representations of bodies, relationship schema, sexual orientation, and sexual practices based on ability, age, class (where discernible, explicit), ethnicity, gender, race, religion (where discernible, explicit), and sexual orientation reduces the interpretation of repetitiveness. The concern with repetition may be increased if the viewer selects films from the same producer or a pornography production company with a particular style, or adherence to a particular pornography genre. The pornography viewer is generally able to select a variety of videos among diverse pornography companies and genres. I also disagree that the viewer acquires the totality of adult sex education available through pornography after “a short time” (Taylor, 2009a, p. 28). As I describe elsewhere in this dissertation, there is great diversity in ‘niche’ pornography: varied bodies, number of persons involved, kinds of sexual relationships, and representations of genders, sexualities, sex / gender roles, practices, and orientations (Kipnis, 1996; Williams, 1989). And in at least the past couple decades there has been a proliferation of amateur and DIY (do-it-yourself) pornography (Albury, 2009; Jacobs 2007; 2012).
Viewers who are not interested in representations of different sexual orientations or niche pornography genres still have opportunities for sex education through depictions in mainstream, largely heterosexual (including girl-on-girl scenarios) pornographic productions. Some of these sexual possibilities are discussed in the previous chapter’s examination of Hartley’s fan mail: anal sex, bisexuality, fisting, Sadomasochism, sex toys, and the inclusion of different kinds of bodies: different ages, (dis)abilities, or ethnicities, for example. In the previous chapter I included letters from several men: Alan, M.B., and Ronny, who wrote Hartley describing their desire to be humiliated, beaten, and sodomized for Hartley’s pleasure (and their own). Vincent, a self-identified 73-year old man, wrote Hartley to request specific made-to-order videos that included Hartley being penetrated by a ‘fucking machine,’ and a ‘gang rape’ scenario where she would be vaginally and anally penetrated repeatedly by several men of colour. Carole’s letter to Hartley asks to see her “fuck women with a strap-on,” “fisting” scenarios, and explicit representations of women performers with “big clits” and “distended pussy lips.” A letter from the man self-identifying as Davey ‘one step’ asks Hartley about her having sex with a man with one leg. Davey discloses that he has encouraged his girlfriend to “try lesbianism,” and that they would enjoy a sexual threesome with Hartley. And the letter from Artis, which includes an outline tracing of his penis, 11” in length and 3” wide, describes his concern in finding a woman he can fully penetrate. These letters articulate kinds of bodies and sexual practices lying that are outside mainstream, heteronormative pornography. The letters describe Sadomasochism, lesbianism,43 sex and

43 I use the term lesbianism here to describe Carole’s letter desiring scenes of Hartley using a strap-on dildo to penetrate women, and Davey’s interest in his girlfriend having sex with a woman. While recognizing that there are ‘lesbian’ scenarios in pornography produced by men for the entertainment of men I distinguish these examples as letters sent from Hartley fans.
disability, non-monogamy, double penetration, interracial sex, sex toys, fisting, and consensual ‘rape.’ The bodies described are of different ethnicities, differently abled, and non-normative in terms of genitalia, both male and female. Most of the sexual practices described are non-normative, non-procreative, and many are non-heterosexual. And all of these acts are legal (assuming consent in the mock ‘gang rape’ scenario).

Recalling the above reference to Foucault’s (1997) description of Sadomasochism, I suggest a more broader application here to capture the idea of sexual practitioners having opportunities to invent “new possibilities of pleasure,” pleasures produced “with very odd things, very strange parts of our bodies, in very unusual situations” (p. 165). The sexual act of fisting—vaginal or anal penetration by, and thrusting with, a fist—would seem to constitute the idea of sexual pleasure with strange parts of our bodies. That is, using the thrusting movement of a fist, a bodily motion often associated with physical aggression, as an instrument of sexual pleasure, inverts its interpretation as a violent act, and disrupts many persons’ understanding of penetrative sexual acts. Unlike dildos or other sex toys, fisting is a bodily connection; fisting represents a personal, intimate connection, an alternative to penile penetrative sex that is non-procreative. And, similar to the ‘fucking machines’ mentioned in Vincent’s letter, fisting is a sexual act that is usually capable of endurance in terms of time beyond penile penetrative sex acts. For some persons, fisting invites considerations of sexual penetration with greater endurance and size (clenched fist), possibly making it an appealing alternative to normative heterosexual or homosexual sex practices. Similarly, but different, the length and girth of Artis’ penis questions the hetero- or homo-normative limitations on penetrative sex. And the letters detailing Sadomasochistic practices from Alan, M.B., and
Ronny, describe male servitude to a woman. This fundamentally disrupts broad, Western, heteronormative understandings of gendered sexual roles. The female sexual dominance of men through sexual penetration (wearing a strap-on harness and dildo) is a usurpation of normative heterosexual gender roles. Furthermore, the S/m activities described in the letters from Alan, Ronny, and M.B.—bondage, coprophilia, rimming, sex toys, for example—are practices that lie outside heteronormative sexuality. For pornography spectatorship and adult sex education what would it mean for spectators to view female sexual dominance and submissive male sexual servitude? What would it mean for pornography fans to view Artis (or someone with a penis of equal size) performing in pornography with women capable of having vaginal intercourse with him? Would that possibility change the parameters of normative sex?

This breadth of sexual appetites and proclivities is articulated in the Hartley fan mail archive: hundreds of letters from disparate viewers with different sexual interests sent to a single pornography performer. As mentioned in Chapter 4, it is interesting that the writers I mention here wrote to a relatively mainstream pornography star. While Hartley is an educated, enthusiastic, sex-positive, pornography performer who enjoyed reading her fan mail, and most of her work is located in mainstream pornography genres. Perhaps these writers had only access (due to geographic location, limited resources, or some other barrier) to mainstream, heterosexual pornography? And, notwithstanding issues of access, performers in pornography subgenres that might be labelled as fetishistic—Sadomasochism or fisting, for example—may not have shared the fame or celebrity status of a mainstream performer such as Hartley, and therefore be more difficult to contact. I suggest that while some persons
may be aware of specific kinds of sexual information some viewers receive new information, in some cases even after many years of being sexually active; this advance in sexual knowledge can be interpreted as acquiring a form of adult sex education. I also suggest that for some of the Hartley fan mail writers these sexual practices are no longer an expansion of their sexual horizons, it is where their sexual interests lie. And perhaps there will be an expansion to other sexual acts in their future. It may be that these writers have a background of intimate, heterosexual experiences and, for whatever reason, are now interested in different sexual practices, as described.

The next sections are divided into two main headings: “‘Radical’ Theories of Sexuality: Barriers to Sex Education” and “Delivering Sex Education: What, When, and How.” As the title implies, the first section examines institutional and social barriers to sex education and includes a brief subsection titled “Personal Resistance as a Barrier to Sex Education.” The second section, “Delivering Sex Education: What, When, and How” includes a subsection titled “Planet Porn. Introducing Porn to the Classroom” that examines a contemporary program for discussing pornography at the secondary school level. This is followed by “Pornography Spectatorship and Sex Education,” which serves as a brief introduction to “Deep Throat and Sex Education,” an examination of the famous pornographic film and its potential as a kind of adult sex education. Finally, I examine Nina Hartley’s sexual education and instruction video productions.

There are barriers to sex education generally, and the inclusion of material that might be deemed pornography, more specifically. There are social, political, and religious opinions surrounding the production and distribution of a more diverse and explicit sex education
discourse. Accordingly, I examine the concept of sex education broadly, and, more specifically, some of the potential barriers to pornography spectatorship and the acceptance of pornographic texts as sex education. In these sections I claim that while there were, and to some extent continue to be, social, political, and institutional restraints on explicit sexual material pornography has not only flourished but contributed to adult sex education.

‘Radical’ Theories of Sexuality: Barriers to Sex Education

In the mid-to-late 1990s I was an executive board member and volunteer with one of the largest HIV/AIDS service organizations in British Columbia. Part of my volunteer work was as a member of the speakers bureau. Speakers bureau members delivered HIV/AIDS education to various groups, sometimes adult groups, most often secondary schools. I recall numerous occasions when my speaking partner and I would arrive at a high school to see the principal or vice-principal waiting to meet us. While walking toward the school entrance, my speaking partner and I would glance at each other, smirk, and one of us would quietly say something like, “Here it comes…,” and the other would respond, “Yup.” The greeting we received would often be quickly followed with the caution that, while the school administration wanted students to receive HIV-related sexual health information, they urged us to not mention anal intercourse. One or two schools also asked us not to discuss oral sex. Sex education without the sex, please.

I include this personal story of difficulty in delivering honest, frank, and, hopefully useful sex education to young people as an introduction to this section’s examination of academic work on sex education in secondary schools and universities. Research on sex
education in the K–12 education system identifies issues in delivering honest, useful, practical ‘Sex Ed’ to the classroom. Attention to sex education and pornography in university settings such as Tjaden’s (1988) article above is useful. My research focuses on pornography spectatorship by consenting adults, not persons under legal age. This section, however, is intended as an overview of the status of sex education, generally, including the K–12 system, and potential obstacles to the delivery and reception of sex education. That is, barriers to communicating sex education to young people, and potential barriers from young people to receiving that information and education. The status of sex education discussed here applies generally to Western post-industrial societies; it would not be possible in this research to account for differences in sex education for young people globally.

The following sections discuss barriers to the effective delivery of useful, practical sex education and information. Some of these barriers are structural—educational, social, or religious—and some of the barriers are personal, a refusal by the individual to engage in the information being provided. The beginning of Hartley’s career, 1984, was a time of anti-pornography activism and social conservatism in the U.S. Formal sex education at the time of the VCR home entertainment revolution could be interpreted as a ‘sex-negative’ view of sexuality that largely reinforced social constraints against sexually explicit material, and endorsed a ‘family values’ ideal of heteronormative, monogamous, reproductive sexuality. Pornography’s “nonmarital, non-procreative sex was under attack by the (political) Right in the early ‘80s” (Strub, 2015, p. 132). This conservative view of sexuality promoted social rules for sexual conduct.
Albury’s (2002) reference to rules and checklists for sexual practices and relationships, mentioned in Chapter 1, can be thought of as imperatives prohibiting individuals from pursuing their sexual desires (p. 19). Traditional, and even contemporary, sex education discourses might avoid engaging individualized ideals of ‘sexual pleasure,’ opting for what are generally regarded as appropriate and widely accepted conceptions of sexuality. Sex education—through educational, social, and religious discourses—often perpetuates the idea of “good” or “healthy” sex rather than sexual practices that may be deemed “perverse” (Britzman, 1998, p. 69). That is, imperatives aimed at directing individuals toward permissible sexual behaviour do not necessarily account for sexual pleasures located in non-normative sexual practices. Given Albury’s (2002, p. 19) idea of sexual rules and checklists, and Britzman’s (1998) reference to a bifurcation between healthy versus perverse sexuality, “nothing about sex education is easy” (p. 76).

An oft-cited example of research on sex education and im/permissible sexuality is Gayle Rubin’s (1984) chapter, “Thinking Sex.” Appropriately for this chapter, “Thinking Sex” was published the same year as Nina Hartley’s first video, Educating Nina: 1984. That is, Rubin wrote “Thinking Sex” while Hartley performed in her first pornography video with a title that suggested she was receiving adult sexual education.

The Western view of sexuality described by Rubin (1984) on the concepts of a sexual hierarchy, sexual essentialism, and sex negativity, consists of religious, social, and political ideologies. These discourses act to create an understanding of permissible sexuality. This “good, normal, natural, blessed sexuality” is “heterosexual,” “married,” “monogamous,” “procreative,” “non-commercial,” of the “same generation,” and, important to note in this
research, does not involve pornography (pp. 280–281). This understanding subsequently influences perceptions of what public sex education ought to provide and preclude. I suggest that at a time when conservative views on sexuality largely attempted to withhold useful, practical sex education the expansion of video pornography production and distribution provided a sexually explicit alternative.

The demarcation of permissible sexualities from the perverse is not a new direction in academic thought. Sexual essentialism and a sexual hierarchy are concepts that contribute to categorizations of healthy and permissible versus perverse and impermissible sexualities. The tension between delivering public sex education and ‘thinking’ sex—questioning and considering sexual rules—is realized in sexual essentialism. The concept of “sexual essentialism” guides Western thought on sexuality through medical and psychiatric discourses (Rubin, 1984, p. 275). Sexual essentialism reifies our understanding of sexuality as “eternally unchanging, asocial, and transhistorical” (p. 275). Rubin’s (1984) succinct, metaphorical contribution to the argument against sexual essentialism in favour of sexual diversity is that the “belly’s hunger gives no clues as to the complexities of cuisine” (p. 276). The adjudication of sexual practices is articulated in what Rubin describes as a “sex hierarchy” (p. 282). This sexual hierarchy is a rank order, and a demarcation, “the need to draw and maintain an imaginary line between good sex and bad sex” (p. 282). A socially constructed understanding of ‘good sex’ instantiates an essentialist view of sexuality (Albury, 2009, p. 648). Sexual essentialism and sexual hierarchy are two of “at least” four other “ideological formations” affecting sexual thought (Rubin, 1984, p. 278). Of these, Rubin (1984) states that sex negativity is the “most important” (p. 278). In modern, post-industrial,
Western cultures, sex negativity is largely attributable to the Christian ideology that regards sex as inherently shameful and sinful. The influence of sexual conservatism in Christianity, and other religions, links sexuality to the concept of virtue. Sex negativity, then, always views sex with “suspicion;” sex is “guilty until proven innocent” (p. 278). A salient example of particular sexualities being perceived as guilty until proven innocent is the AIDS pandemic. It is important to note that 1984, the year of Hartley’s first film and the publication of Rubin’s important work, coincided with the rise of medical, political, social, and sexual attention to the AIDS pandemic (Crimp, 1988; Patton, 1985; 1996). The reaction of social conservatives, religious groups, and society generally, was sex-negativity in a medical context linking (some) sex acts to danger, and even death. Sexual essentialism, sexual hierarchy, and sex negativity as described by Rubin, coupled with the HIV/AIDS pandemic, creates a social understanding of categories of good sex and bad sex.

Rubin’s (1984) “Thinking Sex” is an academic work that examines the ways in which we think about sex and the ideological formations that influence our engagements with and interpretations of sexuality. In the next portion of this section I examine two separate academic engagements with the individual’s refusal to consider sex education, either in whole or regarding specific elements. I suggest that persons not interested in or adhering to the social and political ideology of “heterosexual,” “married,” “monogamous,” and “procreative” sexuality could be susceptible to and invested in sex negativity, particularly as it pertains to pornography (Rubin, 1984, pp. 278–281).

The first is a continuation of Rubin’s research as it relates to a group’s protestation of sex education. The 1984 “Thinking Sex” chapter emerged from a presentation Rubin gave at
the 1982 Barnard Sex Conference. In an article reflecting on “Thinking Sex” a quarter century later, Rubin (2011) recalls her “horror” at the 1982 conference, stating she was “thoroughly traumatized” by anti-pornography activists who “aggressively sabotaged events that did not adhere to the antiporn party line” (p. 16). She describes the ideology of the anti-pornography feminists at the conference as “situat(ing) pornography as the major engine of female subordination and the single most pernicious institution of male supremacy” (p. 22). Protesters went so far as to describe the conference itself as pornography (p. 25).

Rubin’s experience at the 1982 Barnard Sex Conference was troubling in a pedagogical context, especially because Barnard College, affiliated with Columbia University, is a private women’s liberal arts college. Apparently, particular discourses of sex education were deemed unacceptable by (some members of) an institution of higher learning. More specifically, protesting the inclusion of material deemed pornography at a liberal arts college is a statement regarding the regulation of sex education at a ‘liberal arts college.’ I suggest the 1982 Barnard College protest, while not completely analogous, is in part complicit with conservatism’s surveillance of impermissible forms of sexuality. I would add that while pornography was and continues to be a contentious media genre, higher education is often regarded as a place where the topic can be discussed intelligently and openly; for that reason I find the protest (which came in the place of lucid, reasoned debate) surprising and troubling. Equally disturbing and ironically appropriate is that the actions of the anti-pornography protesters can be interpreted as sex negativity deployed to prevent Rubin’s attendance to discuss ideological formations that affect sexual thought.
I have included a discussion of Rubin’s experiences at the 1982 Barnard conference to articulate potential barriers and the idea of acceptable boundaries of sex education. These barriers reveal barriers of appropriate and excluded sexual practices and identifications. Yet, as Rubin (1984) articulates, the idea of a normative sexuality fails to understand that one person’s sexual practices may be disgusting to another, and the sexual practices a person might regard as despicable will be sexual bliss for someone else (p. 283). This is not to suggest that sexual practices should be regarded as ‘anything goes.’

The subtitle of Rubin’s (1984) chapter is “Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality.” I would not necessarily describe my research as constituting “radical theory,” at least not today. I do, however, want to position this dissertation as taking up the politics of sexuality, particularly as it pertains to the somewhat overlooked academic research area of pornography spectatorship, and sexual learning as a potential outcome of that spectatorship. The hierarchy and boundaries related to the imaginary line between ‘good sex’ and ‘bad sex,’ and the education of desire, continues some thirty years on from Rubin’s important work.

**Personal Resistance as a Barrier to Sex Education.**

In the introduction to this discussion of sex education, and particularly useful sex education for young people, I used a personal anecdote as an HIV/AIDS educator to describe an administrative / institutional barrier to delivering useful sex education. I intentionally use the term ‘useful sex education for young people’ because it describes what might be thought of as foundational concepts in understanding gender, sexuality, and sex education. I think there
is a general social assumption, or at least expectation, that secondary school students will show interest in class time dedicated to sex education. What kind of sex education would be rejected or ignored by the students rather than the institution? As Rasmussen’s (2006) work explains, there are unforeseen boundaries that can act as a barrier to delivering education on sexuality and gender to students. In the final section on barriers to providing useful sex education I examine secondary school students’ personal rejection or disinterest in particular sex education material as a barrier to academic engagement with sexuality. Rasmussen describes her frustration at introducing a sex education project to analyze “heteronormalization” (p. 192). I include Rasmussen here because, while it is not directly related to pornography, heteronormalization reifies traditional understandings of sexuality and gender, concepts pertaining to pornography spectators, and to some of the letters in the Hartley archive. Moreover, in this dissertation’s research question regarding video pornography spectatorship as constituting a kind of sex education, the spectator’s refusal to recognize the concept of heteronormalization restricts their understanding of, engagement with, and education regarding pornographic representations of non-normative, non-heterosexual, sexual practices and relationships.

Heteronormalization is a term developed by Michael Warner in 1991. The concept in part builds upon Rich’s (1981) concept of “compulsory heterosexuality,” the idea that heterosexuality is the preferred and indeed only acceptable sexual identification. It also builds on Rubin’s 1984 work on ‘radical theories of sexuality’ examined above. Heteronormalization describes assumptions regarding sexuality and gender, and privileges heterosexuality as the norm. Briefly, heteronormalization assumes prescriptive,
complementary categorizations of sex and gender: male and female, man and woman, and heterosexuality as the norm of sexual attraction. The concept extends to traditional, defined gender roles, and monogamous marriage as the basis for a sexual relationship and child-rearing within the nuclear family (Rich, 1981; Warner, 1991).

Rasmussen’s (2006) work includes a description of a secondary school sex education class where she attempted to introduce students to the concept of heteronormalization. The point of the exercise was to enlighten and educate students who are likely unfamiliar with the ways in which heteronormalization operates. She describes how students simply did not engage or participate in the project examining heteronormalization, demonstrating what she interpreted as a “passion for ignorance (Ellsworth, 1997, p. 57)” (as cited in Rasmussen, 2006, p. 193). Rasmussen (2006) describes her lack of options at the students’ stultified response to the issue. This (feigned?) ignorance of the concept of heteronormalizing identities played out through the students “active refusal of information,” resulted in an “impossibility of teaching (Felman, 1987, p. 79)” (as cited in Rasmussen, 2006, p. 193). Rasmussen’s (2006) conclusion is that the attempt to enrich sex and gender pedagogy regarding heteronormativity was, ironically, stifled by heteronormative privilege (p. 193).

Rasmussen’s experience is, like Tjaden’s research above, a single example. I include this brief examination of Rasmussen’s classroom frustration to articulate some potential barriers to individuals accepting the delivery of sex and gender education. These barriers identify the acceptable and excluded sexual and gender identifications (Rasmussen, 2006, p. 13). Rasmussen’s heteronormalization project, focused on sexual orientation education, does not discuss sexual practices, nor even birth control or STI’s. The students’ refusal of a rather
‘unsexy’ sex education topic, bereft of sexually explicit issues or material, illustrates that, besides social, legal, and religious institutions and ideologies, the intended recipient can be the impediment to sex education. This is an issue that invites us to “consider ‘the ensemble of rules’ that produce truths relating to sexual and gender identities within and around educational contexts” (Rasmussen, 2006, p. 80). And for this dissertation and its attention to pornography spectatorship, how this ‘ensemble of rules’ might prohibit or limit the spectator’s engagement with and understanding of some pornographic representations of bodies, sexual practices, and relationships.

**Delivering Sex Education: What, When, and How**

The introduction to this chapter includes Jennifer Doyle’s recollection of her and her sisters’ curious investigation of explicit photographs in video pornography mail-order magazines. The unsolicited magazines were left for the Doyle sisters without obligation by a neighbour boy. This brief section addresses the suitability of sex education: What kinds of sex education are appropriate for specific age groups? When are persons prepared for different kinds of sex education? And how should sex education be delivered to the recipient?

I suggest that we need not imagine or limit sex education to particular age groups. Rather, it is better to consider sex education as a breadth of information best organized into age-specific applications. This is not a new concept: for centuries adults have responded to the inquiring minds of children regarding parts of the human anatomy and the ‘where do babies come from?’ question. Sex education to youth omits graphic information on particular sexual practices and, as mentioned above, some sexually active adults expand their repertoire
of sexual education, sometimes through viewing pornography. As I discuss later in this chapter, the Hartley fan mail reveals examples of pornography as a kind of adult sex education. This section starts with an examination of young people's’ access to pornography, and how educators and administrators can respond to improved access to pornography.

In Chapter 4 I examined a variety of Hartley’s fan letters, these included a letter from a self-identified 14-year old Girl Scout, and a self-identified 16-year old Roman Catholic boy. It is unknown if the Girl Scout or Roman Catholic boy viewed video pornography as minors. The teenage boy states he acquired the address for Hartley’s fan club through an advertisement in a men’s magazine, and states he borrowed the magazine from schoolmates. There is also a fan letter from a 21-year old man who writes that Hartley helped him “transition from puberty to manhood:” perhaps indicating viewing pornography as a minor. My dissertation does not, however, endorse minors viewing pornography as a means of sex education.

In the contemporary technological context there is what can be interpreted as a normalization of pornography for young people (Harrison & Ollis, 2015). Burton’s (2012) article, “Underage and Overexposed” makes the seemingly obvious observation that, in the contemporary reality of ubiquitous internet access and availability of mobile, internet-enabled technologies, it is “essentially impossible” to prohibit young people from searching for or gaining exposure to sexually explicit materials (p. 58). Because technological advances have greatly increased access to pornography it is suggested that young people “be taught to view it critically (Johnson, as cited 2012)” (in Albury, 2014, p. 172). In research on young people and pornography consumption some researchers have questioned the
connection between “young people’s consumption of sexually explicit material and their actual sexual behaviours (McKee, as cited in 2010)” (Albury, 2014, p. 174). It has also been suggested that an important question for pornography as sex education research is to not focus solely on the sex practices young people “have seen and can name (or want to try);” rather, what other forms of education are available to help direct their “sexual learning processes ethically and safely (Allen, as cited in 2006)” (Albury, 2014, p. 174).

Of course, not everyone consumes pornography. There is, however, something of a public display or sharing of pornography as discussed in the Introduction chapter on Williams’ concept of ‘onscenity.’ The public display and dispersion of pornographic images and terminology potentially leads to an acquisition of knowledge of pornography without direct engagement. That is, because of the proliferation of pornography in popular culture, even those who don’t consume pornography directly are able to learn much of what pornography contains through its transmission through friends, lovers, and media, for example. Put simply, in the contemporary context pornography is widely accessible, by most people, and, as described by Doyle (2006), it is sometimes delivered without solicitation or non-consensually.

Young people may seek out pornography as a source of informal learning about sexuality (Allen, 2006; McKee, 2007). While young people may not be motivated to research other areas of education, they may explore pornography in part to view detailed images of genitalia or explicit presentations of sexual acts (Albury, 2014; Kapsalis, 1996). Similar to the pornographic video catalogues Doyle recalls, research suggests that some young people learn(ed) about bodies, sexualities, and sexual practices that they, their friends, or peers
viewed through videotape pornography (Albury, 2013; Allen, 2006; Cassar, 2016; Harrison & Ollis, 2015). The idea of acquiring sexual knowledge refers to Taylor’s (2009a) critique of pornography’s educational potential discussed above. Pornography, as a kind of sex education, can be described as a “pleasure of the interface” (Springer, 1991, p. 306), one that is located at the intersection of the “viewer, technology, and object viewed” (Williams, 1989, p. 295).

I next examine a modern sex education program designed for secondary school students that specifically addresses issues in the production and content of pornographic movies. While the sexual behaviour of young persons lies outside the purview of this research, it is important to be aware of their access to pornography, and what forms of education may be made available to direct their “sexual learning processes ethically and safely” (Albury, 2014, p. 174).

**Planet Porn. Introducing Porn to the Classroom**

Developed three decades after Hartley’s entrance to video pornography, UK-based *Planet Porn* is an example of a deliberate engagement with young people regarding pornography. This program, then, is a kind of sex education that specifically examines pornography. As I discuss in Chapter 3, VCR technology enabled widespread access to private pornography spectatorship more than two decades before Internet pornography. I suggest that a recognition of expanded access to video pornography in the early 1980s could have signalled the usefulness of a similar project prior to the digital age. *Planet Porn* is a program designed
to engage secondary school students in issues related to pornography production and representations.

The program draws together and helps articulate several issues of this chapter: historic understandings of sex education, ‘new’ sex education, technological media advances, and the demarcation between “pedagogy about porn” and “porn as pedagogy” (Albury, 2014, p. 173). While *Planet Porn* might be a useful sex education tool addressing issues about pornography (“pedagogy about porn”) I suggest it offers a different kind of education than pornography itself (“porn as pedagogy”) (Albury, 2014). As an instructional resource for secondary school students there are obvious limitations to the content: it is discussion, not viewing explicit representations of sexuality. Pornography as sex education is intended in this dissertation to mean a kind of adult sex education: it is sex education acquired through viewing sexual practices. This idea is articulated in the letter citations in the previous chapter.

The most significant part of the *Planet Porn* program for this research is that it represents an introduction of pornography into the classroom: pornography as sex education. The *Planet Porn* program was produced by London, UK, sex educator, Justin Hancock (2010) in conjunction with the Department of Health Quality Standards (Stapleton, 2012, p. 373). It offers a response to the daunting task of producing an educational tool that can be positioned between young people, pervasive pornographic imagery, and the implausibility of eradicating pornography. *Planet Porn* is “a series of games and activities” designed for adults providing education or counselling to youth aged fourteen or older (Bengry, 2012, p. 370). The package is divided into six components, starting with four exercises: ‘Planet Porn,’
‘Porn Thoughts,’ ‘Porn Debate,’ and ‘Porn Challenge’ (Limmer, 2012, p. 369). The first two exercises are described as examining “real” sex and relationships versus the “fantasy” of pornography produced as adult entertainment (p. 369). The ‘Porn Thoughts’ exercise seeks to “deconstruct the fantasy of porn” by inviting participants to imagine the thoughts of actual porn actors while performing sex on camera (Bengry, 2012, pp. 370–371). The third, ‘Porn Debate,’ consists of questions and statements intended to initiate discussion or debate regarding porn (Limmer, 2012, p. 369). ‘Porn Challenge,’ invites participants to think of ways to create “ethical” pornography (p. 369). The final component, ‘Is it Legal? Is it Right?,’ addresses the relationship between pornography and the law, and moral questions of porn.

I include a description of the Planet Porn program here to recognize the introduction of a discussion about pornography as sex education. What I take from the reviewers are their statements that the program has the capacity to describe pornography without fear, disgust, or shame. While it is up to educational institutions whether to include this program as part of their sex education plan, it is a resource that is ready to be included immediately. Planet Porn (Hancock, 2010) was developed by a sex educator with the intention that it be used as an educational program for youth as young as 14. And it recognizes that young persons may already be accessing pornography.

I include several academic reviews of the Planet Porn here as a means to highlight potential criticisms and benefits of the program identified by scholars. These reviews are not intended to present an exhaustive analysis of the program. A 2012 issue of the Sex Education journal included several reviews of the Planet Porn resource package. Limmer (2012) points
out the problem of “power” in porn, specifically, “the reproduction and reinforcement of sexualised gender power relationships that collude to make young women vulnerable and which place unattainable expectations on young men” (p. 369). I acknowledge that while pornography offers an opportunity for sexual fantasy, it can also provide bad sexual information: questions regarding consent, sexual power imbalances, or incorrect sex information, for example. However, the format of the program is praised for being “well laid out, engaging and interactive, providing good opportunities for discussion and debate among participants and covering a wide range of issues” (Limmer, 2012, p. 369). It is an accessible resource that can be used by a “wide range of adults (including parents, sex educators, youth workers, advisors and counsellors)” (Bengry, 2012, p. 371). And the interactive, participatory nature of the program helps increase comfort and confidence, and ease the anxiety that young participants might have in discussions related to sexually explicit material (Stapleton, 2012, p. 373). In his review, Stapleton (2012) writes that “Planet Porn provides a truly sex positive view of pornography in the sense that it does not attempt to generate fear, disgust or shame, with respect to either the producers or consumers of pornography” (p. 374). Bengry (2012) somewhat echoes Stapleton’s point that, importantly for young people who may already be accessing pornography, some of the sections are “fairly well conceived and likely to generate fruitful discussion and some degree of critical self-reflection” (p. 371).

Hancock’s program is called Planet Porn for a reason. The importance of discussing this program in the context of my dissertation on pornography spectatorship is that young people are already viewing sexually explicit representations, sometimes as a source for sex education (When did porn become, 2016). Given the contemporary reality of greatly
increased access to viewing pornography, this program seems a useful learning tool to initiate discussions about what pornography is, how it is produced, its representations and bodies, its educational potentiality, and criticisms of pornography. I reiterate that while it may be a useful sex education resource for secondary school students it is pedagogy about porn, not a kind of adult sex education: pornography as pedagogy.

**Pornography, Spectatorship, & Adult Sex Education**

In this section of the chapter I discuss how improved access to and engagement with pornography via the VCR can also be seen to have improved access to and engagement with sex education: pornography as pedagogy. To do so, I examine academic work on pornographic film and videos as a kind of adult sex education. This analysis suggests some of the things pornography can teach us or lead us to consider, and possibilities regarding who can receive (further) sex education. Despite social, political, and religious discourses on sexuality described in the previous section, pornography sometimes provides spectators with possibilities for a form of adult sexual education, and perhaps for their sexual subjectivity. A detailed examination of the concept of sexual subjectivity is beyond the scope of this research. Briefly, I use the term ‘sexual subjectivity’ here to encompass the sexual positioning, agency, and identification an individual develops through their desires, experiences, and beliefs regarding sex and gender politics.

A spectator’s engagement with pornography can influence, shape, or expand that spectator’s adult sex education. Viewing new or different bodies, gender identifications, sexual practices, sex toys, relationship schema, fetishes, or sexual orientations through
pornography delivers what can be understood as a kind of adult sex education: new or additional sex education information. In Chapter 4’s examination of the Nina Hartley fan mail archive letters I included excerpts that the spectator acquiring new or additional adult sex education through pornography spectatorship. The 1995 fan letter from John, mentioned above, thanks Hartley for her videos: through viewing pornography together the formerly “conservative” sex life of John and his wife has “reached new heights.” The letter from Jimmy, the Pentecostal preacher’s son, states that he received no sex education as a youth but that his sex life has greatly improved since watching Hartley’s videos. And a letter from Mark states that he and his wife get sexual ideas from watching Hartley’s videos. These are vague descriptors but I suggest they capture, generally, the spirit of many of the Hartley fan letters that can be interpreted as referring to pornography as providing a kind of sex education. Adult sex education regarding bodies can include demographic categorizations of ability, age, ethnicity, gender, or race, for example. Sex education on gender identifications might expand the viewer’s understanding beyond the male-female sex, and man-woman gender, binaries to include variations on the spectrum of femininity and masculinity, transgender, or transsexual identifications, some of whom might identify as male-to-female or female-to-male transsexuals, or non-binary identifications that eschew gender designations, for example (Kipnis, 2004; Noble, 2013; Stryker, 2006). Pornography’s ability to provide a form of adult sex education on the broad understanding of sexual practices is multifarious, and cannot be fully elucidated here. Briefly, however, sexual practices can refer to a specific sexual act: vaginal intercourse, anal intercourse, oral sex, fisting, rimming, or pegging, for example, with persons of varied gender identifications. There are Hartley fan
letters regarding anal sex from Scott in Georgia and Richard in St. Paul. Sexual practices in pornographic film can include the physical positioning of bodies for sex, or the particular arrangement of bodies. An example of this is the 1993 letter from an unidentified married woman, who viewed the video where Hartley portrayed a sex therapist instructing anal sex practices, describe how she had “learned how to move (her) ass while doing it ‘doggie-style.’” In some scenarios the positioning of bodies might mean several actors are performing sexual acts on one or more other actors at the same time. The 1997 letter from Robert, the tank gunner who served in Iraq, articulates the specific positioning of multiple bodies on an M1A1 tank during particular sexual acts. Sadomasochism can be understood as representing a large set of sexual practices with its own classifications and nomenclature. I will not attempt to include all of them here, but recognize that they include diverse activities such as asphyxiation, bondage, branding, caning, choking, cutting, flogging, gags, piercing, punching, and spanking, for example. Some of these practices are described in the letters from Alan, M.B., and Ronny described above. The use of sex toys in pornography may include dildos, vibrators, ass plugs, or strap-on harnesses for a dildo as described above in Carole’s letter to Hartley. There are also fan letters pertaining to adult sex education pertaining to anal toys from Michael in Pennsylvania and R.D. in Oakland. What I describe as relationship schema can include the representation of non-monogamy in pornography: performers having sex with two or more other performers in the same scene or within the same film. Relationship schema in pornography might also be the portrayal of actors with an existing non-monogamous relationship with multiple sexual partners involved. And the concept of non-relationship, non-committal, casual sex—sex for the sake of sex—is often
portrayed in pornography and may be included in the viewer’s broad understanding of potential relationship schema. Lastly, sexual orientations include but are not limited to asexual, bisexual, heterosexual, and homosexual. There are also pornographic genres that specifically feature transgender persons, transsexual women, or transsexual men; I will not attempt to categorize the sexual orientation of the spectators who are attracted to these productions.

I have not captured all the kinds of adult sex education that a viewer might acquire through pornography. And many of the kinds of adult sex education listed here may not be included in mainstream heterosexual pornography, including Hartley’s mainstream pornography. However, these sexual topics are available through pornography’s array of genres and subgenres of specialization on kinds of bodies, fetishes, genders, and sexual orientations. The letters discussed in the previous and current chapter include an array of adult sex education issues. And as I describe later in this chapter, Hartley’s sexual education and instructional video productions cover an array of sexual practices and techniques. The voice of viewers in the Hartley fan archive endorse the adult sex education value of pornography. This sex education can be considered by the viewer as a form of sexuality that could be taken up as part of their sexual identification, or not. The varied sexual imagery received through pornography spectatorship broadens the possibilities for the spectator’s sexual subjectivity. Having said that, I recognize that pornography spectators will not necessarily view a variety of pornographic genres; their spectatorship may be limited to a particular genre, particular sexual orientations, and continuity in representations pertaining to performer demographics, body types, and sexual practices. It is possible of course that some
spectators might not view what could be considered a new or different piece of sexual information or representation. In these circumstances Taylor’s (2009a, p. 28) critique of pornography as repetitive and lacking new information would apply. In response, I would cite the letter from R.D., discussed in Chapter 4, that, having watched a video in the genre of anal sex, writes Hartley to ask about the device inserted into her bottom in her video, *Anal Annie and The Willing Husbands* (Webb, 1985). And the letter from Vincent who, after claiming to have watched most of Hartley’s pornographic oeuvre, solicited her to produce five specific pornographic videos that included a mock ‘rape’ scenario involving several African-American men, and Hartley using mechanical dildo technology. I suggest both these letters are examples of a spectator of mainstream Hartley videos exploring, or considering exploring, a wider variety of sexual practices than they would without access to video pornography, and perhaps Hartley’s videos specifically. In this discussion on the potential for adult sex education through pornography spectatorship I connect the Hartley fan archive letters to video pornography and to video technology that enabled pornography spectators to watch explicit representations of sexuality at leisure, anytime, in various locations, alone or accompanied, rewinding and rewatching specific scenes, perhaps in slow-motion, repeatedly.

I next examine Gerard Damiano’s (1972) pornography classic, *Deep Throat*, as an example of the pornographic text as adult sex education. I suggest *Deep Throat* is appropriate because of its popularity, wide recognition, academic attention, transition from film to video and digital technologies, and its potential for pornography as adult sex education. While this research focuses on video pornography it is reasonable to suggest that porn texts prior to the VCR era also held the potential as a kind of adult sexual education.
While VCR technology changed the loci and viewing logistics of pornography spectatorship, the viewer, situated in an adult theatre, still had the opportunity to engage the pornographic text as a kind of adult sex education. Full-length feature film pornography in theatres reached what has been termed the golden age, or “porn renaissance,” in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Lewis, 2000, p. 218). This marked the shift in technology and permissibility from illicit stag films to legal, pornographic narratives on the big screen (Williams, 1989, p. 98). As mentioned in the Introduction, the porn renaissance is linked to a short list of 35mm films that includes *Deep Throat* (Damiano, 1972), *Behind the Green Door* (Mitchell & Mitchell, 1972), *The Devil in Miss Jones* (Damiano, 1973), *The Opening of Misty Beethoven* (Metzger, 1976), and *Debbie Does Dallas* (Buckley, 1978) (Paasonen & Saarenmaa, 2007, p. 23). These films enjoyed exceptional box office revenue for pornographic movies, outperforming mainstream films on a screen-by-screen basis (Couvares, 2006; Lewis, 2000, pp. 208–213; McNair, 1996, p. 113).

**Deep Throat and Adult Sex Education**

*Deep Throat* is perhaps the most famous pornographic film ever released in the U.S. market (Williams, 1989, p. 99). In fact, at the time of its release the film was not restricted to adult theatres, screening in mainstream theatres to sold-out audiences. It also marked the first instance hardcore film was reviewed by entertainment media, and the names of pornography directors and performers became publicly known (p. 99). As detailed in the documentary
*Inside Deep Throat* (Bailey & Barbato, 2005), the theatres screening *Deep Throat* became gathering points for the paparazzi and fans as the film was attended by Hollywood stars and celebrities; some couples went to see the film together, a rarity in pornography spectatorship. More than anything, it is the plot and storyline of this film that sets it apart from most porn films, and makes it an appropriate beginning to examining pornography as sex education.

Kipnis’ (2005) article “Ladies First: The Utopian Fantasy of *Deep Throat*” addresses pornography as sexual fantasy, women’s sexuality and, “the unkindest joke of all,” the location of the clitoris. She observes that while the location of the clitoris does not eradicate the possibility of female orgasm (during vaginal intercourse), it has perplexed a certain percentage of (heterosexual/bisexual) men. Enter the 1972 porn classic, *Deep Throat* (Damiano, 1972). The film’s central narrative and its silly premise focuses on a woman with a sexual ‘problem;’ the location of her clitoris in her throat (Bennett, 2013, p. 190). Because of this anatomical anomaly the woman is distraught because, despite her active sex life, she has not enjoyed sexual pleasure through vaginal intercourse and fears she will never experience an orgasm. The young woman, Linda Lovelace, consults a sexologist (Harry Reems) who explains to her that she has nothing to worry about, she can achieve orgasm through stimulating her clitoris: oral sex.

Admittedly, the film’s premise is ridiculous, even by mainstream pornography standards. However, as Williams (1989) notes, what is memorable about *Deep Throat* is precisely what it leaves open to criticism: the unbelievable plot (p. 99). The “utopian fantasy” of *Deep Throat* described by Kipnis (2005) is that the protagonist’s sexual dysfunction accommodates the best of both (heterosexual sex/gender) worlds: orgasm for the
female protagonist, and the pleasure of (receiving) oral sex for her male partners. Importantly, for this chapter’s attention to sex education through an engagement with pornography, there is more to the film than the absurd plot. As Bennett (2013, p. 190) observes, citing Michelson’s work, while the film is crude, the aesthetics are worth considering. The film “manipulates the audience expectation into a more complex frame of reference (Michelson, 1993, pp. 260–261)” (as cited in Bennett, 2013, p. 190). Through comedy and the audience’s laughter, the plot dissolves nervousness and the secrecy of sex, “thus giving us an imaginative control over our sexuality (Michelson, 1993, pp. 260–261)” (as cited in Bennett, 2013, p. 190).

Williams (1989) describes the 1972 release of Deep Throat as marking a scientific “discourse of sexuality” that offered a “confession of further ‘truths’ of sex” (p. 98). The pornography utopia for Linda Lovelace experiencing her first orgasm (through performing oral sex on Harry Reems) is heralded through visuals of rockets, bells ringing, and fireworks. These comedic, stereotypical references to orgasm are important visual announcements in the film’s storyline. That is, the basic anatomical reality is that neither the clitoris or vagina ejaculate, and the lack of a female equivalent to pornography’s ‘money shot,’ has led to questioning evidence of female sexual pleasure: the invisibility of female orgasm. This is “a quest for a truth which can’t be represented—namely, female sexual pleasure” (Tercier, 2013, p. 231), “the knowledge of female wonders that the genre as a whole still seeks” (Williams, 1989, p. 94).44

44 It should be noted that there are women who release liquid, sometimes in large amount, during sexual pleasure, but unlike male ejaculation, this is not generally regarded as a common or expected outcome of women’s sexual experience.
While the pornographic plot and its numerous fellatio-centric scenes could be regarded as sexist, inviting criticism from anti-pornography sources, the film has numerous cunnilingus scenarios: women receiving oral sex from men (Damiano, 1972). More importantly, the film’s narrative traces a woman's determination to find sexual pleasure despite her unique anatomical reality. Furthermore, as Williams (1989, p. 25) and Kipnis (2005) have written, *Deep Throat* is significant as the first porn film to be seen by “large numbers of women” viewers. This is thought to be attributable to the storyline’s attention to the “problem of a woman's (sexual) pleasure” (Kipnis, 2005; Williams, 1989, p. 25).

The film is also significant, however, and a more genuine target for anti-pornography feminists, for its focus on (female-on-male) oral sex and the proliferation of scenes of “the hydraulics of male ejaculation:” the “money shot” (Williams, 1989, p. 94). *Deep Throat* combined the “biological fantasy of the clitoris in the throat” (Williams, 1989, p. 156) with what was becoming obligatory: multiple, “maximum visibility” (p. 94) money shot scenes.

What I want to garner from this examination of *Deep Throat* is an invitation to think about the “capacity to reimagine the world and the sexual quotient it contains” (Kipnis, 2005). I am attracted to Kipnis’ phrase; in this dissertation I suggest precisely that the pornography spectators’ capacity to reimagine the world’s sexual quotient can be realized through the opportunity to view new or different kinds of sexualized bodies and sexual practices, alternatives to what they have been taught or experienced. To reiterate, I do not claim that every pornography spectator will attain some new adult sex education. And viewing new sexual information or education does not subsequently lead to adaptation by the spectator: sex education does not necessitate or imply a change in sexual practices.
This attention to *Deep Throat* as an example of adult sex education, and fantastical ideas of sexuality, represents the expansion of possibilities for sexual subjectivity: new or different sexual pleasures. The film, and Kipnis’ (2005) questioning of the possibilities for different kinds of sexual pleasure, are considerations of one’s sexual subjectivity through reimaginings of one’s “sexual quotient.” I position this film, and academic engagement with it, as a starting point for a broader investigation of pornography as adult sex education.

Michelson’s (1993) reference to breaking down anxiety and delivering an imaginative framework for sexuality can be understood as a kind of sex education in that it removes normative boundaries of sexuality. As Kipnis (2005) observes, *Deep Throat* invites us to consider sexual fantasy, the utopia of synchronized pleasure between sex partners, where “desires correspond,” even the possibility of women achieving orgasm through performing oral sex. The film can be thought of in the context of sex education for posing and then resolving “the problem of the authenticity of Linda Lovelace’s pleasure” (Williams, 1989, p. 147). The imagined utopia, the mutually enjoyable sexual scenario, is located where the “source of one’s own desire magically becomes another’s source of pleasure too” (Zamir, 2013, p. 88).

There are letters to Hartley cited in the previous chapter that offer glimmers close to this description. There is, for example, the man who details his pornography spectatorship and exploration in transvestism to Hartley. The writer describes how he advanced from wearing lingerie, high heels, make-up, and a wig, to having sex with men at home while cross-dressed, sometimes re-enacting pornography scenarios they watched together. While we do not have access to the thoughts of the sexual participants it is plausible that, through
these sexual encounters, the transvestite is able to enjoy and, to some extent, live out the fantasy of being in the role of a woman in a pornography scenario recently viewed. And, correspondingly, the transvestite’s male companion can enjoy enacting a pornographic sexual scenario, perhaps assuming the role and dialogue of a male pornography star similar to what was viewed. I suggest this can be interpreted as “one’s own desire magically becom(ing) another’s source of pleasure too” (Zamir, 2013, p. 88). Furthermore, this example has connection to Chapter 3’s attention to the adult theatre, and Al Goldstein’s anecdote regarding his wife’s frustration at becoming sexually aroused while watching a pornographic film and being unable to act on it while in the theatre (Greenberg, 2008, p. 95). Comparatively, under the heading of ‘video technology and private pornography spectatorship,’ the transvestite Hartley fan and their sexual partners are able to intentionally enact what Goldstein and his wife could not (or would not attempt) in an adult theatre.

I move from academic attention to *Deep Throat* to a more contemporary pornography video. I examine Albury’s (2009) work on the lesbian pornography video *How to Fuck in High Heels* to question the possibilities for pornography as adult sex education. I suggest that pornographic movies cannot only be understood as a kind of adult sex education, but in some instances can provide adult sex education to persons working in the pornography industry. This possibility for adult sex education is significant in that it pertains to professionals working in and exposed to representations of human sexuality.

In her Australian-based research on pornography Albury (2009) describes a project that sought to “find out what kinds of stories people set out to tell about themselves and other people when they produce pornography or erotica” (p. 647). In opposing the good sex/bad
sex hierarchy and demarcation, Albury (2009, p. 649) suggests we take up a more charitable and “reparative” interpretation of pornographic texts. With regard to Albury’s idea of a reparative reading of pornography, I want to introduce something that not only includes but advances beyond the reparative—improvement, or making reparations—to a consideration of pornography as sex education within the pornography industry.

In Chapter 4 I mention letters that Hartley received lauding scenarios where she wore a strap-on harness and dildo and had penetrative sex with women. In Albury’s (2009) work she discusses the queer porn video, How to Fuck in High Heels (Rednour & Strano, 2000), that which can be understood as a “wonderful example of the ways that the codes and conventions of classic ‘male gaze’ pornography can be adapted by ethical, politicized queer filmmakers”45 (Albury, 2009, pp. 649–650; McKee, Albury, & Lumby, 2008). In short, Albury illustrates how the queer porn video, How to Fuck in High Heels, a lesbian-produced, pornographic lesbian movie, adapts heterosexual male gaze film conventions to a queer pornographic film. The film includes a variety of scenes of queer women having penetrative sex using strap-on dildos; it was written, directed, and performed by queer women and intended primarily for the entertainment of queer women. The film, from S.I.R. Video Productions, a lesbian-owned company, was so successful that it won an Adult Video News (AVN) award for ‘Best Girl on Girl’ scene in 2001 (Albury, 2009, p. 650). The category ‘Best Girl on Girl’ scene normally applies to a ‘lesbian’ scene in a heterosexual genre production. My objective here is to position pornography as a kind of adult sex education regarding sexualities, sex, gender, and sexual practices that How to Fuck in High Heels and

45 How to Fuck in High Heels is an S.I.R. Video production, a lesbian-owned pornography production company based in San Francisco, CA.
other films can deliver to other members of the largely heteronormative pornography industry.

Albury’s (2009) 21st-century analysis of the film lies at the intersection of queer pornography, the male gaze, and the interpellation of the film as lesbian entertainment for men. Most ‘lesbian’ genre pornography is produced by men and intended as ‘girl-on-girl’ pornography for the entertainment of men. As Albury articulates, the AVN award—to the queer women directors and producers at S.I.R. Video Productions—from the pornography industry invites an analysis that situates queer-produced pornography alongside recognition largely reserved for mainstream ‘straight-produced’ pornography. The issue raised by Albury is that while the AVN award represents a wonderful connection of queer sexual aesthetics to straight sexual media, the film, as ‘lesbian sexuality,’ was inculcated as ‘girl-on-girl’ pornographic entertainment for men by the pornography industry. That is, rather than recognized as a queer production of queer sexuality intended for queer women, the largely mainstream, heteronormative, pornography industry (and the award gala) recognized *How to Fuck in High Heels* for ‘Best Girl on Girl’ scene, a descriptor for a ‘lesbian’ scene in an otherwise heterosexual production (Albury, 2009, p. 650). As such this film is applicable to this chapter’s attention to pornography spectatorship as a kind of adult sex education. In this case, adult sex education for the pornography industry.

The film discussed is “pedagogically useful” in terms of pornography studies, queer studies, and adult sex education (Albury, 2009, p. 650). The more fine-grained objective here is to consider that pornography holds the potential to deliver sex education to persons directly involved in the pornography industry itself. It seems reasonable to question how
many members of the industry—professionals employed by and immersed in pornography production—and attendees at the 2001 AVN awards were aware of the queer pornography film discussed here prior to the award. The recognition brought to this film may have been an introduction to some viewers of ‘girl on girl’ porn that, ironically, is produced by women for women rather than as ‘lesbian entertainment for men.’ It is disputable whether the film’s award can be interpreted as transgressive, or as assimilation of a “politically dissident” pornographic text into the dominant sexual culture (Albury, 2009, p. 650). Albury’s point, in part, is to question what kind of adult sex education diverse pornography genres such as this film can deliver to viewers, whether fans, academics, or persons working in the pornography industry.

**From Educating Nina to Nina Educating**

The final section of this chapter examines Nina Hartley’s contribution to the idea of pornography as adult sex education. Hartley’s career includes approximately 40 sexual instruction / education videos produced for the purpose of educating and assisting adult viewers on a variety of sexual practices or topics (Penley, 2006, p. 102). The titles of the videos in this series begin with “Nina Hartley’s Guide to….” As I describe in more detail below, in the production of sexual instruction videos Hartley has dual roles: pornography star and sex educator. The sexual education videos Hartley performs in and produces are sexually explicit and sometimes feature other pornography stars in demonstrating particular acts. As such Hartley’s sexual instruction videos represent pornography as adult sex education.
In this dissertation’s attention to the concept of ‘speaking sex,’ Hartley’s sex instruction videos can be interpreted as the pornography star speaking of sex directly to the viewer. I say more about this below. Hartley’s instructional videos are fundamentally different from feature-length pornography videos in that she addresses the viewer directly in order to provide sex education information rather than being viewed by the ‘intimate stranger’ while performing sexual acts for the purpose of sexual entertainment.

 Appropriately for this dissertation, in Hartley’s porn debut, *Educating Nina* (Anderson, 1984), she plays a Psychology graduate student researching people’s sexual fantasies. The opening scene shows Hartley and a man walking across campus and into a building. Hartley is dressed conservatively in a below-the-knees skirt and sweater. The man walking beside her, presumably a professor, is dressed in accordance with a stereotype of ‘academic:’ dress shoes, slacks, turtleneck, and plaid, wool jacket. Once inside the building the scene moves to a close-up of Hartley standing near a high book shelf, the book titles all under the heading of human sexuality. She holds a text, reading, clearly interested in the content. The next scene depicts Hartley as a serious student, seated at a table, wearing glasses, eating an apple, a textbook opened in front of her, writing notes.

 Nina Hartley is a sex educator by virtue of her pornography performances, but more specifically, through her publications (Hartley, 1997; 1999; 2006; 2013) and, often explicit, sexual instructional videos; I think of these videos as ‘sex education porn’ (Greene, 2000; 2008b; 2015; 2016; Hartley, 1994; 1995). A significant portion of Hartley’s fan mail is what can be interpreted as inquiring about or disclosing issues of sex education, and the fan’s
recognition of her as a source of adult sex education. As I write wrote in the Introduction chapter related to Foucault’s and Williams’ uptake of Diderot’s fable, there is “an immense curiosity about sex, bent on questioning it, with an insatiable desire to hear it speak and be spoken about (Foucault, as cited in 1978, p. 77)” (Williams, 1989, p. 2). The fan letters to Hartley recognizing her as a sex educator can be understood as the viewer’s curiosity about sex and a desire to hear it speak and be spoken about.

A fan letter from Patrick mentions that the author has read Hartley’s essays “Frustration of a Feminist Porn Star” (Nina Hartley official site) and “Using Porn to Bridge the Mind-Body Gap” (Hartley, 1999). Patrick states that Hartley “certainly disprove(s) the unfair stereotype of the bimbo porn star.” I take Patrick’s comment to mean that he recognizes Hartley as both an intelligent person and someone who is a pornography star. I also take his specific reference to Hartley’s “Frustration of a Feminist Porn Star” essay as his recognition that she struggles in her attempts to deliver the message that pornography stars can be feminists, and that pornography has something positive to contribute: adult sex education, perhaps most poignantly articulated in her book chapter, “Using Porn to Bridge the Mind-Body Gap” (Hartley, 1999). I suggest Patrick’s recognition that pornography has something important to say connects to the desire to hear sex speak, and to learn something from it. Examples of Hartley’s contribution to assisting those curious about sex and seeking adult sex education are disclosed in brief excerpts from the following fan letters from Jimmy, Chuck, and Todd.

46 As a point of interest, and perhaps clarification, a television drama titled Educating Nina was one of the two biggest hits on Argentina’s top broadcaster, Telefe, in 2016. Educating Nina has since been acquired by Chilevision, the Chilean network of the Turner Broadcasting System.
Jimmy in Arkansas explains that he is “the son of an old fashion [sic] Penetcostal [sic] Preacher and they [sic] only thing were [sic] told about sex was that we would find out when we got married.” Jimmy goes on to state that since watching Hartley’s videos his “sex life has greatly improved.” Chuck’s 1995 letter solicits Hartley for “advice on sex.” He writes that he is “not very experienced with women;” he has only been “intimate” with one. They were planning to marry but it “fell apart.” Chuck feels his “lack of sexual experience had something to do with it.” Todd’s letter starts by joking that he has “a very rare condition,” one that is starting to worry him: he identifies as a “thirty-two year old male that is still a virgin.” He clarifies that his virginity is “not by choice;” rather, it his “ignorance and naivete” that have rendered him “blind” during circumstances that might have become sexual. Todd feels he needs an experienced woman who will make him “feel relaxed and will spend some time educating” him. The three letters from Jimmy, Chuck, and Todd are similar in their admission to either completely lacking or having insufficient sex education. Jimmy admits that it was his family’s religious doctrine that intentionally withheld sex education or information from him; the family’s sexual ideology apparently being ‘learn as you go.’ Neither Chuck nor Todd elaborate on what if any institutional sex education background they have. Chuck and Todd may have received a secondary school level of sex education. However, as mentioned, these classes may have focused on reproductive health and sexually transmitted infections rather than on sexual practices and relationships. Chuck has been sexually intimate with one woman in a relationship that ended, he believes, because of his lack of sexual experience; Todd states he is a virgin. While starting with no sex education background, Jimmy thanks Hartley and states that his sex life is much improved,
attributing this advancement to viewing her pornography videos. Chuck and Todd however, describe what might be interpreted as failure in finding sexual pleasure, and seek Hartley’s advice. I suggest that Chuck and Todd are seeking a pornography star-based solution to their sexual mind-body gap; that is, to physically fulfill what their mind feels is lacking.

The common denominator in these three letters is that they identify as heterosexual male pornography spectators that wrote to pornography star Nina Hartley to admit lacking an adult sex education and to request for advice from someone they recognize as a having sexual expertise. As Taylor (2005) writes, “Sex becomes more and more an object of expertise” where the message of sex is received within the power relation of confessor and confessant (p. 57). While the concept of confession is not an analytic axis of this research, the writing of letters to Hartley from pornography spectators seeking sex education, and to share sexual desires, introduces the adjudication of her as a trusted source: a sexuality authority. I suggest that these spectators recognize pornography’s potential for adult sex education, and that the authors of these letters also recognize Hartley as a kind of sexual expert.

In Chapter 4 I mention a 1991 letter from Gerald in the context of the male spectator recognizing pornography as an opportunity for women to enjoy their sexuality. In this discussion of the spectator recognizing pornography as a kind of sex education I include the opening words of Gerald’s letter:

Dear Nina, I’ve only met a few people who see, I mean really see what they look at. You are not in the trance most of us move in. You see what you are looking at. As well as seeing well, you communicate through your writing and acting what you have
In connection to Gerald’s letter and the idea of Hartley “seeing” what is around her, and her ability to communicate what she sees, I recall Todd’s letter and his use of the term “blind” to describe his ignorance, naïveté, and inability to act in circumstances where a situation with a woman might have become sexual. Without attempting to advance an ambitious claim, perhaps Todd’s blindness, and what Hartley sees, is adult sex education: the knowledge and ability to advance in a sexual, or potentially sexual, situation. In a 1990 letter from Fred in Pennsylvania regarding Hartley’s “sex education tapes” he writes that he does not “know of anyone more suited to teach it. It’s a subject that you obviously know and love, and you have the intelligence to be a fine erotic instructress.”

The trajectory of Hartley’s career has taken her from her 1984 premiere, Educating Nina, to three decades of pornography, including two decades producing adult sex education and instruction videos. Hartley’s personal website includes an Internet-based business that offers her adult sex education videos and DVD’s for sale. These ‘how-to’ products are designed to educate and enhance the sexual knowledge and skills of adult viewers interested in a range of sexuality topics from anal sex, to oral sex (cunnilingus and fellatio), to bondage, and spanking (Nina Hartley official site). Hartley’s entire ‘sex education porn’ work has been produced and distributed through Adam & Eve, now one of the largest sex industry businesses in the US, and probably the world. I briefly discuss Hartley’s business relationship with Adam & Eve here to articulate how both parties share a dedication to professional sexual health education. Moreover, Adam & Eve recognize Hartley as both a nurse and a pornography star capable of combining professional sexual health information and explicit
sexual content that would be useful, practical sex education accompanied with demonstrations. The Adam & Eve videos featuring Hartley offer adult viewers an explicit, pornographic level of sexual instruction and education that surpass more traditional sexual education videos.

In 1970, two American men, Phil Harvey and Dr. Tim Black, founded the company commonly known as Adam & Eve. Harvey had recently completed his Master’s degree in family planning at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and had years of experience working with CARE in India (Heffernan, 2013, p. 245). Black, a physician, had returned from New Guinea and Nigeria working with family planning and health services. The two formed the business as a way to sell condoms by mail and put much of the profit into the promotion of family planning worldwide; the incorporated name of the business is Population Planning Associates (p. 245). In the early-to-mid 1980s the technological advance of the VCR prompted Adam & Eve to begin production of explicit sex education videos. The company hired “a panel of psychologists and sex therapists” to review the videos before release to ensure a “positive portrayal” of sexuality (Heffernan, 2013, p. 246). The company’s video plans were somewhat derailed for eight years due to Reagan-era social conservatism that led to police raids and legal prosecutions against Adam & Eve. However, in the mid-1990s, after winning a court case, the company began video production. Their “high-profile video line became a series of sexual education / instructional videos directed by and starring” Nina Hartley (Heffernan, 2013, p. 246). My search on the Adam & Eve website brought 38 results for Nina Hartley videotapes on an array of sexual education and instructional topics (Adam & Eve Adult Store). In recent email correspondence regarding her
instructional videos / DVD’s, Hartley wrote that she believes the total to now be 40. I will not attempt an exhaustive, detailed description of all her sexual instruction videos here; rather, I provide an overview of this area of Hartley’s work as it pertains to this chapter’s attention to pornography as adult sex education. In particular, I want to highlight the professionalism, longevity, and breadth of her sex education work.

Beyond Hartley’s recognition as a pornography star, the genre of ‘sex education porn’ from Adam & Eve is significant in that the videos are produced by and feature a woman (Heffernan, 2013, p. 238). As both a pornography star and a sex educator, what sets Hartley’s videos apart from mainstream sexual instruction products featuring professional (clothed) therapists and counsellors is a combination of her training as a nurse (and corresponding professional understanding of anatomy) and her “intuition” as a sex-positive porn star (Heffernan, 2013, pp. 247–248). And, being ‘sexual in the way that Mozart was musical,’ Hartley has an enthusiasm for pornographic demonstrations of her topic. As Heffernan (2013, p. 248) observes, Hartley’s knowledge on the connection between the heart and mind regarding sexual desires and practices enables her to explain how to approach specific sexual acts. In 1994, Adam & Eve released Nina Hartley’s Guide to Better Cunnilingus (Hartley, 1994), followed the next year by Nina Hartley’s Guide to Anal Sex (Hartley, 1995) and Nina Hartley’s Guide to Oral sex (Hartley) in 1998. In her video guide to anal sex, Hartley states that “if your mind is saying, ‘Yes! Yes!’ and your heart is saying, ‘No! No!’ your anus will always, always listen to your heart” (Heffernan, 2013, p. 248; Hartley, 1995). This succinct quote from Hartley can be interpreted as understanding not only the idea of a mind-body connection, but the way each body reacts to different sexual practices; that is, the in/ability to
enjoy anal sex, and the body’s response to specific stimulations. Later in the anal sex video, in the context of being aware of one’s body and communication with a sex partner, Hartley (1995) states, “You don’t get ass, you earn ass. And you can’t earn ass unless you learn to speak ass” (Heffernan, 2013, p. 248). This quote, referring to the importance of communicating with a partner(s) during anal sex, perhaps perfectly summarizes Hartley’s location as both a pornography star and a sex educator.

Hartley’s sex-positive attitude and enthusiasm urged fans to expand their Adam & Eve sexual education repertoire. Working with her second husband, Ernest Greene, as director, they produced an expanded range of sexually explicit videos that can be interpreted as pornography. These topics include alternative sexual practices: bondage, domination, and fetish topics (Greene, 2001a; 2001b; 2004b; 2005; 2008a; Heffernan, 2013, p. 248). Other specialized topics included Nina Hartley’s “advanced guide to sex toys” (Greene, 2000), and guides to “stripping for your partner” (Greene, 2007b), “multiple orgasms” (Greene, 2004a), “female ejaculation” (Greene, 2006a), “strap-on sex” (Greene, 2006b), “the ultimate sex party” (Greene, 2006c), and “great sex during pregnancy” (Greene, 2008b).

The Adam & Eve website description for Nina Hartley’s Guide to Female Ejaculation starts, “Learn how women can explode just like men in this how-to movie hosted by Nina Hartley” (Adam & Eve Adult Store; Greene, 2006a). As the title implies, the focus of the film is teaching women how they can achieve (vaginal) ejaculation, or squirting, during orgasm.47 The website description goes on to describe Hartley instructing a woman on a “variety of positions, techniques and toys as she learns how to gush!” Similar to male

47 I mention the occurrence of female ejaculation in a footnote above related to discussion on the topic of ‘the invisible female orgasm.’
ejaculation, then, the objective of the instruction is to enable women to “leave the sheets dripping wet” (Adam & Eve Adult Store; Greene, 2006a). Because female ejaculation is relatively uncommon, it is likely that many people, including women, are unfamiliar with the possibility, making this instructional guide representative of explicit sexual education. And once a woman knows how to achieve ejaculation this adult sex education benefit can continue through the woman educating her sex partners.

In Nina Hartley’s Guide to Great Sex During Pregnancy (Greene, 2008b), Hartley interviews porn star, Violet Blue, who is eight months pregnant. The educational discussion clarifies myths and concerns about the possibilities for sexual pleasure during pregnancy, even late term pregnancy. In dispelling the concerns, Hartley discusses a woman who had sex with her husband in the delivery room, up to the point of the baby being ready for birth (Greene, 2008b). In a pornographic context, the instructional video advances from an educational discussion to explicit sex: Violet Blue has sex with her baby’s father, porn star, Dick Danger. The sexual act between Blue and Danger serves as a practical demonstration and example to the viewer of the topic discussed.

The preceding section has provided an overview of Hartley’s sex education/instructional videos. In this chapter’s attention to pornography as a kind of adult sex education Hartley’s dual roles in these videos as both a pornography star and sex educator draws together both the significance of Hartley’s career and the existence of her sex education videos: pornography as adult sex education. In the VCR era, the screen of the viewer’s television is the proscenium separating them from the performers. Yet, sex education porn, the transmission of ‘how-to sexual education’ directly to the viewer in a
clear, understandable method is the primary intention, beyond any accompanying pornographic entertainment. The examples of Hartley’s ‘sex education porn’ described here connect sexual and anatomical information to explicit sexual imagery to provide a complete package of theory and practice: the viewer receives both important, relevant physiological information and a pornographic demonstration as an example of the sexual topic. Sex education pornography, as a kind of pornography genre, breaks the ‘fourth wall’ of typical pornographic performance: the sex education pornography performers are engaged both in sexual acts, and directly addressing the audience in the context of instruction and education. That is, rather than a usual pornographic film where the performance is ‘public solitude,’ separated from the viewer, the objective of sex education porn is to transmit sexual education to the viewer.

Hartley has explained that she did the sexual education videos because “every day someone turns 18 and needs to know about this stuff” (N. Hartley, personal communication, April 9, 2017). Hartley defined her position as having both a nursing education and being committed to promoting sex education, writing:

I knew that sexual skills need to be shown, not just described. I wanted to leave a legacy of actually useful information for people, not just entertainment products. That's the nurse in me. We're here to educate, advocate and role model desired / healthy behavior. That's what my life is and certainly what the Guides are about. Some were more successful than others, to be sure, but I'm proud of most of them, certainly (N. Hartley, personal correspondence, April 9, 2017).
Hartley’s sex education and instructional work has extended for more than two decades, from her 1994 Adam & Eve premiere, to her most recent productions, *Nina Hartley’s Guide to Exploring Open Relationships* (Greene, 2015) and *Nina Hartley’s Guide to Hot Talk* (Greene, 2016). These titles on the issues of relationship schema and language as sexual stimuli further represent the breadth of Hartley’s sexual knowledge: from physical, sexual acts to the metaphysics of communication, negotiation, and language. The longevity and depth of Hartley as a sex educator is testimony to her sexual knowledge, medical training, dedication, enthusiasm, and professionalism.

**Conclusion**

Jennifer Doyle (2006) writes that the image she remembers most clearly from the pornography video catalogues she and her sisters viewed is a photograph accompanying a film titled, *Moby-Dick*. The photo was of a naked, black man who had an enormous penis; her assumption was that the man was the film’s star and (appropriated) namesake. The African-American pornography actor was photographed against a background of dry, arid landscape, presumably somewhere in the pornography capital of southern California. Doyle’s (2006) analysis of the film’s reimagination of *Moby-Dick* is that it represents a conjunction of “the pornographic to the anthropological:” the black actor’s huge penis framed by the pale, desert sand can be interpreted as the “photographic negative” of the famous nautical theme of a large, white, whale in the dark ocean (p. xi).

At the age of 12 the (self-proclaimed) nerdy Doyle was aware of Melville’s tale and knew enough to consider the disparate understandings of *Moby-Dick* as both pornography
and literature. Her younger sisters, however, were not. Doyle (2006) describes one of the sisters coming home from school one day humiliated and confused. That day, the sister proudly wore a new sweater to school, the front decorated with a blue whale motif. A male teacher saw Doyle’s sister and innocently asked the name of the whale on her sweater. Before she could answer the teacher asked, “Moby-Dick?” (p. xiii). Doyle’s sister’s only reference point for ‘Moby-Dick’ was the photograph of the African-American pornography actor with an enormous penis. She was startled, confused, and not sure how to respond. Later that day when Doyle was told of the incident, she informed her sister of the Melville novel and, while entertained by the incident, explained that the teacher was not initiating a salacious conversation.

I elaborate Doyle’s story of ‘Moby-Dick’ because of this chapter’s, and this dissertation’s, attention to the question of video pornography constituting a kind of sex education. First, as discussed above, the possibility for pornography to act in advancing a person’s sex education is, in part, contingent on their pre-existing level of sex education and experience. In this example, the catalogue’s description of (video pornography’s appropriation of Melville’s novel) *Moby-Dick* was lost on Doyle’s younger, less educated sister; she was unaware of the literary reference. And pornography’s educational potential—the comedic suggestion that a pornography performer’s penis is comparative to a whale—was not clarified by Doyle for her sisters, presumably assuming this not being important, useful sex education.

Doyle’s story is not only an example of young people and pornography as sex education but also as literature. Doyle was aware that *Moby-Dick* was literature, not
pornography, and that *Moby-Dick* was a whale, not a pornography actor. Melville’s story was published a century after Diderot’s *Les Bijoux indiscrets*, and both have launched numerous analyses. Diderot’s fable has a direct connection to ‘speaking sex,’ summoned through the sultan’s ring. The story of Melville’s novel is not connected to speaking sex, and yet, as an unwitting participant in a confused scenario, Doyle’s sister became inculcated into a misinterpretation of the teacher’s declaration of a whale motif on a sweater as representing a pornography star. This innocent mishap unravelled because it was interpreted as summoning sex to speak. I am not attempting to force a literary comparison between Diderot’s fable and Melville’s novel. In fact, quite the opposite. Unlike the intentionality of Mangogul’s magic ring it was the ‘literary turned pornographic’ idea of *Moby-Dick* that led sex to speak.

Recalling the Britzman (1998) quotation from the introduction, “nothing about sex education is easy” (p. 76).

The closing section of the 1990 Hartley fan letter from Fred in Pennsylvania reads, “A lot of people are still terribly embarrassed about sex, and it would be doing them a great service if you could just help to convince them that there’s nothing at all shameful or embarrassing about human sexuality.” The second question of this research focuses on pornography as a kind of sexual education within the context of film spectatorship (Rasmussen, 2006; Talburt, 2000). Sexual knowledge garnered through film pornography posits diverse human sexual practices and relationship modalities outside normative ideas of sexual education largely focusing on reproductive health and sexually transmitted diseases (Kulwicki, 2008, p. 306; Tisdale, 1994). Pornography, theorized as a mode of sexual education, reveals the barrenness of government-sanctioned, institutionalized sex education,
and rhetorically asks the heterosexual viewer, “how they know what they know about sex, and where they learned it?” (Albury, 2002, p. xvii).

Development of the sexual self, and sexual education, correlative with film pornography is generated through the spectator's engagement and reconciliation with pornographic scenarios (Paasonen, Nikunen, & Saarenmaa, 2007; Penley, 1989). The engagement with and consideration of pornographic texts by the viewer invites reflection upon and perhaps an assessment of one's own sexual knowledge, practices, sexual identification, and intimate relationships (Sedgwick, 1990; Stryker, 2006; Sycamore, 2006). Through video pornography, (re)viewed in the private domain, individuals have the opportunity for new or different imaginations of sexuality via pornography.

Writing for *Esquire* in 1972, Nora Ephron said that for people “not to have seen” *Deep Throat* “seemed somehow…derelict (Smith, 1973, p. 721)” (Williams, 1989, p. 99). While the term ‘derelict’ is often defined as something abandoned or deserted, it also carries a definition as negligent, or to be neglectful of one’s duty; I interpret Ephron’s intention to be the latter definition. If so, what did Ephron intend with the statement that it was derelict, negligent, to not view *Deep Throat?* Was the intention of the statement a cultural reference? A sexual reference? A reference to sexual culture? I like to think Ephron was making a claim regarding pornography as sexual culture. And perhaps, as culture, capable of delivering education: not only adult sex education but also cultural education. *Deep Throat* represents both cultural and sexual education in that it invited viewers to imagine different modes of sexual pleasure, the “capacity to reimagine the world and the sexual quotient it contains” (Kipnis, 2005), and the means to solve the problem of sex (Williams, 1989).
In this chapter I have argued for pornography spectatorship to be understood as a kind of sex education. Pornography’s potential as a discourse of sexual education has been largely overlooked. Sexualities, identities, and knowledges are constructed through varied kinds of action, “participation in and observation of prohibitions and pleasures… other bodies, medical texts, popular press accounts, how-to-books, pornography” (Patton, 1996, p. 142). The pornography spectator has an opportunity for sex education through an observation of pleasures, perhaps sexual acts regarded as prohibited pleasures, the observation of other bodies, and perhaps unfamiliar sexual practices and relationships depicted in pornography.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

Introduction

In 1748, Denis Diderot’s fable Les Bijoux indiscrets, or, The Indiscreet Jewels, was published. It was controversial, sexually explicit for its time, and “promptly suppressed as pornography” (Vartanian, in Diderot, 1993, p. xi), resulting in Diderot’s brief imprisonment. In January 1993, two and a half centuries later, Nina Hartley and ten other pornography actresses were arrested in Las Vegas; Hartley was charged with “Infamous Crimes Against Nature” (N. Hartley, personal correspondence, April 9, 2017). The arrests occurred at an annual fundraiser show for the Free Speech Coalition. Police raided the show after the pornography stars “began performing sex acts with each other and with audience members” (Porn Star Hartley Arrested, 1993).

At the introduction of this conclusion chapter I position Hartley’s 1993 arrest for sexual misconduct—a kind of pornography—alongside Diderot’s 1748 arrest for pornographic literature—a kind of sexual misconduct—to connect their careers across time, across continents, and across state apparatuses regulating sexuality. I am not endorsing pornography fans engaging in sexual acts in a public venue. The intent of this connection is to recognize that Diderot’s literature was perhaps as scandalous in 1748 as Hartley’s live sex performance in 1993. More significantly for this research, both Diderot’s literature and Hartley’s pornography can be understood as making sex speak. For both Diderot and Hartley,

48 This Nevada crime, which no longer exists, was clarified to Hartley as ‘Felony Lesbianism.’
49 ‘Pornography’ in that porn stars had sex with each other and with some attendees.
their arrests were brief and legally inconsequential, the outcome of the state exercising its obligatory response to public awareness of a salacious issue.

As I articulate in the opening pages of the Introduction, Foucault (1978) makes a brief reference to Diderot’s *The Indiscreet Jewels*, in *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*. Foucault asks what device the West will “invent” to release the discretion of sex and bid it speak, similar to Mangogul’s ring (p. 77). Williams’ (1989) answer to Foucault is that in “this quest for the magic that will make sex speak, the most recent magic has surely been that of motion pictures:” explicit sexual representations (p. 2). This research concurs with Williams’ suggestion that, similar to Mangogul’s magical ring, video pornography spectatorship can summon sex to speak. However, my response to Williams and, by extension, Foucault, is that, the speaking of sex is not only the pornographic text itself; rather, the speaking of sex can be understood as the pornography viewer’s response subsequent to viewing pornography. And this dissertation’s attention to video pornography and the Hartley fan letters is itself the speaking of sex. The speaking of sex recalls the obscenity / onscenity and public / private binaries discussed in the Introduction of this dissertation. Pornography, adjudicated as obscene, can be viewed / consumed in the public adult theatre or in the private, domestic sphere. And there are demarcations on the location and recipient for speaking sex: the un/speakable discourse of sex described by Delany (1999a) changes with the context of the addressee. Similarly, my reading of, and discussing excerpts from, the Hartley fan letters in this dissertation changes the context of speaking sex from both the obscenity / onscenity and public / private boundaries. The Hartley fan letters are private correspondence that I have read and, to some extent, made public through my research, and some of the Hartley letters
could be deemed obscene and, to a lesser extent than pedophile priests or political sex scandals, this dissertation shifts these obscene letters to onscene.

The argument of this research is that pornography spectatorship summons some viewers to speak sex, as articulated in the Hartley fan archive letters. However, unlike Mangogul’s ring commanding a direct response from a woman’s jewels, pornography only summons interest from some viewers to speak sex, to articulate what they have learned or considered through pornography spectatorship: their sexual curiosities, desires, and fantasies. While some of the Hartley fan letters can be interpreted as shallow or meaningless, there are confessions, questions, and attempts at a connection to Hartley that speaks sex in a way that pornography does not.

Indiscreet Jewels is similar to video pornography in that it is a fable, a fictional story involving characters who do not actually exist. Yet, while Diderot categorized the work as fiction, it was clear to those attentive to the personal lives of the French monarchy that the work was a satirical fable that described the sexual liaisons and secret relationships of Louis XV, his mistress, and the ladies of his court (Diderot, 1993, pp. 9–11). That is, the fictional characters listed in Diderot’s fable represent real people in 1748 France, and, conversely, the actors in hardcore pornography perform fictional characters but are real people outside the film studio (Kipnis, 1996). In both contexts the characters are fictional, the people and the representations of sex are real. And, importantly, both the writing of Diderot in 1748 and Nina Hartley’s pornography in the late twentieth century give some voice to women’s sexuality (Diderot, 1993, p. ix; Hartley, 2013).
In the following sections I highlight what I regard as the significance of this research project. There are three components in this section: epistolarity, videotape technology, and sex education.

Epistolarity, Research, & Connections

Hartley’s fan mail has allowed me to examine the specific positionality and reflexivity of the pornography fan letter-writer through a cultural analysis of the private letter made public. Altman’s (1982) work on epistolarity makes a claim about the effect of personal correspondence that is important to consider when revealing Hartley’s mail to the public: “As a tangible document, even when intended for a single addressee, the letter is always subject to circulation among a larger group of readers. It passes freely from the private to the public domain and even back again” (p. 109). The letters, art, and ephemera of the Hartley archive are representative of the significance of fans and their connectivity to the performer’s life. This connection has, to some extent, passed from the private to the public. Hartley’s reading, accumulation, and retention of her fan correspondence is not a financial, legal, or even personal obligation, but a voluntary act. The Hartley fan archive is representative of mutuality: the fan seeking connection to the celebrity, and reciprocally, the importance of fan mail to the celebrity. This correspondence is generated largely through fans’ home pornography spectatorship using VCR technology.

I cite epistolary theorists here to make the point that, like Stanford's "Mapping the Republic of Letters" (Open source opens eyes, 2016) project, mentioned in the Introduction,
personal correspondence is sometimes opened to the world. Academic engagement with the letters in this research reveals articulations of the desires, emotions, fantasies, and sexual education of the authors. I recognize the potential concern regarding the ethics of disclosing personal mail. And, while I have kept the letter-writers anonymous, I am, to some extent, circulating personal correspondence to a larger group of readers. While undertaking academic work based on Hartley's fan archive, I do have concerns regarding the ethics of making the contents of these letters public.

The Hartley fan archive, representing the fan’s desire for connection to the pornography star, extends to penmanship and the fact that most of the letters in the Hartley archive are handwritten. Fans in the early days of the Nina Hartley Fan Club did not have access to electronic mail. However, as I describe in Chapter 2, in the contemporary technological context of portable, digital, telecommunication devices there are epistolary theorists who regard the choice of penmanship and letter writing as an indication of the importance of the correspondence (Almond & Baggott, 2006). For the most part we no longer depend on post mail for our everyday communication; postal correspondence is saved for extraordinary messages: notes, letters, or cards of thanks or condolence, “expressions of feeling” (Gilroy & Verhoeven, 2000, p. 143). The directness of personal letters has been described as “the intimacy of heart and mind speaking to heart and mind across distance and across time” (Kenyon, 1992, p. viii). Letters of intimate correspondence can be understood to reveal the most private thoughts of the writer’s subjectivity (Bray, 2003; Siegert, 1999). And the somatic connection between “letter writing with the physical body,” and with sexuality

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50 There are also a small number of Hartley fan letters forwarded to her from various businesses. For example, a nightclub where she had recently performed, or a men's adult magazine containing a recent interview with
specifically, has been taken up by epistolary scholars (Bower, 1997, p. 57). In this analysis, the writer can be understood by the reader as an individual physically and emotionally engaged in the writing process (Foucault, 1997, pp. 207–221): the writer holds a pen and connects the pen to physical paper. This somatic connection to writing is distinct from electronic, digital communications, or even typewriters where the keys are mechanically directed at the paper.

The development of the video pornography industry is connected to the desire of many individuals to view sexually explicit material of assorted sexualities and genres. The Nina Hartley fan archive provides a generous sample of fans desiring a closer connection to her. The letters and ephemera represent a diversity of demographics, ideas, and desires. Contemporary ethnographic work on pornography spectatorship describes viewers as representative of the average adult citizen, yet these spectators have diverse sexual desires (Loftus, 2002; McKee, Albury, & Lumby, 2008; O’Toole, 1998). Sexuality theorists have upset the outdated stereotype of pornography consumers as ‘dirty, old men,’ reconceptualizing the spectatorship demographic as not being represented by specific, stratified categorizations. Having said that, as I mention in describing the demographics of the Hartley archive, a large percentage of letters are from self-identified heterosexual male writers.

The fan letters cover a broad spectrum of interest. Perhaps the most important theme the letters articulate is the pleasure pornography provides as sexual fantasy: scenarios that offer solutions to ‘the problem of sex’ (Williams, 1989). The themes in the Hartley letters range from gratitude and adoration to sexual confession and requests for sexual advice.

Hartley; these letters were not addressed to her fan club address.
Perhaps unsurprisingly, there are a significant percentage of letters from men incarcerated in prison, or serving in the military, experiencing some level of sexual isolation. Men serving prison sentences likely had no access to watching pornography; my assumption in reading their letters is that they were aware of her pornography work prior to incarceration. I should add that some of the best art sent to Hartley, and most detailed sexual fantasies came from prisoners. This is perhaps due to their ability to dedicate time to these personal projects. There are also a sizable number of letters from fans familiar with and lauding her anti-censorship activism. As discussed above, another dominant theme involves letters of fictional sexual scenarios written by men. Most often these are personal fantasies involving Hartley; some are requests for Hartley to perform a desired scenario in a future video.

An underlying theme in the letters is recognition of Hartley as an expert on sexuality issues, expanding her attractiveness to those pursuing sexual education and exploration (McKee, Albury, & Lumby, 2008, p. 106). The fan’s recognition of Hartley’s knowledge of and expertise on a generous range of sexual topics, and the request for her to share this knowledge and expertise is prevalent in the archive letters. Part of this is due to her sex education video work, discussed in Chapter 5, and partly because of the breadth of her video pornography performances: heterosexual, lesbian, S/m, for example, as discussed in Chapter 4.

The VCR and Videotape Pornography

In Melendez’s (2004) chapter on video pornography and sexual pleasure, he describes his objective as rethinking pornography spectatorship by “addressing pornography as a genre
whose pleasures are predicated as much on technological reproduction as on the sexual spectacle made visible” (p. 402). Melendez locates his research at “the complex intersection of visuality, sexuality, commodity, and technology” (p. 402). Similarly, my doctoral research attends to academic work on spectatorship, sexualities, and how advances in technologies have influenced pornography spectatorship.

My dissertation highlights the largely overlooked significance of the videotape era of pornography. In response to the first research question regarding how the videocassette recorder and video technology changed viewers’ engagement with pornography, VCR technology and the possibility for private video viewing represents a major shift in pornography spectatorship (O’Toole, 1999, p. 103). The VCR and pre-recorded videocassettes were the first (widely available) media technology opportunity to move film pornography spectatorship out of public theatres and into the private home. As I detail in Chapter 3, there are many letters in the Hartley archive that mention watching her videos, with whom they watch her videos, and in what manner they enjoy watching her videos. These descriptions range from physical comfort to explicit sexual acts. Some letters make specific reference to VCR and videotape technology and how it relates to their spectatorship. The letters describe how VCR technology permitted pornography spectatorship to be a largely private activity (Loftus, 2002; McNair, 1996; O’Toole, 1998). Many of the Hartley letters articulate how the VCR not only expanded access to pornography, and the variety of pornography genres, but how it also provided the personal comfort and ease commensurate with private viewing. The accessibility and comfort of private pornography spectatorship via VCR technology, the viewer’s ability to control film viewing (pause, slow-motion, rewind,
fast-forward), and the proliferation of video pornography production (Greenberg, 2008; 
Jennings, 2000), contributed to video pornography constituting a kind of adult sex education. 

Nina Hartley’s first pornographic movie was released in 1984. The historiography of 
pornography in the 1980s is characterized by the technological transformation from film 
cinema houses to portable, accessible, private video viewing (O’Toole, 1998, p. 104). The 
early 1980s represent a technological period that witnessed the introduction and rapid growth 
of home movie entertainment via VCR technology and videotape movies (Greenberg, 2008, 
p. 72; Kleinhans, 2006, p. 157). VCR technology preceded personal computers and Internet 
technology by approximately a decade. This research has examined how VCR technology 
changed viewers’ access to and engagement with pornography, viewing pornographic 
representations of sexualities in private, alone or with others. And as described above, 
viewing pornography at home provided a safe viewing space for women who were a growing 
demographic in pornography spectatorship (Juffer, 1998; O’Toole, 1998, p. 104; Williams, 

The expanded pornography audience, facilitated via the VCR, were able to enjoy 
pornography and concomitantly receive a kind of sexual education by viewing, considering, 
and questioning, varied sexual practices, sexual relationships, sex toys, bodies, and sexual 
scenarios. Moreover, pornographic videotapes could be watched anytime, pausing or 
rewinding to view particular scenarios, at their leisure, repeatedly, to re/view sexually 
explicit scenarios of interest for entertainment and analysis (Hoang, 2014b; Williams, 1989, 
p. 231). And, unlike theatre movies, privately owned videos could be borrowed, traded, or 
sold.
VCR technology permitted viewing hard-core pornography in private. Adult theatres represent a venue many would-be pornography viewers were unable or unwilling to navigate: unable, in that some would-be viewers could not access an adult theatre due to geographic location, regional legislations, physical mobility issues, or financial limitations, and unwilling, in that some felt embarrassment, “shyness,” “shame,” or some form of “uneasiness” (Koch, 1993, p. 25) entering the shared space of an adult theatre.

In summary, while the public cinema offers a shared space for social gatherings and a sense of inclusion (Hansen, 2002; Stacey, 2002), viewing videos at home, while not public, does not negate the concept of social gathering. Video pornography permitted the opportunity for couples or groups to view pornography in the private, domestic realm; people could choose to watch a pornographic video for entertainment rather than other film genres—comedy, western, or horror—for example. And, as discussed in this dissertation, couples could watch pornography as an explicit precursor to sex, without the annoyance and logistics of leaving a public theatre (Greenberg, 2008, p. 95). That is, whereas the public cinema, with its darkened space and sometimes romantic film text, became a popular destination for dating, and a relationship cue for possible intimacy to follow (Stacey, 2002), the potential lubriciousness of pornography at home precludes the necessity to leave the theatre.

Pornography as Adult Sex Education, Reprise

There has been what can be described as a guarded and perhaps reluctant response of educators to the inclusion of pornography as sex education (Attwood et al., 2015; Burton,
2012; Ingham, 2005; McKee, 2010). However, the potential inclusion of ‘porn literacy’ in secondary school curriculum is in part because of increased access to pornography by youth via digital media technologies (Bengry-Howell, 2012; Limmer, 2012; Stapleton, 2012). Current media technologies have definitely increased the distribution speed, convenience, and affordability of pornography. Yet, as I have written above, my research contends that the VCR era be recognized as the inauguration of pornography as a home entertainment genre.

This research contributes to the discourse of sex education generally and, more specifically, to the inclusion of pornography as adult sex education. Pornography can provide a discourse of sexual pedagogy, but one that has been largely overlooked. I have argued in this research that pornography spectatorship is an opportunity for adult sex education through an observation of fantasy and pleasures (Patton, 1996, p. 142). Secondary school sex education curricula have been largely attentive to procreative sex and STI’s. Yet they are usually bereft of practical information on sexual practices and sexual pleasure (Ingham, 2005). The pornography spectator can acquire sex education through the observation of other bodies and, perhaps, sexual practices the viewer was not previously familiar with. These observations, and subsequent considerations and questions, might pertain to sexual acts regarded as prohibited pleasures, or perhaps unfamiliar sexual practices and relationships that are depicted in pornography.

The second research question asks if the spectator’s engagement with pornography can be understood as a form of sex education. Broadly, sex education can be acquired over the years from a variety of sources: parents, peers, media, or secondary schooling, for example (Ollis, Harrison, & Maharaj, 2013, p. 1; Tjaden, 1988, p. 210). In this
research I have discussed impediments to receiving meaningful, useful, sex education material from secondary schooling (Rasmussen, 2006) and post-secondary institutions (Rubin, 2011). This research specifically addresses what adults learn about sex from their engagement with video pornography, and suggests that video pornography can provide a practical, useful, and engaging form of sex education through its explicit depictions of human sexuality. Pornography, as a form of sex education, focuses on a diversity of sexual acts, bodies, genders, and orientations, engaging in physically pleasurable and playful sex: sex for the sake of pleasure, rather than as a purely reproductive biological function.

The significance of this research is in part attributable to its examination of existing academic work on the interpretation of pornography as a kind of sex education (Albury, 2014; Allen, 2006; Cassar, 2016; Ingham, 2005; McNair, 2009b; Ollis, 2015). Pornography, as a media genre, makes available representations of an array of gender identifications, body types, ethnicities, sexual orientations, sexual practices, and sex toys. A contribution of this research is its attention to letters from pornography fans describing what can be interpreted as acquiring a kind of adult sex education through pornography spectatorship. These letters, like utterances summoned from Mangogul’s ring, disclose what pornography spectators have learned, questioned, or considered from viewing explicit representations of sexuality. Similar to Doyle (2006, p. xi) and her sisters viewing explicit representations of sexuality in catalogues for pornographic videos Hartley’s fans view an array of explicit sexual images, some of which would be new to the spectator.

My attention to epistolarity in Chapter 2 includes references to Foucault’s (1997) work “Self-Writing” and his study of Seneca. Foucault cites Seneca in describing the
connection between what one has learned and writing. The specific contribution of this dissertation is my examination of the spectatorship-epistolary trajectory articulated in the Hartley fan letters. These letters describe the pornography spectators’ viewing of Hartley’s pornography and their subsequent consideration, questions, thoughts, and education from what they have viewed. Importantly, I think, some of the letters include revelations about the spectators’ own bodies and social categorizations: age, class, dis/ability, education, ethnicity, gender identification, ‘race,’ or sexual orientation, for example. The spectatorship-epistolary trajectory articulates a kind of sexual education. In Chapter 4 I examines examined a selection of letters from Hartley’s fan archive pertaining to the pornography fans’ engagement with and, in some letters, consideration of, kinds of adult sex education garnered from Hartley’s videos. These letters can be understood as the pornography spectator directly addressing the pornography star to articulate the specific kinds of adult sex education they have acquired, or questions that are lingering. A second contribution to the question regarding pornography as sex education in this research is my attention to Nina Hartley’s publications (Hartley, 1999; 2006; 2013) and, more importantly, sex education videos (Greene, 2004a; 2006a; 2006b; 2016). As I discuss in Chapter 5, Hartley’s sex instruction videos are important in that, as the instructor, she is both a pornography star and, as a nurse, a sexual health educator. In recognition of Hartley’s qualifications as a sex educator, Chapter 5 includes a selection of fan letters touting her professionalism in this role. Hartley’s sex education / instructional videos are pornographic productions that can be accessed by adults, free from familial, religious, educational, or institutional influences or restrictions. This pornographic ‘academic freedom,’ while indulging sexual fantasy, lies outside the gossip,
rumours, or misinformation that sometimes become associated with developing one’s ‘sex education.’

This dissertation contributes to academic work that recognizes pornography as “pedagogically useful” (Albury, 2009, p. 650). Pornography can be understood as a kind of adult sex education in that it removes normative boundaries of sexuality (Michelson, 1993) thereby increasing the spectators’ “capacity to reimagine the world and the sexual quotient it contains” (Kipnis, 2005). This reimagining of possibilities for sexual practices is articulated in Albury’s (2009, p. 649) suggestion that we reject a demarcation between ‘good sex’ and ‘bad sex,’ or a kind of hierarchy of sexual practices or identifications.

I close this section with its focus on the significance of this research project regarding video pornography as adult sex education by citing Nina Hartley on the subject. Hartley’s sexual expertise has been produced and distributed for more than two decades through her sex instruction and education videos, some of which are mentioned in her letters. In her chapter on pornography as sexual role-modelling, she writes that sexual performance “never gets old because the varieties of sexual desire and expression are infinite and never take the same form twice” (Hartley, 2013, p. 231). Hartley states her objective in role-modeling “effective sexual techniques” is so the performance can be useful for viewers in trying out different sexual acts with their partners (p. 232).

In the next sections I suggest two potential research projects that could build on this research. I have titled the first research project ‘The Porn Archive’; the second addresses an interpretation of the Hartley archive letters as a kind of sexual confession.
Future Research: The Porn Archive

The Hartley fan archive includes letters, promotional posters, fan photographs, original artwork, and assorted ephemera. The letters, artwork, and ephemera sent to Hartley by fans are diverse and intriguing, sufficiently so that during my archival research the Center for Sex and Culture (CSC) curated a selection of Hartley’s letters that were on exhibit from February 1 to March 20, 2013. The Hartley exhibit at the CSC saw the transformation of a personal correspondence collection into a non-public archive, and then into a public exhibit: the private made public. This dissertation involves the excavation of an archive. An archive is often regarded as a concealed, static, unresponsive collection of artifacts (Dean, 2014a; Steedman, 2001). However, the objective of this dissertation is to reveal the correspondence and artwork of Nina Hartley’s fan mail archive. These letters and tributes, including original artwork, represent the voice of the pornography viewer. Because they are personal correspondence, this material has not been previously published and is not publicly available.

It is possible that there are other fan mail collections belonging to particular pornography stars. The seemingly obvious recommendation coming from this dissertation is to research another pornography star’s fan archive. However, it is questionable if one might exist, and how to go about finding one; I was fortunate to unintentionally discover the Hartley fan archive. It would, of course, be interesting to compare another pornography star’s fan archive to my research on Nina Hartley. Would the second study garner findings similar to mine in terms of spectator demographics, letters detailing sexual fantasies, revelations and inquiries concerning sex education, adoration and gratitude, and artwork? Such research might reveal substantial differences between the two archives if the second pornography star
were physically / demographically different from Hartley: male, gay male, differently abled, a person of colour, or a woman of colour, for example. Presumably, much of the fan mail content and research findings would be different corresponding to another pornography star’s demographic identification.

In terms of researching pornography archives it is easier to locate pornographic videos. Pornography studies has become somewhat established as an area of academic attention in the past couple decades through a growing number of dedicated academic texts, a small number of anthologies with chapters on a variety of specific pornography subjects, and the lone academic journal, appropriately titled Porn Studies. Yet there is no dedicated porn studies program or centre for porn studies (Williams, 2014). As Williams (2014) observes, specific to pornography studies, there is an “absence of scholarly societies, academic conferences, and archives” (p. 35). In part, my research seeks to highlight the latter absentee: the porn archive. I suggest that other collections of pornographic material, public or private, are fertile ground for future academic research.

How can we make sense of ‘porn archives’? The concept and study of the “porn archive” is a recent field of study (Dean, Ruszczycky, and Squires, 2014). One of the few (published) scholarly engagements with a pornography archive is Strub’s (2015) recent examination of the Gay Male Pornographic Video Collection, 1978–1992, at Cornell University’s Human Sexuality Collection in the Division of Rare and Manuscripts Collections. As Strub (2015) observes, the particular set of gay male videos he researched had “fallen through the scholarly cracks” (p. 129). His research focused on the previous owner’s thorough and detailed indexing of the videos, rather than the content of the videos.
themselves. Strub recognizes that it is only through academic work on pornography by scholars such as Linda Williams (1989) and Thomas Waugh (1996) that has “resulted in a resurgent interest in the archiving and preserving of smut” (p. 129). Yet, contemporary work on sexuality archives recognizes “critiques of the archive as an institution of power and attentive to experiences and ephemeralities that can escape it” (Cvetkovich, 2015, p. xv). The opening sentence of Dean’s (2014a) Introduction to the anthology Porn Archives recognizes the contradiction in the term, observing how “pornography evokes an ostensibly private experience, while the archive conjures publicly accessible records” (p. 1). The descriptive opposition continues in that pornography, as described above, is a private or discrete, liminal, and unofficial film genre while an archive is public, often honorific, and official. As Dean (2014a) summarizes, “If porn is juicy, then the archive is dry as dust.” (p. 1). Moreover, pornography is usually not regarded with respect and dignity, so the placement of pornography into an archive can seem contradictory, and the archive’s potential as an institution lies in its power to preserve or erase the past (p. 3).

With regard to the idea of ‘erasing’ the past, Chapter 3 of this dissertation references Hoang’s (2014b, p. 70) attention to the issue of the degeneration of aging videotape pornography. Historic pornographic films and videos, including those of Nina Hartley, could be lost forever. Opposing obsolescence, in the Introduction I mention recent, rapid advances in portable, wireless, digital technologies that have greatly increased accessibility to and awareness of pornography as a sexually explicit film genre. In the era of readily accessible, digital pornography, then, the preservation and research of pre-digital pornography artifacts should be considered. As Linda Williams (2014) summarizes, “The lack of preservation of
the pornographic heritage is appalling, and we cannot count on the hit-or-miss salvages of the Internet to do the job” (p. 35).

Hoang (2014b, p. 70) points out that video pornography can be sustained and preserved by dubbing the movie onto a new videotape or transferred into a digital format. Similarly, sustaining and preserving are characteristics of the archive. The academic work of Foucault (1978), Kendrick (1987), Hunt (1993), Preciado (2009), Hoang (2014b), and Dean (2014b) articulate how pornography is an outcome of modernity. Kendrick’s (1987) work particularly elucidates the creation of ‘pornography’ as a particular category of objects and images concurrent with the movement of particular archaeological items into an archive. Thus, rather than opposing concepts, “pornography and the archive come into being together as functions of modernity” (Dean, 2014b, p. 1).

This research coincides with recent academic attention to the intersection of sexuality and archive materials. A recent anthology on sexuality and archives, *Out of the Closet, Into the Archives: Researching Sexual Histories* (Stone & Cantrell, 2015), examines is focused on the interpretation of queer sexualities in archival documents, manuscripts, and ephemera. In their Introduction, editors Stone and Cantrell (2015, p. 2) describe feeling “dislocation” while searching for representations of queer sexuality in an archive located in San Antonio, Texas. A San Antonio gay bar, however, housed a small community archive in the back room known as the “Happy Foundation” (p. 2). That community archive is an example of an ‘appropriate’ archive, one containing sexual documents, publications, recordings, personal papers, and ephemera. In the case of Stone and Cantrell the appropriate sexual materials related to the LGTBQ community.
Moving from a community-based archive to academic institutions, Cvetkovich (2015) notes the significance of contemporary sexuality archives that include the community-based “Lesbian Herstory Archives in New York” and the “GLBT Historical Society in San Francisco,” and university archives such as “Cornell’s Human Sexuality Collection, Duke’s Sallie Bingham Center, and the newly established Transgender Archive at the University of Victoria” (p. xvi). I would add to the academic list, particularly with regard to pornography, the Sexual Representation Collection in the Mark S. Bonham Centre at the University of Toronto. It is important in thinking about the concept of ‘porn archives’ to recognize these institutional spaces dedicated to preservation. An example of a “strategic placement” of archives (with the intention to “disrupt business as usual”) is the Jane Rule collection at the University of British Columbia (Cvetkovich, 2015, p. xvi).

In the case of research similar to this dissertation it is difficult to locate an archive holding a substantial amount of pornographic material, never mind a pornography star’s fan archive. Similar to the description in Out of the Closet, Into the Archives, the Center for Sex and Culture is a non-profit, volunteer-run organization that houses a cramped, dusty, diverse, partially unorganized, sexuality archive. As I ‘discovered’ at the CSC, and Stone and Cantrell ‘found’ in the back room of a bar in San Antonio, there are undiscovered, or underutilized archives, private or public, waiting to be researched. I recognize that we cannot archive everything, and, frankly, hundreds or thousands of videocassettes take up physical space. And, as mentioned, videos degenerate. Perhaps ironically, in my dissertation’s attention to video pornography as a significant precursor to digital technology, the recording, cataloguing, and storage of digital copies of video pornography will save these historic
sexual artifacts. As I discuss above, in Chapter 3 particularly, the video era of pornography lies midstream between photographs, ‘stag’ films, and adult theatres, and modern digital and Internet pornography technologies. As pornography filmed in a particular social, cultural, and political epoch, these pornography videos provide historical information pertaining to sexuality in that time.

I hope that my dissertation motivates research on sexuality archives, and pornography specifically. The problem, of course, as articulated here, is finding the largely unknown or overlooked archives. Some of these ‘archive’ opportunities may be piles of dusty boxes in a personal garage or storage unit. What we lose from these undiscovered or overlooked pornography archives are, as Hoang (2014b) and Williams (2014) articulate, the degeneration and eventual disposal of historic, explicit, sexual representations that are irreplaceable. This is an unsatisfactory assessment and perhaps a daunting, pessimistic statement for persons wanting to conduct research on pornography archives. There are, however, institutional sexuality archives and universities such as Cornell University and University of Toronto that offer research opportunities under the heading of ‘porn archives.’

**Future Research: Nina Hartley’s Fan Archive as Sexual Confession**

In my dissertation research I have read and examined hundreds of fan letters from the Hartley archive. I have described these letters as the authors ‘speaking sex.’ And I have attended to the fan’s desire to feel close to Hartley, and the connection between the author’s physical body and the writing of letters. However, the research questions pertain to the significance of VCR technology and pornography spectatorship, and the spectators’ subsequent engagement
with pornography as a form of sex education. Because of this focus I have not analyzed the hermeneutics of the authors’ letters in detail. I have used the term ‘confession’ several times without expanding on the concept of confession, or its specific connection to the Hartley letters, as it lies outside the scope of this research. With regard to further research emerging from the current project, I suggest some of the Hartley letters, or a similar archive, could be examined as constituting sexual confession. The idea of Hartley reading / hearing sexual confession can be interpreted as her transformation from pornography star to an authority qualified to receive sexual confession. I do not suggest ‘authority’ in a religious, legal, or political context; rather, it is her position as a pornography star and sexual expert. Such an analysis is of interest because it would suggest an elevation of Hartley’s position to some pornography fans as not just an adult performer but someone they trust with their sexual confessions: curiosities, fantasies, or practices, as they do in the letters discussed above.

This dissertation has described Hartley’s qualifications and experience to be categorized as a sex educator. And, as discussed in Chapter 5, Hartley has a relationship with fans as a sex educator. Unlike disclosures from authors regarding acquiring sex education from pornography spectatorship there are Hartley letters containing disclosures of the fans’ sexual desires or practices that can be understood as sexual confession. Examples of sexual confession in this dissertation include the man who describes his transvestism and having sex with other men, sometimes mimicking scenarios from pornography videos. The man seeking pegging (anal penetration) from his wife reveals to Hartley that he has an anal sex toy inserted while writing his letter is another example. Some less salacious examples come from two separate men who admit that they first viewed pornography while in their mid-teen
The Hartley letters are personal letters, but do not constitute true correspondence in that they are one-way communication: letters from a writer, unanswered by the addressee. These archival letters of confessions, desires, and curiosities provide an interesting example of what Foucault (1978, p. 61) called the “transformation of sex into discourse,” and as such they give voice to the “unspeakable” (Delany, 1999a) – the author's shared, secret sexual desires. The Hartley fan letters lie between a Foucaultian understanding of “the exigent nature of confession as a discipline” (Cryle, 2001, p. 127) and the idea of a letter as unsolicited correspondence that is sent from an autonomous author. In most cases the Hartley authors have not had personal contact with the addressee; no prior relationship exists beyond spectatorship. That is, unlike Mangogul’s ability to summon a detailed narrative from the unwitting confessor Hartley has no direct influence on the author’s content.

Reading these letters through the lens of confessionality analyzes the relationship between the pornography fan and the pornography star in the context of disclosing personal, perhaps secret, sexual information. Reading the Hartley letters as sexual confession would require both an examination of Hartley’s suitability to hear / read the spectators’ confession, and the relationship status between the spectator as confessor and Hartley as confessant. As I mention above, as a porn star, sex educator, and nurse, I suggest Hartley can be regarded as a sex expert. And as “sex becomes more and more an object of expertise,” in a Foucaultian context, the techniques of sexualities are received within the power relation of confessor and confessant (Taylor, 2005, p. 57). The confidential correspondence between confessor and confessant permits the author to disclose circumspect questions of interpretation and
knowledge of one’s sexual identity, practices, and desires. In “The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom,” Foucault (1994a) states on the topic of sexuality that, “it is obvious that it is by liberating our desire that we will learn to conduct ourselves ethically in pleasure relationships with others” (p. 27). I do not suggest that consuming pornography is a liberatory practice. However, the fan letters in this research speak to the liberation of desire, specifically sexual desire, and the idea that the consumption of pornography can be a conduit to sexual confession.

What are the restraints on confession? Can confession always be interpreted as speaking truth? Who is permitted to hear confession? And how would a written confession differ from a personal interaction? Foster (1987) describes confession as an act that usually “involves a narrator disclosing a secret knowledge to another; as a speaker to a listener, writer to reader, confessor to confessor” (p. 2). If we accept this traditional understanding of confession then it is ambitious to suggest fan letters sent to Hartley as constituting confession. However, if we return to Seneca’s work on the significance of writing then perhaps we can develop an expanded understanding of confession, one inclusive of the confessor’s written word. Foster (1987) defines a “full confession” as an act that “would presumably require that a private knowledge be revealed in a way that would allow another to understand, judge, forgive, and perhaps even sympathize” (Foster, 1987, p. 2).

Conclusion

For persons interested in a career in pornography or other kinds of public sex performance in the mid-1980s, the level of anti-pornography social conservatism (de Grazia, 1993; Hixson,
1996; Strub, 2013), censorship, and misinformation regarding the transmission and treatment of HIV/AIDS (Crimp, 1988; Patton, 1985; 1996; Watney, 1997) may have been daunting. Hartley (2013), however, regards her entry into pornography as “a particularly opportune time” (p. 229). Though Comella (2010) describes Hartley as a “trailblazer,” Nina Hartley (2013) states that it never was her “goal” to be “a trailblazer” (p. 228). Rather, she sought to carry out her “true life’s work: to speak about sex, sexuality, and sexual expression from a place of practice and not just theory” so that she could help others (p. 228). The possibility of delivering helpful, knowledgeable, adult sex education in 1984 was precarious timing.

Nina Hartley has described, on many occasions, her enthusiastic pursuit of hardcore pornography as a career. The status of pornography continues to be contentious and conflicted. Contentious, in that pornography is examined and discussed as a film entertainment genre, cultural media, and as adult sexual education material, while simultaneously criticized, censured, and condemned by some. Conflicted, as described by Jennings (2000) in the introduction of his autobiographical work, Skinflicks: Police raided an Oakland, California film set being directed by legendary porn actor and director, Paul Thomas; they arrested some persons and seized videos while simultaneously obtaining autographs from some of their favourite porn stars (p. xi). And while recent political legislation (Domonoske, 2016) and anti-pornography academic work (Dines, 2010) has categorized pornography as a “public health” issue, this research accesses Hartley’s fan mail archive and sexual education work to identify sexual health information acquired via pornographic video texts: pornography as public health.
Notwithstanding the contentious status of pornography, it remains a film and digital entertainment genre that offers a kind of adult fairy tales: fantastical, sexual stories. “Pornography gives us a glimpse of a world in which the erotic erupts into everyday life, in which people break out of family, work, school...” (Tucker, 1990, p. 268). Sexuality and cultural theorists have described the sexual fantasy of pornography using terms such as pornotopia, pornocopia, or sexual utopia (Kendrick, 1987, p. 76; Marcus, 1965, p. 266; O’Toole, 1999; Williams, 1989, p. 147). Sexuality theorists state pornography can be understood as an adult fairy tale, “a fictional, fantastical, even allegorical realm” (Kipnis, 1996, p. 163). There are familiar political notions of utopia: Plato’s Republic, Thoreau’s Walden, or Emma Goldman’s anarchic self-governance, for example. As Jose Munoz (2009) observes, there is “nothing new or radical about utopia;” however, this need not deter us from considerations of sexualities that might offer hope (pp. 10–11). The writers of Hartley’s fan letters perhaps allow a glimpse as to what sexual utopia would look like for them. These epistolary glimpses into Nina Hartley’s fan mail, generated through video pornography spectatorship, are, like Diderot’s Indiscreet Jewels, the “speaking of sex.”


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