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ABSTRACT

This article traces the recent history of porn studies as a field, focusing on key developments between 1984 and 2014, on a range of initiatives by academics to establish the study of pornography through collaborative efforts, on the launch of the *Porn Studies* journal in 2014, on 10 years of publication in *Porn Studies*, on priorities for the journal and the field, and on the future of porn studies.

Introduction

The foundational history of porn studies has been recounted many times and in various forms, but its retelling remains crucial as we reflect on the 10th anniversary of *Porn Studies*; it is in such repetitions that we find the framework for understanding this journal's origins and its ongoing mission. Returning to this history reminds us that *Porn Studies* emerged from a field that was – and continues to be – dynamic, multifaceted, and ever-developing. As we look back, we can also look forward to more fully appreciate how the field has transformed and how *Porn Studies* has been instrumental in expanding and diversifying critical inquiries and research into pornography over the last decade.

Porn Studies: early years

The 1980s marked the beginning of serious academic engagement with pornography, driven by groundbreaking feminist and film theory. Carol Vance's (1984) seminal collection, *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, emerged from discussions at the feminist Barnard Conference, sparking important debates around female sexuality, power, and pleasure. Meanwhile, Walter Kendrick's (1987) *The Secret Museum* traced the history of porn discourse and regulation, providing a cultural and historical perspective. In the same era, Tom Waugh's pioneering research on gay pornography (for example, Waugh 1985) began to carve out space for LGBTQ+ studies within pornography and Chuck Kleinhans played an important role in creating space for academic discussion of porn, for example in his special section on sexual representation in *Jump Cut* (see Kleinhans 1987). But the most influential text to shape the field was Linda Williams' ([1989] 1999) *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the 'Frenzy of the Visible'*. Williams' work,

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examining the aesthetics and politics of pornography, remains a cornerstone in the field. Her second edition in 1999 reflected on the growing body of research and identified pornography studies as an emergent academic discipline.

By the early 1990s, scholars began building on these early works, expanding the scope of porn studies to include more diverse perspectives. Collections such as Church Gibson and Gibson's (1992) *Dirty Looks: Women, Pornography, Power* and Segal and Macintosh's (1992) *Sex Exposed: Sexuality and the Pornography Debate* brought a critical feminist lens to the examination of pornographic texts. Richard Dyer also contributed significantly to the field during this period, writing extensively on representations of gay pornography (for example, Dyer 1992) and Tom Waugh (1996) continued his influential work in this area with *Hard to Imagine*. Laura Kipnis' (1996) *Bound and Gagged: Pornography and the Politics of Fantasy in America* and Constance Penley's (1997) *NASA/TREK: Popular Science and Sex in America* explored the intersections between porn, politics, and popular culture. Brian McNair (1996), in *Mediated Sex*, considered the connections between pornography and other sexual texts, mapping out the evolving media landscape of sexuality. As the decade came to a close, Jane Juffer's (1998) *At Home with Pornography* provided a key analysis of how porn is gendered and how technological advancements were making pornography more accessible to women. Studies on porn audiences also began to emerge, such as Simon Hardy's (1998) work on readers of UK top shelf magazines. These texts collectively broadened the conversations around porn, challenging earlier moralistic perspectives and offering new frameworks for understanding the role of sexually explicit media in culture and society. The late 1990s and early 2000s also saw contextual studies that linked pornography to broader media and exploitation cinema, such as Eric Schaeffer's (1999) *Bold! Daring! Shocking! True!*, which offered an analysis of exploitation films. Lisa Sigel's (2001) collection, *Governing Pleasures*, examined the history of pornography regulation in England, while Joseph W. Slade's (2001) *Pornography and Sexual Representation: A Reference Guide* solidified the growing legitimacy of porn studies by providing a comprehensive guide to the field.

We had both begun to publish in the area in 2002 (Attwood 2002a, 2002b; Smith 2002, 2003), working from a background in British Cultural Studies by way of the Humanities and Women's Studies, and were surprised by what still felt like a lack of engagement with porn in these areas, as there clearly were with other presentations of sex and gender in popular media. By the end of that decade, Brian McNair's (2002) *Striptease Culture* and Peter Lehman's (2006) *Pornography: Film and Culture* had appeared, and there was more work on porn and new media – Dennis Waskul's (2004) collection on sex, porn and the internet was out and Katrien Jacobs (2007; Jacobs, Janssen, and Pasquinelli, 2007) was publishing work on 'netporn'. In 2007 there was a special issue of the journal *Velvet Light Trap* on porn and the first monograph on women as consumers of pornography (Smith 2007). Alan McKee, Catharine Lumby, and Kath Albury published *The Porn Report* in 2008 (McKee, Lumby, and Albury 2008; Attwood 2010). Two collections exploring issues around 'pornification' and sexualization (Paasonen, Nikunen, and Saarenmaa 2007; Attwood 2009) were followed by Susanna Paasonen's (2011) groundbreaking monograph on porn and affect, and Katrien Jacobs' (2012) work on porn and China. Two other significant collections were Claire Hines and Darren Kerr's (2012) *Hard to Swallow: Hard-core Pornography on Screen* and Tristan Taormino, Constance Penley, Celine Parreñas Shimizu, and Mireille Miller-Young came out in 2013.

We began to discuss the possibility of a new journal as part of our activities as a research network focused on a term we took from Linda Williams' work – 'onscenity' – that we had won Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funding for in 2009. We ran a number of events between 2010 and 2012, ending with the 'Sexual Cultures' conference with the support of Julian Petley at Brunel University, UK. Our interest was driven partly by the need for a renewed focus on sex in the context of technological change and by the possibility of drawing together scholars working across a range of disciplines to think about the ways sexual practices, experiences, and identities were increasingly understood as mediated and commercialized. We were interested in discourses about 'sexualization' – the new visibility of mediated forms of sex as practice and product, service and representation, as well as the concerns these seemed to arouse about sexual norms, most commonly expressed in the assertion that forms of sexual activity or presentation that had previously been marginalized were becoming 'mainstream', that porn was increasingly 'extreme', that young people's use of media and communication technologies, their consumption of porn, and practices of 'sexting' represented new and unprecedented forms of harm. These developments seemed, to us, to offer an opening up of the study of pornography to a broader consideration of the ways that sex, technology, and the self are represented and experienced, and they also complicated the question of what porn and porn studies might be in new and interesting ways.

We were not alone in our interests. There were more books and articles all the time, and more workshops, conferences, and networks focused on these topics. Two conferences on sex and technology – 'The Art and Politics of Netporn' and 'C'Lick Me' – took place in 2005 and 2007, while the monochrom group began their 'Arselektronika' conferences in 2007 considering the important role that pornography has played in the development of new technologies from print through photography, film, video, the internet, and virtual reality (Arse Elektronica 2007). Another important development was the Porn Studies section of the MAGIS – International Film Studies Spring School held in Gorizia, Italy and curated by Giovanna Maina, Federico Zecca, and Enrico Biasin. This dedicated space – much missed by us and many other porn academics – provided a galvanizing and generative space for more than 10 years, time to think and talk and plan, often in the presence of lots of young scholars with an unexpected enthusiasm for porn studies.

In 2014, Peter Alilunas, Eric Schaefer, Elena Gorfinkel, and John Paul Stadler established the Adult Film History Scholarly Interest Group (now the Adult Film and Media Scholarly Interest Group) within the Society for Cinema and Media Studies (SCMS) in the USA. Like the journal, it drew on the 'growth of interest in, and research on, adult film within the field of film and media studies', defining adult film as 'time-based visual media with an emphasis on nudity and/or human sexuality that is intended for viewing by adults, including stag movies, "loops," art studies, sexploitation films, erotic thrillers, adult video, pornography, sex education films', with approaches that incorporate 'economic, social, technological, and aesthetic perspectives within the larger context of global entertainment and leisure industries while taking into account local social and political conditions' and advocacy for 'the archival preservation of adult films and ancillary materials related to them' (see Adult Film and Media Scholarly Interest Group (Founded 2014), Macdonald et al. 2024).

Finally, Screening Sex, a project established by Darren Kerr and Donna Peberdy in the UK in 2017 and developed as a Special Interest Group of the British Association of Film,

Television and Screen Studies in 2018, aimed 'to call attention to the critical and cultural significance of sex, stimulate debate on marginalized matters and amplify the diverse and important research being carried out in this multi-disciplinary area', to investigate the 'value of sex on screen, in culture and in society', drawing on Williams' notion of the 'screen' both as representation and as a process that conceals, evaluates, or investigates, considering 'sex in broader social, cultural, political and historical terms' (see Screening Sex 'about' https://screeningsex.com/about/, see also Peberdy and Kerr 2025).

We were keen to set up a home for researchers working across these areas. In 2010, we had begun to discuss the possibility of launching an academic journal dedicated to the study of pornography. While the idea of an edited collection on the topic garnered some interest from various publishers, the prospect of a long-term, peer-reviewed journal was met with more scepticism. Publishers expressed only mild interest, questioning the viability of such a project. However, in 2012, our discussions with Katherine Burton at Taylor and Francis marked a turning point – Burton was enthusiastic about the idea and committed to taking it forward. After several iterations of the proposal, we secured approval at the end of 2013, allowing us to begin the process of curating content for the journal's inaugural issue. Despite facing opposition – including a public petition organized by Stop Porn Culture – we pushed ahead. In 2014, we officially launched *Porn Studies*, signalling a significant step forward in legitimizing the critical academic study of pornography.

Porn Studies was set up as a dedicated space for research and debate – moving away from the notion of 'pornography' as a singular or monolithic thing, in order to develop 'close and contextualized study of different facets and aspects of specific pornographies' as a way of understand the wide variety of porn practices in their particularity, to look at ' … pornographies past and present, in all their variations and around the world – their histories, modes, aesthetics, genres and subgenres; their institutional and industrial structures; and their consumption and their regulation' (Attwood and Smith 2014, 5). We conceived of the journal as offering a place to engage with porn's cultural, economic, historical, institutional, legal, and social contexts, their connections to wider media landscapes, and their links to the broader spheres of (sex) work across historical periods and national contexts.

We hoped to reach beyond the areas where porn studies were quite well established – for instance, in film and media studies – to others where there was little discussion of porn – for instance, business, marketing, and human–computer interaction. We imagined the journal as interdisciplinary, featuring research that was 'critical, engaging, innovative and productive', as a space for researchers to develop conversations across different disciplines and to move the study of porn in new directions.

The launch of *Porn Studies* in 2014 ignited a spectrum of responses, ranging from intellectual curiosity to vocal criticism. The journal became a lightning rod for debates about the legitimacy of pornography as a scholarly subject, with detractors reviving familiar arguments that pornography is inherently misogynistic and unworthy of serious academic consideration. However, the journal also garnered significant attention and invitations to speak on various media platforms, where we were able to discuss its aims and engage with both critics and supporters. Notably, Constance Penley was a prominent voice in these conversations, offering compelling arguments for the journal's necessity. On a hostile radio show, Penley highlighted the striking parallels between the dismissive

attitudes towards *Porn Studies* and those that had historically been directed at feminist scholarship, pointing out that claims questioning the need for a dedicated journal mirrored earlier critiques of feminism itself. She emphasized that just as feminist studies had proven indispensable in reshaping academic and cultural discourse, *Porn Studies* had the potential to foster a more nuanced, critical understanding of pornography as a significant cultural and social phenomenon.

Ten years of porn studies

Ken Plummer ([2008](#)), writing about the developing history of *Sexualities*, the journal he founded in 1998, has described how the day-to-day experience of editing and managing a journal is often experienced as a mundane process; just 'one little thing after another'. It is instructive, however, as he also notes, to look back through the accumulating journal issues more thoroughly to see what stands out – what concepts and methods have been chosen; what topics, themes, and discourses emerge; what groups, spaces, events, countries, movements, and cases are focused on; and what meanings, feelings, and affects are singled out for analysis. It is interesting, too, to revisit statements of intent, proposals, and drafts in order to measure in some way the distance travelled between what was intended and imagined and what has been accomplished over time. The following is the list we published in the first issue of *Porn Studies* (Attwood and Smith [2014](#), 5), outlining where we wanted the journal to be in 10 years time:

Where do we want *Porn Studies* to be in 10 years?
- The go-to publication on pornography, and sexual representations more generally.
- A publication that has accumulated individual studies of particular pornographies in particular places and times.
- A space in which debate and argument can flourish without rehearsing the same old arguments of the porn debates.
- A space that has enabled the discipline to grow and develop and become an archive of and for those developing studies.
- A truly international space in which the Anglo-American 'debate' about porn is not the default framework for discussion. The cross-cultural and global aspects of pornography are a particular priority for the journal, and we hope to pay special attention to the ways in which pornography is made, legislated, accessed, and experienced differently across the globe and in regions such as Pan-Asia, Eastern Europe, Oceania, Europe, the Middle East and Africa, and sub-Saharan Africa, exploring national and regional differences and boundary crossings.
- An environment in which various approaches, ideas, concepts, methodologies, and theories can be explored and debated. This entails work that does not start out already knowing all of the answers or assuming that we already know what the porn industry looks like, what porn means, or what impact it has on people's lives. It necessitates choosing the most appropriate theoretical frameworks and methods for its object of study, whether that is the economic dimensions of porn production; the connections between mainstream film, cult cinema, and sexworks; the dimensions of individual porn stardom; or the intersections between sexually explicit media and current social and political mores.

Since its inception, *Porn Studies* has consistently published special issues that highlight critical areas of focus, revealing both recurring themes and emerging interests in the field. Our special issues have touched on diverse topics including regulation, censorship, surveillance, porn panics and public health, audiences and consumers, labour, porn tourism, porn archives, music and sound, fashion, psychoanalysis, feminist porn, gay porn, and gonzo porn. Others have grounded their discussions in tangible contexts such as particular times, places, events, figures, and phenomena – the 'golden age' of porn, university campuses, South Asian porn, East Asian Porn, transnational porn, the British adult entertainment business, porn in Ireland, Tom of Finland, and the phenomenon of 2 Girls 1 cup. The exploration of porn through digital technologies, from big data and deepfakes to the politics of platform governance and deplatforming, has added further dimensions to the journal's contributions, situating pornography within the shifting landscape of digital media and culture.

Approaches to and within porn studies

One of the most significant contributions of *Porn Studies* has been its deep engagement with the methodological and disciplinary challenges inherent in the study of pornography. Contributors have interrogated the varied approaches across the humanities and social sciences, reflecting on the tension between different research paradigms and the complexities of positionality in porn scholarship. Articles have considered everything from the terminological distinctions between 'porn' and 'pornography' to the constraints of research focused on 'effects'. They have revisited key texts in porn scholarship and considered the place of porn studies in the broader history of sex research; examining how porn studies is undervalued and stigmatized, and why hilarity is often a response to porn scholarship. Additionally, they have explored psychological frameworks such as scopophilia, voyeurism, melancholia, and jouissance, and have applied affect theory, assemblage theory, and apparatus theory to pornography. Theoretical innovations like pornoarchaeology and 'porn-studies-in-action' have emerged, proposing fresh ways to think beyond textual representation, while ethnographic methods have shed light on the activities of anti-porn and free-speech activists. The difficulties of coding female orgasm in porn have been considered, so too the ways the term 'porn' has been applied to a variety of non-sexual texts and what this reveals about cultural constructions of pornography. These articles illuminate the evolving nature of porn studies as a discipline and invite further inquiry into the role of artificial intelligence (AI) and other emerging technologies in shaping the future of both pornography and its academic study.

Porn's times, places, and technologies

Authors have written in *Porn Studies* about many times and places, about the importance of region, about internationalization and transnationality, outlining Tom of Finland's unique place in Finnish culture, considering the so-called 'golden age' of porn, tracking the export of Danish feature sex films to Britain, and the production of hardcore versions of Italian erotic films 'pornified' for export in the 1970s. Authors have interrogated the construction of Denmark as a 'sexy' nation, and examined notions of nation and

nationality connected to the production and distribution of early pornographic films – and the construction of 'Swedish sin', the 'French film', and 'German decadence'.

At the same time, the journal has featured investigations into contemporary digital landscapes – covering everything from tagging, searching, content creation, platformization, algorithms and algorithmic rank systems, classification practices for coding sexuality in online dating, datafication and vibrators, face-swap software repositories, VR porn, WhatsApp, Reddit, GitHub, Pornhub, Google's SafeSearch, and webcamming platforms such as Camera Prive. Focusing on particular platforms, authors have written about Tumblr – its use by gay South Korean producers consumers and distributors, as a queer archive, issues of race and pleasure, and its loss for those who valued it. They have written about pornographic, political, and celebrity deepfakes, analyzed news articles, memes, and posts on the official OnlyFans blog, and considered open-source software as a site of toxic geek masculinity. Together, these studies emphasize the importance of understanding pornography as a transnational and technologically mediated phenomenon, deeply intertwined with issues of culture, identity, and power.

Porn archives, education, and literacy

Another notable area of focus has been the relationship between pornography, education, and archives. Contributors have examined the archival significances of porn in museums and universities, as well as the collaborations between researchers and librarians. The educational dimensions of pornography have been critically examined, with articles investigating how porn intersects with formal sex education, vernacular health promotion, and learning environments beyond traditional classrooms. They have also examined the ways that young people, parents, and educators use sexual scripts to make sense of young people's engagements with porn. They have critiqued sex education's focus on porn texts and its lack of consideration of the variety of people's engagements with porn, including as a resource for constructing gendered sexual subjectivities. By examining the role of porn in both formal and informal learning contexts, contributors have enriched the conversation about pornography's potential as an educational tool, while also questioning its limitations.

Campus controversies around pornography have been examined alongside the growing use of trigger warnings in porn education, while scholars have reflected on their own experiences of teaching about porn, exploring notions of 'good sex' with students, discussed how porn performers have contributed to porn teaching on campus, and documented the experience of having students produce porn as part of their studies. Graduate students in porn studies have discussed their experiences of the field. Authors have argued for more dialogue with a range of writers beyond academia and with other kinds of voices and speech, and we have included pieces by writers who mix factual and creative writing and academic and more personal viewpoints in their reflections on porn, as a way of understanding the significance of different kinds of language in expressing and documenting sex and sexuality.

Discourses of pornography

Exploring how pornography is framed and understood within wider cultural and academic discourses has been another area of rich exploration. Articles have examined the

role of porn in the development of European sexology and psychopathology and of sex research in the USA, and have shown how scientific discourses have often been used to reinforce heteronormative hierarchies. They have written about the development of sexology in India and its relation to Western scientific writings, classical Indian writings about sex, pornography, and the broader development of an erotic consumer culture. The journal has also examined the role of 'porn panics' and pseudoscience in shaping public perceptions, and the ways these panics have intersected with racial and gendered narratives, such as the pathologizing of non-Western sexuality, for example setting 'the pathological native' against 'the good white girl' in Australia. Discourses of porn addiction, sexualization, and 'the extreme' have been analyzed and set in context, as have the historical connections that underlie concerns about hypnosis and porn. Authors have considered the ways that gonzo porn is discussed in online dictionaries and Pornhub, and the way that young people in New Zealand perceive porn. Others have examined the notion of 'war porn' in the context of India, and identified resonances between porn and ableist representations of disabled people in 'inspiration porn'. In such unpacking of the terminology used to describe porn, the political and social implications of terms like 'pornographication' have been put under the spotlight. The analysis of an imagined 'bromance' 'between Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin during the 2016 US presidential election, the creation of intimacy in the podcast *My Dad Wrote a Porno* and the representation of theatrical porn in the HBO series *The Deuc*e have highlighted pornography's role in political satire and mainstream media.

Porn and regulation

Regulation and censorship have been central themes in *Porn Studies*, with contributors examining various legal frameworks and their impact on both the production and consumption of pornography. Articles have charted porn legislation in Iceland, illegal screenings of Swedish porn films between the 1920s and 1940s, the history of video-on demand in the UK, porn and homosexuality in Uganda, queer sexualities in Australia, porn film festivals and public sex, and representations such as fisting and stump fucking. At the same time, contributors have highlighted how porn industries and performers navigate these regulations, highlighting indifference as a 'regulation effect' and industry ambiguity towards opposing censorship. Authors have paid particular attention to legislation such as the Obscene Publications Act 1959 and the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 in the UK, to specific legal cases such as The Watford Blue Movie Trial in 1970s Britain and the trial of William Burrough's *Naked Lunch*, and policymaking in the Longford Report, the European Convention on Human Rights, and Measure B, underscoring the shifting regulatory landscape surrounding pornography.

Investigations of film censorship in Argentina and its impact on sexploitation film and exploration of Mexican 'only for export' film in the 1960s have revealed sexual and political values, while consideration of 'porn-free zones' in Stockholm and Japanese debates about animated sexual images, feminist campaigns to exclude sexual material from supermarkets in the UK, and the use of a British bawdy style in the 2014 'Face-Sitting' protests against porn legislation in the UK have drawn out the specificities of national regulatory impulses. Public figures such as obscenity law and sexual freedoms expert Myles Jackman

and founder of the Australian Sex Party Fiona Patten have offered their personal takes on what it means to challenge moral campaigns against sexual expression.

In addition, and more recently, articles about surveillance, the 'Pornopticon', non-consensual upskirting, and Pornhub as an 'engine of confession' have expanded conceptions of sexual imagery. Discussions of new forms of surveillance in the digital age, from government monitoring in China to Pornhub's moderation policies and deplatforming of content, have opened up new questions about digital governance and platform capitalism, particularly as US initiatives such as FOSTA/SESTA contribute to whorephobia and worker precarity around the globe.

Porn texts

By far the most extensive category of content in *Porn Studies* has been its examination of pornographic texts and genres. Articles have mapped content trends and analyzed a wide variety of types and genres of porn, considering porn that focuses on amateur couples, zombies, and superheroes, along with Str8 porn, solo girl porn, amateur gay S/M porn, crip porn, reality porn, Japanese animated porn, gay bareback, gonzo, DIY porn and deepfakes, feminist and mainstream porn, 'quality porn', Japanese 'pedagogical porn', British hardcore, Queer South Asian 'Aunty porn', Australian settler porn, and non-narrative porn.

Specific sites, labels, and studios such as Sketchy Sex, Gag the Fag, Sean Cody, Treasure Island Media, Chitu, GayPatrol, NDNGirls, and Lightsouthern, and individual films such as Fraternity X's *Trump Pump* and Icon Male's *The Therapist*, have come in for detailed exploration; as have forms of documentary such as the docudrama *Linda, Les and Annie* (1992), a 1972 sexploitation version of Kenneth Anger's quasi-documentary, *Hollywood Babylon*, and *Fuck the Fascism* (2016–), a decolonial and antifascist docu-porn short film series. These studies have illuminated the aesthetic, narrative, and performative dimensions of porn texts, while also addressing broader themes of sexuality, gender, race, and representation. Our special issue 'canon fodder' reconsidered the canon of porn films by revisiting films such as *Bacchanale* (1970), *School Girl* (1971), *Bijou* (1972), *Score* (1973), *Forced Entry* (1972), *Easy Alice* (1989), *Alice in Wonderland* (1976), *El Paso Wrecking Corp* (1978), *Long Jeanne Silver* (1979), *Odyssey: The Ultimate Trip* (1977), *One Thousand and One Erotic Nights* (1982), *On the Prowl* (1989), and *2040* (2009).

Scholars have also ventured into the realm of vintage porn and alternative forms, offering analysis of early pornographic formats like stag films, sexploitation films, British 8-mm film 'rollers', and gay male VHS porn in the late 1970s/early 1980s. The journal has explored user-generated content such as amateur 'popper training' videos, 'hypno videos', danmei, and 'blue-photo' images. Additionally, contributors have considered fan-driven genres like fan fiction, gifs and microporn, video collage, and the Bangladeshi cut-piece online. More broadly, they have considered celebrity sex videos, gay porn blogs, sexting, public sex performances, and porn in art galleries, opening up new avenues for considering the boundaries between pornography and other forms of public and private sexual expression. Similarly, pieces on mediated erotics in Indian slam poetry and the fan art of Disney princesses highlight the wide reach of pornographic influence across cultural texts. Analysis of pornography's relationship with games, photography, Indian miniature painting, anti-circumcision activism, and dick pics has further expanded the scope of the journal's focus on how pornographic themes manifest in non-traditional pornographic

forms. The intersection of porn with fashion has also been explored, specifically through the marketing of footwear, perfume, and menswear, while articles on audio erotica and audio porn have delved into the sonic dimensions of pornography in sea chanteys, pornocorridos, soundtracks, sonics, voice-over, and the relation of the Blaxploitation sonotope to porn.

The focus of authors has also moved beyond audiovisual media. Contributors have examined sexually explicit magazines such as *Private*, *Oui*, the Bengali film magazine *Anandalok*, men's magazines, top shelf softcore porn mags, and twentieth-century Bengali sex magazines such as *Nara-Nari* and *Natun Jiban*. Finnish porn magazines, Italy's adult press, Quebec's sexually explicit tabloid print culture, and pornographic comic books have also been investigated to map the ways in which pornography circulates across various print media. Historical explorations have included the use of sexually explicit images in Victorian porn novels and autobiographies, nineteenth-century porn novels from India, and post-war London's underground trade in handmade obscene books. More contemporary contributions have looked at the memoirs of porn stars and the intersections of erotica with popular romance novels.

Tracing the histories of anonymous porn writing syndicates, contributors have examined how figures like Henry Miller, Anaïs Nin, Gershon Legman, and Iris Owens contributed to the 1930s and 1940s New York underground pornographic writing culture, while similar collectives in Paris during the 1950s and 1960s have been analyzed for their gendered authorship practices. Additionally, the journal has documented how, in the 1990s, female writers produced porn for gay men for publishers such as Masquerade and Badboy Books. They have examined the use of explicit sexual content in nineteenth-century scientific books on female beauty and considered the intersections between medical and pornographic visuality in the work of sixteenth-century medical illustrator Charles Estienne and contemporary porn star turned performance artist Annie Sprinkle.

Journal articles have offered nuanced analyses of style, performance, and aesthetics within pornography, exploring issues like authorship, agent roles in erotic writing, and the complex narrative and stylistic strategies of genres such as gonzo porn. Authors have considered how concepts like edging function as filmic structures, the visual economies of ejaculation, and the rhetorical devices used in porn performance and autobiography. Performative aspects, including mannerisms and acting styles in porn texts, have been examined alongside editorial strategies used to legitimize male nudity in sexually explicit magazines.

Contributors have engaged with a broad range of themes within porn texts, discussing topics like group sex, rape, the grotesque, domesticity, and cuckoldry. Studies have interrogated the portrayal of themes such as artifice and authenticity, amateur performance, and the politics of representation, with particular attention given to trans representation, queer bodies, and the hijra as erotic figures in South Asian porn. Articles have also analyzed compulsory bisexuality in US adult video, bisexual transgression in film, and the construction of heterosexuality within the context of same-sex acts.

Racial representations in porn have also been examined, including interracial desire in porn novels and the eroticization of White authority figures and Black 'suspects' in American hardcore porn. Bodily differences have been explored in the portrayal of disability in gay porn, the representation of muscular men in Indian porn, and the erotic legacy of figures like Vaslav Nijinsky. Topics of extremity and fantasy, from shit and amputation

fetishes to infantilism and AB/DL content, have been studied in relation to broader questions of transgression, disgust, and marginality. These contributions illustrate the extensive thematic and aesthetic variety present in *Porn Studies*, highlighting how pornography intersects with a wide array of cultural, social, and political discourses.

Through these diverse studies, *Porn Studies* has expanded the horizons of what constitutes pornography, offering a more complex and inclusive understanding of the genre's textual forms and their cultural significance.

Porn industry, labour, and performance

Our contributors have had comparatively little to say on the 'porn industry', at least as it is often conceptualized as a monolithic organization. Instead, they have focused more closely on particular aspects of porn business; for example, porn piracy, British adult entertainment as a business, porn commerce in Stockholm from the 1960s to the 1980s, respectability in Pornhub's corporate communication strategies, the financing and box office performance of *Deep Throat*, the branding of DVD pornography, fair trade porn, and Greek mainstream porn production from the point of view of particular porn workers and producers.

We have published pieces on and by individual producers, directors, screenwriters, photographers, artists, companies, writers, and performers, including John Amero and Lem Amero, Paul Gerber, Wakefield Poole, Radley Metzger, Shaun Costello, Joey Silvera, Bud Townshend, Joe Gage, Alex de Renzy, Gerard Damiano, Brad Armstrong, Jamie Gillis, Edwin Brown, Madison Young, Barbara de Genevieve, Courtney Trouble, Stoya, Tristan Taormino, Jennifer Lyon Bell, Vex Ashley, Bruce LaBruce, Paul Morris, John Stagliano, Jerry Douglas, Lasse Braun, Vex Ashley, Paul Morris, John Stagliano, Ben Dover, William A. Rhoads, Kent Monkman, Howard Chaykin, S. I. R. video, Silk Labo, Pink Label and CrashPad, Fan Popo, Jiz Lee, Jake Lyons, Buck Angel, Mason, Chris Crocker, Sunny Leone, Sasha Grey, Francois Sagat, Brian Reynolds, Ariel Rebel, Countess Diamond, Shine Louise Houston, Bonnie Rotten, Judy Coleman, Ben Dwyer, Ginger Lynn Allen, Dana Vespoli, June Lovejoy, Pat Rocco, Blath, Conor Habib, Cinnamon Maxine, Asa Akira, Pierre Fitch, Oasi Das and Rick McCoy, Koh Masaki, Paromita Vorha, Kato Taka, and Suzuki Ittetsu.

We had hoped for more work on the labour of porn. Nonetheless, we have featured articles that consider how porn work needs to be set within broader accounts of labour, how sex research can be considered as sex work, and how an exceptionalist approach to porn as a form of creative industry can be challenged while also necessitating a closer focus on what is distinctive about porn labour as labour. Contributors have critiqued the fantasy of 'labour-free' amateur production and its implications for those who make their living in porn, outlined how porn workers develop a range of income streams within the porn gig economy, and explored precarity and stigma in gig economy work. They have considered the issue of 'racial dodging' where Caucasian performers restrict their engagement with African male performers, how porn actors may find racial pleasure in their work by appropriating gendered racial stereotypes, and the invisibility of Aboriginal people in porn. They have examined the experience and status of transmasculine and non-binary people in the camming industry, webcam performance in Brazil and South Korea, the entrepreneurial modes of adult performers in India, and the

impact of UK copyright law on adult content creators. We are not complacent about our coverage of these issues; nevertheless, the exploration of the porn industry, labour, and performance in *Porn Studies* has been radical in its emphasis on the diverse, multifaceted experiences of those who work in pornography, challenging monolithic conceptions of the industry by foregrounding the complexities of porn labour as a form of creative, precarious, and often stigmatized work.

Porn consumption

Finally in this whistlestop tour of the past 10 years of *Porn Studies* content, contributors have offered in-depth analyses of porn consumption and audience engagement, providing insights into how different groups interact with pornographic media; writing about a range of different groups, about female fans of porn, of 'ero' Boys Love manga in Japan, and in participatory porn cultures, about the ways we might categorize different orientations to porn among young women, meaning-making processes among women that consume feminist pornography, the engagement of feminists in Sri Lanka with the question of pornography, and the views and activities of sex activists and entrepreneurs in Hong Kong and San Francisco on queer and feminist pornography and its relationship to social movements.

Our authors have written about spectatorship and queer, feminist, and lesbian porn, about straight, queer, feminist, and lesbian women watching m/m porn, about Hong Kong lesbians' consumption of mainstream pornographic videos depicting straight sex, and about young women's understandings of lesbian porn. They have considered bisexual and transgender potentialities in porn spectatorship, gay, bisexual, and heterosexual cisgender men's everyday uses of pornography, and gay men's perceptions of 'straight' men in sexually explicit material. Porn consumption in public places has been investigated, while others have focused on porn at home and within relationships, on the relation between watching porn and sexual pleasure, on the ways that porn viewers negotiate early memories and perceptions of risk in porn, and on ethical spectatorship and consumer ethics.

These studies move beyond simplistic moral judgements or assumptions about porn's effects, instead focusing on the meaning-making processes of viewers and the ways they navigate their own sexualities, desires, and identities in relation to porn. In work on assemblages of porn spectatorship, porn and fantasies, the ways women situate the consumption and production of erotica alongside their use of sex toys, the uses of porn in sexual self-development, and the possible links between porn consumption and genital dissatisfaction, articles reveal the nuanced ways that people engage with porn, challenging stereotypes and providing more complex understandings of sexually explicit media roles in shaping sexual subjectivities, ethical considerations, and community-building. Articles have illuminated specific practices and sites: Pornhub searches during the pandemic, Reddit user communities, the distribution of porn by Israeli men in WhatsApp groups, the online forum Free Ones and its significance for pornophiles, the creation of pornographic taxonomies and folksonomies, the affective processes of scrolling and browsing porn sites, the circulation of porn amongst 'buyers, bargainers and borrowers', viewer commentary on the gay porn review site Way Big, on the 'COVID-19 porn genre', and on sites featuring Buck Angel's work. They have catalogued interactions between

users on Pornhub that grow into digital communities, queer intimacies and pic exchange on Grindr and PlanetRomeo in Kolkata, and the pornographic self-representation of white, Black, and men of colour posters on Reddit r/MassiveCock. The articles on porn consumption in *Porn Studies* are significant because they offer critical insights into how pornography is experienced, interpreted, and integrated into everyday life by diverse audiences.

Discussions of porn consumption in different places – Turkey, Malaysia, Germany, Amsterdam, Japan, China, India, and South Africa – make it clear that porn is not a uniform experience, and examinations of networked porn texts show how they work to compose active pornographic spaces such as Montreal's Gay Village, Canada. Articles on porn fans as sex tourists, DIY and alternative festivals, attendees at the Adult Entertainment Expo in Las Vegas, USA, the relation of porn tourism and urban renewal, and 'dark' tourism expand discussions of consumption, commodification, and the intersections of sexuality and travel. This research highlights how pornography, like other cultural products, is not only consumed passively but also actively sought out in specific geographic and cultural contexts, linking it to issues of place, identity, and sexual exploration, highlighting how pornographies and their associated industries shape, and are shaped by, global networks of power, economics, and sexuality.

Setting the agenda for the next decade

As *Porn Studies* looks forward to the next decade, we asked a diverse range of scholars – both senior and early-career – to contribute their insights into the evolving landscape of the field. For this issue we arranged three roundtable discussions on porn labour (Berg, Pezzutto, and Stardust 2025), black desire and porn (Anderson et al. 2025), and the future of porn studies (Alilunas et al. 2025). We invited 13 scholars – Jonathan Allan, Finley Freibert, Katrien Jacobs, Mark Lockwood, Maggie MacDonald, Alan McKee, Giovanna Maina, Jennifer Moorman, Aurelie Petit, Rebecca Sullivan, Ricky Varghese, Emerald Vaught, and Federico Zecca – to list key pieces of reading produced between 2014 and 2024 which they would want to use for a course on Porn Studies – we discuss their responses in a separate annotated bibliography (Smith and Attwood 2024). We also asked them to reflect on the state of porn studies today and to envision its future, addressing two questions: 'For you personally, what have been the three key developments in porn studies over the last decade; the ones that have really interested you or excited you?' and 'If it was up to us, by committee, with unlimited funding and no institutional oversight, to set the agenda for research in porn studies over the next 10 years, what four key areas/issues/questions would you have at the top of your list?'

Several key themes and priorities emerged in their responses. These not only highlight the dynamism of the field but also suggest pathways for its continued growth and relevance in academia and beyond.

One of the most exciting shifts has been the increasing visibility of porn creators within academic research. The inclusion of sex-working academics, participant-led studies, and the growing presence of creators in peer-reviewed authorship has added critical depth and nuance to the study of pornography. This shift has helped humanize the labour behind porn and foster more collaborative and inclusive research methods.

Another significant trend has been the field's growing engagement with platformization and the impact of AI and algorithmic technologies on the porn industry. Scholars

have drawn attention to the importance of examining how new digital tools are reshaping labour, genre, and spectatorship in porn. This is paralleled by an explosion of work on non-traditional forms of porn, such as animated pornography and VR, further broadening the scope of porn studies. Equally important has been the field's refusal to sanitize the more transgressive and affective elements of pornography – to resist a purely empirical or quantitative approach, embracing the 'mucky' elements of porn, including fantasy, lust, and filth. We agree that this approach has been vital in allowing for deeper engagement with the affective embodied experiences of both creators and consumers, providing a counterpoint to the more sterile analyses prevalent in other approaches and publications.

When asked to envision the future of porn studies, our colleagues emphasized several key areas of focus for the next 10 years; policy, governance, and censorship; porn audiences; AI, automation, and algorithmic content moderation; moving beyond Western-centric models; and challenging colonial and racial hierarchies. We outline these in the following.

Policy, governance, and censorship

A common priority was the need for more robust engagement with policy and governance, particularly around issues of censorship, age verification, and financial discrimination within the sex industry. The lack of evidence-based policymaking in this arena is alarming, and scholars in the field have a vital role to play in advocating for more rigorous, data-driven approaches. Several reviewers emphasized the importance of engaging with policy and producing research that can effectively speak to policymakers, viewing this as a critical direction for porn studies over the next decade – this is certainly something we, as editors, are keenly aware of. The call for this type of engagement reflects a growing awareness of the gap between academic research on pornography and the policies that govern the regulation, censorship, and legal frameworks surrounding pornography and sex work. Unlike other areas of cultural life, pornography is something that everyone believes they understand – what it is, what it does, who makes it, and who consumes it – even those who have never viewed it! As states increasingly move towards age verification laws and broader censorship efforts, often developed without reliable data or rigorous academic input, it is ever more imperative that porn studies as a discipline engages more actively with legal frameworks and governmental bodies.

A key challenge is that current laws related to pornography – particularly those concerned with age verification, online content moderation, and platform governance – are often driven by moral panics rather than grounded in data or nuanced understanding. Our reviewers expressed concern over the increasing censorship of sexual materials under the guise of protecting minors or maintaining public health, without meaningful consideration of the complexities involved. Policies that lack a clear evidentiary basis can result in the overreach of censorship, the erosion of digital freedoms, and the marginalization of sex workers who rely on online platforms for their livelihood. They noted the necessity for academics to step into a more active role by producing research that directly informs and challenges harmful or misguided policies; for example, by developing peer networks to guide journalists to appropriate experts and building stronger pipelines between academic research and government policies, similar to established connections

in other fields. This could involve creating mechanisms where research articles, reports, or briefs are routinely shared with policymakers to inform debates on censorship, labour rights, and online safety. They also suggested that scholars in the field should actively collaborate with civil society groups, activists, and organizations that focus on sex workers' rights and digital freedoms, to mobilize knowledge in more impactful ways such as through public letters, open reports, or partnerships aimed at influencing the policy discourse around pressing issues like the deplatforming of sex workers, the financial marginalization of those in sex industries, and the increasing imposition of restrictive content moderation practices on platforms like OnlyFans and Pornhub. These kinds of interventions suggest a need for training academics to combat misinformation, develop effective means of translating knowledge through more accessible forms such as podcasts and TikToks, and publications that set explanations of pleasure, desire, arousal, and affect alongside those of harm and addiction. They also require more understanding of why people believe in porn and sexual 'addiction', despite the lack of evidence, and, more generally, why stigma around porn persists – questions which suggest fruitful areas for more research.

Our reviewers added that the rapidly evolving technological landscape – particularly around AI and algorithmic content moderation – makes it critical for researchers in porn studies to provide insights that policymakers can use to understand these shifts. Policymakers often lack the technical knowledge needed to make informed decisions about the future regulation of AI-generated pornographic content, deepfakes, and platform governance. Academics can play an essential role in filling this knowledge gap by producing research that demystifies these technologies and outlines their social, ethical, and legal implications. Moreover, as the regulation of pornography becomes more intertwined with public health and education debates, there is an urgent need for porn studies to engage in conversations about sex education. For example, the framing of pornography as a public health crisis – a narrative that has gained traction in the USA and elsewhere – has led to policies that increasingly restrict access to porn, often under the guise of protecting young people. However, these policies frequently do not account for the fact that stigmatizing pornography can hinder open, educational conversations about sex and sexuality, and reinforce shame about sex, and especially masturbation. Research that counters these narratives with data-driven analysis is crucial for influencing educational and public health policies that are more balanced and evidence-based. The histories of these forms of censorship also require academic analysis, as do their relations to religious fundamentalism, racial supremacy, and anti-porn rhetoric. Understanding the context of contemporary moves to censorship requires a broader analysis of sexual and gender politics in the face of the rise of right-wing groups and global anti-gender movements, with serious implications for activist production cultures and for critically informed research.

Porn audiences

Audience research emerged as a crucial area for development in the responses we received, reflecting a growing recognition of the importance of understanding how pornography is consumed and interpreted by diverse audiences. This is an area we have ourselves explored, for example in research on women's engagement with porn (Attwood,

Smith, and Barker 2021), but we agree with those of our respondents who highlighted that this remains an underexplored and challenging area in porn studies. The importance of audience research lies in its ability to move beyond assumptions about porn's effects and inquire into how viewers actively negotiate their experiences with pornography. Existing studies, particularly from sociological perspectives, tend to focus on the negative impacts of porn, such as its influence on relationships or body image, and to adopt a conservative and heteronormative stance on sex and sexuality; it is important to consider how we can support social science researchers to move away from this. However, future audience research could take a more nuanced, intersectional approach, exploring how viewers make meaning from porn, how they experience pleasure and desire, what feelings and affects are experienced in porn consumption and how these intersect with individuals' experience and understanding, and how factors such as race, gender, sexuality, class, and ability shape engagement with different types of porn. We need more focus on bodies and embodiment. Audience research also presents the opportunity to explore how communities form around pornography, both online and offline. Several scholars raised the need for research into the ways that porn consumption fosters different kinds of communities. This could include everything from the role of adult theatres in creating public spaces for sexual expression to online communities on platforms like Reddit or OnlyFans, where fans and creators interact in ways that blur the boundaries between spectatorship and participation.

Moreover, there is increasing interest in understanding how viewers engage with new forms of pornographic media, such as VR, deepfakes, and AI-generated content. It will be important to study how audiences respond to these emerging technologies, which introduce new ethical, emotional, and sensory dimensions to the viewing experience. Audience research in this area would not only shed light on the evolving relationship between technology and sexuality but also contribute to broader conversations about consent, representation, and desire in the digital age. Future research on porn audiences will be essential for understanding the complex and varied ways that pornography is consumed, experienced, and integrated into everyday life. The voices and perspectives of consumers can offer a more comprehensive picture of pornography's cultural impact and challenge reductive narratives about its influence.

The growing influence of AI, automation, and algorithmic content moderation

Technological advancements were also a recurring theme in our colleagues' reflections about the future of porn studies, particularly in how advancements are reshaping the production, distribution, and consumption of pornography. The rapid development of technologies like AI, algorithmic systems, and platform governance has had a profound impact on porn across all aspects of production, distribution, and consumption; technology is changing what counts as pornography and most of our respondents emphasized the need for deeper research into these areas. Our reviewers emphasized the urgent need to explore how these technologies are transforming porn production, from the creation of AI-generated content and deepfakes to the ways algorithmic systems prioritize and filter pornographic materials. AI and machine learning tools are increasingly being used to automate aspects of porn production, such as face-swapping technologies that create realistic pornographic images or videos using the

likenesses of celebrities or private individuals – raising profound ethical and legal questions around consent and representation.

Our reviewers stressed the importance of paying attention to how AI is reshaping the boundaries of pornographic content. AI-generated pornography, including 'synthetic' or 'deepfake' porn, allows users to create content that simulates any person, blurring the lines between reality and fantasy. We need more research into the labour force behind animated and AI-generated porn, including whether creators of this content are considered sex workers and how AI disrupts traditional notions of authorship, agency, and consent in pornography. Algorithmic governance is also becoming a central concern, particularly in the regulation and moderation of porn on major platforms. Work on platform governance has explored how platforms like Pornhub, OnlyFans, and Reddit use algorithms to moderate sexual content, often in ways that reflect broader societal anxieties about sex, power, and morality. These platforms rely on automated systems to identify and remove content deemed inappropriate or illegal, but these systems are prone to errors, bias, and overreach, often disproportionately affecting marginalized communities such as sex workers, queer creators, and people of colour. We need to investigate how platforms use AI and algorithms to shape pornographic content – determining what is visible, what is censored, and who has access to audiences.

This is linked to the shift towards platformization, where porn is increasingly produced, distributed, and consumed on large centralized platforms, another technological advancement that has radically altered the porn landscape. The rise of platforms like OnlyFans and Pornhub has democratized porn production to some extent, allowing more creators to enter the industry by lowering the barriers to entry. These platforms give creators more control over their content and revenue, which contrasts with the traditional studio-based porn industry. However, while these platforms offer new opportunities for creators, they also introduce new challenges. We need to scrutinize the power dynamics of platform governance. Platforms like OnlyFans present themselves as empowering spaces for creators but hold significant control over creators' access to audiences and their ability to monetize their work. The deplatforming of sex workers reflects the precarious nature of relying on corporate-controlled platforms. These often respond to external pressures from financial institutions, governments, or social movements, resulting in sudden changes to policies that can harm creators, particularly those working in marginalized communities. The gig economy nature of these platforms also raises questions about labour rights, precarity, and exploitation. Research has increasingly examined how these platforms fit into the broader context of late capitalism, where sex work is often precarious, informal, and shaped by the pressures of gig economy structures. More research is needed to understand how porn creators navigate these platforms, the forms of labour they undertake, and the economic structures that determine their success or vulnerability.

All of this is complicated by the rise of non-live-action porn, including animated pornography, VR porn, and interactive pornographic experiences. Animated porn, often marginalized in discussions of porn studies, offers a rich site for exploring the intersections of technology, labour, and sexual representation. The role of animation and AI in pornography opens up new questions about the future of sex work as it allows for the creation of sexual content that does not involve human performers, raising complex issues about the ethics of representation, the economic implications for human performers, and the potential for AI to create content that bypasses concerns about consent.

VR and immersive pornographic experiences are also emerging as significant technological advancements in the porn industry. VR porn offers users a more embodied, immersive form of spectatorship, blurring the line between viewer and participant. VR porn introduces new dimensions to the experience of porn, transforming how audiences engage with content and with their own bodies. It offers a more interactive, sensorially rich experience, which could challenge traditional understandings of spectatorship, arousal, and intimacy. This technological shift calls for further investigation into the implications of immersive porn on notions of consent, agency, and sexual ethics.

The increasing datafication of porn consumption – where users' activities, preferences, and behaviours are tracked and analyzed by platforms – will be a critical area for future research. Pornhub and OnlyFans collect vast amounts of data on their users, which are used to optimize algorithms, target adverts, and personalize content. This datafication not only affects the user experience but also plays a significant role in shaping the types of content that are produced and promoted. As platforms prioritize certain types of content to maximize engagement and profit, they are likely to exert a powerful influence over the kinds of porn that become visible and dominant, which may reinforce existing power dynamics or marginalize certain genres or creators.

Surveillance technologies are also becoming more pervasive in the porn industry, particularly in relation to content moderation, age verification, and censorship. There are concerns about the use of AI-driven surveillance tools that monitor and moderate online porn, which often disproportionately affect marginalized creators. Age verification technologies, which are being introduced in many jurisdictions as a way to restrict access to pornographic content for minors, also raise questions about privacy, digital rights, and the surveillance of porn consumers. We will need to pay more critical attention to the ways in which these surveillance technologies shape the production, distribution, and consumption of porn.

Across all of these technological advancements there are broader ethical and social implications. It is important to consider how new technologies – whether AI-generated porn, algorithmic moderation, or VR – affect issues of consent, representation, and agency. It is clear that the creation of deepfake porn, where someone's likeness is used without their consent, breaches privacy and identity. Regulating deepfakes, however, is complex, involving not only privacy rights but also challenges around enforcement, technological safeguards, and the potential for misuse. Similarly, the idea that algorithms are a magic cure for moderating content raises questions about who is being excluded or marginalized from digital spaces, particularly queer and marginalized creators.

The intersection of technology and labour raises further concern. While platforms like OnlyFans offer new economic opportunities for creators, they also reinforce the gig economy model of precarious labour, where workers have little protection or control over their working conditions. The rise of AI and automation could further disrupt labour practices, potentially displacing human performers or devaluing their work. Technological advancements in AI, platform governance, algorithmic moderation, and immersive porn are transforming the landscape of the porn industry in profound ways. Understanding how these technologies impact labour, ethics, and the politics of representation will require interdisciplinary research that critically engages with these shifts, exploring both the opportunities they present and the challenges they pose for the future of pornography and its study.

Moving beyond Western-centric models

The call to decolonize porn studies has grown in momentum in the past decade, high-lighting the need for the field to broaden its scope beyond dominant Western frameworks and to engage more deeply with marginalized perspectives, especially from the Global South. Decolonizing porn studies involves both expanding the geographical and cultural focus of research and challenging the colonial, racial, and gendered hierarchies that have historically shaped pornography and its scholarship. Our respondents decried the Western-centric focus that often dominates porn studies; as a field shaped by research on pornography produced and consumed in the USA and Europe, there is still a lack of engagement with pornographic cultures, industries, and consumers in other parts of the world. They highlighted the importance of integrating scholarship from non-Western contexts – not as a marginal or special-interest area, but as an integral part of mainstream discussions in porn studies.

Research that examines the specificities of porn industries and consumption patterns in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and other under-represented regions will be crucial to build-ing a more global understanding of pornography. There is a growing body of work by young scholars in China and the Philippines, where the study of pornography remains stigmatized, who are forging ahead, but more research is needed on national porno-graphic cultures that are often neglected in the literature. Projects such as the 'Cartogra-phy of Pornographic Audiovisual' (2011–2019) and the symposium 'Pornography in the Pre-Digital Era' (2019) are examples of important efforts to explore non-US pornographies and the transnational circulation of pornographic materials. Understanding the flow of pornographic content across borders, and how it intersects with local cultures, econom-ies, and regulations, is essential for a decolonized approach to the study of pornography.

Challenging colonial and racial hierarchies

Our reviewers highlighted important work in porn studies, Black erotics, and Black femin-ist theorizing that has paved the way in addressing the racialized and colonial legacies embedded in both pornography and its academic study, showing how pornography reproduces colonial power structures and fetishizes, commodifies, and sexualizes Black and brown bodies and how race, gender, and sexuality intersect in pornographic rep-resentation. They have also shown how we might rethink issues of pleasure and danger in the production and consumption of sexual representations and the possibilities of locating sexual pleasure and power. They highlighted the need to push back against the dominance of white, cisgender, and colonial perspectives that continue to shape the field and to include diasporic, decolonial, and Global South perspectives in the field's discussions, panels, and journal issues. We have been very aware that too often research on pornographies outside the Western mainstream is siloed into side discus-sions, rather than being integrated into the core of academic conversations about porn studies. A decolonial approach would work to dismantle these barriers, creating space for more diverse voices and perspectives to shape the field.

Reviewers also emphasized the need to explore the racial and postcolonial dimensions of porn more deeply, pointing, for example, to the potential of using psychoanalytic per-spectives to better understand how colonial and racial desires are constituted in both the

production and the consumption of pornography. This would involve a critical examination of how colonial fantasies, racial fetishism, and neocolonial dynamics operate in contemporary porn, particularly in relation to representations of Black, Indigenous, and people of colour (BIPOC) performers. Additionally, a decolonial lens in porn studies should engage with questions about labour and exploitation in non-Western contexts, particularly as pornographic production becomes increasingly globalized. By examining the labour practices and economic structures that underpin porn industries in different parts of the world, we can shed light on how colonial and capitalist power relations continue to shape the experiences of performers, producers, and consumers in these regions.

A central goal of decolonizing porn studies is to centre the voices and experiences of those who have been historically marginalized, both in pornography itself and in its academic study. As the journal moves forward we will continue to develop the important work of including sex workers, performers, and creators from marginalized communities to shape our research agenda. This also extends to understanding how marginalized groups consume and produce pornography. We need more research on the consumption practices of audiences in the Global South, as well as more work that examines the pornographies created by and for marginalized communities. Moreover, there is a need to interrogate how platforms and digital technologies may reproduce or challenge colonial and racial hierarchies. Future research should examine how platformization and algorithmic governance in pornography affect creators from marginalized communities, particularly in terms of who gets visibility and who faces censorship or deplatforming. This would include exploring the ways that platforms may reinforce racial stereotypes or prioritize certain types of content that cater to Western, white, and cisgender audiences, while marginalizing other forms of expression.

Researchers are going to have to rethink the archives and historical narratives that have traditionally dominated our field. Our reviewers stressed the importance of mapping out existing archives and collections, particularly those that hold materials from non-Western or marginalized pornographic traditions, and of archives collaborating to create databases of materials and making these more accessible. They suggested that developing a project on the theory and practice of the pornographic archive would be a valuable step in making these materials more accessible to researchers and addressing the challenges researchers face in accessing older or more obscure pornographic materials, especially those that have not been preserved in mainstream Western archives. A decolonial approach to the archive would involve actively seeking out and preserving the pornographic histories of marginalized groups, while also questioning the colonial and racial biases that have shaped what has been deemed worthy of preservation.

Decolonizing porn studies requires both expanding the geographical focus of research and critically engaging with the colonial, racial, and gendered power dynamics that have historically shaped pornography. This involves centring marginalized voices, challenging the dominance of Western perspectives, and developing new methodologies that reflect the diverse ways that pornography is produced, consumed, and understood around the world. As our reviewers have pointed out, the next decade offers an important opportunity to push the field towards greater inclusivity, diversity, and critical engagement with the global dimensions of pornography. By taking up these challenges, porn studies can continue to grow as a field that reflects and engages with the complexities of the contemporary world.

Pornography is a complex object – spanning media, technology, labour, ethics, culture, and politics – demanding approaches that integrate diverse perspectives, methods, and expertise.

The interdisciplinary nature of porn studies is one of its strengths, allowing scholars to engage with a range of fields, including media studies, gender studies, sociology, law, political economy, and technology studies. There is exciting potential for collaboration between the humanities and social sciences, and there could be deeper engagement between qualitative researchers and quantitative social scientists. Bridging these methodological divides could lead to more nuanced understandings of how pornography functions culturally, socially, and economically. Scholars from areas such as media studies, law, and computer science are needed to work together to understand how platforms, algorithms, and AI are transforming the production and consumption of pornography. These collaborations will be essential for addressing the complex ethical and legal questions posed by new technologies. Collaborative projects with creators and performers, especially from under-represented communities, could also help break down the silos between academic knowledge and the realities of the industry, ensuring that research is both relevant and ethically grounded. Moreover, interdisciplinary collaboration is going to be crucial for moving the insights of porn studies into public debates and policymaking. By combining the expertise of legal scholars, technologists, sociologists, and media researchers, the field can better respond to contemporary issues such as censorship, platform governance, and public health.

Conclusion: building on a solid foundation

As *Porn Studies* moves into its second decade, it is clear that our field is poised for continued growth and innovation. The work done over the past 10 years has laid a strong foundation, and the priorities identified by the various scholars in this article – ranging from technological advancements and policy interventions to decolonization and affect – promise to push the boundaries of porn studies even further. With increased collaboration, interdisciplinarity, and public engagement, the next decade will no doubt see the field continue to expand its reach, influence, and impact.

This will be increasingly important as the edges of 'porn studies' become increasingly blurry. In our first ever issue we wrote that we wanted the journal to help 'develop a broad-based definition of what constitutes pornography' (Attwood and Smith 2014, 5), but as sexual media continues to shift and diversity it is increasingly difficult to settle on appropriate terminology. We need to question more rigorously how those shifts impact on the way we understand porn, how we position it in relation to other kinds of controversial media or body genres or adult media forms, and to remain attentive to how useful the term 'porn' is for describing emerging forms of sexual expression which may have few of the characteristics that older studies of porn production, representation, or consumption have identified (Paasonen 2024). This is particularly true of forms that are interactive, that have more in common with other forms of sexual performance or are central to new experiences of digital or mediated intimacy and forms of sexual sociality (Alilunas et al. 2025) To what extent might the experiences and vocabularies of creators and consumers aid us in developing our conceptual frameworks (Paasonen 2024)? How do we resist the exceptionalism that positions porn as an aberrant form of creative

labour, yet hold onto its distinctive characteristics (McKee 2016), while also allowing our research on porn to illuminate and strengthen our understanding of labour more generally (Berg, Pezzuto, and Stardust 2025)?

The journal remains committed to advancing the scholarly field and engaging with the complex, evolving landscape of sexual media. Since its inception, *Porn Studies* has created a unique space for interdisciplinary, critical, and open discussions about pornography – a space that challenges taboos, disrupts normative assumptions, and fosters intellectual inquiry into a cultural form too often dismissed or demonized. We have celebrated and scrutinized pornography through diverse lenses, from race and labour to technology and transnational flows – and in doing so, we have built a platform that is as dynamic and multifaceted as the subject itself.

Yet as we celebrate our accomplishments, we acknowledge that elsewhere the same tired arguments persist: the moral panics, the misconceptions about porn's impact, and the political backlash against sexual expression. Increasingly, we see a global rightward shift that seeks to roll back the gains made in sexual freedom and expression, reinforcing censorship, criminalization, and stigmatization, and increasingly these involve a rejection of 'academic terrains of analysis and debate in favour of appeals to common sense and emotional intelligence' (Smith and Attwood 2013, 47), a trend we noted in anti-porn politics at the time of the journal's inception. This is horribly familiar now on multiple fronts – not only in the deplatforming of sex and sex workers and the eviscerating of fora for sexual cultures, but in attacks on gender studies, queer theory, and critical race studies, and more broadly in the respectability politics of most mainstream feminist discourse, threats to reproductive rights, anti-trans movements, anti-gay and gender legislation, book bans of LGBTI materials, anti-masturbation and sex education movements, men's rights movements, and the rise of the far right.

This is the context in which we now work, located within a neoliberal academia firmly focused on presenting itself as a respectable and lucrative business, with increasingly narrow markers of value, while a different kind of 'porn studies' continues to dominate academic publishing – churning out endless articles that demonstrate no understanding of the configurations they are studying or the academic histories of their analysis, with porn presented simply as emblematic of the terrifying or stultifying power of media and of sex.

This context only makes our work more vital. *Porn Studies* has always been a site of resistance against simplistic, one-dimensional views of pornography, and against the conservative forces that want to limit sexual discourse and exploration. We remain undeterred in our belief that pornography must be studied rigorously, thoughtfully, and inclusively, and we are committed to deepening our engagement with these urgent political issues.

Despite these challenges, the journal has flourished, driven by a remarkable collective of scholars, creators, and activists who have pushed the boundaries of what *Porn Studies* can be. We owe this success to our wonderful contributors, whose insightful, bold, and transformative work has made *Porn Studies* what it is today. From established academics to emerging scholars, from creators to activists, our contributors have been at the forefront of pushing the field into new, exciting directions. Their commitment to thoughtful, rigorous, and often courageous research has ensured that the journal continues to lead the field in innovation and relevance.

We are deeply grateful for the tireless support of our editorial board, whose guidance, expertise, and enthusiasm have been instrumental in shaping the journal's direction. Their unwavering commitment to fostering a space where complex and difficult discussions can take place has been essential in maintaining *Porn Studies* as a vibrant, engaged, and inclusive scholarly platform. We are indebted to the many, many academics who have contributed to the journal through anonymous review – their service has been considerable and their value to the journal and to individual authors should not be underestimated.

Looking ahead, we are keen to meet the challenges that our contributors have set out for us. We are energized by the calls for more interdisciplinary work, for deeper engagement with technological advancements such as AI and platform governance, and for further exploration of non-Western pornographies and decolonial perspectives. We recognize the pressing need to engage with policymakers, to inform public debate with evidence-based research, and to challenge the misinformation and stigma that still surround pornography. As the political landscape becomes more polarized, we are committed to ensuring that *Porn Studies* remains a leading voice for open, critical, and informed discussion.

We welcome new and emerging scholars with open arms and invite them to join the conversation. *Porn Studies* has always been a space that encourages fresh voices and innovative perspectives, and we are constantly seeking new contributors who can bring fresh ideas, challenges, and insights to the table. We actively welcome suggestions for special issues and collaborative projects that reflect the evolving nature of porn studies and its intersections with culture, technology, and politics. As the field grows, so too does our commitment to fostering an inclusive and supportive community where emerging voices can thrive.

While we acknowledge that pornography creators and scholars face persistent obstacles, including ongoing political backlash and moral conservatism, we are lucky enough to be able to provide a space where we can be resolute in our belief that studying pornography is essential for understanding the broader cultural, social, and political dynamics of our time. Pornography is a key site where issues of gender, race, sexuality, labour, and power are negotiated, and it is only by engaging with these complexities that we can contribute to broader discussions about freedom, equality, and representation.

Disclosure statement

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