

Trans Pornography

Mapping an Emerging Field

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Abstract This article introduces the field of trans pornography studies and makes a case for why studying it matters. We locate trans pornography within the broader field of porn studies, while also pointing to its importance to transgender studies. We map the history of trans pornography and examine the wider social, political, and economic forces contributing to the transformation of trans porn into a genre of mainstream straight porn. We discuss the economic organization of the trans porn industry and current industry trends, including geographical shifts in production and the rise of alternative production platforms. We address areas of future research and the need for more scholarship on the political economy of the trans porn industry, audiences and consumers, trans-masculine representation in pornography, and research that focuses on trans porn production outside the United States.

Keywords transgender, pornography, trans studies, porn studies, political economy

In April 2019 XBiz, one of the adult entertainment industry's leading publishers of business news, ran a cover story in its eponymous monthly magazine titled, "Trans Pop! How a Fringe Genre Captured the Imagination of Adult." It was a groundbreaking feature with trans performers taking center stage in an industry that has historically marginalized them. The article lauded the increased interest of mainstream production companies in elevating transgender pornography, transforming it from a niche genre into a staple of commercial pornography production. No longer left to a handful of independent studios in Los Angeles and San Francisco, trans porn is now being produced by transnational porn empires, such as Montreal-based Gamma Entertainment and megacorporation MindGeek, both of which are capitalizing on the genre's increasing popularity by consolidating trans porn production and heavily investing in it.

Concurrently, the realities of many trans performers on set have begun to change significantly in the past several years. Despite most trans porn being sold in a heteronormative market context, trans women in porn have traditionally

been restricted to shooting with male talent from the gay side of the industry. Mainstream performers from the ostensibly straight¹ side of the industry who decide to shoot with trans talent risk being blacklisted and having their careers in porn prematurely end, owing to what is widely known as HIV crossover stigma—a notion that shooting with performers on the gay side of the industry comes with a higher risk of contracting HIV. Recently, however, an increasing number of cisgender performers from the straight side of the industry have begun to advocate for working with trans talent, pointing to the fact that trans performers follow the same testing protocols and deserve to be featured in straight pornography at large. A number of well-known cis performers, many of them women, have now worked with trans performers like Venus Lux, Buck Angel, Domino Presley, Aubrey Kate, Chanel Santini, and Natalie Mars, thus increasingly pulling trans performers into the realm of straight porn production.

This repositioning of trans as just another genre within mainstream, commercial straight porn is taking place at a time when the industry is undergoing dramatic changes. Competition from tube sites, increasingly affordable video technology, and the emergence of alternative platforms of distribution, has led to a decline in profitability for many studios (Tarrant 2016). The rise of “professional-amateur” (“pro-am”) pornographers who film content from the comfort of their homes, often with other performers, is blurring the lines between amateur and professional pornography and causing a geographic dispersion of the industry away from its traditional centers of Los Angeles and San Francisco. In an increasingly competitive porn market, studios are now looking toward trans pornography and other pornographic niches such as bisexual porn, to maintain profit margins. The rise in popularity of trans and bisexual porn is beginning to destabilize the industry’s presumed straight/gay divide, further complicating ongoing tensions about testing protocols, HIV risk, and crossover performers.

How and why did a once relatively fringe genre, one that was produced by only a handful of studios, catch the imagination of big adult entertainment conglomerates? What are some of the wider social, political, and economic forces contributing to this transformation of trans porn into a genre of mainstream straight porn? How, moreover, can a deeper understanding of the history of trans pornography and its shifting politics of representation enrich academic thinking in ways that inform both transgender studies and pornography studies?

As the *XBiz* cover story and its positive reception suggest, the time has come to talk about trans pornography, its place within the broader erotic imaginary and sexual economy, and why studying it matters. In what follows, we map an emerging field of study by locating trans pornography within the broader field of porn studies and pointing to its importance to transgender studies. We then turn our attention to the current production landscape for transfeminine

and transmasculine porn, the genre's history, and erotic imaginaries, before ending by discussing areas of future research.

Locating Trans in Pornography Studies

Pornography has long been a topic of public discussion and debate, but it took the publication of Linda Williams's groundbreaking book, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible"* ([1989] 1999) for the history of pornography to be viewed as a subject worthy of serious scholarly attention. Other scholars soon followed Williams's lead, and within a decade, an emerging field was beginning to take shape (Church Gibson and Gibson 1993; Kipnis 1999; Williams 2004, 2014). In their introduction to the inaugural issue of *Porn Studies*, editors Feona Attwood and Clarissa Smith (2014: 1) acknowledge *Hard Core*'s influence on the field: "From this point on we can trace the gradual development of research focused on the history of pornography, the analysis of its production and consumption, its aesthetics, its significance for particular audiences, and its place in contemporary culture."

Over the past several decades, porn studies has evolved from a focus on the hard-core heterosexual films that were the subject of Williams's book to engage with different porn and porn-adjacent subgenres (Butler 2004; Waugh 1996; Escoffier 2009; Schaefer 1999; Gorfinkel 2017); technological innovations (Alilunas 2016; Heffernan 2015; Attwood 2010; Jacobs 2007), labor and production practices (Miller-Young 2014; Berg 2017), and audiences and spectatorship (Smith 2007; Neville 2018). Researchers have examined pornography's wider contexts of distribution and reception (Delany 1999; Comella 2013), with the goal of studying the "specific places it is produced, distributed, and consumed" (Juffer 1998: 14) in an effort to advance the call for a "porn studies-in-action" (Comella 2014: 69). Porn scholarship has analyzed class and cultural distinctions (Penley 2004; Kipnis 1999), race and desire (Mercer 1994; Shimizu 2007; Miller-Young 2014; Nash 2014; Cruz 2016), and the politics of queer representation (Trouble 2014; Rednour and Strano 2015; Strub 2015), while elevating the voices and experiences of performers (Nagle 1997; Lee 2015). Although it is beyond the scope of this article to offer a comprehensive literature review of the field as a whole, it is worth providing a brief overview in an effort to better situate research on trans pornography within a broader set of scholarly interests regarding pornography's significance as one of the most popular, not to mention profitable, forms of popular culture.

The history of pornography is fragmentary at best, owing largely to its illicit and stigmatized nature (Voss 2015), but the release of *Deep Throat* in 1972 is generally credited with propelling pornography "into the center of the cultural stage" (Schaefer 2002: 4), ushering in the era of "porno chic," as well as feminist backlash (Lederer 1980; Bronstein 2011). Feminists were far from united on the

issue of pornography, a divide that would only deepen throughout the 1980s as feminists clashed at the infamous Barnard Conference on Women's Sexuality in 1982 (Vance 1984; Queen and Comella 2008; Bronstein 2015) and as pornography's allegedly deleterious effects became a focus of the Reagan-era culture wars (Vance 1997; Strub 2010). Antipornography proponents positioned women as victims and men as aggressors, relying on a highly reductive understanding of gender to make their case about pornography's harms. Anticensorship feminists pushed back against this essentialist framing and complicated ideas about gender, power, and desire. In doing so, as Susan Stryker (2008: 218) notes, they helped "clear the intellectual ground" not only for queer theory but also for transgender studies.

In the decades since, the feminist and queer porn movements have challenged the tendency to discuss pornography, and ideas about gendered spectatorship and desire, as though they were monoliths. *The Feminist Porn Book* (Taormino et al. 2013: 9) emphasizes the ways in which feminist, queer, and trans pornography "uses explicit imagery to contest and complicate dominant representations of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, ability, age, body type, and other identity markers" in an effort to unsettle conventional understandings about gender, sex, and social hierarchies.

Many of the book's authors make the case for why pornography matters and how it can be used as a medium for new kinds of visibility and inclusion, especially for marginalized communities. Genderqueer performer Jiz Lee (2013: 275) notes that queer porn is one of the few venues where queer people can tell their stories on their own terms. Tobi Hill-Meyer (2013: 163) discusses working to create more inclusive spaces for trans women in feminist and queer porn, noting that she wants to make porn that "inspires people." Scholar Bobby Noble (2013: 304) argues that pornography helps make transmasculine bodies "knowable," a point echoed by performer Buck Angel (2013: 285), who writes about being contacted by trans men who thank him for helping them feel comfortable in their bodies. As these accounts suggest, pornography is, for many people, more than just an entertainment medium designed to titillate; it can also be life affirming and sustaining, offering a panoply of images through which bodies become "knowable," not only to others but also to themselves. Even though there has been an explosion of mainstream trans representation in the last few years, from *Orange Is the New Black* to *Pose*, for many people, trans or not, pornography has historically been and still is the first encounter they have with trans people, let alone naked trans bodies. This is important, not just for representational politics but because, as Eliza Steinbock (2016: 65) notes, it creates an "inter-subjective social space to explore and produce our sexual bodies," allowing for gendered imaginaries otherwise unimaginable to many people.

Despite the establishment of porn studies as a valid field of study—as evidenced not only by the journal *Porn Studies* but also by professional associations such as the Society for Cinema and Media Studies’ Adult Film History Scholarly Interest Group—there are still those for whom research on pornography remains a curious, and perhaps even frivolous or smutty, endeavor. Such framing ultimately makes visible the politics of respectability in academia, criticized as “homonormativity” in the context of gay and lesbian politics, whereby sex is positioned as a private matter typically relegated to the context of the family (Duggan 2003; Valentine 2007). Pornography, however, is about more than just arousing images; studying it can offer important insights about the larger political, economic, and social organization of a significant domain of cultural production and representation. Pornography is a place where political and social anxieties are played out, be it through public discourses regarding pornography as a public health crisis or various legislation that seeks to curtail its availability. It is a sector of the economy in which issues of labor, technology, gender inequality, class distinctions, racial differences, and modes of production and consumption become manifest. Thus, far from being narrow in focus, research on pornography has a great deal to offer scholars working in gender and cultural studies, economics, labor studies, law, urban studies, and more, and whose interests might include the sociology of organizations, media industries, fan cultures, and material history (see Church and Schaefer 2018).

For transgender studies specifically, pornography enables what Sandy Stone ([1991] 2006: 231) has called the “*productive* disruption of structured sexualities and spectra of desire.” Indeed, with Stone’s influence on transgender studies, it is surprising that trans pornography has not received more attention by trans scholars, given its refusal to make invisible trans bodies and pleasures, in particular penile pleasure, which, by medical authority, was not considered, and still is not in some contexts, part of “the permissible range of expressions of physical sexuality” for trans women (228). *The Transgender Studies Readers*, for example, include only passing references to pornography across both volumes, and neither engages directly with the topic of trans pornography (Stryker and Whittle 2006; Stryker and Aizura 2013).

Beyond sustained interest in trans porn by popular media (Dickson 2015; Herman 2015; Wischhover 2015; Bell 2016; Squires 2016; G. 2017a; Tierney 2017), scholarship on trans pornography is scant and much of it is dated and fails to take into account the perspectives of performers (Phillips 2006; Escoffier 2011; Ogas and Gaddam 2011). Research with trans sex workers regularly fails to extend its analysis to those working in porn (Sausa, Keatley, and Operario 2007; Operario et al. 2008; Slamah, Winter, and Ordek 2010). In addition to personal essays by performers (Chavalier 2007; Angel 2013; Hill-Meyer 2013; Lee 2015), pornography

scholarship has paid some limited attention to trans porn as a genre (Tibbals 2014); the representation of trans masculinity within feminist porn (Noble 2013); the development of the transfeminine porn market in the 1970s (Matte 2016); affect and erotics, such as in Morty Diamond's film *Trans Entities* (Steinbock 2014a); and the pedagogical aspects of trans porn (Barriault 2016; Spieldenner 2019). Research on trans representations on-screen and online can and should be expanded to include trans pornography (Horak 2014, 2017; Steinbock 2017; Keegan, Horak, and Steinbock 2018; Steinbock 2018).

Charting the Production Landscape for Transfeminine and Transmasculine Porn

Since its emergence in the late 1990s, most commercial trans pornography has been produced in Los Angeles (LA), with San Francisco home to a handful of smaller, mostly independent queer porn studios. During much of this time the majority of performers were based in close proximity to the studios, in and around the San Fernando Valley area of LA or in the Bay Area (Tarrant 2016). In the past decade, however, the geography of the adult industry has begun to fracture. The reasons for this are numerous and include the passage of LA County's mandatory condom law, Measure B, in 2012; the emergence of various online platforms for the sale and distribution of self-produced pornography; and the rise of adult webcamming, in which anyone with a computer, webcam, and high-speed internet can make adult content for paying customers from anywhere in the world (Comella 2016; Jones 2016; Pezzutto 2018). A significant number of performers have moved away from or decided against moving to California, mainly because of the high cost of living and a shift in pornography production toward a decentralized model of self-production (Pezzutto 2019). Las Vegas, with its affordable rents, lower taxes, and less-restrictive regulation, is quickly emerging as an alternative locale, with many trans performers now opting to live there, regularly making the four-hour drive to LA for professional shoots. Studios, for their part, have been slower to leave California because of the existing film industry infrastructure and an attachment to life in California, with a number of established directors choosing to remain there. Many studios, such as trans porn pioneer Grooby Productions, have managed to keep production in LA by no longer operating formal offices there and by allowing their office staff to work from home since the mid-2010s. Other companies, such as TransSensual and TransFixed, never operated formal studios and instead hire film locations and crews for the day. The decision in 2018 by MindGeek to open an office and studio for its trans porn flagship TransAngels in Las Vegas, however, may signal the beginning of at least a partial shift of the trans production landscape away from California. In addition to Las Vegas, Florida, with TwoTGIRLs and Trans500, has also emerged as a place of trans porn production. Additionally, many companies

such as Evil Angel and Grooby have expanded their operations overseas and shoot with local talent in Thailand, Brazil, Japan, the Philippines, the United Kingdom, and Canada.

A persistent challenge in conducting research on sex-related businesses, including porn production companies, is that very little reliable data exist regarding sales and profits. Adult companies are typically not publicly traded entities and thus do not have to disclose their finances. As a result, the most widely circulating figures about the size and profitability of the industry are estimates or based on insider reports that are difficult to verify.

While Pornhub may not be representative of commercial studio sales and revenue, it periodically publishes reports that may be considered indicative of global internet porn consumption patterns, given its status as the world's most frequented pornographic website and the eighth most visited site on the internet (SimilarWeb 2019). Data suggest that trans porn, despite recent publicity, makes up only 1.97 percent of all searches on Pornhub, but that demand for it has significantly increased in recent years, roughly quadrupling between 2014 and 2017 (Pornhub 2017). Renamed "transgender,"² the category was the thirteenth most viewed category last year (Pornhub 2018). Other popular tube sites, such as Youporn (2018), similarly highlight the genre's rising popularity, with trans porn being the sixteenth most searched term on the tube website in 2018. This recent interest in trans pornography has coincided with a rise in public awareness about trans people, perhaps best exemplified by Laverne Cox, who was the first trans person to grace the cover of *Time*, in 2014, the same year demand on Pornhub began to rise significantly (Steinmetz 2014).

Activities on the ground seem to corroborate the recent growth of trans porn. While many mainstream porn companies have disappeared or faced significant downsizing owing to the larger industry shifts outlined above, trans pornography appears to have bucked the trend. The past five years alone have seen a significant number of trans porn studios, many of which are backed by big porn empires, emerge on the production landscape. In 2015 Montreal-based Mile High Media and director Nica Noelle founded TransSensual. In 2017, the largest pornography company in the world, Montreal-based and Luxemburg-headquartered MindGeek, significantly expanded its venture into studio-produced trans porn with TransAngels. In 2018 Gamma Entertainment created TransFixed under the direction of Bree Mills and has since garnered attention beyond the industry for popularizing trans lesbian porn (Valens 2019). In 2019 San Diego-based Naughty America began its foray into the genre with its first trans studio, Tonight's TS. Additionally, a number of smaller, independent studios have emerged within the past five years. Florida-based TwoTGirls was launched in 2015 and remains one of the few trans-owned and trans-operated studios in the industry today.

In 2017 LA-based Gender X and VRB Trans joined the fray, with VRB specializing in virtual reality pornography.

Trans pornography's apparent expansion amid an otherwise challenging environment is at least in part due to its distinctiveness and the fact that it is difficult to replicate. Given competition with amateur and semiprofessional pornographers, who upload countless hours of video onto tube sites and clip stores, the material that generates income in commercial studio pornography today is above all niche and hard to imitate. Asked in an interview with the *International Business Times* (Herman 2015), Adam Grayson, then chief financial officer of Evil Angel, stated that trans porn had been the highest-grossing category of pornography at his company for decades and was sold at a 25 percent premium.

Trans men in porn, on the other hand, are relatively less visible compared to trans women, mostly because a significant demographic of porn producers and consumers are straight men with an interest in the feminine form. Nonetheless, porn with trans men is on the rise too, mainly owing to a growing demand from women and gay men (G. 2017a). Unlike most of the trans porn industry, the studio landscape for transmasculine porn remains firmly in the hands of mostly independent, small studios, many based in the San Francisco Bay Area, and often owned and operated by trans and/or queer people. These include, for example, Cyd St. Vincent's Bonus Hole Boys, James Darling's FTM Fucker, Courtney Trouble's Trouble Films, Shine-Louise Houston's Heavenly Spire, and Michelle Austin's now-retired Texas-based Kennston Network. These companies can be situated within the broader lesbian, queer, and trans porn tradition in the Bay Area, dating back to *On Our Backs* and Fatale Video in the 1980s, as well as SIR Video and the films of trans filmmaker Christopher Lee in the late 1990s. As demand for transmasculine porn grows, bigger studios are beginning to show a greater interest in trans men. In 2019, for example, MindGeek's flagship gay studio, Men.com, featured trans performer Tommy Tanner in a scene with Ryan Bones, signaling big gay porn's budding interest in trans men (Villarreal 2019). Although much of the porn featuring trans men is marketed to gay or queer audiences, some of the mainstream trans studios have begun to feature trans men in their productions, thus opening up space for the consumption of transmasculine bodies in straight porn. Examples include Grooby's *House of Whores* (2018) featuring Eddie Wood, Evil Angel's *Girl/Boy 2* (2016) with Buck Angel, and TransSensual's *Naughty TS Hotties* (2017) and *Buck Angel Superstar* (2017), with Viktor Belmont and Buck Angel, respectively.

Though demand has exponentially risen in the past five years, studio-produced trans porn has been a mainstay niche in pornography since the late 1990s. Companies such as Grooby Productions, which was founded in 1996 with the aim to produce trans pornography, as well as Devil's Films and Evil Angel,

were responsible for initially bringing studio-produced trans porn to a wider straight audience. Joey Silvera, a pioneer of commercial trans pornography, joined Evil Angel in the mid-1990s and directed the first installment of the *Rogue Adventures* series in 1998, which is still produced today, with its forty-fifth installment released in 2016. Buck Angel, on the other hand, was one of the first trans men to appear in studio porn in the early 2000s.

The history of trans porn, however, predates its widespread distribution in the late 1990s. As obscenity laws began to change, and with the sexual revolution of the 1960s, an increasingly unapologetic generation of trans people, drag queens, and female impersonators began to consciously reject the middle-class politics of respectability of Christine Jorgensen and prior generations of gender-nonconforming people. Entertainers like Coccinelle were among some of the first to appear nude or seminude in a variety of magazines, tabloid newspapers, and pulp fiction, often framed in salacious and sensationalizing ways (Meyerowitz 2009). As pornography production entered its golden age from the late 1960s onward, trans performers such as Ajita Wilson and Jill Monro appeared in a number of pornographic movies. Wilson appeared as early as 1976 in Italian pornographic blaxploitation movies such as *Black Deep Throat* and *The Nude Princess*, while Monro was featured in a number of Gerard Damiano's movies from the late 1970s into the early 1980s. While Wilson and Monro both appeared in their movies after having undergone gender-confirmation surgery (GCS), one of the very first trans women to appear on-screen with penis was Sulka in pioneering director Kim Christy's *Dream Lovers* in 1980, thereby hinting at the emergence of a genre that would become well established by the end of the 1990s.

Consumer Interest and Diversification

With the exception of smaller, independent producers who market their porn to queer audiences and women, almost all mainstream trans porn companies market their products as a straight specialty for men. While information on porn consumers is scarce and difficult to obtain, available data from clients of trans sex workers provide some possible explanations for trans porn's appeal. Studies conducted with clients of trans female sex workers suggest that men enjoyed the transgressive aspects of the encounter and the ability to do things that were considered otherwise taboo for straight men (Mauk, Perry, and Muñoz-Laboy 2013). One study found that those attracted to trans women identified as either straight or bisexual, finding a 50 percent split between the two (Weinberg and Williams 2010). Another study of 46 men interested in trans women found that 20 identified as heterosexual, 14 as bisexual, 4 as gay, and 8 refusing to identify (Operario et al. 2008), while a larger study of 236 viewers of pornography featuring trans women reported that 69 percent identified as heterosexual (Billard 2019).

Mainstream trans porn's queer appeal to the straight-identified male viewer is arguably made most starkly visible by the large and erect penises that feature prominently as the object of desire on many DVD covers alongside an otherwise hyperfeminine embodiment common for straight porn, featuring large breasts, skinny figures, long hair, and lots of makeup (G. 2017b: 178). While one of the very first trans women to appear in studio-produced porn prior to GCS, Sulka, was able to have a successful career post-GCS,³ there is a widespread notion among performers today that undergoing GCS is tantamount to ending one's career. Even though trans performers are no longer expected to shoot big loads and top men consistently, the fact that many performers choose to skip testosterone blockers prior to a shoot and/or use performance-enhancing drugs hints at the enduring centrality of the erect penis in trans porn.

While straight men are the largest group of consumers, there is a growing market for trans porn beyond this demographic, which includes trans people, queer people, and women at large. Companies that market toward these demographics include San Francisco-based Pink & White Productions, which has been producing queer porn featuring trans women since 2005 under its Crash Pad Series; numerous small, independent studios featured on Pinklabel.tv; and Courtney Trouble's QueerPorn.TV.

Charting Future Research

While we have charted a brief overview of the genre, many gaps remain. Relatively little is known about the preinternet history of trans porn and the various key figures who have shaped it. Pivotal figures may be a point of departure for reflecting on the history of trans porn as well as broader issues surrounding the erotic representation of trans people. Future scholarship may look at the careers of notable figures like Sulka, who was one of the first trans women to appear on screen non-op, Vaniity, who in 2004 was the first performer to win Adult Video News's (AVN) Transsexual Performer of the Year Award, or Jill Monro, one of the first trans women to appear in mainstream commercial pornography in the United States. More work, in particular, needs to be done on the topic of transmasculine porn, including on early pioneers such as filmmaker Christopher Lee and Diesel, one of the first trans men to appear in porn, during the early 2000s. This also includes looking at the trans men who have played important roles in front of as well as behind the camera, such as Cyd St. Vincent, James Darling, James Tanner, Viktor Belmont, Buck Angel, Joshua Riverdale, and many others.

Relatively little is known about the industry's political economy and the various economic, social, spatial, and organizational aspects of trans porn, including film festivals, industry trade shows, and more. Such research is particularly

pertinent, given a rapidly changing production landscape and new contexts of reception. Future scholarship may ask how the emergence of alternative income platforms such as webcamming, online clip stores, and premium content services has transformed the lives of trans performers and operations of trans porn studios. It may also examine the ramifications of spatial changes in the industry as performers are increasingly moving away from former production hotspots such as San Francisco and LA, and how this dispersion is affecting the performer community.

Organizational research may look at the emergence of the Adult Performers Actors Guild (APAG), the performer's union that was founded in 2017, including the role trans performers have taken to bring this organization to life. APAG has been particularly vocal in drawing attention to the discrimination of performers on social media platforms, successfully organizing a strike at the Instagram headquarters in 2019 (Aydin 2019). Additionally, research may look at other organizations in the industry, such as the Adult Performer Advocacy Committee, the Free Speech Coalition, and the Trans Adult Industry Foundation, and how they represent and negotiate the needs of the various stakeholders on the trans side of the industry.

Despite the public attention that award shows garner, many questions remain unanswered. What are the finances behind these shows? Who makes the decisions about awards? What are the politics of trans representation at these shows? Up until 2012, for instance, trans performers were not given the opportunity to accept their awards onstage at the annual AVN Awards; instead their names were displayed on a slide show at the end of the ceremony (G. 2017b). Today, trans performers are allowed onstage but are typically considered for only a handful of specific trans categories. Given the degree to which winning a major award can boost a performer's pay rates and status, awards are ultimately as much about economic opportunity as they are about inclusion.

In response to community pressure and an online petition led by trans performer Chelsea Poe, Grooby renamed its award show in 2014 to the Transgender Erotica Awards, while Pornhub changed its trans category in 2018. These changes have been part of a larger, albeit slow change in trans-related terminology in pornography. While people are made aware of the outcomes of these processes through press releases, not much is known of the history of trans terminology in porn. Future research may chart such a history and examine how community concerns as well as economic considerations, such as search engine optimization (SEO), have shaped these processes.

Drawing attention to the "cotton ceiling," Steinbock (2014b) points to a transmasculine and postoperative transfeminine normativity in queer porn, arguing that trans pornographic representations are yet to uncover their full

potential. Interest in the representational politics and ethical production practices of feminist and queer porn has grown in recent years, among both researchers and journalists, but there is a tendency among those writing about the porn industry to exaggerate differences between mainstream pornography and its more alternative counterparts, exalting the former while often criticizing the latter. The resulting distinctions often conceal more than they reveal about power, consent, authenticity, and agency on set. One of the goals of this issue has been to draw attention to mainstream trans pornography as a medium of inquiry. The mainstream part of the pornography industry, which provides a large number of performers with income, is an area in need of further research. A more nuanced framing of pornography is particularly important in the context of the trans side of the industry, where there is significant overlap between performers who shoot for independent, queer, and feminist companies as well as mainstream studios. To complicate things further, mainstream studios such as TransSensual and Transfixed are now increasingly drawing on feminist porn rhetoric and marketing trans porn as female centered and empowering.

In thinking about *TSQ*'s dedication to scholarship about and from the global South, there is a need for more research on the trans porn production landscapes beyond the United States. While we have briefly touched on US companies filming in countries such as Thailand, Brazil, Mexico, and the Philippines, it has been difficult to find scholarship on trans pornographies outside the United States, let alone on or from the global South, which, admittedly, is a shortcoming of this issue. Such research might look at transnational flows of labor and capital by US production companies to the global South as well as trans porn production taking place outside the United States more broadly, including at webcam studios. Places with established trans porn industries such as Japan, Latin America, and Europe would be an obvious point of departure from US-centric research.

Another area in need of more research is the impact of policy on pornography. In 2018, for example, the Trump administration passed some of the most drastic and far-reaching antisex work legislation in decades with the Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act (SESTA) and Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act (FOSTA) (Q 2017). Widely criticized by sex work advocates, SESTA/FOSTA has also impacted porn performers, many who increasingly rely on escorting to make up for the diminishing availability of work from pornographic studios. Future research needs to more closely examine the impact of SESTA/FOSTA, as well as the effects of ensuing corporate censorship, on porn performers, specifically on trans performers. Research may help situate these recent policy changes within pornography's long and complex history regarding various obscenity laws and morality crusades (Strub 2010).

In late 2018, on the coattails of SESTA/FOSTA, Tumblr decided to ban all “pornographic” content from its platform, a topic examined by Carolyn Bronstein in this issue. Since then, Instagram and Twitter have followed suit and are increasingly cracking down on porn performers. Many performers report having their accounts suspended or removed, despite influencers and celebrities posting significantly more graphic photos. As social media plays an increasingly important role in managing their careers and generating income, many porn performers report significant mental distress over the suspension of their social media accounts (Pezzutto 2019: 43). One of the first issues that APAG, the adult performers’ union, addressed was social media discrimination. More research needs to be done on the importance of social media in porn and how these policies affect not just the careers but the mental health of performers. Given a relatively high rate of regularly occurring suicides in the industry, scholars interested in labor issues will need to look at the increasingly vocal conversation around mental health in the industry and how this intersects with social media technologies.

While we have touched on some consumer-related data, more consumption-oriented research is required. Such research is particularly challenging, owing to the anonymity of the internet and the significant stigma around trans attraction. When thinking about consumers of trans pornography, future research should look beyond straight men, as the industry is starting to discover that queer people, trans people, and women more broadly, are also consumers of trans porn.

There is an emerging body of research on pornography, race, and representation (Shimizu 1999; Fung 2007; Shimizu 2010; Miller-Young 2014), but very little of this has looked specifically at transgender pornography. Transgender studies, in turn, has also turned its attention to issues of race (Koyama 2006; Roen 2006; Aizura et al. 2014; Ellison et al. 2017; Snorton 2017), but with no attention to pornography. There are numerous issues around race and racism in trans porn that need to be foregrounded. Trans porn is overwhelmingly white, while trans women of color are overrepresented in street-based sex work. Porn featuring Black trans performers is often relegated to the sidelines and sold on separate websites, such as Grooby’s Black Tgirls. Many performers opt to erase their Latinx or other ethnic backgrounds by choosing white-sounding stage names. We hope that porn and transgender studies scholars interested in issues around race will turn their attention to trans pornography. Following in the footsteps of pornography studies, more work needs to be done on the aesthetic and political dimensions of trans pornography, including visual analyses around representation.

As technologies such as artificial intelligence, virtual reality, augmented reality, and robots are becoming more sophisticated and accessible, trans pornography research is set to be a fertile ground for research at the intersection of science and technology, transgender studies, and pornography studies. As human

bodies are increasingly freed of their biological limits, technology is set to dramatically reshape the role of queer and trans bodies in pornography. What will the advent of customizable, humanoid sex robots, for example, mean for a pornographic genre that draws crowds for its display of queer bodies?

Trans pornography scholarship may also consider drawing on disability studies as ableism in trans porn—and porn at large—often goes unmarked, despite the apparent queerness of bodies being the selling point of trans porn.

There are a number of productive tensions that lie at the intersection of pornography, trans, and feminist studies. Culminating in the feminist “sex wars,” feminist scholarship has had an illustrious past with pornography as well as trans people (Whittle 2006; Jeffreys 2016). Similarly, LGBTQ+ rights advocacy has not always been particularly vocal about sex workers’ rights and public/commercial sex more broadly (Valentine 2007: 241). Much work remains to be done to uncover the productive tensions between feminism, queer rights advocacy, sex workers’ rights, and trans pornography.

In the articles that follow, we showcase contributions by both academic researchers and industry insiders and have, in the process, tried to foreground trans and queer voices. We begin this issue with a poem by trans performer Sly Fawkes. Historian Whitney Strub’s article provides a much-needed genealogy of commercial trans porn, from the work of pioneering and understudied director Kim Christy in the 1980s, to the late 1990s work of Joey Silvera, who, perhaps more than anybody else, was responsible for locating trans porn firmly within a heteronormative market context. Matt Richardson focuses on the work of trail-blazing trans performer Ajita Wilson. Not only was Wilson one of the first trans women to appear in erotic cinema, but, as Richardson highlights, her Black identity figured centrally in her performances during the 1970s and 1980s. RL Goldberg’s contribution provides us with an important perspective on the history and pedagogy of transmasculine porn, looking at three key films that helped define the genre. Aster Gilbert draws on Steinbock’s (2016) framing of pornography as engaging the viewer beyond the screen and applies this to contemporary fan video remixes, including how these clips can serve as a point of departure for imagining different gendered embodiments. Valentina Mia, a now-retired performer, talks about her time in the industry and how the Trump administration’s SESTA/FOSTA legislation drastically reshaped her career. Carolyn Bronstein expands the discussion of SESTA/FOSTA, coupling it with an analysis of corporate censorship to examine the role of Tumblr as a locus for trans porn and trans community prior to its abandonment of pornography. Rae Threat, one of the few women in the industry behind the camera, showcases her work in a photo essay that grapples with issues around representation in porn, including race and body positivity. Korra Del Rio, an established performer who has worked in the

industry since 2014, shows in her essay how important professionalism is in the generation of sexual fantasies in porn and looks at some of the more practical issues performers face on an everyday basis. Geoffrey H. Nicholson's contribution seeks to bring the voice of a cis male porn consumer into the conversation as he considers his consumption of trans porn and attraction to trans people through the lens of transamory. Skylar Adams highlights in her essay the role that porn can play in providing community and economic stability for trans performers. Finally, Laura Horak discusses her experience curating a trans erotic exhibit at the University of Toronto and some of the limits of the archive, especially when it comes to preserving trans erotic history.

As a trans ethnographer researching the trans porn industry and a cis porn scholar interested in aspects of the industry that are often overlooked, we hope our fruitful collaboration on this issue signals just some of the intellectual possibilities that can arise when transgender studies and pornography studies meet.

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Notes

1. The commercial pornography industry has historically been divided between "straight" and "gay," though these labels are best understood to refer to talent pools and/or consumer desires rather than performer or viewer sexuality.
2. The most common term under which trans pornography has historically been marketed and sold has been *shemale/she-male*, which was the category under which it was classified by Pornhub until early 2018. Other terms that have historically been used for the genre have been *tranny*, *transsexual*, and *hermaphrodite*. Following pressure from various people within as well as outside the industry, companies have begun to adopt the term *trans* or *TS* in lieu of other terms considered offensive. The industry has been slow to adapt to this change, which has been at least partially due to marketing considerations and search engine rankings.
3. In 1981 Sulka featured in *The Transformation of Sulka* and had many successful movies post-op such as *Sulka and Candy* (1982), *Divine Atrocities* (1983), *Sulka's Wedding* (1983), and *Sulka's Daughter* (1984).

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