

UNIVERSITY OF TAMPERE

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UNPLEASANT PLEASANT PLACE

The essence of a Porn Shop?

Master's Thesis
Department of Journalism and Mass Communication
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AALTO, SATU: UNPLEASANT PLEASANT PLACE The essence of a
Porn Shop?

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Journalism and Mass Communication, Master's Program of Places, Spaces
and Transnational Relations (ISSS)

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Aim:

This study examines perceptions of place and space, and how porn shops fit into these perceptions. Place is understood as something concrete, whereas space is understood as something abstract. To exist, a space requires a place. In addition, this study observes how shame, stigma, taboo, and (fear of) other, are present. Research questions; 'What and where is a porn shop in terms of Place and Space?' and 'Are the Other, Shame and Stigma placed when visiting a porn shop?' were treated both empirical and theoretical ways.

Approach:

Conversational, philosophical and psychological; covering history of sexuality and porn, society in general, and different cultures. Empirical and theoretical fuse.

Data:

Collected by using participant observation; comparing results with the findings by other researchers, interviews and open discussion boards. Prime research method, both ethnography (naturalistic branch) and auto-ethnography.

Conclusion:

The term 'Unpleasant pleasant place' is accurate to describe the context of my study. However porn shops also fit into the idea of place, space, and non-place.

Keywords: Non-place, Place, Space, Porn, the Other, Shame, Stigma, Taboo, Sexuality, Sex, Media, Porn shop, Feminism, Ethics, Media, Auto-ethnography.

TAMPEREEN YLIOPISTO

Tiedotusopin laitos

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Pro gradu –tutkielma, 101 sivua

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Tämä tutkielma tarkastelee tilan ja paikan käsitystä, ja sitä kuinka pornokauppa sopii näihin käsityksiin. Paikka ymmärretään konkreettisenä, tila abstraktina. Ollakseen olemassa, tila vaatii paikan. Myös häpeän, stigman, tabun ja “fear of the Other” käsitteet ovat vahvasti läsnä. Tutkimuskysymyksiä, ‘Mikä ja missä pornokauppa on suhteessa tilaan ja paikkaan?’ sekä ‘Ovatko the Other, häpeä, stigma ja tabu läsnä pornokaupassa?’ käsiteltiin sekä empiirisesti että teoreettisesti.

Lähestymistapa on keskusteleva, filosofinen ja psykologinen; pornon ja seksuaalisuuden historiaa, yhteiskuntaa yleisesti sekä erilaisia kulttuureja käsittelevä. Empiria ja teoria sulautuvat.

Data on kerätty osallistuvalla havainnoinnilla, sekä strukturoimattomilla haastatteluilla. Löydöksiä, omia ja toisten tutkijoiden, verrattiin keskenään. Myös keskustelupalstoja tutkittiin. Primaarinen tutkimusmetodi oli sekä etnografia (naturalistinen) että autoetnografia.

Tuloksena, termi ‘epämiellyttävä miellyttävä paikka’ on paikkansapitävä. Tosin, pornokauppa sopii myös tilan, paikan ja epäpaikan määritteiden alle.

Avainsanat: Epäpaikka, Paikka, Tila, Porno, the Other, Häpeä, Stigma, Tabu, Seksuaalisuus, Seksi, Media, Feminismi, Etiikka, Media, Pornokauppa, Autoetnografia.

*Dedicated to a person living in the middle of place
and space, concrete and abstract; in a space in which
no one else can see into.*

With Love.

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1 INTRODUCTION

“I feel privileged that I met C.G. Jung in the same times where he was searching and had no definite formulations. I remember how I said: ‘But what you say today is just the contrary of what you said last week,’ and he answered: ‘That may be so, but this is true, and the other was also true; life is paradox.’ It was a most stimulating experience.” –

Tina Keller

(Swan, 2006:505)

In recent years, the sex-industry and its by-products have once again come to the fore. This is evidenced by an ever-growing discussion in the media about pornography, prostitution, erotic-dancers, illegal porn, escorts, adult toys and other related topics. Such discussion has been directly fuelled by recent studies in the field, such as: examining prostitution and prostitutes in Finland (Kontula: 2008), erotic dancers, prostitutes and corporeal globalization (Penttinen: 2004), porn in popular culture in *Jokapäiväinen Pornomme* (edit, Nikunen, Paasonen, Saarenmaa: 2005), *Mediated Sex, Pornography & Postmodern Culture* (McNair: 1996) or the sex industry as a whole (Williams: 2004).

Whereas the field was earlier dominated by a hardcore feminist approach (Lederer: 1980, Dworkin: 1981, 1985, 1987, MacKinnon: 1993, etc.), recent studies have taken an approach both for and against the feminist perspective. Researchers seem to have moved away from the extremely black and white opinionated ideas that earlier characterized the field. It has become clear that the pornography industry, like many other study topics, can be seen as both disturbing and providing. Pamela Paul states; *“One need not be a prude or a religious zealot to experience revulsion at the sight of certain pornography, just as one need not to be a depraved pervert or a lefty activist to use pornography.”* (2005:10). In other words, researchers are now able to see pornography as both, as a good and bad thing, not just one or the other. Regarding Harri Kalha (2007:15), the word porn can presently be seen as endlessly versatile. It is a

phenomenon that manages to penetrate the whole visual culture of art, literature, and media.

Although considerable research has been devoted to the actor, rather less attention has been paid to the places they might occupy. Indeed, little attention has been given to one of the most visible and concrete places for pornography and adult toys, the high street porn shop. So far I have managed to find only a few articles dealing with pornographic establishments (Berkowitz: 2006, Hefley: 2007, Stein: 1990). This may be considered surprising in light of the interest attached to place in recent anthropological studies on urban environments, especially those by Marc Augé (1995). For Augé the super-modernity creates non-places, places which are not themselves anthropological places, and which do not integrate the earlier places. The aim of this paper is to extend the concept of place / non-place in order to examine the behavior of the actors in a porn shop. This is the exact reason why I feel it is a necessity to take the reader through different space and place interpretations together with an in-depth take on pornography and the essence of porn shops. Essentially, this is a study about a place where we simultaneously do and do not want to be, and about the potential reasons causing this situation.

In this thesis I look to use space and place as terms that will go together as complementary forces; place being something that is concrete and virtually unchanging, and space being something abstract. Space can be seen as something that people create in their mind of the Place. The idea of space changes from one person to the next. However, though complementary concepts, they do go both together and separately. Paradoxically, in order to be able to think of place and space, as separate singular entities, one must be aware of both of these concepts as whole. While I find this to be the case with place and space, I am arguing that a similar thing occurs concerning the concepts of sex and sexuality. To talk about a place one needs to be aware of the concept of space, and to talk about sex one needs to be aware of the concept of sexuality and vice versa. In my understanding neither can be spoken of effectively in isolation. It can be said that this is an examination of how a porn shop relates to the diversities of the perception of place and space. Like any other subject matter, pornography requires a place to exist.

Customer, when purchasing a DVD:

*"Do you have a problem with the whole arsehole-
thing, you know, with anal sex?"*

My wife does."

1.2 Research questions and problems involved and evolved

Traditionally research questions should, at the end, take form relatively easily. However this was not true in my case. Since the setting of the research did, in a way, come before the research problems, it made even finding the strict research problems somewhat hard. Not surprisingly an interesting place is not enough on its own. To think that Everet Hughes is reported to have remarked, only half jokingly, that *“the researcher should select the research problem for which the setting chosen is the ideal site!”* (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995:37) This could not have been further away from my circumstances. Once the topic took form, it became clear that due to its massive nature it offered all sorts of possibilities and directions. This made it really hard to pin point the tangible questions. Finally I came up with two general research questions, which, in my opinion, enable a larger philosophical view of the chosen topic. Admittedly, artistic freedom was used.

What and where is a porn shop in terms of Place and Space?

Are the Other, Shame, and Stigma placed when visiting a porn shop?

Question considering Place and Space is in its essence theoretical one, whereas as the latter research question represents more the empirical side of this work. To illustrate my time spend on the field, I have inserted anecdotes from the field and descriptions of my own feelings whilst on the field within the text. These segments of my field-diary are used throughout the thesis.

Once introduced to the works methodological part the text will take its reader through the history of sexuality and pornography and from there to different types of place and space perceptions. After the place and space discourse the reader is introduced to potential shame and stigma appearances and the idea of the Other within the place and space. From thereon the text will carry the reader towards the ends discussion, bringing all the elements together. It is in my aspiration for this paper to be readable cross scholarly.

Customer wanted me to know that he was new to the town and how amazed he was about the amount of toys and lubricants sold here. He then wondered whether he should bring his girlfriend with him, and asked: "Are women allowed to come here?" What? Did he not see the place around him? He was in the middle of pink toy-invasion, including creams, clothes, shoes etc. The shop actually looks really feminine, and pink. He did not seem particularly nervous, and that's what normally explains unusual questions.

2 METHODOLOGY

It has been almost a hundred years since, with the lead of Robert Ezra Park, the Chicago School pioneered fieldwork and research whose primary focus was human beings and their normal social behavior, instead of just their historical development or social problems. (Madge, 1963:89) The Chicago School specialized in both urban sociology and research of the urban environment by combining theory and ethnographic fieldwork.

Ethnography can be seen as a study of both explicit and tacit cultural knowledge (Spradley 1980:8). According to Frake (in Spradley 1980:9), culture is best thought of as; *“A set of principles for creating dramas, for writing script, and of course, for recruiting players and audiences... Culture is not simply a cognitive map that people acquire, in whole or in part, more or less accurately, and then learn to read. People are not just map-readers; they are map-makers. People are cast out into imperfectly charted, continually revised sketch maps. Culture does not provide a cognitive map, but rather a set of principles for map making and navigation. Different cultures are like different schools of navigation designed to cope with different terrains and seas”*. (Frake, 1997:6-7)

For me, ethnography seems to be something that is inbuilt. It is, yet another feature in one's personal essence. Although it has not been that long since I first learned that the concept even existed, the observation of one's surroundings has always been of great importance to me. Does the fact that one is not familiar with the academic word for a certain action, although one practices it, change anything? How much value is actually based on our understanding of words? Just like Sirpa Lappalainen [et al.] *Etnografia metodologiana* (2007:14)ⁱ I also believe that the power of the ethnographic approach is its potential to produce socially meaningful research. This is possible because ethnography makes visible different types of practices that are possibly restricting people's functionality.

ⁱ Original in Finnish, English translation by author.

In addition to observing, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:25) define ethnography as something that involves the ethnographer participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time. It involves, watching what happens, listening to what is said, and asking questions. It is in fact collecting whatever data is available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research. Ethnography means learning from people, rather than studying them. (Spradley, 1980:3)

As in so many other disciplines inside the so-called general definition, there are also several more in-depth schools. For instance naturalism, constructionalism, and positivism form their own schools and followers. As expected all of these schools also have to face critics. Of all these disciplines, naturalism seemed to be the one for me.

Naturalism proposes that, as much as possible, the social world should be studied in its “natural” state, undisturbed by the researcher. Hence natural, not artificial settings such as experiments or formal interviews, should be the primary source of data. Furthermore, the research must be carried out in ways that are sensitive to the nature of the setting. The primary aim should be to describe what happens in the setting, how the people involved see their own actions and those of others, and the context in which the action takes place. A key element of naturalism is the demand that the social researcher adopt an attitude of “respect” or “appreciation” towards the social world (Hammersley&Atkinson, 1995:6). In Matza's words, naturalism is the philosophical view that remains true to the nature of the phenomenon under study (Ibid & Matza, 1969:5). According to naturalism, one of the first requirements of social research is a devotion to the phenomena under study, not to any particular set of methodological principles, no matter how powerfully supported by philosophical arguments. Obviously, science is not value free, the expectations and feelings of the researcher do not only affect the research, without a doubt they also become part of the process itself. It can be said that feelings become resources for understanding the phenomenon under study. What’s more, emotions reflect our ideologies. (Kleinman, 1991:184-186)

2.2 Methods in use

I fully realize the fact that there still exist those “old school shops” that have taped windows with blinking neon signs. For obvious reasons they also should exist because there is an understandable function for them. Just like, there is the need for different types of bars, these shops are needed and the clientele for them does exist.

In this thesis I am concentrating on the somewhat softer shops with clear windows etc. those shops that already are “more easily accessible”. In my opinion it is not important for this study to take on board every single shop that deals with porn. For instance shops that have private- rooms and are evidently mostly aimed only at men do not serve the purposes of this study. This is not to say that they would not have an important role on their own/in their own genre. At this point I should also note that in my opinion similar thing occurs with the online-shops. By no means am I arguing that the internet would not have an important role when it comes to pornographic industry. The internet’s influence is undeniable. It is merely the fact that I feel it to be another study’s task to tackle with the whole phenomenon. Especially in view of the fact that the internet has influenced society on so many different levels with various different social matters, its impact has been somewhat universal. At the time being, I settle for noting that when combined with an actual, concretely existing shop, online-shop provides a secure space to explore the products. When this is done at each individual’s own tempo it can give one the possibility to prepare oneself, in advance, before actually entering the shop.

This study by no means aims to make porn shops like groceries. I do recognize that it is essential for porn shops to be a little bit “sinful”, a bit exciting. This said, similar to groceries, it is also possible to divide porn shops into roughly three categories: the everyday local shop, the high street shop, and the exclusive shop. The porn shop I worked in shifted somewhere between the high street shop and the exclusive shop. The place consisted of three different parts: of the actual frontal shop, DVD-side of the shop and of downstairs Adult video-arcade. I made conscious choice to give the downstairs movie-theatre very little, if all, attention within this study. The first two, the actual shop side and the DVD-side, were in my main interest for they appealed for wider range of people; both gender and age ways as well as having the counter and cash register placed on that area. In addition the interaction with the clientele for movie-arcade was virtually

non-existing since they paid the entry fee in the machine, hardly ever purchased a product from the shop and could exit the premises through different door. However, when entering the premises everyone used the same door. Frontal shop was square shaped and approximately 50 square meter, had fitting room in one of the corners and a large table in the middle in which all the lotions, lubricants and oils were placed. The shop also had a separate area for clothes and shoes and for novelty items. Overall color scheme was pink and black with a touch of dark wood. The DVD-side was separated from the shop and was slightly smaller, nevertheless shelving several thousand films that were organized by different genres. The arcade part of the place consisted of one movie-theatre with fairly large screen and of approximately twenty solitary booths in which the customers could choose from over one hundred different titles to which movie to watch. The place was solely in their use from opening till closing and in my use before and after. This resulted my relation to this particular place to form of what ever the place users left behind. It was my job to open and close, and clean, the place but only after it was completely emptied of customers.

In addition to my own observations I have also used internet discussions as one of my sources. This provided me with the observations, assumptions, and stereotypical views that common and sometimes not so common people hold about porn shops. I believe that it offers a “larger scale” than if I would have done a questionnaire in one or few of the actual shops. This seems especially true since virtually no research has been done in this area. It is no wonder that the image we have of porn shops stays the same year after year. Those few available texts appear mostly in the various media publications and are all more or less repeating themselves. I was so excited to go in...Raincoats.. Sunglasses...Huge dildos emerged. There seems to be a certain humor-aspect or an aspect of sensationalizing involved virtually whenever a porn shop is mentioned.

“In the opinion of this rational observer, women should cover up their wrinkled and ballooned flesh as well as possible. But beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and the eye is an adjustable organ. When you step into the porn shop for the very first time and see all those dildos and inflatable dolls with their mouths open, you are terrified. After an

hour you could easily become a sales clerk, because all those things seem to be completely normal.” (Walter de Camp, City-lehti,13/2007)ⁱⁱ

Walter de Camp’s portrayal is quite accurate, though it may not be extremely academic. Then again as I pointed out earlier there is not much research done about porn shops in an academic fashion. Therefore I greatly rely on information gathered from various “popular-media sites”. The initial idea of the place can be somewhat dominant, and it may remain so, especially since most of the customers do not spend hours inside the shop. In short, the original feeling one has while stepping into the shop might stay the same time after time. There is no time to get familiar with the place or space in question.

Furthermore, this thesis is partly an attempt to better understand the “fear” of a certain place. In order to do so I have not only gone through diverse perceptions of place and space, but also through historical, philosophical, ethnographical, cultural and everyday life- aspects. Questions about whether or not or how it would be possible to make entering these places easier remain unanswered for the time being. All and all I feel that it is important that questions are raised.

Perhaps the question ‘Should it even be easier?’ is the most relevant.

It happened again this morning; I needed to stop doing what I was doing and then I started to laugh. The realization of how bizarre it is to start a morning by switching on several TV’s that show different porn movies really kicked in, the cacophony of different (artificial) bodily noises filling up the place as I go along. There I was, downstairs, pointing TV’s in booths with two remote controls, one for each hand like I would be some sort of character from Wild-West all set to fire away.

ⁱⁱ Original in Finnish, English translation by author.

2.3 The Inevitable; Ethical Issues and Moral Dilemmas

Regular comes in, and for the first time ever he asks if it's ok to take a cup of coffee before going in to the DVD-section. Then he sits down to drink it and asks; "May I ask if you are studying at the uni?" Me: "Yep, you may and yep, I am." He: "Yeah, I thought so, I saw you around the area one day with some of your mates.." Me: "Ummm.. Ok.." He's always been really polite and talkative, but never before has he asked any personal questions, until now that is. I am not sure whether I should feel; well basically, how the hell should I feel?! Anxious, annoyed, terrified, what?! All I could think was, "what kind of movies is this guy watching? Is he gay? If so, then its ok he mentions he has seen me, I think. And why do I think its ok then? What if he watches teen porn? And why would any of this really matter?" After all I am the one whose studying them so wouldn't it be only fair if they sometimes ask questions? Then again I am studying them in their "public" space whereas this guy was "violating" my personal space, my personal life, by bringing it into the shop. Yes I do have a life outside of this place but it really shouldn't be any of them business what I do outside my working hours. Or should it..?

Another significant implication of naturalism is that in studying natural settings the researcher should seek to minimize his or her effects on the behavior of the people being studied. The aim of this is to increase the chances that what is discovered in the

setting can be generally applied to other similar settings that have not been researched. This, however, places the researcher in a somewhat paradoxical situation. In order to minimize one's effect on the people under observation one should not unveil what one is actually doing. The moment the person knows that he or she is under study is the very moment in which the behavior changes. For me this was a key issue when thinking about my research methods and the thesis in general. How could I make sure that the ethical side of the research was “acceptable”, and by whose standards? What exactly is my responsibility as a researcher, not to mention as a worker, and for whom should I be responsible? To whom, and to what, should I be loyal? Although this is mostly a study about the character and identities of one certain place and space, it is obvious that one still needs to study not only the others present, but also oneself. Does being a part of my own study, amongst the other study objects, make it more justified to “use” others without them necessarily knowing the whole truth? Trouble-free answers do not exist, if answers exist at all. Every case study is different.

Interestingly I did not notice any difference in my behavior or action toward customers once I became a working researcher instead of being just a worker. I believe that this was due to the fact that as a setting a porn shop is already quite delicate one and filled with unspoken rules. For instance there exist an unspoken rule to not to greet or acknowledge customer once outside the workplace, unless the customer is the one who initiate it and even then it is debatable. Similarly, to speak about customers outside the workplace was considered as something one just should not do, and especially not with names. Ethics existed quite strongly already. Therefore sift between worker and researcher ended up being virtually non-existing. In a sense I was a researcher before I even knew it myself. What's more, taking notes from the field resulted the other workers to start keeping a “shop-diary”. Diary proved to be extremely useful way of changing data concerning not only about difficult customers but also for instance stock items and sizes, since there were several days when we were not all working together. However, after I stopped working in the shop, I noticed something that I can only assume and hope so many other researchers before me have noticed as well. Not working in my research place affected my ideas of ethics. A more distant, less concrete connection to the place made me to think about the place differently. I felt much less

morally and ethically obligated to the place than before. To realize the change in my own behavior towards the place, space and people under study made me even more aware of the risk to reveal too much about the location or the people involved. It became evident how easy it is for one to end up exposing too much information once disconnected from the field. By doing so, one can cause unnecessary trouble for the phenomenon and people under study. Of course this in turn means that there also exists the possibility of becoming over protective towards the phenomenon under study. Ultimately what is and is not researched and eventually published is due to any researcher's own moral and ethical values. For instance Durkheim (1979) has made it very clear, that the moral ideal is not absolute, and is far from it. It is constantly changing and evolving. One can say that it is alive. The future will evidently have a different ideal from the one we have now, and it is the moralist's task to prepare the ground for these needed transformations (Durkheim, 1979:81). This creates yet another substantial challenge when conducting research.

I strongly share Archetti's idea that simply asking what is wrong or right is not enough. In our research we also need to focus on what is desirable or worthwhile for the actors. He underlines the fact that it is important to see that these are different questions. Archetti states that "*while perhaps everything that is desirable to do is also something that one is obligated to do, it is still not the case that **saying** that something is worthwhile or desirable is the same as saying that one is obliged to do it.*" (Archetti, 1997:101)

The above questions arose particularly in the case of Michael Stein's research *The Ethnography of an Adult Bookstore*. "*The knowledge that a sociologist was on duty could have dissuaded some people from entering or could have altered the behavior of those who did.*" (Stein, 1990:32) Stein, like me, decided to remain covert. However, for the customers in the porn shop, Stein performed as a 'normal' shop clerk, when in fact he was a non-paid researcher. On the other hand, I was a 'normal' salaried worker who then turned into a researcher while still being a very much of a worker. Which one of these two ways is more morally acceptable? Is it in fact the same? The end justifies the means, in particular in the case of a porn shop. The option to 'come clean' for the customers practically did not exist, it would have, at the very least, scared them away.

Furthermore, I still believe that in a small country like Finland, it would not have been possible to study this subject had I not been involved with it myself from the beginning. No shop would have taken me in there just to do research. And even if being “just a researcher” had been a possibility, it would have led to me being a complete outsider. In that position it is hard to make people, in this case the shop owners, to trust you.

Besides, was I not much the same as Stein, doing the research not only about them, but also very much for them? This said, it still seems that most of the research that is and has been done is virtually never aimed at the ones being studied, but rather at the ones studying. Especially in the case of popular culture, this has always been something difficult for me to comprehend.

Interestingly, I also seemed to attract some attention at both university and town libraries whilst working with my thesis. Some of my research involved visiting internet porn sites and porn shops. When this is done in a place not normally considered suitable for this kind of material, it becomes understandable that it creates interest. Place does indeed matter, and there definitely exists certain readily shaped ideas of what is appropriate in certain places. People seemed to be especially interested in my workstation while I was away. Books with half naked people on the cover, or with titles such as ‘The History of Sexuality’, ‘A History of Pornography’, or ‘Pornoaktemia’ still appear to draw attention. Janne Seppänen (2001) describes something that can be seen as similar to my experience. In short, he ends up in a restaurant dressed, however convincingly, but not so plausibly, like a woman. Whilst in the restaurant he noticed that many of the people at the bar were not only looking at him. They were also having conversations about him, not with him, and all those implications did oscillate in the air. For him, this experience pointed out how much one values the power of gaze/look when defining ones identity. (Seppänen, 2001:91-93)ⁱⁱⁱ

Similarly, noticeable reactions occurred whenever I mentioned my study topic or discussed my findings with friends or colleagues, or whoever happened to be nearby. However, no one ever approached me directly. This leaves me wondering what kind of ideas, if any, I have managed to give those people. Has the interest been purely fuelled by natural human curiosity or have I in fact offended someone’s beliefs and ideologies?

ⁱⁱⁱ Original in Finnish, English translation by author.

Furthermore, why did I stop to think about what they think? Why should it matter? Is it because I am genuinely curious about their thoughts or because I am actually, unconsciously worried about what those random people will think about me? Is it due to the fact that the Other exists?

A Couple, a man in his sixties with a woman in her thirties. The man had a huge problem with the fact that she would like to buy a vibrator. "Why isn't my dick enough? Its huge and I can use it three weeks nonstop!" I tried to explain that real things and toys are two completely different things, but he was not interested in my explanation. In addition, he was worried about other people seeing him come into the shop, stating that he will loose his reputation and his friends would think that he can no longer fuck.

I would argue that the words 'porn', 'sexuality', and 'sex' still have noticeable power in them, especially when used in general settings by a woman. They still interest people and will undoubtedly carry on doing so. It is worthwhile to mention an interesting point here. As soon as I mentioned my thesis topic to people, even after sometimes leaving my relatively long work history out, it seemed to give them permission to talk freely about porn shops and their products. It appeared that an authority with an expertise in the area was needed to guide this type of conversation. Talking was done for greater good, for the sake of 'science'. I eagerly agree with Spradley's idea of *cultural complexity*: the fact, that even the simplest social situation is imbued with a large number of cultural meanings. (Spradley, 1980:100) Possibly the most widely used meaning of the word "culture" in anthropology is contained in an *omnibus definition*. It treats culture as virtually all that has been learned or produced by a group of people. According to an omnibus definition, spears, automobiles, buildings, fire, and anything else made by man as a member of a group is a part of culture. The patterns of emotions, art, law, and the institutions of society are all part of culture. (Spradley-McCurdy, 1972:7)

As mentioned earlier, my approach to the chosen subject matter is essentially speculative, conversational, and even philosophical. Throughout a thesis on this topic I felt it necessary to use my field notes as little stories on their own. I do this to illustrate the points made in the rest of the text. As Sarah Pink (2002:3) mentions, it is frequently emphasized that methodologies are developed for/with particular projects. They are interwoven with theory, and it is not unusual to make up the methods as you go along. The methods should serve the aims of the research, not the other way around. I was by no means sure whether the naturalistic branch of ethnography would serve me to the very end of my research. However, together with auto-ethnographic touch, it did. As Pink continues, according to Josephide (1997:32), "*our ethnographic strategies are also shaped by the subjects, situations, their global as well as local perceptions, and their demands and expectations of us. Therefore there can be no blueprint for how to do fieldwork*". (Pink 2002:4)

Ethics and morals are the issues that every researcher has to resolve for themselves while they stumble along with their projects. This particular case is complicated and delicate since all the values involved in humanity are constantly open to questions from different angles and people. Moral and ethical values are indeed built into my research topic. Unfortunately, just as completely objective research cannot exist, there is no ready set formula for doing one hundred percent ethically correct research. The decision to study or research a certain kind of phenomena is already in its self a subjective one.

A customer, slightly drunk, walks directly towards the counter, and asks, "What do you think about us customers? Do you think we are a sad bunch of people? Just wondering, because I sometimes do."

Spradley and McCurdy describe the case of complete objectivity. According to their description, it is believed by many people that the facts recorded by scientists are accurate and objective, provided that the investigator is sincere and has received the appropriate training. The scholar is thought to be objective when he gathers and records

his data. His prejudice only operates during later analysis and interpretation. This, they state, is a naïve point of view. They believe that the most significant distortions in the scientific study of social behavior happen during the process of data collection. There is an important variable between the events of sociable behavior and the investigators descriptive account. That variable is the investigator. They conclude that complete objectivity may be a characteristic of some omniscient observer, but not of a human being. (Spradley-McCurdy, 1972:13) I strongly agree with this. The data I gathered during my years “in the field” was indeed gathered by one individual, and I am by no means trying to portray it as an absolute truth. Even in different parts of world others (See Stein 1990, Hefley 2007), have made similar observations. I would argue that this can be seen as something that backs up my findings.

2.4 Auto-ethnography and Self-reflectivity

It's not even eleven o'clock, and I have already listened, on the phone about one person's arse-stretching hobby, and other ones pondering about a penis-vacuum-enlarger-pump, with a quite detailed list of pros and cons. And no, unfortunately we do not sell suspenders made out of latex. It seems that spring has definitely arrived.

As declared earlier, I am myself very much involved with this research topic and therefore as a method, auto-ethnography is strongly implicated as well.

In *Doing Research in Cultural Studies* Paula Saukko (2003:84-6) explains that self-reflexive auto-ethnographies can be conceptualized in terms of Foucault's technology of the self. The self indicates a practice of doing an inventory of discourses that have constituted one's self. This makes the goal of self-reflexive auto-ethnography two fold; both to relate an experience and, to critically explore the discourses that constitute that experience. This technology of the self also reminds us that it is possible for one to

work towards a technique of governing oneself in a fashion that aims to be more ethical, not just towards others, but to the self as well. This is something I wish to accomplish in both the actual and “anecdotal” part of the text.

As pointed out earlier engaging, the reader is an important of an alternative form of writing in social science. Ellis and Bochner have stated that since mainstream logico-scientific writing is written in a neutral way, it places the reader in a passive position. In reading “normal” scientific reports the readers are not asked to think about the particular people the research has been about. When the writing is done in narrative form it changes this. The stories are written in a way that draws the reader into the text, compels them and, finally, affects them. (Penttinen, 2004:57) This does not mean that traditional social science would become worthless. In my opinion there are just different ways of exploring things, and as one of the methods self-reflexive auto-ethnography seems suitable for me.

“It’s clear to me that the work we’ve been doing has a different aim than the work of the analytical

ethnographers. We think of ethnography as a journey; they think of it as a destination. They want to master, explain, grasp. Those may be interesting word games, but we don’t think they’re necessarily important. Caring and empathizing is for us what abstracting and controlling is for them. –Arthur Bochner

(Ellis, Bochner 2006:431)

Auto-ethnography differs from the new ethnography in that instead of taking experiences and problems at face value, it challenges the way they are always underpinned by historically sedimented discourses. It does not primarily try to capture the raw guilt and fear that the author feels, but wants to problematize these feelings as products of historical discourses. (Saukko, 2003:85) I fully understand that as in any other analyses or methodologies, auto-ethnography also has its strengths and shortcomings. As Saukko poignantly describes, auto-ethnography provides a powerful critique of how discourses constitute us. It can end up so focused on challenging the self that the social panorama of which the self forms a part recedes to the background. (Saukko, 2003:86) I believe that in the process of using and challenging myself I have managed to keep the main focus where it should be, and that is in the place and space.

Two small boys, maybe aged thirteen, step halfway inside the shop just to yell at me “Whore!” I find myself reacting strangely strongly to their yell. After they are already long gone, I still feel somewhat vulnerable. Why is it that the word ‘whore’ creates such a strong feeling? Is it because of the place it’s screamed in or is it because of the boys’ young age? Probably both.

In addition to both self-reflexivity and to auto-ethnography, George E. Marcus brings up the method of messy texts as a form of experimentation with ethnographic writing. (Marcus, 1998:187) Marcus argues that ethnography, which is centrally interested in creativity of social action through imagination, performance and narrative, has usually been produced through an analytic imagination that is both comparatively impoverished and far too limiting, above all under contemporary conditions of post-modernity. He offers an example: *‘Once we know (or analytically “fix” by naming) that we are writing about violence, the migration, the body, memory and so forth, we have already circumscribed the space and the dimension of our object of study – we know what we are talking about prematurely. But we can also be sure that our object of study will always exceed its analytic circumscription, especially under conditions of post-modernity.’* (Ibid:187-188) In Marcus’s opinion, the mark of experimental, critical work is its resistance to the easily adapted phenomenon of interest by any given analytic, readymade concepts. Marcus notes that such resistance is manifested in a work’s messy many-“sited”-ness, its contingent openness to the boundaries of the object of study, its derivation/negotiation of its analytic framework from original discourse, and its concern with position. He then continues by stating that by no means are messy texts identical in their theoretical influences or sensibilities. He finds them fascinating as symptoms of a struggle to produce surprising connections and new imageries of old realities within the given formats and practices of analytical writing. In doing so, messy texts appear to critically displace sets of representations that no longer seem to account for the worlds we thought we knew, or at least could name. (Ibid:188,189)

I do not aim to intentionally resist anything. It is in my very interest to tell the “story” involved in the way that appears the most effective. In the end it was an agenda to let the text take its own naturally suitable form. As Carolyn Elli’s describes in *The Ethnographic I: The methodological novel about auto-ethnography* (2004), Auto-ethnographic writing is both personal and academic, both evocative and analytical, and it is both descriptive and theoretical when it is done well. It rolls toward the solipsistic when it is not done well, and it loses its claim as interpretive scholarship if it fails to be analytical and theoretical. In contrast to traditional forms of social scientific writing, auto-ethnography is a more flexible and fluid form of scholarly writing. It allows for a great deal of variation among its practitioners. Auto-ethnography is not about fixing the problem it’s about gaining inside about who you and others are and finding a way to be in the world that works for you. (Ellis, 2004:296) It was perhaps this “make possible-character” of auto-ethnography that first draw my attention towards this form of scholarly writing. Taking into account that I have a degree in arts, my style of writing was already in its essence unconventionally academic. As I progressed with my thesis I realized that the way I did my research was exceedingly similar to the way I precede with my artistic photographic work. For me the most fulfilling photographs have been taken of people in the places in which I myself have had a connection as well. This connection to the place or people has either been through working with them or through a person familiar to the people and the place in question. Either way, I would argue that this connection-approach has made it possible to get more in depth view to certain phenomena’s than perhaps if one would just step in as an outsider.

Customer walks into the shop. “Pardon me, is this a porn shop? You see I really do not visit these places normally.”

Great, excellent even. Someone has the energy to keep calling just to ask whether I have big boobs, amongst other highly important questions.

3 A SHORT HISTORY OF PORNOGRAPHY AND SEXUALITY

'What is pornography to one man is the laughter of genius to another. – D.H. Lawrence'
(Hyde 1964:2)

'Sexuality is a constantly changing phenomenon; it is one manifestation of the culture of the body. It is a plastic social and historical phenomenon, not a clinical or natural entity. Not only do views on sexuality change, but also sexuality and sexual behavior themselves change. – Gert Hekma'

(Hekma 1989:189)

The word 'pornography', is derived from the Greek word '*pornographo*', literally, 'the writing of harlots'. It is commonly agreed that the essential characteristic of pornography is its sexuality. In order to come within the realm of pornography, the writing, picture, or sculpture must have the power or be intend to act as an aphrodisiac. Strictly speaking, this includes any description or pictorial representation of the human body which indicates those parts which are in general kept covered, and which at least in theory, are capable of stimulating an erotic response. (Hyde 1964:1)

I would argue that sexuality and pornography can be seen as forces which feed off of each other. Without sexuality, pornography would not exist. Therefore, I find it crucial to look briefly into both of their histories. These days we speak without hesitation about sexuality, as if the meaning of the word 'sexuality' were totally clear. In the nineteenth century, when the concept of sexuality was being introduced, a Dutch dictionary gave 'sexuality' the following definition, which is rather different than the one we are used to: 'sex system' (with sex in the meaning of biological gender), according to Linnaeus, and derived from the Latin '*sexus*'. It is possible that biology led to the entanglement of gender and sexuality which still prevails today. (Hekma, 1989:173)

For much of human history, sexuality and pornographic imagery were considered a normal part of everyday life. One good example is the case of The Secret Museum in

Pompeii. There is a collection of all the erotic frescoes and artifacts found in Pompeii and the surrounding areas. The collection is now open to the general public, both male and female. However upon discovering the frescoes in the 18th century, commissioned archaeologists were ordered to hide these scandalous finds from the public. Before these frescoes were moved to their present day location in the museum, Hyde mentioned them in his book *A History of Pornography*, which was published in 1964: “*But even today they are only shown to male tourists on request and then only at the cost of a tip to the custodian. Women are still not allowed to see them.*” (Hyde, 1964:10) Shifting standards of decency mean that what was acceptable to display in Roman times is now only questionably appropriate. Ideas of taboos and decency have certainly changed during the years, perhaps most significantly since the Victorian era.

“The most striking distinction between the erotic life of antiquity and our own no doubt lies in the fact that the ancients laid the stress upon the instinct itself, whereas we emphasize its objects. The ancients glorified the instinct and were prepared on its account to honor even an inferior object; while we despise the instinctual activity in itself, and find excuses for it only in the merits of the object” (Freud, 1977:61)

The Victorian era seemed to have changed everything. At the beginning of the seventeenth century certain openness was still common. Sexual practices had little need for secrecy. Codes regulating the coarse, the obscene, and the indecent were quite lax compared to those that would follow. (Foucault, 1976: 3)

It could be said that the Victorian era managed to silence sexuality. It was reduced to the serious function of reproduction. Foucault mentions brothels and the mental hospitals as places of tolerance. Words and gestures, quietly authorized, could be exchanged there at the going rate. Only in those places would untrammelled sex have a right to safely insularized forms of reality. Everywhere else, modern puritanism imposed its triple act of taboo, non-existence, and silence. (Ibid:4)

Above all masturbation aroused a particularly colossal panic. It was the enlightened physician Tissot who attracted world-wide attention with his *De l'onanisme* (1760). Tissot's idea was that in the Age of Reason the child was imagined to embody a natural

innocence which only a bad education could spoil. Masturbation was a clearly identifiable indicator of poor upbringing, and thus the struggle against self-abuse provided the basis for a new and enlightened pedagogy. Since any mistake in the child's rearing could induce masturbation - wrong sleep position, wrong food, wrong clothing habits and life-styles – the educator had to pay attention to every aspect of the child's life.(Hekma, 1989:174) In addition to this, Tissot managed to detect the following connection between sexuality and insanity: masturbation led to all kinds of diseases of wasting, including shrinkage of the spinal cord and the brain. Non-acceptable sexual behavior caused insanity, whereas masturbation itself was generated by social and cultural factors such as misguided education and overheated fantasy. (Hekma, 1989:175)

Tissot was not by any means the only one to consider masturbation as self-abuse. Immanuel Kant, despite being an Enlightenment thinker, developed an account of sexual perversion. This account was strikingly similar to Aquinas's medieval description. Those who engage in the criminal *carnis contra naturam* (e.g. masturbate or engage in same-sex sexual activity) treat themselves as objects and “degrade human nature to a level below that of animal nature and make man unworthy of his humanity”. (Kant 1786/1963 & Soble, 2009:113) Sexual activities have been either encouraged or prohibited through the assumptions of the philosophy and religion of the culture and the tolerance of certain sexual behaviors is linked with these sexual assumptions restrained by cultural values and creation myths. (Bhugra, Popelyuk, and McMullen, 2010:245) According to Kaan's *Psychopatia sexualis* (1844), masturbation was the result of excessive fantasizing and led in turn to all other perversions. Kaan's formula was that self-abuse was the *pars pro toto* of all immorality. He mentioned all the vices that were known to forensic medicine and concluded that onanism and ultimately all perversions must lead to insanity. (Hekma, 1989:176)

In the 1880s, two theories concerning sexuality survived. First the biological, according to which all sexual perversions were inborn forms of degeneration, and secondly the psychological, which stressed the importance of upbringing. The biological theory

predominated, and gradually replaced older notions of lust, exhaustion, and excessive fantasy. (Hekma, 1989:180)

The number of publications about sexuality and everything relating to it rapidly increased from the second half of the nineteenth century onward. The human sex drive turned out to be an unlimited source of fantasies and this became the bases of many theories about 'its true nature'. Sexuality was seen as a primitive natural force that was hard to control and manifested itself in fundamentally different ways in men and women. Male sexuality was active, whereas female sexuality was passive. The most popular theory assumed that male sexuality, active as it was by nature, needed to be satisfied. This was not effectively a problem, because female sexuality was perceived as its complement, so that at least in theory, no sexual frustration could exist. (Jusek 1989:124-125)

However, those who insisted upon making sexuality a subject of public debate, even if on the grounds of health and education, were persecuted by moral campaigners and the legal system. For instance, Charles Bradlaugh and his associate Annie Besant were sentenced to six months' imprisonment in 1877 for publishing an 'obscene' book on methods of birth control. (McNair, 1996:10) The absurd lengths to which an illiterate bureaucracy went when hunting for pornography may be seen in the attack performed by the British Customs on a work entitled *Rape Round our Coasts*. "I don't know what sorts of minds these Yahoos have," the author observed with considerable restraint when he heard what had happened to his masterpiece, "but I hope they enjoyed the book. It is about soil erosion!" (Hyde, 1964:9)

Interest in sexuality generally originated after 1890. Sigmund Freud's *Three Contributions to the Sexual Theory*, first published 1905 suggested that sexuality has its importance in all human achievements. The book dealt psychoanalytically with sexual aberrations, infantile sexuality, and transformations of puberty. In the part that deals with sexual aberrations, Freud introduces two technical terms. He calls the person from whom sexual attraction precedes the *sexual object*, and the act towards which the instinct tends the *sexual aim*. He then argues that scientifically sifted observation shows that several deviations occur in respect to both of these – the sexual object, and the sexual aim. Concluding that, the nature and significance of the sexual objects disappear

into the background under a great number of conditions and in surprisingly numerous individuals. What is central and continuous in the sexual instinct is something else. (Freud, 1977:46-61) In his, later, paper “*Civilized*” *sexual morality and modern nervous illness*, first published 1908, Freud suggests that the more civilized a society becomes, the more regulation is applied to the sex act. Ultimately, this regulation culminates in a society where the only legitimate sex is for the purpose of reproduction. (Clack, 2002:69)

In the ‘purity crusade’ which sprang up at the end of nineteenth century all over the western world, social interest in the various forms of sexual life developed quickly. Due to new printing techniques, pornography could be sold on an unprecedented scale. The debate on prostitution especially made sexuality a major topic among many social groups. Sexuality became a social question. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, groups such as socialists, feminists, and Christians rejected liberal sexual politics. For them, these led to capitalist degeneracy, male contempt of women, or satanic vices. In a powerful union, they managed to bring about an end to the medical control of prostitution and the enactment of stricter criminal laws concerning sexuality in many countries. (Hekma, 1989:181-182)

In the final decades of the nineteenth century and the opening decades of the twentieth, recreational sex was still morally unacceptable, and gays were openly persecuted. (McNair, 1996:9) What’s more, where as in Kaan’s *Psychopatia sexualis* (1844), masturbation had been the ‘*pars pro toto*’ for all sexual aberrations, after 1900 it became of marginal interest for sexology. Masturbation was no longer regarded as pathological because it led to physical exhaustion, but rather because it implied the absence of a social relationship. Before 1800, sodomy had been far worse a sin than self-abuse; after 1900, homosexuality could be regarded as better sex than masturbation, since it was at least social, whereas masturbation was asocial. (Hekma, 1989:186)

Post-war sexual liberalization has been understood as a response to the ‘crisis’ of the Victorian sexual culture which had become stifling and out-of-date, by mid-century. From this viewpoint, the sexual revolution functioned to preserve existing gender and sex norms. State regulation of sex began to be reduced, and for the first time, a ‘sex

industry' emerged. Although the process started in the United States, other countries, including Britain, were quick to follow. British critic Bryan Appleyard observed that the 1960s' permissive approach to sexuality "*coincided with, and justified an economic transformation of, the pornography industry from private indulgence to mass medium. Increased affluence, high-quality printing, and efficient distribution made simple the mechanics of widely available erotica.*" (McNair, 1996:11) In both America and Britain between the 1920s and the 1970s, public sexual imagery moved from the margins to the social center, from a ghettoized, stigmatized sphere of representation to a legitimate multi-billion dollar business. McNair concludes that Sexuality was commodified and subsumed within the normal rules of the capitalist marketplace. (Ibid: 11)

Take, for instance, the case of Larry Flynt, founder of the Hustler magazine. As Tom Connelly, publisher of the trade magazine *Adult Video News*, explains, "*I think (Larry Flynt's name) used to be something pornographic, but now it's the ultimate in hip, trendy and cool...kids want to wear T-shirts with **Hustler** on it*" (Paul, 2005:184)

Hustler was originally a newsletter for the members of Hustler Club used to see what girl would perform when and in which club. It became a worldwide magazine in 1974, and later an empire. For a lengthy time, Flynt had to fight to publish each issue, and as a result, had to appear in courts on several occasions regarding obscenity, pornography, and freedom of speech. (Seksikeisari Larry Flynt, 2008:Midtown Films)

Times are definitely different now. Still I would by no means go as far as Pamela Paul (2005), who argues that pornography is so flawlessly integrated into popular culture today that surreptitiousness or embarrassment is no longer even part of the equation. (Paul, 2005:4) It is true that porn has, yet again, been at the forefront of technological innovation, such as pioneering the use of streaming videos and encryption for secure credit card purchases via the Internet. (Schlosser, 2003:201) It is undeniable that the internet era changed certain things, such as the availability and the access of pornographic imaginary. However, I would still argue that it has not changed matters fundamentally. It can be argued that the Anttila's mail-order-catalogue that was once used as a masturbation aid has now been replaced with a "random" site from the

internet. Embarrassment when caught watching porn is still there, regardless of the media used. What's more, surreptitiousness still hangs around the porn shops.

3.2 Media and Pornographic Material

As stated by Osmo Kontula (2000:234), the way media promotes knowledge about sexual matters has varied greatly in different times. The content of sexological messages conveyed by the media has been mainly determined and influenced by the particular professional group or authority (such as, a medical doctor or a priest) chosen to present such messages in various times. This was especially true before the 1960s. Although part of it was due to censorship restrictions, the media tended to mystify sexuality rather than convey factual sexological information.

Jan Bremmer argues that it is only in the last decade that historians have started to study sexual practices. This is a field that has long been the playground of psychologists, biologists, and doctors with their (often wrong) ideas. It is only now becoming clear that sexuality is not a biological constant, but an ever changing phenomenon which is being eternally formed by people themselves. (Bremmer, 1991:6)

The significance of the media is partly based on the fact that people often trust experts appearing in public more than their own experiences. Kontula offers an example; *"In Finland the authority of physicians was used as late as the 1950s to distribute scare stories about the ill-effects of masturbation. This presentation was regarded as true by many and it caused a lot of unnecessary fear and anxiety. At a time when people were, in other ways as well, made to feel guilty about their sexuality, the perceived physiological threatening images portrayed by medical doctors led people to be afraid of the consequences of masturbation, an act that makes them to feel good. Enjoyment was loaded with a sickness label."* (Kontula 2000:235)

These days media offers a completely different take on sex. I would argue that the media's previous actions have also created an unnecessary uneasiness about porn shops and the novelty items sold in them. This is especially true in the case of elderly people. Stories considering elderly people's sexual lives are without a doubt needed and have great importance. When they are supplemented with incorrect information, such as

cooking-oil being a good lubricant and therefore a rescue for bad sex-life, the stories start to turn against themselves. (Karhunkorpi, AL, Su/Ihmiset 30.01.2011) Old assumptions die hard. It is worth noticing that the FINSEX-survey proposes that the more public discourse there is about sex, and the greater the detail of that discourse, the easier it will be for people to accept the various manifestations of sexuality in their own lives. This in turn results in increased and more comprehensive discussions about sex and sex education. In general, attitudes toward sexual matters have become more open-minded. (Kontula, 2009:170)

McNair uses post-modern as a functional adjective to describe a climate in which images of sex and gender are invested with a new meaning; in which significant dichotomies, such as pornography and erotica and passive feminism and active masculine, are being challenged. He concludes that we live in an era of unprecedented openness in terms of public discussion of sex and sexuality. (McNair, 1996:1-2) This might well be the case, but only partly. Facilities to talk about and open up the conversations are all there. Are those facilities being used to their full potential?

It can be argued that the present day media and popular culture are rather sex-centralized and somewhat pornified. (see for instance McNair 1996, Nikunen&all 2005, Paul 2005) However, their take towards porn shops is still fairly noticeable and rather old fashioned. It seems to be more a rule than an exception that when writing about these stores, whether against or for, the stereotypical phrases are still greatly in use. For instance City's reporter, was writing a story about the use of poppers, a liquid substance which is inhaled with the goal of enhancing sexual pleasure. He describes how he feels unease when surrounded with all the articles sold in a shop. He continues by saying that although the shop owner looks friendly and clean cut, he is however, "*peeking out from between artificial penises.*" (City 22/2010)^{iv} Another recent example is, a Kaupunkilehti Aamuset article about some novelty items appearing in supermarkets selections. It started, roughly translated, as follows. No longer does one have to wear high collars with brimmed hats, and put sunglasses on to lurk into an erotic shop and purchase a sex

^{iv} Original in Finnish, English translation by author.

toy. (Aamuset 31/3/2010)^v The same article quotes Philips Consumer Lifestyles marketing director Ylva Bäckström saying this: *“Many couples consider common sex toys strange, repulsive and tasteless. Relationship care-series consists of high-end products whose design is pleasurable and tactful.”* Though obviously a marketing speech, it once again, made me wonder how many citizens will believe these types of sentences without a second thought. How many will continue assuming that novelty items sold in porn shops are anything but appropriate?

In addition, *Sex Research and the Media-* research in *Journal of Sex Research* (2007, Vol. 44, No. 4, 347-358) completed by McBride et al. also offers a good example of the role of media. The idea of this research was to investigate contemporary issues in sexuality researchers’ interaction with journalists and explore better practices. It also sought to suggest curricular and training initiatives for sexuality researchers and journalists. The idea was that this would encourage accurate dissemination of sexuality research results in the media. Research reminds us that sex research has attracted media attention since the mid-twentieth century. As a result, scientific studies of sexuality, sexual behavior, and sexual health have increasingly become the topic of news reporting, and an important source of information for the public. Without a doubt, accurate and well-articulated media coverage of sex research has the potential to improve sexual health and individual lives. Researchers argue that the way in which sex research is presented in the media has the potential to incite moral and political debates. This can have negative consequences for individual careers, observations of the field of sexuality research, funding for sexuality-related research, sex education, and public policy. (McBride et al. 2007:348) It can be said that Media has its effect on everything and anything. The quantitative findings of the survey suggested that the majority of sex researchers see journalists’ primary purpose in reporting sex research is most often to provide education. The qualitative findings reflected a concern by a number of respondents that the purpose of such coverage was to sensationalize, titillate, or create controversy. i.e., *“Q: Please describe the negative aspects of interacting with the media: P: Usually a reporter has an agenda, and, in my experience, that agenda is more about entertaining than informing.”* (Ibid: 351) Fortunately the findings of this survey were

^v Original in Finnish, English translation by author.

positive. A common theme for both journalists and researchers was the desire to provide information that will serve the public in a positive way. Working towards a better understanding of the values and ethics of others is mutually beneficial for journalists and researchers, as well as the public. (Ibid: 356) One can only hope that this ideology will be in universal use. The fact still remains that the general public obtains its information from different types of media. The media in turn, obtains it from the researchers and specialists of certain areas. It is not about the information per se, it's about how they choose to use it.

Supplementary questions do arise.

Why does it seem that society, market forces, and popular culture try to spread or remove all pornographic material from shops that already are dedicated solely to produce pleasure^{vi} to us? Why would it not concentrate on making these places easily accessible? Would it not be easier to control the already existing age limits and respect the values of others if all the material existed under the same roof? Pornographic magazines have long belonged to the kiosks and shops supply instead of the porn shops. It is no longer profitable to sell them from the shops originally devoted to them. This fact caused quite a few bemused moments in which the customers who arrived at the shop I worked in, were told that R-Kioski would be the place to purchase certain magazines. Today the marketing and distribution of newsstand copies of newspapers and magazines in Finland is in the hands of Lehtipiste, the trade services Division of the Rautakirja Group. In fact Rautakirja and its magazine distributor Lehtipiste have more than seventy differently titled pornographic magazines (of which some of them include DVD-material) in their supply. They are distributed among approximately 7500 stands around Finland. Rautakirja's places of businesses are visited by more than 200 million customers a year. (www.rautakirja.fi/eng/company/corebusiness/tradeservices/lehtipiste, www.lehtipiste.fi/cgi-bin/lehti.pl?aih=%2720%27, www.finnkino.fi/News/Finnkino-tiedottaa/2010-08-13/1024/Rautakirja-100-vuotta/)

^{vi} I do acknowledge that as a place porn shop can be seen from several different angles, however I have chosen to use the 'dedicated for pleasure' point of view. For instance shops commercial value is undeniable and ultimately, like any other shop, porn shop aims to make profit. Whether all the products sold in porn shops are needed is of course debatable.

Would this not make Rautakirja Finland's biggest porn distributor? This leaves me wondering about the difference between a porn shop and a shop or kiosk that sells porn. Besides the fact the latter does not have the word "porn", "erotic", or "sex" in its name, is there really any difference?

Supermarkets and porn shops sell similar products. In addition to all those other items used in everyday life, supermarkets offer sexy lingerie, condoms, magazines, lubricants and toys. Yet the actual porn shops keep existing. Kristen Hefley has stated that it is the continued existence of these establishments, even in an era of internet and cyber shops, that testifies to the role they occupy within a community. (Hefley, 2007:80)

3.2.1 The case of RFSU, K-Citymarket and Iltalehti

In December 2009 Finnish tabloid-magazine Iltalehti released news about RFSU^{vii} bringing sexual healthcare products into K-Citymarkets. The headline read "SEXTOYS come to family markets". (Lappalainen, 2009:6-7)^{viii} The products to be introduced were a vibrator, two lubricants, and vibrating penis-rings. The article created a lengthy discussion on the paper's discussion board. The topic was whether or not it is appropriate to have sex-toys in a grocery store. Some people criticized the somewhat pompous headline (For instance Message No.684). After all, Citymarket is not just a grocery store but a hypermarket. In the end it was most likely the headline that resulted in more than a hundred pages of opinions within of just a couple of days. (http://www.iltalehti.fi/uutiset/2009121510785284_uu.shtml)^{ix}

Naturally the topic brought up its fair share of funny comments, often connected to sexuality and sex in general. On comment read "*Single guys could go next to the isle that has those vibrators on display and showcase their own equipment.*" (Message No.178), "*Sure they fit in there, with a counsel and samples.*" (Message No.338)

^{vii} RFSU stands originally for Riksförbundet För Sexuell Upplysning (the Swedish Association for Sexuality Education)

^{viii} Original in Finnish, English translation by author.

^{ix} All messages originally in Finnish, English translations by author.

Some writers were strongly against bringing these products into hypermarkets. i.e., *“This will result in me changing hypermarkets. Dildos and other tools should be available in special-stores only.”* (For instance Messages No. 4, 426, 482)

“Children are with me when I do my shopping, and I refuse to explain adult toys to a child who is less than 10 years old. Yuck.” (Message No.212)

“This is sad. Ecce Homo.” (Message No.965)

Some were parading the idea i.e., *“Excellent idea. They do sell condoms already so why wouldn’t they be selling dildos also?”* (Message No.188) *“Bravo City-Market! I am applauding.”* (Message No. 360)

Quite a large number of people brought up, justifiably, the equality point. i.e., *“Where are the artificial vaginas? What is there for men?”* (For instance Messages No.8, 225, 227, 252, 322) However none of these message senders brought up the fact that most of the markets already have pornographic magazines in their supply. Nor were they paying any attention to the fact that both sexes could possibly profit from lubricants and penis-rings.

Some people used the gateway argument. Of course it is debatable how serious these opinions really are. i.e., *“I wonder when the sex-services arrive at grocery stores.”* (Message No.167) *“Soon it’s probably possible to sell booze and guns from hypermarkets also.”* (Message No.203) *“Now that women are leaving men for artificial / rubbery organs and normal sex is no longer interesting, in the future men will probably be offered the use of living domestic animals, rabbits, lambs and a cow on a stool. It feels just as real and it doesn’t say no and claim to have a headache.”* (Message No.716)

Specialty shops that already sell all those items with a larger variety and the help of friendly and experienced staff were mentioned, though not often. When the porn shops were mentioned it was not, always in their favor.

“A pharmacy would be a better place to buy a dildo than a grocery store. Underage children would not be able to get to the dildos too soon and there would also be staff to look after the purchases.” (Message No. 55)

“I am glad that I no longer need to go into the only “small red shop” in the whole town. Upon stepping out of that shop, people spit on you.” (Message No.71)

“I find it excellent that those products will also be available elsewhere than just in those suspicious and seedy sex shops.” (Message No.101)

“Really nice idea, you can now get the things from the normal shop and it’s no longer necessary to go to those sickening porn-caves in midtown.” (Message No. 417)

“The products of RFSU are hopefully of higher quality than the ones porn shops are selling. The products they sell are not studied, and some of them have harmful chemicals in them.” (Message No.728)

“Yeah sure, it is so much easier to buy a dildo from a place where everyone is staring at you, than to get it from a shady erotic store in which everyone is there for the same reasons. Yep, yep.” (Message No. 132)

“I would much rather walk into Citymarket and buy a bagful of dildos than feeling distressed sneaking into a sex-shop.” (Message No.824)

“It’s a nice idea, but.. For me its already shameful to buy sanitary towels if there’s a long line and everyone is looking at what you are putting on the belt.. So what would happen with a dildo?! Good God, I would rather go to the sex shop to buy it.” (Message No. 509)

“I would rather buy my dildo together with my other shopping than go to a gloomy special store, which, as a young woman, I am disgusted to go into.” (Message No. 514)

“Special-shops should be for those special people who would need those kinds of things.” (Message No. 559) *“Good idea. People who do not accept products in question can walk past those aisles. Greetings; Woman who does yearn for pleasure on her manless weekdays, but is too “ashamed” to walk into a special-store.”* (Message No.631)

In the end there are also those somewhat neutral opinions, though they were clearly in the minority. i.e., *“Even if the shop would sell those porn magazines and vibrators, no one is forcing anyone to buy them.”* (Message No.173) After reading all those 1214 posts, it became evident, that stereotypes, assumptions, and the shame and fear of “what others would possible think” were all very much real. Interestingly, masturbation was not a topic of extensive debate. Those plastic devices that were generally seen as either

good or evil were. Most of the people posting their opinions shared the view that special-stores / porn shops must exist.

“Why is it so hard to respect other people’s moral values? Is it a must to bring those dildos into the markets if it hurts the feelings of so many people? If those pro-dildos in the market people are as liberal as they claim, wouldn’t it be nice to pop into an erotic store to do some shopping. I have done that, and there’s nothing special about it. It’s even easier to order these things from cyber shops. In my opinion they do not belong in the ‘family shop’.” (Message No.829)

3.2.2 Common sex toy - Common porn shop?

Throughout the years the variety and availability of different products has steadily risen. A term such as “common sex toy” is, at very least, problematic. The human history of sensual enhancement can be traced as far back as 24000-22000 B.C, with the statue of Venus of Willendorf. (Ihmisen Suku, 1993:14) Though most experts consider these types of statues to be representations of fertility goddesses, they may have also served as the porn of their day.

In the British Museum there is a vase on which a courtesan is depicted holding an artificial leather penis, known as an *olisbos* (found in Pompeii). In the Aristophanes play, Lysistrata speaks of these instruments being manufactured by the Milesian women and bemoans the fact that they have vanished from the market. (‘There isn’t one to be seen these days to console us poor grass widows!’) (Hyde, 1964:41)

The very first appearance of a vibrator (developed by American physician George Taylor), was in 1869. It was a large, bulky, steam-powered device. Taylor recommended it for treatment of an illness known at the time as “female hysteria”. Hysteria involved anxiety, irritability, sexual fantasies and excessive vaginal lubrication- in other words, sexual arousal. Since it was the Victorian era, women were not considered to be at all sexual, and “sexual arousal” was therefore deemed a disease. (Brief History of Sex Toys, MyPleasure.com)

Nowadays women are deeply involved in this industry. Beate Uhse, a woman, is the founder of the German Beate Uhse AG- porn empire. It now has more than 200 stores

around Europe. (Heusala, 2003:272) In The United States, California Exotic Novelties and Doc Johnson are novelty item manufacturers that are mostly run by women and use women as designers. California Exotic Novelties (Calexotics) founder and Owner Susan Colvin describes the company on their website; *“female owned and operated company, plays no small part in the meteoric rise to the top of the Adult Toy and Novelty industry. With the unique ‘female sensibility’ and unwavering dedication to designing and creating consistently superior products for women, California Exotic Novelties is a breath of fresh air in the industry. As we continue to “push the envelope” in the design and creation of revolutionary new products, California Exotic Novelties remains focused on turning ‘fantasy into reality.’”* (<http://www.calexotics.com/index.php>) Despite the fact that this is yet another obvious promotion speech, there is a truth in there. However you look at it, having women designing products for women does make sense. Ideas of taboos and decency have certainly changed during the years. During the Victorian era, a ‘fine lady’ did not have any sexual desire. She would especially not openly admit a need for experiencing sexual pleasure. Nymphomania was identified as a condition that women were particularly prone to. Any behavior that exceeded past the bounds of female modesty could be seen as excessive and could therefore be treated as nymphomania, sometimes even resulting in the removal of the clitoris. (Kontula, 2009:194)

In the present day vibrators come in all sorts of colors, shapes, and materials. Their primary purpose is to produce pleasure, not treat disease. Even the main-stream film industry manages to guide our knowledge about toys. For instance, Sex and The City managed to make a difference in the use of novelty items. *“When a good girl like Charlotte got hooked on a vibrator it gave me permission to be naughty and buy one”.* (Interviewee in The Sex education Show)

3.3 Feminism and Pornography

“Hugh Hefner, Bob Guccione, and Larry Flynt – Who are every bit as dangerous as Hitler, Mussolini and Hirohito. – Judith Bat-Ada”

(Lederer, 1980:127)

“There are only two types of people that do not like pornography; those who don’t know what they are talking about and those who don’t know what they are missing. – Larry Flynt”

(in Seksikeisari Larry Flynt, 2008:Midtown Films)

“Hustler has this extra dimension of hatred of women bodies. – Andrea Dworkin”

(in Seksikeisari Larry Flynt, 2008:Midtown Films)

I asked one of the Finnish sexuality researchers whether it would be possible to interview him since I am writing my thesis about porn shops. His initial, rather sharp response was, “Are you doing it for the Women studies?” So, there it is again, assumption that a women writing about pornography must be doing it for something like women studies. She must be a feminist, and is not able to have a “un-judgmental point of view”. This is still true if she is working in one of those shops. As Harri Kalha points out, a researcher whose main interest is pornography is faced with prejudices. The female researcher is labeled as an angry feminist, and the male researcher is not angry enough. (Kalha, 2005:30) As I progressed with my research it became clearly noticeable that most researchers were dealing with all sorts of topical doubts from a variety of sources. i.e., *“What’s a nice girl like you doing writing about porn?”* (Paul, 2005:1) At the very least they mentioned the possibility of sex and sexuality researchers to face prejudice and opposition. (see for instance Heusala 2001, 2003, Kalha 2007, Kontula 2009)

It is also worth mentioning that some of the books that claimed to be neutral had rather strong anti-pornographic undertones in them. When a writer such as Pamela Paul uses ‘the space between the lines’ to promote her own judgmental and patronizing opinions it doesn’t only make the text hard to follow, but the whole thing seems unconvincing, no matter how many interviewees have been used. It is essentially Paul’s interpretation of those exact interviews that made me as a reader feel unease. Take for example Adrea Dworkin and her anti-pornographic work. Although I do not necessary agree with her ideas, at least she is honest about what she represents. There is no hidden agenda in her work. However, I did make the decision to use some of Pamela Paul’s interviewees in

my text. I believe that as separate units these interviews add something extra to this thesis.

All that said, I explained my discipline to this researcher, and all was fine after that. His excuse was that he had been forced to deal with mostly angry feminists, and was quite tired of being accused of this and that.

This little incident really made me think about how feminists' impact on pornography and vice versa shows in the everyday life of common people. By no means do I wish to address here the whole concept of feminism. I am merely interested in feminism and pornography, and the ways pornography is dealt with by those for and against it.

3.3.1 Theory and Practice

One of the first feminists to attack pornography back in the 1970s was Robin Morgan. She coined the phrase: "*Theory and Practice: Pornography and Rape*". The phrase has been used by feminists to point out the convergence of the two ever since (Lederer, 1980:134). If pornography is the theory then rape is the practice.

Strongly opinionated points of view are always problematic, it doesn't matter if the 'arguers' are arguing their opinion for the greater good. One can also argue that new ideologies often need a strong argument to start with, to create the desired attention. Whether Robin Morgan intended this to be the meaning of the phrase above remains unknown for me. Nevertheless the phrase was coined and has 'lived' ever since.

In the 1980s, feminists such as Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon battled politically and legally to have regulations, concerning pornographic material passed in several cities in the United States. These are regulations that have since been declared unconstitutional, in part because their definition of pornography was considered overly broad. Dworkin and MacKinnon saw pornography as a violation of women's civil rights. These regulations would have helped women in the porn industry if they had been abused in any way on a production set. Nonetheless the regulations were not only for them, but for all women. For instance, a woman who was physically harmed by a consumer of pornography and who could show that this act was the result of his viewing

or reading pornography could have sued under the regulation. (Cornell, 2000:3) Dworkin and MacKinnon defined pornography as follows: *“On the basis of its reality, Andrea Dworkin and I have proposed a law against pornography that defines it as graphic sexually explicit materials that subordinate women through pictures or words.”* (MacKinnon, 1993:104) In the actual regulation, MacKinnon and Dworkin define what kinds of material form subordination of women and sexually explicit materials:

(a) women are presented dehumanized as sexual objects, things, or commodities; or (b) women are presented as sexual objects who enjoy pain or humiliation; or (c) women are presented as sexual objects who experience sexual pleasure in being raped; or (d) women are presented as sexual objects tied up or cut up or mutilated or bruised or physically hurt; or (e) women are presented in postures or positions of sexual submission, servility, or display; or (f) women’s body parts – including but not limited to, vaginas, breasts, or buttocks – are exhibited such that women are reduced to those parts; or (g) women are presented as whores by nature; or (h) women are presented as being penetrated by objects or animals; or (i) women are presented in scenarios of degradation, injury, torture, shown as filthy or inferior, bleeding, bruised, or hurt in a context that makes these conditions sexual. (Mackinnon, 1993:118)

MacKinnon and Dworkin wanted to change the legal definition of pornography from an obscenity standard which appealed to the public morality, to that of the subordination of women. (Cornell, 2000:4) In Dworkin’s opinion, pornography is the material means of sexualizing dissimilarity. It is for this reason that pornography is a central tenant in the subordination of women. (Dworkin, 1985:30) For Dworkin the ‘civil rights law’ is women’s speech. It defines an injury to us from our point of view. It is premised on a repudiation of sexual subordination which is born of our experience of it. It breaks the silence. It is a sentence that can hold its own against the male flood. It is a sentence on which it is possible to build a paragraph, then a page. It is an educating law. (Ibid:37, 38) Yet, like Diana E.H. Russell points out, Dworkin’s and MacKinnon’s definition of pornography fails to distinguish between materials that portray women as a

dehumanized sex objects for educational purposes, and materials that demean women for male's sexual entertainment and/or sexual satisfaction. (Russell, 1988/1993:51)

Dworkin's and MacKinnon's idea of what pornography is and does, really seems to have one "key problem", simplification. For them, everything pornography is and does is simply bad and made by men. To arrive at this conclusion they have produced a significant amount of texts. Undoubtedly in the process they have gone through large amounts of material. I do not deny that there is a truly dark side to the pornography industry. I feel that failing to see all sides of the story is unfruitful and one-sided. Due to its ambition to discredit all degrading pictures, the anti-pornographic movement has actually been criticized for widening the division between bad and good girls. (Nikunen et al. 2005:15) The movement refuses to acknowledge the very reality that there is a strong possibility that women are also able to enjoy and get pleasure from the pornography imaginary.

"Women hating is the passion; antifeminism is its ideological defense; in the sex-based insult passion and ideology are united in an act of denigration and intimidation."
(Dworkin, 1983:201)

As Andrea Dworkin points out, feminism is a much-hated political philosophy. While this might be true, I would disagree with the reasons she presents as the cause of this. Dworkin claims that it is simply because women are hated. She takes antifeminism as an opposite. For her it is a direct expression of misogyny; it is the political defense of woman hating. Antifeminism throws women to the wolves. (Dworkin, 1983:195-196) Antifeminism can be divided into three social modes: the separate-but-equal model, the woman-superior model, and the male-dominant model. All these three models mix and match with perfect ease, since consistency and logic are not fundamentals for keeping women down. The woman-superior model also takes a sexual form, one that is solely pornographic. In that model, a woman is only the apparent victim, only appearing powerless. The woman provokes what she wants. (Ibid, 1983:212) Dworkin argues that the pornographic conception of female power is fundamental to the antifeminism of sexual-liberation movements in which unlimited sexual use of women by men is

defined as freedom for both. She also argues that it is fundamental to the antifeminism of the legal system with respect to sexual crimes like rape, battery, and sexual abuse of children, in particular girls. (Dworkin, 1983:215)

Professor of film studies Linda Williams (2004) describes how, in her opinion, Catherine MacKinnon's article *Turning Rape into Pornography; Postmodern Genocide* (1993) seemed to be thoroughly unfavorable to the goal of feminism. In the article, MacKinnon argued that the Serbian rapes of Muslim and Croatian women in Bosnia constituted an unprecedented policy of extermination caused by pornography. This was the last straw for her. It was then that she decided that pornography needed to be brought into classrooms. In Williams's opinion, instead of concentrating on how Muslim and Croatian women became the targets of sexual crimes, MacKinnon prefers to blame pornography as their cause. This in turn encourages us to shift the attention from the real crime of politically motivated rape to the 'reality' that in fact it is the pornography we must fight, not rape. Williams concludes that, "*MacKinnon's argument was not a theoretical argument about the evils of porn, it was an argument that encouraged taking action against pornography as if it was the same thing as taking action against rape*" (Williams, 2004:11-12)

"If we are to tackle effectively the issue of pornography we must first and foremost recognize that any fixed definition of what pornography is will be inadequate. Lecturing at people has always been a detriment to organizing. Open discussion is no replacement for organizing, but it can be a first step. – Drucilla Cornell "(Cornell, 2000:13)

Karen Boyle notes that while anti-pornography feminists have listened to women's stories and made women's descriptions central to their analysis of pornography, these stories are often placed alongside the scientific literature, or re-presented as the 'effects' of pornography. The effects discourse still permeates anti-pornography feminism. Simultaneously, many researchers, teachers, and activists are struggling to make their audiences understand the very real harm involved in the production and consumption of pornography. (Boyle, 2000:188) Boyle argues that with effects research there is no consideration of how individual consumers use and understand pornographic media.

There is no acknowledgement of their choice, responsibility, and accountability for their behaviors. The research is even further limited by the focus on a limited range of behavioral effects with little consideration of how and why those behaviors are chosen by respondents in particular circumstances. As a result, traditional effects research is, as its best, a dubious ally for anti-pornography feminism. (Ibid:190)

Laura Kipnis pays attention to what I believe should be the main focus of the so called porn debate. Whether porn should or should not exist is pretty much beside the point. It does exist, and it is not going to disappear. However, the questions of why it exist, what does it have to say, and to whom, are all more interesting than those dreary attempts to protest against it, regulate it, or debate about it. (Kipnis, 1999:6)

“I would like to purchase a DVD in which a woman gets a real orgasm.” This sentence, formed by a female customer, has probably been one of the most stirring throughout my four years career working in a porn shop. How should I be able to verify this exact request? These are all movies. Should they also make them non-real for their real essence? Don’t these movies also have real people with real bodies in them? Isn’t the question justified, and shouldn’t I be able to have an answer to it? Would it be enough if I just picked one of the movies and claimed, that yes, this is it, this is the film in which the woman gets a real orgasm? The customer would probably believe all that I am saying, since I am saying it in the specialized place as a specialized salesperson, in a space that is dedicated to sell and offer pleasure. Even if the customer were satisfied, I would be lying both to the customer and myself. On film, it is evident that an ‘authentic’ female orgasm is hard to portray. The so called male orgasm is much easier to achieve (visually) on the screen. ‘The Money Shot’, or ‘the Cum Shot’, where a man ejaculates on the woman’s face has been the source of many debates that are mainly focused on how it is degrading for women. However, Linda Williams offers a different point of view in her analysis of the porn classic *Deep Throat* (1972). In the film, Linda Lovelace first thinks she does not have a clitoris at all, and then later on finds out that it’s in her throat. Williams connects the popularity of the money shot with the fact that “the clitoris is finally culturally emerging and acknowledged”. It is perhaps partly for this reason that the so called ‘Money Shot’ has become so important in the adult film industry. Consequently, behind the importance of the cum shot, there might exist tan

aim to tackle the problem of invisible pleasure, an aim to create a visual counterpart to the female orgasm. (Kalha, 2005:48)

According to Missy Suicide, the founder of the female-operated pornography website Suicide Girls; *“Sex and sexuality is nothing for a woman to be ashamed of, but for a long time it felt that way, even in feminism. It’s that old attitude that any time you take your clothes off you’re being objectified or exploited. I think the women on Suicide Girls are brave in saying, ‘I’m confident, I’m intelligent, and I don’t have a problem sharing my sexuality with the world. This is what a real body looks like, and it’s beautiful.’ This is what should be celebrated.”* (Paul, 2005:271)

To argue that the entire porn industry is good is every bit as profitable as saying that the whole industry and the business involved with it is evil. One has to be able to see the different sides. Some may ask the inexplicable question that also includes an answer; *“Is it not worse to be in a porn movie than just be a prostitute? Since all (female)porn actors are also prostitutes, and hence filming them in action makes life even harder for them.”* This type of statement does not only leave one wondering about the different ways of seeing and feeling things, it also underlines the existing need to talk and explore the phenomena involved.

This in mind, I feel that it is in importance to explore the place and space perceptions and how a porn shop, a place holding pornography and novelty items, relates to these views.

It's nice to notice that some people don't hesitate to ask questions. I have been organizing the DVD shelves, again. It seems that my color/production company coordination is beneficial. Customers tend to rent or buy more of the same types of films when they are placed next to each other. And besides, it looks better when the DVD's are in some sort of an order.

I wonder whether people wonder what the hell I'm writing.

I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For by U2 is playing on the radio. It kind of fits here.

God, can't those two customers, who have practically been living on the DVD-side for the last two hours, finally leave or make up their minds about the purchases so I can finally eat my lunch?!

4 THE NOTION OF PLACE AND SPACE

One only needs to open a dictionary in order to realize that the word ‘place’ is not exactly the most unambiguous word. It is often linked together with the word ‘space’. In a way these two words complement each other.

’The space could be to the place what the word becomes when it is spoken: grasped in the ambiguity of being accomplished, changed into a term stemming from multiple conventions, uttered as the act of one present (or one time), and modified by the transformations resulting from successive influences... ’

(Michel de Certeau 1984, 173)

The notion of place and space is something that one constantly tries to create for oneself. An empty classroom, a clinical room without any personality becomes our “own” after we have occupied that space for a while. After the first session in that room we have chosen our places in that space and tend to stick with those choices as long as we use that specific space. A similar thing occurs when we travel with public transport. Unless it is an absolute necessity to choose otherwise, we tend to choose a place next to no-one. Although even then we are faced with a choice; Which one of these people are we going to allow to enter into our personal space? Poignantly, de Certeau (1988:115) argues that stories traverse and organize places every day. They select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them. They are spatial trajectories. Further more, those stories carry out a labor that constantly transforms places into spaces, or spaces into places. They also organize the play of changing relationships between places and spaces. (de Certeau, 1988:118) Jonathan Z. Smith complements this idea by stating that it is the relationship to the human body, and our understanding of it, that orients us in space, that gives meaning to place. Human beings are not placed, they bring place into being. (Smith, 1987:28) Unlike humanistic geographers, Smith concludes that place is not the creation of personality, but that it is what imprints or forms personality. (ibid:31)

“Space is more abstract than place. What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value... If we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place.

– Y.-F. Tuan” (Smith, 1987:28)

According to Henri Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space* (1991), the rationality of space is not the outcome of a quality or property of human action in general, or human labor as such, of ‘man’, or of social organization. On the contrary, it is itself the origin and source – not distantly but immediately, or rather inherently – of the rationality of activity; an origin which is concealed by, yet at the same time implicit in, the inevitable empiricism of those who use their hands and tools, who adjust and combine their gestures and direct their energies as a function of specific tasks (Lefebvre, 1991:72). For him the space should be seen as the site of ongoing interactions of social relations, rather than the mere result of such interactions. It is a process of production, rather than a product. According Elden (2004:182) Lefebvre sees space as something that may not change, rather our perceptions of it does; they become more fine, more subtle, more profound, and more differentiated.

James Fernandez is mostly interested in what makes spaces sacred and how they become places. He complements Lefebvre’s idea by stating that the relationship between people and their environment is reciprocal and mutually constituting. Identity is negotiated through interactions with the environment, and in particular, in the ritual enactment of metaphor. Fernandez argues that people are influenced by the environment that surrounds them. For this reason they also take qualities of that environment into themselves. (Low & Lawrence-Zúniga, 2003: 14)

For my uses, place is that which can be seen as something concrete, a space is essentially something abstract. As a place a porn shop differentiates largely from the porn shop as a space. It is the notion of space that varies from person to person. However, place and space share similarities as well and can not be separated from each other. In my understanding, for space to exist it requires a place.

Saturday ended with me shouting my lungs out to this passed out drunken wanker whom I found downstairs after the closing hour. I was already pretty pissed off and in a hurry after what I thought was the last customer. When I found the drunken guy, I just lost it. That was actually good because at least he listened and I managed to push him in the hallway and shut the door behind him. It was only afterwards, that I realized it could have gone terrible wrong. The guy was almost two meters tall, really big, and disorientated. Luckily nothing happened.

4.2 The Betweenness of Place

J. Nicholas Entrikin argues that geographers have valued the provincial, and have made it an object of scientific study. In the study of place and region, they have done it only generally from the cosmopolitan perspective of modern science. For him, this precise meta-level distinction between the form and content of their investigations contradicts a confused relation between the universalizing and the particularizing discussions that have distinguished the study of place. The scientific search for universals seems to trivialize the importance of the particularity of places. The insistence on universal ethical principles seems to undermine the significance of the moral particularity associated with the individual's attachment to a place-based community. For Entrikin, the significance of place in modern life is associated strongly with the fact that as actors human beings are always situated in place and period. The very contexts of our actions contribute to our sense of identity, and as a result to our sense of centeredness. And it is for this reason that he sees the study of place is of fundamental importance to our understanding of modern life. (Entrikin, 1991:3,4)

Entrikin notes that places take on the meanings of events and objects that occur there. Their descriptions are fused with human goals, intentions and values. Places and their contents are seen as wholes. In turn, this metonymic quality of our everyday concept of

seeing place has parallels in the characterization of place in myth. (Entrikin, 1991:11) He goes on by saying that people are confident about the objective nature of place and will happily offer explanations that use specific places as part of the cause of actions and events. We recognize upon reflection that place references are often based on stereotypes and false impressions. Yet they are a real and important part of everyday discourse. He uses newsreaders as an example; *“It would seem, for example, that newsreaders feel that they have received at least a partial explanation for an especially bizarre crime or a peculiar incident when they learn that it took place in Los Angeles.”* (Ibid:12)

We do tend to explain our behavior and actions through different places. We have learned how one is supposed to act in certain places and situations. Into a certain extent the porn shop falls into one of those type of places, in which we should know how to behave. Yet again, it is one of those rare places where we don't have a ready-made behavior-schema. In fact, it seems that some of us are experiencing significant mixed feelings. As a result of this we might actually not know how to behave. It is possible that this is due to our unfamiliarity with porn shops. However, I argue that this behavior is distinct from, for instance the first time a person without children visits a children's clothing store in order to purchase a present for a new born. Even if both are completely new situations, in the children's clothing store it is easier to approach the person behind the counter, and adapt to the place. The stereotypes, taboos, and stigmas that exist in association with the two places are very different.

Entrikin continues by stating that places differ, and that these differences are not imaginary, but are actual features of the world. We do know that these differences matter and we self-consciously employ this knowledge in our everyday lives. When we begin to go behind the facades and ask questions concerning why places actually differ, and how this effects our actions and events, we run into difficulties associated with the indistinctness of the concept.(Entrikin, 1991:13)

*I Took Roland Barthes book, Image-Music-Text
with me so I would have something to read at work.*

Just how bizarre can that book look in this environment, especially now when it's placed on top of the DVD-pile on the counter. Though, any book in this environment would probably look displaced.

Entrikin sees place as both subjective and objective. For him, it is this *betweenness of place* what, that makes a larger reading of a place possible. He strives to understand place in a manner that captures its sense of totality and contextuality. This can be achieved when one occupies a position that is between the objective pole of scientific theorizing, and the subjective pole of empathetic understanding. (Entrikin, 1991:133)

“The divide between the existential and naturalistic conceptions of place appears to be an unbridgeable one, and one that is only made wider in adopting a decentered (objective) view. The closest that we can come to addressing both side of this divide is from a point in between, a point that leads us into the vast realm of narrative forms. From this position we gain a view from both sides of the divide. We gain a sense both of being “in a place” and “at a location,” of being at the center and being at a point in a centerless world. To ignore either aspect of this dualism is to misunderstand the modern experience of place.” (Entrikin, 1991:134)

Place can, be both subject and object. Marilyn Stratham justifiably argues that rather than places becoming exemplars of *our* concepts, they should be perceived as, to varying degrees, socially constructed products of *others'* interests. They should be perceived both as material and as ideational, and as mnemonics of *others'* experiences. In Stratham's opinion, the contests and tensions between different actors and interests in the construction of space should be explored. (Rodman, 2003:208-209)

4.3 A Sense of Place and Placelessness

E. Relph takes into consideration that a sense of place may be both authentic and genuine, or it can be inauthentic and artificial. These notions of authenticity and non-authenticity are taken from phenomenology. They are ideas which have had long

currency under a range of slightly different appearances. An authentic attitude towards place is understood to be a direct and genuine experience of the whole complex of the identity of places. It is not distorted and mediated through a series of relatively subjective social and intellectual fashions about how that experience should be, nor does it follow stereotyped rules. An authentic attitude towards place comes from a profound and unselfconscious identity with place, or a full awareness that they are products of man's intentions and the meaningful settings for human activities. (Relph, 1976:63, 64)

In unselfconscious experience, places are innocently accepted for what they are. In self-conscious experience they become objects of understanding and reflection. The relationship is changed from 'I – Thou' to 'I – You'. Relph points out that although the latter relationship is perhaps more superficial and the union between subject and object is not complete, a considerable intensity of association with places is still possible. The 'I – You' relationship is essentially that of the outsider or the stranger who seeks to respond to the unique identities of places, to experience places as openly as possible. Relph describes this 'I – You' relationship with the recognition that he adapt from Sinclair Gauldie's statement about architecture; "*Somewhere above the level of brute survival, places can communicate delight, surprise, wonder or horror, and the ability to attend knowledgeably to such communications enhances life*". To 'attend knowledgeably' here means an explicit "*act of judgment, a comparison of the new experience with one's expectations*"; and also an attempt to open one's senses to all the features of a particular place and to experience it both sympathetically and empathetically. However this does not mean that everyone who achieves the same measure of openness experiences the identical place. Identity is determined in part by the intentions and experiences of the observer. (Relph, 1976:66)

While places obtain meaning simply because we live in them, their man-made landscape and architecture is not of an unnecessary essence. Human life requires a system of places that have structure, form, and meaning. This type of system of distinctive places can be created both on the basis of an unselfconscious and self-conscious sense of place. Relph, like many other scholars, advocates the idea of "place-continuity". He argues that even though the founding of a place may be its most

dramatic and significant event, place-making is a continuous process. The very fact of having been lived-in and used and experienced will provide many places a degree of authenticity. (Relph, 1976:71)

Relph determines an inauthentic attitude to place as essentially no sense of place. There exists no awareness of the deep and symbolic significances of places, and no appreciation of their identities. It is merely an attitude which is socially convenient and acceptable. It is an uncritically accepted stereotype, an intellectual or aesthetic fashion that can be adopted without real involvement. Inauthentic attitudes towards place can be unselfconscious, emerging from an uncritical acceptance of mass values. They can also be self-conscious and based on a formal support of objectivist techniques aimed at achieving efficiency. (Ibid:82) It appears evident that the porn shop falls into this 'no sense of place'-definition. Nevertheless it does so only partly. Whereas the former, unselfconscious approach is easily plausible, the self-conscious approach becomes more problematic. The porn shop does provide us with a strong sense, not of the place or space itself, but of ourselves.

Erving Goffman has written in great length about shame and stigma. These are themes that I will look at more closely later on. He suggests that due to the social identity, the individual with a covert differentness will find him/herself during the daily and weekly routine in three possible kinds of places. First are the forbidden or out-of-bounds places, places where exposure means expulsion. Next are the civil places. These are places where people known to be of the individual's kind are carefully treated as if they were not disqualified for routine acceptance, when actually they somewhat are. Finally, Goffman introduces the idea of back places. In these places people of the individual's kind stand exposed. They find they need not try to cover up their stigma, nor be excessively concerned with cooperatively trying to disattend it. Whether the individual enters a back place voluntarily or involuntarily does not make a difference. The place is likely to provide an atmosphere of special piquancy. In back places the individual will be able to be relaxed together with his or her fellows. They will also discover that acquaintances that he or she thought were not of his kind really are. Goffman makes the point that this individual also runs the risk of being easily discredited should a 'normal' person known from elsewhere enter the place. In Goffman's opinion, this partitioning of

the individual's world into forbidden, civil, and back places establishes the going price for revealing or concealing. It also establishes the significance of being known about or not known about, whatever his or her choice of information strategies. (Goffman, 1963:102-104)

In some ways this idea of back place fits into the idea of porn shops, though not absolutely. Stigma, shame, and taboo are undeniably attached to porn shops. This approach would assume that a person who visits a porn shop is automatically stigmatized, or the very least, not completely 'normal'. In my opinion, that is a particularly problematic assumption.

Talking about stigmatized individuals, Goffman makes the point that, if an individual's world can be divided up spatially by their social identity, then their personal identity can also be divided up. There are places where the individual is known personally. Some of those present are likely to know them personally, or the individual in charge of the area knows them personally. Secondly, there are places where the individual can expect not to run into anyone who knows them personally, and where they can expect to remain anonymous. Whether or not it is embarrassing to their personal identity to be in a place where they are well known personally will vary with the circumstances. This is especially true with the question of whom they are 'with'. (Goffman, 1963:104)

4.4 Concept of a Non-Place

According to Marc Augé's, *Non-places Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, (1995), the distinction between places and non-places derives from the opposition between place and space. He quotes Michel de Certeau (*The Practise of Everyday Life*: 1988) as saying that space is a frequented place, an intersection of moving bodies. It is the pedestrians who transform a street geometrically defined as a place by town planners into a space. It is a parallel between the places as assemblies of elements coexisting in a certain order, and the space as an animation of these places by the motion of moving body is packed by several references that define its terms. The term 'space' is more abstract than the term 'place'. 'Place' refers to an event of some sort which has taken place, or something that has a history. It is something that is

concrete. It can be touched, smelt, heard, and furthermore seen. Whereas space is abstract, it is applied in much the same way to an area or to a temporal expanse. In short, de Certeau argues that space is a practiced place (de Certeau, 1988:117).

Augé argues that since a 'place' can be defined as relational, historical, and concerned with identity, then a 'space' which cannot be defined as relational, historical, or concerned with identity will be a 'non-place'. He theorizes that supermodernity produces these non-places. These are places which are not themselves anthropological places, and which do not integrate the earlier places. Instead, these places are promoted to the status of places of memory and assigned to a restricted and exact position. For Augé these non-places are the real measure of our time. However, Augé (1995:78) manages to find similarities between the non-place and the place. It never exists in pure form; places reconstitute themselves in it; relations are restored and resumed in it. Place and non-place can be seen as opposed polarities. The first is never totally erased, and the second is never fully completed.

For Michel de Certeau, (1988:127) non-place is a somewhat negative quality of place. It is an absence of the place from itself, caused by the name it has been given. For de Certeau, the proper names impose on the place an injunction coming from the other. Every itinerary is in a sense diverted by names, which give it meanings that could not have been predicted in advance. For example, when someone is describing a route, he does not necessarily know that much about the places when he states the names appearing along this route. For de Certeau, this is what in essence creates non-places in the places. Using this type of point of view makes it possible for whole countries to become non-places. For instance, I have been in Sweden several times, but every single time I have "used" the country in order to get somewhere else. I have passed by it, driven down the same motorway, laughed at the sign reading 'Hölö' and 'Mörkö'^x, stopped year after year at the same rest stops, and waited for the same small boat to Denmark. In fact, in the true sense of being I have never actually been in Sweden. One could say that the act of passing gives a particular status to place and country names.

^x Though Swedish place names, in Finnish they read, roughly translated, as Windbag and Goblin.

The movement that shifts lines and traverses places is, by definition, creative of itineraries, of words and non-places.

Augé continues by stating that travel constructs a fictional relationship between gaze and landscape. We can use the word space to illustrate the frequentation of places that specifically defines the journey. However, we should still keep in mind that there are spaces in which the individual feels a spectator without paying much attention to the actual spectacle. Augé mentions an analogy in which a journey can be seen as similar to a book that's been written before being read. It passes through different places before it becomes one itself. The narrative that describes the journey or the book, passes through a number of places. It is this plurality of places, the demands it makes on the powers of description and observation, and the possible consequential feeling of disorientation, which results in a break or discontinuity between the spectator-traveler, and the space of the landscape he/she is reflecting or rushing through. (Augé, 1995:84)

After the journey is completed, the spectator has become his own spectacle, possibly without even realizing it.

Many travel brochures suggest this deflection, the turnaround of the gaze. They sell the would-be traveler stereotypical pictures of different possibilities and different locations. Instead of seeing them as mass produced images and fancy words, the would-be traveler sees them as his anticipated image. He sees his own image in the word that speaks only about him but carries another name. In this sense, the traveler's space may be the prime example of non-place.

4.5 Concrete Non-Place?

It is possible to see the word 'non-place' from these two different perspectives: spaces formed in relation to certain ends (i.e. airports, motorways, rest stops, commerce), and the relations that individuals have with these spaces. For example one only needs to hear the word 'Tahiti', and even if that person has never been there, their imagination is already flying towards that place. (Augé, 1995:95) Even though these two sets of relations obviously have quite a few common characteristics, one should not mix them up.

Augé (1995:100) mentions the supermarket as an example of the invasion of space by text. The customer is forced to wander around in silence. They use machines which give the price and weight for the fruits and vegetables. They give their credit card/bonus card to the silent person at the register who then confirms the validity of those cards. Occasionally something 'abnormal' happens, such as a message reading 'faulty card', but most of the time the messages do not stand out of the mass. Another example is how all the messages that appear on our roads and commercial centers, are addressed simultaneously and indiscriminately to each of us. They fabricate the average Joe at that point defined as the user of the road or retail outlet. On very few occasions they might individualize him, as happens when a roadside camera catches a speeding driver.

Non-places can also be seen as somewhere we lose and gain our identities. For instance, when we enter the supermarket we become 'everybody's' and 'nobody's' at once. We are all there for the same reason, to shop, and that remains our main purpose as long as we are inside the store. However, when we reach the registers and hand over our credit cards, we regain our identities. Those cards carry our identification codes. A similar process, reversed, can also be experienced at airports. In order to accede to anonymity (the departure lounge) one needs to prove one's identity. To quote Augé (1995:102); *"The user of a non-place is always required to prove his innocence."* *"There will be no individualization (no right to anonymity) without identity checks"*. The phenomenon that occurs at the beginning of every single flight; the sprint towards the plane when they finally open the boarding gates, the run towards our own place, might take place for the simple reason that in our assigned seat we are finally 'whole' again, at least until the landing. Then again, maybe we are just unconsciously afraid that the plane will take off without us. The fact that there is no way we can know for certain where all the different nations and cultures at the airports 'belong' or who they actually are can make those places intriguing and somewhat unsettling. Nevertheless it is fascinating to stop in the middle of the airport and just observe, and observe you can.

As long as you are in the departure lounge and luggage free, you will, probably not arise any particular attention. The attention starts when a person chooses to stay in a non-

place without any visible reason. Why would anyone prefer to stay in such a place any longer than necessary? This seems to be a consistent feature for non-places. It is obvious that one should have a certain purpose when visiting them. Is it not like that with every place regardless of its non-place status? Maybe the ‘in and out as soon as possible-mentality’ is accurate and worth exploring more in-depth. Personally, I felt this during my last journey to England. My plane arrived in Heathrow during the early morning and knowing that my friends would be at work, I was not in a hurry to get out of the airport. On the contrary, I thought that it would offer me a perfect place for scientific observation. I soon realized that a person hanging around the arrival lounge with their luggage for several hours was in fact interesting for quite a few people. The observer had become the observed, and not pleasantly so.

“A person entering the space of non-place is relieved of his usual determinants. He is able to distance himself from the everyday worries. He becomes no more than what he does or experiences in the role of passenger, customer or driver. The space of non-place creates neither singular identity nor relations; only solitude, and similitude.” Marc Augé (1995:103)

4.6 About Different Spaces

In Foucault’s opinion most of the analyses considering space are concerned primarily with internal space. As such, he wishes to bring up the concept of the space outside (*du dehors*). He understands that the space in which we are living, and by which we are drawn outside ourselves, is not at all any kind of void. Instead, we live inside an ensemble of relations that define emplacements that are irreducible to each other and absolutely nonsuperposable. (Foucault, 1967/1994:178)

Unlike Marc Augé, Foucault is not interested in describing these emplacements through the set of relations by which a particular emplacement might be defined. For instance, in describing the set of relations that define emplacements of streets, transit, and trains, he makes a noteworthy point about the train. It is an extraordinary bundle of relations, since it is simultaneously something through which one passes, something by which one can pass from one point to another, and then it is something that passes by. (Foucault,

1967/1994:177-178) Foucault is interested in the emplacements that have the curious property of being connected to all the other emplacements, but in such a way that they postpone, neutralize, or overturn the set of relations that are designated, reflected or represented by them. For him two types of these spaces exist. The first type is utopia, which he defines as emplacements that have no real place. They maintain a general relation of direct or opposite analogy with the real space of society, and they are essentially and fundamentally unreal. Heterotopias are the second type of space. Foucault defines as effectively enacted utopias in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously, represented, contested, and inverted. They are the sorts of places that are outside all places, although they are actually localizable. Somewhere between these two there must be sifting a kind of mixed intermediate experience, a kind of a mirror. A mirror that Foucault describes can be seen as a utopia, since it is a placeless place. *“In the mirror I see myself where I am not, in an unreal space that opens up virtually behind the surface; I am over there where I am not, a kind of shadow that gives me my own visibility, that enables me to look myself there where I am absent – a mirror utopia”* And yet as a heterotopias as well; *“the mirror really exists, in that it has a sort of return effect on the place I occupy. Due to the mirror, I discover myself absent at the place where I am, since I see myself over there.”* (Ibid:179)

Plausibly Augé and Foucault share something in common after all. Their approaches to the place and space are just completely different in terms of one being mostly abstract and the other virtually concrete. Yet, they seem to portray the similar ideas. Foucault mentions that heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that isolates them and makes them accessible at the same time. In addition, they have a function in relation to the remaining space. The heterotopias have the role of creating a space of illusion that denounces all real space. He ponders that perhaps it is this role that was for a long time fulfilled by those famous brothels which we are now left without. The heterotopias also have the role of creating a different space, a different real space as perfect, a heterotopia not of illusion but of compensation. (Foucault, 1967:184)

Furthermore, can it be seen that in the case of a non-place, a person tries to avoid bringing him/herself in to the space? Who is the person who enters a non-place? Is it the ‘genuine’ one, or is it someone created just for these places? Or is it the place that

manages to reduce individuals into the 'general mass'? Perhaps people and places carry an equal amount of importance when it comes to influencing each other.

It's winter everyone keeps telling me once they are inside the shop. First snow provides an excellent getaway. It must be relaxing to the customers when they can actually say 'something meaningful' rather to them explaining and making excuses such as "Umm.. this is my first time in here", or "I don't normally come into these kind of places". It seems that the fact that it's snowing also cuts down the overall amount of customers. I'm not looking forward of going downstairs. Hopefully there are no extra bodily fluids.

5 FROM NON-PLACE TOWARDS UNPLEASANT PLEASANT PLACE

According to Augé, non-places are some sort of in-between places, that we use in order to get somewhere or to get something. They can also be places where we need to stop for a brief occasion. In my understanding, places that have become non-places are originally places that will not cause that much of thought. They are places that are there for a reason, places that are needed. They are places that we do not pay that much attention to and used without thinking. As Augé pointed out, they are places that the supermodernity of our times has created.

What happens when we consider a place that indeed is extremely concrete, knowledgeable, and raises a lot of attention? What happens when we enter a place where we simultaneously want to and do not want to be? A place, where we try to draw as little attention as possible, and, significantly, fail to do so? A place, where we hide behind our mobile phones, sunglasses, high collars, nervous behavior, etc? A place that we ourselves have created to be something seedy and obscene?

As I pointed out earlier it is possible to see the word ‘non-place’ from two different angles. Spaces formed in relation to certain ends and the relations that individuals have with these spaces. Individuals are able to form a certain kind of picture of the place even if they have never visited it. Just like Augé’s idea that the word ‘Tahiti’ creates instant ideas of the place, though one might have never visited the actual site, a similar thing can occur when the word ‘porn shop’ is mentioned. Certain words create images, and it could be suggested that certain places can exist only through the words that evoke them. In Augé’s opinion these type of places can be seen not only as non-places but also as imaginary places; banal utopias, clichés. (Augé, 1995:95) I believe that supermodernity creates not only non-places, but also places where we simultaneously do and do not want to be. This is where the porn shop becomes interesting. Supermodernity has created an unpleasant pleasant place. Could it be said that in this place a person tries to avoid bringing him or herself into the space? Who is the person who enters an

unpleasant pleasant place? Is it the 'genuine' person or is it someone created just for this place?

On my first day a customer is noticeable nervous. He gets even more agitated, understandable so, when he realizes that I am nervous myself. Finally he asks poignantly; "shouldn't you be ok with these things you sell, isn't your job?" I try to explain to him, failing somewhat miserably, that in fact I am new at my job, and being new at any job is enough to make one nervous. How can I explain to a customer that I am anxious because, in my own opinion, I do not yet know enough about the delicate products we sell here?

In a context of a place and space study, a porn shop offers generous research possibilities. It is a place that is talked about with other people, though hardly ever in a context that would reveal that they themselves would have visited such a place. As stated earlier, the actual setting for this study is a porn shop. However porn was not in the main focus of this study, even if it does make an evident contribution to the thesis. Equally important amount of focus remains on the place and/or space. It is a coalition of the theoretical and the empirical worlds that form this thesis. At this point I feel that it is necessary to reiterate that I fully understand the darker side of pornography industry, and by no means am I aiming to trivialize it. It is merely not of interest in this study.

Porn is not that well researched academically in Finland. Timo Korppi has written a book, or more accurately a memoir, about the Finnish porn industry. His book *Lihaa Säästämättä* (2002) can be seen as a guide to Finland's history of porn. The book written by Harri Nykänen and Tom Sjöberg, *Rööperi – Rikoksen vuodet 1955-2005* (2005) can also be seen as such. It is worth mentioning that these books have contradictory information in them. For instance, they do not share the same opinion about who really had the first pornographic shop in Finland. Describing a porn shop was

perhaps not so easy in earlier days. While I progressed with my research, I noticed that the difference between a pornographic shop and a shop that sells pornographic material is not apparent, especially in the present day world.

Porn shops seem to have a reputation to some extent. Some might add rightfully so, whereas others cannot see what all the fuss is about. It seems that everyone who has ever heard the term 'porn shop' has something to say about it. They are, at least, able to offer some sort of an opinion about it, negative or positive. All of those people with an idea about the place don't actually need to visit it. They are able to form their opinions based on the 'facts' they have been given and told by other people, who equally so, might have never stepped into the building in question. It is safe to say that 'porn shops' raise discussion.

An elderly lady walks into the shop. As I politely greet her I have just enough time to wonder what might be her errand. It becomes vividly clear in a matter of moments, as from the doorway she screams, "Just wanted to see who exactly is it working in this filth!" To finish with, she spits towards me. I'm left feeling violated.

For me the question of why the researcher ends up researching a particular subject has always been as interesting as the actual research aim/topic, sometimes even more so. As a researcher, one learns a great deal about the writers themselves and the project they are involved in, by paying attention to the actual 'force that drives them' In my case, finding the research topic happened by chance. As a student, one is often forced to work, and it so happened that my place of work also became the context of my study. My own first encounter with this particular porn shop happened after living in a new town for a few weeks. I was desperate to find a job. Then one day, after having visited a number of high profile job agencies with no success, I found a small independent job agency on the internet. On its webpage was a banner stating that in order to be able to

join this agency one has to apply for at least one job offered on that page. There were a number of advertisements there. They were looking for such things as truck drivers, snow workers, heavy duty factory workers, and a job in a porn shop. For a while I thought about it, and then decided to apply, as in the end it would just be an application. The rest is history, and now I can use myself as a part of my research.

It's my name-day and I am at work. It's been quite busy today. A customer decided to open up to me. He was an old sailor, who concluded that as long as there's hope there's still meaning in one's life. He was very curious about both the people who own the shop and the people who work here. He brought up that some people seem to be acting shy when they come in, stating: "In order to be able to work here one has to have a certain kind of personality."

I have changed a lot between now and then. The amount of knowledge I have gained in a year's time is significant and applies to both technical and social skills. When I first started I was completely clueless about most of the articles sold in the shop, not to mention how to answer the questions customers asked about them. But then I suppose it is the same with every single new job. Now I am able to decide which new products should and should not be taken on board. The owners of the shop made it very clear, against the general assumption, that they prefer people with no earlier experience in the industry. I truly learned on the job, not only how to do my actual 'real' job, but how to grow as a researcher. *"When an ethnographer first enters a strange society, each encountered event is new, unanticipated, improbable, and, hence, highly informative in the communication-theory sense. As he learns the culture of a society more and more of what happens becomes familiar and anticipatable... The more he learns of a culture, the more his anticipations match those of his informants."* (Frake, 1965:583)

This gave me an excellent starting point when thinking about ethnographic research and methods. As Spradley (1980:4) points out, ethnography starts with a conscious attitude of almost complete ignorance. In my case, I really was completely clueless about

anything and everything, like an empty canvas which it is easy to paint on. Of course this also brings along the question of whether or not I am too close to my study objects. Is it even possible to be unbiased? Am I the product of my own study? In response I would argue that since the study is about the place and actions and feelings taking place in there, in order to make it complete I would also need to study the people occupying it, myself included.

A customer comes in to return a rental DVD, and asks if he can get another one for free since he actually has already seen this one before. Since we do not hold an electric customer database, it is our fault that he does not know which films he has already seen. After a few relatively silent moments I answer as politely as it was possible, that obviously another movie can be rented, as long as it's also paid for. It's not exactly my fault if you choose, out of thousands of different movies, to rent one that you have seen before. Good God. Sometimes I wish that I worked anywhere but here.

In this respect a porn shop offered excellent material for ethnographic research. Customers were extremely 'mosaic', and yet they managed to fall into certain kinds of categories that had nothing to do with their social status. For instance it was fairly obvious that there is a group of people who would rather wait silently until I manage to come up with the right words or questions so that they would not need to be the first to start the conversation about what exactly they wanted. Perhaps it is their way of not having to admit to themselves that they indeed are visiting, or have visited a porn shop. By performing the silent entrance, they have avoided being the initiating force. In addition to this, there also existed a group of people who would describe their location as; I'm in the shop, at the town etc., when receiving a phone call. This introduced me to term 'The shop without the name and location'. I was indeed working in a place that, in some people's world, does not exist.

Again I am faced with the same issue. Parents entering with their small children, age 0 to, maybe, 4, seem to make some of the other customers feel unease. So much so that not only once or twice have I had a conversation with them about us needing to state on the door that our age limit is strictly 18. Obviously this is the age limit for the DVD-section but an infant or a toddler does not in my opinion fall into that strictly category. Besides they do not yet have an idea what exactly it is that they are surrounded by. For them it might as well be a selection of bright colored things, perhaps toys. The uneasiness, the “shame” seems to arise from the other customers’ minds, and perhaps in the end from their ideas and perceptions of morality. It’s like they are afraid that the children get a completely wrong idea of them, as they had been caught doing something very wrong.

6 TABOOS. STIGMAS. ASSUMPTIONS.

It can be said that cultures define and describe what is normal and what is deviant. Humans are undoubtedly sexual animals, but they do vary across cultures in their propensity to use sex as a non-procreative and pleasurable activity. Sexual behaviors in the non-procreative tradition differ across partners. These behaviors depend on the availability of partners, fantasies and opportunities. They are influenced by cultural norms, mores or morals, religion, religious taboos, types of societies, and expectations of its members. Normal and abnormal behaviors are defined and differentiated by the society and culture, with the defining deviance (what is 'abnormal') in opposition to what simply contravenes the norms of society. Nonetheless, this distinction is not always a trouble-free one. (Bhugra, Popelyuk, and McMullen, 2010:242) Particularly when abnormality is considered sexual, a substantial range exists. For example, from a man wearing women's clothes for a costume party, to once in a while dressing up for sexual pleasure, to wanting to be dressed all the time. In all of these situations, the basic premise of cross-dressing remains the same, but the degree, intention, and purpose vary. (Ibid:242) Although I do not agree with the undertone of this 'abnormality example', perhaps it is still possible to stretch this example to encompass also porn shops and their clientele. Visiting a porn shop once in a while is very different from visiting it every day. The real question is how one chooses to see this differentiation and from whose point of view it will be seen.

The Greeks originated the term '*stigma*' to refer to bodily signs designed to expose something bad and unusual about the moral status of the signifier. The signs were burnt or cut into the body and the person was then to be avoided, especially in public places. Later, in Christian times, two layers of metaphor were added: the bodily signs of holy grace that took the form of eruptive blossoms on the skin, and the bodily signs of physical disorder. Today the word is commonly used in something like the original literal sense, but is applied more to the shame itself than to the bodily evidence of it. (Goffman, 1963:11)

Goffman argues that the term stigma will be used to refer to an attribute that is deeply discrediting, but it should be seen that a language of relationship, not attributes, is really required. An attribute that stigmatizes one type of possessor can confirm the usualness of another, and therefore it is neither discreditable nor creditable as a thing in itself. To Goffman, stigma is in fact a special kind of relationship between attribute and stereotype. He argues that stigma is closely associated with stereotype, and that both are connected to the unconscious expectations and norms which act as hidden arbiters in all social encounters. (Goffman, 1963:13-14)

Subsequently he offers an interesting example; *being seen going to the library*. Whereas a middle class boy may feel no hesitation when entering, a professional criminal can; “*I can remember before now on more than one occasion, for instance going into a public library near where I was living. and looking over my shoulder a couple of times before I actually went in just to make sure no one who knew me was standing about and seeing me do it.*” (Ibid: 13) This reminds of several occasions in the shop when it was evident that customers (mainly middle aged) were from another town. They seemed to feel far more relaxed and at ease than the local customers. Knowing that it is highly unlikely that anyone you know would see you entering the shop, or see you in the shop, definitely were factors that made that ‘coming in part’ easier.

I still wonder what drives people to pretend they are here for the first time ever. Especially when I have seen the same person the previous day. What is there to gain by this behavior?

Goffman points out that the visibility of a stigma is an important factor. It is perhaps for this “simple” reason that stepping into a porn shop proves to be such a difficult move to accomplish. If a person is carrying a stigma, it is not constantly carried within. The stigma is only visible to others while entering the place. Goffman continues by stating that what can be told about individuals’ social identity at all times during his daily round and by all persons he/she encounters therein will be of great significance to him or her. The consequence of a presentation that is perforce made to the public at large may be small in particular contacts. In every contact there will be some

consequences, which can be massive when taken together. Further, routinely available information about a person is the base from which he or she must begin when deciding what approach to take in regard to whatever stigma that person possesses. Therefore, any change in the way the individual must for all time and everywhere present him or herself will for these reasons be critical – this presumably providing the Greeks with the idea of stigma in the first place. (Goffman, 1963:65)

Goffman makes a distinction between social and personal misrepresentation. Whether social or personal identity is involved, one can differentiate representation aimed at proving one is what one isn't, from representation aimed at proving one is not what one is. He argues that in general, norms about social identity relate to the kinds of role repertoires or profiles we feel it acceptable for any given individual to maintain. (Ibid:82)

According to Kristen Hefley, the writer of, *Stigma Management in an Adult Novelty Store*, Goffman's work has been justifiably used in previous studies of adult stores (Stein 1990, Karp 1973, Sundholm 1973 etc.) Hefley argues that all of the strategies borrowed from Goffman and identified in these previous porn shop studies are those that indicate acceptance with the idea that porn shops, the products sold in them, and at the very end, those who visit them are deviant. (Hefley, 2007:83) This however is not how I seek to use Goffman's work. I wish to challenge the very idea of deviance and 'merely' try to seek reasons causing this point of view in the first place. I am interested in understanding Goffman's view of stigma, but I am not saying that people who enter porn shops should be stigmatized. Goffman isn't stigmatizing anyone either, it is the society that takes care of the act of stigmatization. As Goffman states, the general identity values of a society may be utterly deep-rooted nowhere, and yet they can manage to cast some kind of shadow on the encounters found everywhere in daily living. For him, the normal and stigmatized are perspectives, not people. They are perspectives that are generated in social situations during mixed contacts by virtue of the unrealized norms which are likely to play upon the encounter. (Goffman, 1963:153, 1963)

My interest still remains in the question of why is it that we might feel shame when entering the porn shop, and why is it that people feel that they need to disguise their actions from themselves?

The word shame occurs frequently when having conversations about visiting a porn shop. Shame is the most common answer I get when asking people what they feel when entering the shop and if entering is hard, why is it so? Especially men seem to be keen to give me the shame answer with an additional; what if someone sees me? Women seem to be much more at ease when talking about the subject. How much of that is due to the fact that I am a woman myself remains unanswered. However, I would argue that it should not make that much of a difference. Comparable to Dana Berkowitz's (see Berkowitz, 2006) findings from the field, mine also suggest that women appear to be more relaxed than men when entering and being inside the shop.

"Men who look at pornography from a comfortable online or television distance deride the image of the "scumbag" characters who frequent adult bookstores. "Seedy" they call the places. Full of weirdoes and misfits." (Clinical director of the Masters and Johnson Clinic St. Louis in Paul, 2005:105)

Pervasive silence, distance between the customers, avoiding contact with the employees, and maintaining an uninterested facial expression are all previously observed porn shop norms. These norms (stigma / identity management techniques) exist in order to help maintain the privacy of the individual inside the shop. (Hefley, 2007:90) They also occurred in the shop I worked for. They co-exist with Hefley's additional identity management strategies. For instance, customers attempting to maintain their privacy outside the shop as well as inside, and customers disguising themselves to mask their identity from employees, other customers, and passers-by. Hefley describes how several customers, visible through the glass door, simply waited inside their cars for the store to appear empty before deciding to come in. (Ibid: 91) Again, this example is not only exceedingly similar to my experiences at the shop I worked for, but it is also an action that perhaps actually creates more attention than if the person would just simply walk directly in. What's more, I observed that although the shop I worked for was placed quite centrally, the parking spaces that were located

directly opposite or next to the shop's door were almost always empty. This I would argue was due to the "being seen (and connected) in a wrong place" factor. No one was willing to park in those spaces, not the customers, and certainly not the non-customers.

Remaining silent when inside the shop, whether it is for a while or during the whole experience does not change the fact that it is still a common technique of denying one's concrete presence inside the shop. As stated earlier, there exist certain groups of customers who would not say a word before I would initiate the conversation. However, Hefley argues that accounts or stories appear to be a rational method of managing stigma when in a porn shop. She quotes Scott and Lyman (1968:5) assaying; "*an account is a linguistic device employed whenever an action is subjected to evaluative inquiry and every account is a manifestation of the underlying negotiation of identities*"(Hefley, 2007:94,95) She points out two different types of rationalizations that were observed among the customers, which in turn took different forms. They were, an excuse (denial of responsibility), and a referentialization (claim of relative acceptability), therefore neutralizing or explaining the visit to the store.

'Denial of responsibility' is divided into two forms. These forms are, entering intoxicated and attributing responsibility to others. Once again, her findings are similar to mine. When Hefley explains the method of blaming 'others', i.e., customers creating excuses for purchases, saying that they were purchasing the products for someone else, they were shopping for gag-gifts, birthday presents, or for people who were too shy, etc (Ibid: 96) I did witness this type of behavior quite often, and in most cases it appeared to be a fabricated story. A story that sometimes actually made it even harder for the customer to find the right product. This was especially obvious in cases such as men purchasing lingerie or corsets for themselves, and claiming that their purchases would be for their wives or girlfriends. These types of customer encounters were also hard for me, especially at the beginning of my work. I did not yet have the ability to read customers, or at least not all of them.

However, the 'claim of relative acceptability' which appeared for Hefley on several occasions was, though present, not that apparent in the place I worked for. This might

be explained by different cultural values, or by the fact that most of the products designed for men were situated in another part of the store, next to the DVD-section and away from the main floor. Hefley describes customers that stated to each other or employees that it was acceptable to purchase gag-gifts or pornography, or for women to purchase vibrators. However, products that were designed for men to enhance their sexual pleasure in solo activities were frequently noted as deviant. Comments like *“I feel sorry for any man who has to come in here and buy a blow-up doll”* or *“Guys who have to buy **that** are just losers who can’t get laid”* were made. Hefley argues that these comments were made by the customers to point out that their own reasons for visiting the store were not as morally reprehensible as other customers’ reasons. She offers an interesting example of this by describing how two female customers, buying party items, board games, and a vibrator, reacted when they saw an strap-on device on the counter; *“When one of them saw the strap-on box, she gasped in a very loud and exaggerated manner. She exclaimed to her friend, ‘That is just sick! Who would buy that?’ Her friend replied, ‘I know. I can’t understand why most people come in here or why they buy half the stuff in this store.’”* (Hefley. 2007: 97-98)

The Other is strongly present, both in “excusing” and “judging” us and our behaviors. The latter will be looked more closely later.

Hefley manages to pinpoint yet another explanation for visiting the store. These customers did not offer rationalizations for visiting the store, but instead for engaging in other norm violations within its confines. She refers to this as a ‘claim of transference’, because these customers seemed to suppose that the deviant status of the store transferred other deviant behavior into non-deviant behavior. (Ibid:99) Similar to Hefley, I was often approached with questions about the nearest striptease places, local swingers clubs, and escort services, all areas outside my expertise. However, there were some occasions when I did provide the needed information, either from the yellow-pages or from the internet, about the town’s strip clubs to the people who genuinely appeared to be from out of town. There were also a few occasions when a girl who wanted to become a stripper would approach me asking which stripping place do I think is the best to start from.

On a number of occasions I've had to explain that porn shops are not violent or dangerous places for woman to work in. I would argue that small grocery stores and kiosks often run by women are targeted far more frequently by violent individuals. Perhaps contrary to popular belief during the four years I worked in the shop there where only few incidents when I felt seriously frightened. Even on those frightening occasions, my authority was not questioned, at least not in the end.

After official opening hours, from a partly open door, a fairly disorientated, heavily drugged and bulky built guy walks into the middle of a strictly women's only sex-toy party. He then demands that I call him a taxi. When I refuse and advise him to leave, he truly goes off. He starts roaring and shouting and calling me all sorts of names. He gets really close to my face. Pointing his finger at me, he calls me an ape. I try not to laugh. All this time the rest of the women stay still. I choose to keep my voice as calm as I can, repeating that he should just leave. Luckily, in the end, he did.

Courtesy of my own mother, my aunt believes that I was working in a special souvenir shop. Even today, I still keep wondering what exactly it was that I was supposed to be selling there. Luckily, she has never asked. There are not many occupations existing anymore that one must keep quiet about. Apparently this is one of those remaining few. Of course, one can always argue whether this type of approach actually tells more about my aunt's own ideology. Or better yet, about what my mother assumes the ideology itself is.

Interestingly, I did notice a difference, both in my own behavior and in the essence of the place, whenever I visited the shop after I had stopped working there. Mostly it was due to the fact that I saw the shop, literally and mentally, from a completely different perspective. I was now facing towards the counter instead of the shop floor. Nevertheless, I must admit that part of me, however how small, felt a bit agitated and

excited upon entering, even after having worked there for almost four full years. Perhaps it had something to do with a newly gained novelty factor. It became clear that the shop had lost its 'every day' characteristic. I would have to re-form my 'relationship' to the place all over again. It can be seen that my connection with this particular place is now sifting somewhere in between place and space. As a former member of staff I can never be able to see the place as customers will see it, however I can no longer see it in the way the employees see it, and yet my researcher status stays. Earlier, I questioned my own existence within the study, now it became clear that I did become a product of my own study, perhaps in more ways than I first assumed. It just took me a while to comprehend this.

It seems that all the freaks are out today. I am waiting for the moment I have to call the guards. Meanwhile, one customer has been lurking around for quite along time now, looking relatively loony. The customer went through all the shoes we have for sale and is now back at the DVD-section, again. Another guy asked for advice choosing between two big but/big boob DVD's. He ended up getting both, and after a rant about our plastic bags not being normal, he finally finishes with the question, "Do you have any plans for the afternoon, would you like to watch these films with me?"

6.2 The famous Other

Despite the fact that Sartre's ideas of 'Other and our being and very existing' really have different abstract and concrete levels and stages, I did find it useful for this work. This is especially true since in my opinion his way of writing does make possible several different interpretations and understandings.

In his work, *Being and Nothingness* (1943/1969), Jean-Paul Sartre describes the two kinds of entity in existence; Beings-in-themselves, and Beings-for-themselves. Beings-in-themselves are non-conscious things, which can be said to have essences. They exist independently of any observer and constitute all the things in the world. Beings-for-themselves are conscious beings whose consciousness makes them entirely different from other things, both in their relation to themselves and to one another, and to those other things. Sartre then makes a connection between one conscious Being-for-itself and another, and so the idea of Beings-for-others is introduced.

In addition to the notion of Beings-for-other, the notion of shame also comes up. Sartre argues that shame *realizes an intimate relation of myself to myself, through shame I have discovered an aspect of my being. It is certain that my shame is not reflective, for the presence of another in my consciousness, even as a catalyst, is incompatible with the reflective attitude; in the field of my reflection I can never meet with anything but the consciousness which is mine. But the **Other** is the indispensable mediator between myself and me. I am ashamed of myself as I appear to the Other.* (Sartre, 1969:221-222) Sartre points out that by the plain appearance of the Other, one is put in the position of passing judgment on oneself as on an object, since it is as an object that one appears to the Other. For Sartre, shame is by nature recognition. i.e., I recognize that I am as the Other sees me; shame is shame of oneself before the Other. However, the Other is needed for one to fully realize all the structures of one's being. (Ibid:222)

In my understanding, the Other appears as both, one's (concrete) consciousness and as a concrete other, as another person. Similar to Sartre's outlook on vulgarity and how nobody can be vulgar all alone, nobody can feel shame all alone. We need someone or something to reflect those feelings. *Thus human-reality the characteristic of being is that human-reality is its being with others.* (Sartre, 1969:245) Goffman, among others, offers a poignant look at the Other's involvement in the life of individuals as well. Here I feel necessary to quote the whole text exactly as it is, for I believe there is no better way to articulate it. *'The individual who is known about by others may or may not know that he is known by them; they in turn may or may not know that he knows or doesn't know of their knowing about him. Further, while believing that they do not know about him,*

nonetheless he can never be sure. Also, if he knows they know about him, he must, in some measure at least, know about them; but if he does not know that they know about him, he may or may not know about them in regard to other matters." (Goffman, 1963:84) To simplify, not knowing for sure creates all those assumptions, prejudices, and stereotypes. That in turn leads us to feel shame amongst other feelings.

*A customer actually walked in whistling today.
Excellent verification of a stereotype, especially
since he stopped the very moment he was inside.*

When talking about the space, Sartre uses the example of a man reading a book while he walks. The disintegration of the universe which he represents is merely virtual. He has ears which do not hear and eyes that see nothing apart from his book. Between his book and him, one senses an undeniable relation without distance; still the form has closed in on itself. (Sartre, 1969:256) It is possible to extend this particular example to consider people that walk in the porn shop while talking on the phone. They also distance themselves from the world around them, however briefly that moment is. In a way, they are playing the trick of not seeing others or the place, and thereby turning invisible for themselves, on themselves.

In effect, what does being seen mean for us? Sartre offers his answer to this as well. For him, it is shame or pride that reveals to us the Other's look and ourselves at the end of that look. It is the pride or shame that makes us live, not know the situation of being looked at. However, he makes the point that this look is probable. It is probable due to the fact that we can constantly believe that we are looked at without it being true. As a result, does not our certainty of the Other's existence take on a solely hypothetical character? (Sartre, 1969:261,275)

6.3 Stranger knowing

"I don't want some stranger knowing about me and my sexual proclivities" (Male informant, in his thirties in Paul, 2005:18), this is an explanation statement that is often said when talking about porn shops. It could easily be stated by numerous different

informants, including myself. Is this a legitimate concern? How much do we really pay attention to the actions of other people, especially in a place in which everyone should be for a similar reason? I would argue that in other places dedicated to fulfilling a single human need such as pharmacies or liqueur stores, people do not focus on the purchases or actions of others. Why then do we seem to feel so strongly about these shops? Why is there the need to watch our back, to double and triple check that no one is there? It seems that we want to make sure that not a soul sees (the real) us. It is evident that sexuality is still a taboo.

I would argue that pornography is for men what vibrators are for women. Both are invented to pleasure and to relieve pressure, and both are artificial aids for masturbation. Evidently, I do recognize the simplification here. Here, artificiality takes two forms; the form of a toy s(t)imulating a sexual organ, and the form of a reproduction of real human bodies, offered, in a plastic DVD-case, to be then viewed through a screen. As Kontula notes, ideas of pornography are often very personal. The way people understand and evaluate particular sexual materials and whether these materials are acceptable or offensive is strongly associated with the instant positive or negative reactions of the person in question. In Kontula's opinion, porn moves people to feel something, because it manages to convert what is most private about a person's life into something visible and public. (Kontula, 2009:165) Kontula points out that in the present day, masturbation has not only been represented as a kind of a safe sex in an era of various health risks, but also as a key to one's sexuality, and a way of claiming one's own body. (Ibid:240) Could this be considered true for both men and women? I would argue that there is a significant difference between women and men here. It is easy to say that a woman interested in her own well being is claiming ownership of her sexuality, when investing in a vibrator or a porn movie. Is it as easy to say the same about a man buying a pornographic movie or a novelty item?

Some of the embarrassment and shame can be triggered by our assumptions about others' thoughts about us. *After all, doesn't the use of any of these aids means that that person is not getting any real action?* I heard this comment surprisingly often when discussing novelty items and pornographic material with a mixture of people. It was

also visible in Pamela Paul's (2005) research. *"When I was in a relationship looking at pornography didn't trouble me as much but when I wasn't I associated the way I was using porn with some creepy guy home alone on a Saturday night, jerking off."* (Male informant, 32 years old, in Paul, 2005:104)

"When he started watching these things (porn movies) alone while I was at his place, that spelled the end of our relationship, she recalls. At about the same time, he bought me a vibrator. It was as if he were saying, 'Here's your toy. You don't need me anymore.' I felt like it cheapened everything." (Female informant, 33 years old, in Paul, 2005:146)

The shop I worked in had a policy that all the vibrators and dildos sold looked nothing like the real thing. The idea was that real penises were attached to real men. I observed plenty of couples shopping for vibrators. Quite often, the male companion felt the need to comment to me about him becoming completely useless after they purchase this whirling, buzzing, and hurling device. My answer about them still having the real things seemed to console them. Like women who feel inadequate when thinking about perfectly sculptured porn stars, men are capable of feeling insufficient when comparing part of themselves to these artificial plastic devices.

Once again instantaneously as I opened the front door, the first customer arrived. They must be waiting somewhere outside the shop. Regular customer paid a visit this morning as well. It seems that nowadays he is much more at ease with me. He wants to talk about his personal life etc. He must have stayed more than hour. I don't think it's my place to "entertain" one customer for a whole hour so I did what I normally do when there are no other customers around. And that is to pretend that there are a lot of things that needs to take care of immediately; such as bringing empty DVD-cases back on shelves and so on.

7 SELLING THE FANTASY

If religion, media, feminism, and culture and society as whole, have had some impact to our ability to step in to an adult bookstore, have those original ‘old school’ bookstores had their fair impact as well? Stereotypes do not rise out of nowhere. The image of an elderly greasy man located behind the counter, reading used porn magazines underneath the desk lamp, has not emerged from nowhere.

Initially, those shops really were poorly lighted, run only by men, and were connected with antiquaries. The toys sold were replications of the real thing. They were flesh colored, plastic, and presented in modest cases and boxes. Shops were not located in high street setting, but seedy neighborhoods. These shops still exist and they do for a reason. However, things have changed and we can now choose between different shops. The trouble is that these original stores have managed to have an impact on public opinions.

*“So, where do you work then? I work in a porn shop,
as a clerk. Ah, so in that case, where do you
“Dance”?
Nowhere, I work in a porn shop, as a clerk.”*

During the four years that I spent working in a porn shop, it became evident that the amount of female customer grew steadily. Of course this is just a single shop, but the overall trend appears to be that women are more interested and relaxed about their sex-life than previously. This must be partly due to the growth off “more female friendly” shops. There are currently a wide variety of shops that are mainly run by and marketed towards women. In the United Kingdom alone, there are several different chains such as Sh!, Coco de Mer and Ann Summers. (See for instance, Malina & Schmidt (1997) and The Sex Education Show versus Porn, Cheetah Television, Channel4)

Customer walks in. "Ok. Right. I wonder if I'm in the right place. Yes. It seems so. I can see the bits and bobs, pots and caskets. So, where do you keep the pillowcases then?"

According to my field notes, interviews, discussions and plain observations there are certain behavior patterns that are observed when one enters a porn shop. We tend to make excuses for being in one. We tend, most likely unconsciously, to present ourselves differently from our normal, everyday selves. Some examples are: just wanted to have a quick look etc., cover stories (it's a birthday present, when it is blatantly clear that it is not), made up stories (oh, so this is not a button shop / clothes shop / barbershop / photolab...), nervous laughter, strained humor, (especially performed by men) courage drinks before entering, surrounding ourselves with other people, and by doing so, possibly covering our(true)selves, overall nervousness and therefore odd questions, i.e. is this a porn shop? Though, there have been cases that have shown that for some people the shop really looks extremely 'normal'.

I would argue that Goffman's definition of performance is viable not only in terms of the many strip club studies that use it (Joseph&Wosick-Correa, 2008.202) but also in terms of porn shops. Goffman suggests that individuals continually perform during everyday interactions. What observers see is seldom the person's 'true self', but rather a contrived set of behaviors and props used to complete the performance through the 'front stage'. The 'back-stage' is rarely seen by others. It is where the performer can relax, step out of character, and evidently drop the act in an attempt to be more real. However, moments of slippage do occur. These are what Goffman terms as "breaks in character". (Ibid: 202,210 & Goffman, 1959) The difference between porn shops and strip clubs is that in strip clubs the performers are most likely the dancers, while in porn shops it is the customers who will run the show. In a way, it is the porn shop's personnel's task to adjust their actions to those of the customers, and in a process 'force' the potentially nervous customers to unwind themselves. There were a number of occasions when a customer approached me with the query, "*I need something nice for a birthday present*" This in turn resulted in me asking follow up questions, which in

the given environment were more than appropriate, such as; “*Is this person she or he, gay or straight, single etc?*” In some cases, these questions led to the customer becoming offended. This is something I find quite interesting, since in my understanding, the porn shop is one of those places where a simple ‘something nice’ is not providing enough information. Follow up questions are plainly needed.

At this point I wish to underline the fact that though having done interviews, and discussed the topic with several people, inside the shop I have undeniably observed only the people who have made the decision to enter the shop. As a result, I myself have remained as the only variable component between the place and space under study and ‘outer surface’.

Customer comes in, I acknowledge him. He makes it clear that no help is needed and snatches the first possible bottle from the shelf. He then pays for his purchase (clitoral stimulation gel), and leaves without a word. A moment later he returns, repeats his earlier action and leaves with his purchase (toy disinfection lotion). When he returns yet again a moment later, I am forced to ask whether there really is nothing I could help him with. Turns out, just like I assumed from the very beginning, he wanted a lubricant.

There were times when I wondered whether my study field was too narrow. I did have conversations with other porn shop workers and realized that their experiences were relatively similar. I found a couple of American researchers (see Stein, 1990, Berkowitz, 2006 & Hefley, 2007), whose findings were similar to mine. Even though the places might change the people act the same. It seems that not much has changed in over a decade.

7.2 Me and Michael Stein on the field

As I pointed out earlier data considering porn shops was not found easily. I assume this to be for the reason that it still remains an area that has not yet drawn enough attention to be well researched. After I had already finished my own data collection I managed to get my hands on Michael Stein's ethnographic research of a porn shop located in a relatively small town in United States. Although the study was made twenty years ago, on a completely different continent, there were many similarities between Stein's findings and mine.

Stein argues that studies about pornography are concerned with behavior after exposure to pornography. In his opinion, the focus on potential effects in such a fashion is not trivial, however in this approach something of current behavior; the process of coming into contact with pornography, is either obscured or lost. Therefore as valid and valuable as this type of research may be, little attempt has been made to approach pornography on its own ground. He concludes that one has to come across pornography before one is affected by it. (Stein, 1990:2-3) Similar to me, Stein brings up the important point that porn shops are not being extraordinary merely because they specialize in one kind of product or service. The same may be said for instance for shoe stores, fabric stores, or religious bookstores. The special quality is rather due to the nature of the reputation of the products being sold. Pornographic materials have a marginal status in relation to the dominant culture.(Ibid:70-71) After twenty years, this description is still accurate. Stein continues that; *"Pornography was literally an under the counter commodity for a long time. Though now it is legal, the dirtiness and the consequent sense of deviance associated with this material lend it a subterranean quality. Thus pornography and other adult material are simultaneously aboveboard and underground."* (Stein 1990:71) It can definitely be argued that it is this status that makes it so hard to be in a porn shop.

7.2.1 Similarities and differences in findings:

Stein describes how some of the customers seem to be completely "blind" to a large sign suspended from the ceiling, situated on an eyelevel and only a few feet away from the entrance, blocking part of the view. The sign indicated the shops fifty cent cover

charge policy, that would however be refunded with any purchase of a dollar or more. (Stein, 1990:38) This is similar to my observations of people often not noticing a glass-door (peculiarly in both cases, when coming in and stepping out), cinema-coverage (walking first directly towards me and the sign and then past me and the sign) or the fact they had arrived at the porn shop. Stein comes to a conclusion that is similar to mine; that this is due to the sexual scenes depicted all around, and not for instance unwillingness to pay.

I don't normally work on Wednesdays. It's been extremely peaceful today, unlike on last Thursday, when I had to call the guards to come escort one drunken guy out. I can see the regulars today as well. It seems that they visit almost every single day. It's amazing how long customers can actually spend in the DVD-section. Sometimes I forget that someone is still there. I'm trying to do some crosswords – some porn shop worker I am indeed. It seems this day will never end.

Stein's observations were similar to mine even up to the point (Stein, 1990:101) where he describes a regular magazine customer who shows up to the store on every Thursday (new release day). If the new releases were not yet on display, he would leave (after some good-natured banter), and return when he thought the new displays would be ready. This exact same performance also took place in the shop I worked for. The only difference was that instead of magazines it was DVD's.

Stein did his research in the era when shops started to sell and rent films in the VHS format. (Ibid:123) I did mine in the era of DVD and Internet downloads. During my first months in the shop, I was asked on several occasions whether we still stock videotapes and would we be interested in exchanging some for DVD's. The shop had an exchange policy where a customer buying a new DVD was refunded some money while returning a movie purchased from us.

It was interesting to notice the similarities in our analysis, but it was even more absorbing to realize the differences within the studies. Stein notes that; *“I could not detach myself from the **kind** of place an adult bookstore is. Seldom, if ever, was the time I entered without feeling a twinge of concerned embarrassment that I might be seen. I began thinking of the bookstore as a haven when I noticed how quickly the feeling disappeared once I was inside”* (Stein, 1990:128) Stein’s interest in researching this particular place arises from his idea that the porn shop is a clearly bounded place, in many ways a scene set apart. It is this notion and focus which mostly contributed to his interest in the porn shop as a research setting. My position and interest towards the place differs significantly. Whereas Stein wanted in while looking out, I was already in looking out. My reason for studying this place was due to my original interest in different places and spaces. Then came the realization that I was working in a place that was hard to define, not to mention approach. It is a place that makes people hesitate to step into. It is a place, in which it is required to have a certain type of person working behind the counter.

*“Tell me what’s your favorite out off all these toys?
Well.. I would say that this is the one we have sold
the most and no one has come back to complain
about it.. Yes, yes but what’s your favorite? Well.. I
would say that this is the one we have sold.. Come
'on You must have tested all of these yourself!
Actually no.. You must be kidding? Umm, no I am
not, do you reckon pharmacists have tested all the
drugs they are selling? Yeah well.. But if I worked
here I would be testing these all the time!!”
Yes, and that’s exactly the reason you’re not.*

8 CONCLUSIVE REFLECTION; A WORD AFTER

I aimed to find answers to two research questions. ‘What and where is a porn shop in terms of Place and Space?’ and ‘Are the Other, Shame, and Stigma placed when visiting a porn shop?’

Although attitudes have changed towards a more open direction, for the time being, I have no other choice than to conclude that stigma, shame, taboo, and evidently the presence of the Other are all still strongly present in the environment of the porn shop. Culture and society have without a doubt affected our understanding of sexuality and deviance standards. As discussed in chapters 3, 6 and 7 in an environment of a porn shop, shame, stigma, and taboo are placed in several different ways. Goffman attached stigma to stereotype, stating that they are both connected to the unconscious expectations and norms which act as hidden arbiters in all social encounters. Goffman pointed out that the visibility of a stigma is an important factor. (Goffman, 1963:65) It seems evident that this matters especially in the case of porn shop. Knowing that it is highly unlikely that anyone you know would see you entering the porn shop, or see you in the shop, was definitely a factor that made ‘coming in part’ easier. It was clearly visible that once inside the shop, for example the pervasive silence and the distance between the customers occurred as stigma management techniques. Hefley brought up the concept of ‘Denial of responsibility’, customers would either enter intoxicated or attributing responsibility to Others. (Hefley, 2007:96) In addition explanations and stories seemed to be a rational method of managing stigma when in a porn shop. The presence of the Other appeared to be strongly present, both in excusing and judging us and our behaviors. Sartre argues that by the plain appearance of the Other, one is put in the position of passing judgment on oneself as on an and object, since it is as an object that one appears to the Other. No one can feel shame all alone. (Sartre, 1969:222, 245)

As noted, sexual activities have been either encouraged or prohibited through the assumptions of the philosophy and religion of the culture. The tolerance of certain sexual behaviors is linked with these sexual assumptions restrained by cultural values and creation myths. (Bhugra, Popelyuk, and McMullen, 2010:245)

To conclude, it seems accurate to argue that society together with the culture (history, religion, philosophy, media and ideologies in general), regulate our behavior towards certain places, and therefore also towards and within spaces. For instance, the feminist movement and the media as ‘a representative of everyday voice’ have left their mark on general thinking, and this has not always been done in the most productive way. For example, Dworkin’s and McKinnon’s idea of all pornographic material being deviant or plainly bad is over simplified. (Russell, 1988/1993:51)

Especially before the 1960s, though partly due to censorship, the media (together with medicinal institutions) tended to mystify sexuality more than convey factual information. In the present day, general media constantly handles sex related matters with a sensationalizing angle. Especially tabloid media has the habit of bringing up the matters that they believe are most newsworthy, i.e., most sensational. For instance, when a piece of news, such as K-Citymarket has some novelty items in their supply is released as; ‘Sex-toys come to Family markets’, it is guaranteed to raise some conversation. I would argue that formulating this piece of news the way they did was actually for the better, for it did raise much needed conversation. Just like Harri Kalha has stated, though not directly about the porn shops; *“Porn does effect each and every one of us and it is of concern to all of us. For these reasons it should be talked about more and we should be able to look porn straight in the eyes.”*(Kalha, in Yhteiskuntaoppia / Porno 25.4.2005)^{xi} Furthermore, accurate and well-articulated media coverage of sex research has the potential to improve sexual health and individuals lives.

I am arguing that, depending on the point of view, a porn shop can be seen as just a place, a space on its own, or a non-place that supermodernity and our own imagination has created. Ultimately it is something that I would call an unpleasant pleasant place, a place where our fears and fantasies collide.

When we step or avoid stepping into a certain place, in this case a porn shop, we take with us all the ideas that culture, history, media and other sources of influence have left us. This includes the fear of the Other that subsequently feeds from the feeling of shame. It is a combination of all these factors that makes stepping in a challenge. I

^{xi} Original in Finnish, English translation by author.

would argue that a porn shop certainly is a place where a human presence does count. It is also a place that can become a very different type of space depending on who is occupying it. The experience of the space for an erotic dancer, whose familiar with the place, space and things sold in there, can differ drastically from the experience of a person whose taken a lot of time thinking before making the decision to step in for the very first time. Again, it can be seen that place and space compliment each other. As a place, a porn shop is concrete and virtually unchanging. As a space, a porn shop is abstract and the idea of it (space) changes from person to person. How this merging of the concrete and abstract is done, also varies from person to person.

8.2 In-between Place and a Non-Place

Additionally to the subjects already covered there also seems to exist a certain amount of hypocrisy connected to the pornographic industry, and its ‘byproducts’.

Under current Finnish law, every single pornographic DVD arriving in Finland has to be ‘clarified’ through the VET (Valtion elokuvatarkastamo)^{xii}. This involves scanning, writing, describing, ean-coding etc... The DVD in question must also be placed into the appropriate category. Is it hardcore SM/violence, gay, teen, hetero, bisex, transsex, animation, perversion? After all this, it is someone’s job in the VET to decide whether those movies are exploiting, hurting, or oppressing someone. For instance, from the tape they must judge whether the girls in ‘teen’ movies look too young, whether someone is really getting hurt in SM-movies, and whether the product in use really is chocolate or something other than the real thing in movies involving feces. One could question whether someone who is aiming to distribute material that is offensive would in fact report or clarify these details to the VET. In addition, the Internet and hardly regulated flea markets provide ways to circumvent these controls.

I find it important to highlight that in regard to sexual matters, society has come a long way since the Victorian era. There is still a long way to go. In addition it has been interesting to observe that changing porn shops too much from their original state is not the answer either. Somewhat softer shops, such as Elämän Suola and Sin City-chain,

^{xii} VET stands for Finnish Board of Film Classification.

have open space, bright lights and a no curtains policy. They seemed to have downsized their stores or vanished completely. Some sort of mystification is necessary. Neither eroticism nor sex need to be sterilized.

Sometimes it is entirely possible to not even recognize being in a porn shop. The case of Soho Original Bookshop in London is a good example. I had a friend in London who applied for a job in, what he thought was purely a bookstore. He got the job, and it was only then that he realized that there was a downstairs as well. Downstairs had nothing to do with the books sold on the upper, ground level. The ground floor of each store is dedicated to an extensive range of different types of books, titles that range from cooking, design, art, architecture, history, and photography, to children's stories. Alternatively, downstairs the shop is devoted to a wide range of adult-themed novelty items, DVD's, toys, and lotions are all found there. It is like a completely different place and space inside of a place. Perhaps, in order to ease the stepping in part, with porn shops some kinds of tricks are needed.

However pornified the present is, and however liberated we are, I would argue that sexuality is still a taboo. It is perhaps for that reason that one still finds it so difficult to step inside a porn shop. As stated earlier, places are important not because of their inbuilt value, but rather because we give value to them (in relation to our projects). (Entrikin, 1991:16)

Sex is everywhere. Sexuality is not. And maybe, since sex really is almost everywhere, we are programmed to believe that everyone should be able to do and perform everything, all the time, and everywhere. In failing to do so, we fail not only ourselves but the expectations laid out for us by ourselves. If we need 'aids' to perform, there must be something wrong with us.

Can this result in the shame and fear of not being good enough, or simply, just not enough?

In the end, do porn shops become unnecessary? Are they just places that are vanishing in the way of the internet? Is it just the material that's needed, not the premises selling it? And doesn't this make the premises completely useless?

The answer is both; Yes and No.

It is not only the place that creates our idea of this particular place or space, it is the things that are sold from there. It is the material that is occupying the place that makes us anxious. It is the people surrounding us, the fear of others and their possible thoughts which make us feel unease. The shame emerges because we mirror ourselves to the others who might not even see us in the first place. These others who just might be so wrapped up thinking about what other individuals think about them that they no longer see themselves or the others. Yet, I would argue that these places are needed, even if only as a counterforce for our feelings. It is a place that we genuinely do feel something for and about. Like E. Relph has expressed, though not directly about porn shops, there exists a deep human feeling for associations with significant places. If we choose to ignore that need, and allow the forces of placelessness to continue unchallenged, then the future can only hold an environment in which places simply do not matter. Concluding that – *“whether the world we live in has a placeless geography or a geography of significant places, the responsibility for it is ours alone.”* (Relph, 1976:147)

If one thinks about Mary Douglas’s idea of what is regarded as dirt: essentially it is disorder. There is no such a thing as absolute dirt, it only exists in the eye of the beholder. Dirt (such as taboo) in a given society is any matter considered out of place. Dirt offends against order, and eliminating it is not a negative movement, but a positive effort to organize the environment. (Douglas, 1984:2) Hence, is porn in a wrong place? Would our perception towards pornography be totally different if it would exist solely in our own private spaces such as our bedrooms? As things are now, it is everywhere but there. But then, to be able to exist in the first place, pornography needs counterforce, it needs to be opposed in order for it to survive. We need ‘dirt’ around us. Just like Linda Williams states, pornography simultaneously threatens to overturn the established cultural hierarchy and provides the base ground on which that hierarchy is erected. It comes to stand for a whole range of social ills and anxieties, simultaneously becoming the site of a ‘carnavalesque’ overturning of established order or of ‘utopian’ resolutions to actual social problems. (Attwood, 2002:97)

Perhaps the combination; Excitement- Stigma-Taboo-Shame- Embarrassment- Enjoyment is needed after all.

In terms of dirt existing in the eye of the beholder, I find Constance Penley's observation quite useful *"Given the enormous success of the feminist anti-porn movement – and their strange bedfellows, the religious right – in shaping the current prevailing idea of porn as nothing but the degradation of women and the prurient documentation of the most horrific forms of violence waged against women, it may prove difficult to recognize that the tone of pornography – when one actually looks at it – is closer to the Hee Haw than Nazi death camp fantasies."* (Penley, 2004:314)

Furthermore, if the word 'pornography' was earlier hard to define, it is paradoxically even more so in our present, pornified society. Like Nikula et al. remind us, pornification is happening on several levels. It is not possible to isolate this phenomenon to just a change in attitudes happening on a national level. It has as much to do with media-technology and international economics. (2005:14)

All this in mind, there are TV-programs about the porn industry, plastic surgery including penis enlargements and vaginal modifications, sex education shows, sex themed talk shows etc. Somehow the porn shop manages to make us feel unease, and strongly opinionated. One is able to watch and talk about porn and novelty items in a studio environment but not necessary in the place that is selling them.

Herbert Marcuse points out that when Freud establishes a correlation between the progress in the society and the increasing guilty feelings the obvious questions arise. Why would humans embrace civilization/society if to do so means relinquishing one of the basic means of attaining pleasure? (Marcuse, 1987:64) Is this perhaps the Great Paradox of our time?

Gert Hekma does excellent work with pointing out some of the problems regarding the research around sexuality. Although it was written more than a decade ago, it still, seems accurate. He states that sociological and historical examinations of sexuality have been implanted by the biological and psychological foundations of sexology. Another problem has been the flight from empirical behavior into theoretical speculation. It is the embarrassment about sexual acts that continues to make it difficult to study such social facts. What's more, many researchers quickly pass over actual sexual phenomena in order to discuss them in light of other social facts. For instance homosexuality in terms of the relation with the parents, prostitution in terms of poverty and social class

(though for instance Kontula (2008) makes an exception). While such analyses are valid, they often inhibit deeper insights into the sexual phenomena themselves.

Also, the reverse is hardly ever done: analyzing family life, politics, or the economy in terms of sexuality. Cultural-historical studies on sexuality have rarely been undertaken, while in sociology gathering statistics on sexual outlets has proved to be the limit of what seems possible.

It is necessary for historians and sexologists to devote more attention to the social formation of sexual mores, to their choreography and architecture, and to representations and preliminaries of sexual acts.

I can not help but agree with Gert Hekma; *“In light of the clinical speculations in which biologists rejoice and to which sociologists and historians submit, research on the social formation of sexualities cries out for more thorough and systematic pursuit.”* (Hekma, 1989:187-189) Studies do exist, but they are often focused on the ‘wrong areas’. After all, people who work within the pornographic industry are studied. However, the ones who are using the services provided are not well studied.

Finally to answer the question, ‘What and where is a porn shop in terms of Place and Space?’

As discussed extensively in chapters 4 and 5, porn shop seems to fit, for instance, under Nicholas Entrikin’s (1991) idea of people tending to explain their behavior and actions through different places. However, this should make a porn shop to be also a place in which one should know how to behave. This feature does not seem to take place, a porn shop appears to be one of those rear places where one does not have a readymade behavior-schema. In a case of a porn shop, E. Relph’s (1976: 63,64) statement of an authentic attitude towards place coming from a profound and unselfconscious identity with the place, or a full awareness that they are products of man’s intentions appears to be suitable.

Common features with Marc Augé’s (1995) non-places do exist, and uncommon features co-exist. I would argue that in the case of a porn shop it occurs that instead of losing one’s identity in order to become one singular mass, sometimes one gains new ones, or the very least pretends to be something else. As discussed previously, Goffman’s (1963) idea of the ‘facades’ one builds up seems to be accurate. This is

worth noticing, especially since porn shops should easily be under the term non-place. Like grocery stores, and gas-stations for instance, it is used the similar way. Everyone is there for the same reason. But unlike in grocery stores and gas-stations it seems that people in porn shops are out of their comfort zone just like they would be when ever they enter in whatever place or space formerly unknown to them. However the difference here is that the novelty factor does not seem to wear off, at least not as quick as in other places. It is possible that this is partly due to the fact that there is not enough time or frequency to adapt to the place. Nevertheless I would argue that feeling shame does have an important role when thinking about our behavior towards and inside the place.

Furthermore, the porn shop (like Augé's example of Tahiti) does bring immediate images to our mind. This is not to mention the conversations the words 'porn shop' creates even between those who have never stepped into one. It appears that we are truly aware not only of ourselves, but also about the place we occupy. As a result, there exists a market for online shops. In addition, I am arguing that it is not the material sold in these places per se that makes us aware of ourselves and the space within the place. It is the combination of place, space, our presence, and the material all in one, singular place. Take out one (of us) from of the equation, and it is instantly easier to 'manage'. Maybe the case with this particular place is that it shifts somewhere between place and a non-place. It is a place that makes us truly to feel as if we are inside a place. Therefore I feel that the term 'unpleasant pleasant place' is not only necessary, but also accurate to describe the contexts of my study, a porn shop.

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