City of Reykjavík

Pornography as Work Culture and Cultural Phenomenon

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Introduction

During the course of Icelandic history, the push by the feminist movement for more gender equality in Icelandic institutions, both public and private, has been and continues to be both visible and persistent. One outcome of this long struggle for reform is a long series of laws and policies aimed at improving gender distribution and dynamics in the Icelandic labour market and in education. This entails for example laws and policies on sexual harassment. In some respects these reforms have paid off. Women in Iceland have generally become much more visible in Icelandic workplaces, especially during recent decades. In some workplaces and learning environments women are even over-represented. The City of Reykjavik and The University of Iceland are prime examples. 80% of employees at The City of Reykjavik and 65% of students at The University of Iceland are women (Pétursdóttir, 2009).

So does the overrepresentation of women in these institutions mean that women have finally stopped being discriminated against? Is equal gender distribution the same as gender equality? As this research will show, the answer to this is no. In fact, in a working environment with an equal gender distribution or even an over-representation of women, it can be a serious challenge for many men to consolidate their cultural upbringing as men, their life-long education in the codes masculinity, and the privilege that this entails, with a newfound reality in which men all of a sudden have to not only work with, but also often take orders from women (Kimmel, 2008).

Some men try to deny this new reality by desperately attempting to uphold the illusion of women's inferiority. The most straight-forward way to do this is by removing focus from the professional and educational accomplishments of women and instead focus on women in different terms. In a culture, which is saturated by pornographic discourse (i.e. the sexually explicit subordination of women) to the point where it has become almost invisible to the average person, it is not difficult to imagine the easiest way to strip a woman of her professional and personal worth. By utilizing elements of a pornographic discourse, which is already omnipresent in our society, some men in our workplaces and educational institutions are able to keep on imagining that women are professionally and intellectually inferior human beings, whose primary function it is to sexually serve and to further the interests of

heteronormative masculine egos. This process is probably better known to some as *sexual harassment*.

In this project I sought to explore the different ways in which the discourse of a pornified culture is being used as a tool (i.e. sexual harassment) to restrict female influence in Icelandic working and learning environments. To define the pornification (or pornographic discourse) of working and learning environments as a form of sexual harassment in this way may be controversial to some. But this is the corner-stone which makes up the basis of the innovational value of this project; namely that individual cases of sexual harassment cannot be treated *only* on an individual basis. They must be put in relation to working and learning culture as a whole. We cannot expect to successfully deal with cases of sexual harassment in our workplaces and universities if we do not recognize that such incidents take place in a context; not in a vacuum. This project seeks to expose the connection between a pornified culture and incidents in which this condones or accepts as inevitable the existence of sexual harassment.

Questions I sought to answer in this research were, among other things; In which way does the pornographic discourse of mainstream society manifest itself in Icelandic working and learning environments? How does it affect these environments? Which messages do a pornified working and learning environment send to respectively staff and students about the roles of women and men? How do pornified words, imagery and actions emotionally effect those who are exposed to it? What should and should we not be doing about it? etc.

The end goal of this project is to create educational materials on the topic of pornography as working culture and a cultural phenomenon by utilizing the results of this research. These materials are to be distributed within departments at the City of Reykjavík and at the University of Iceland, which will hopefully give rise to a vivid and healthy debate about the topic, ultimately resulting in changed attitudes towards the influence of a pornified culture on working and learning environments.

This project was carried out as a collaboration between the City of Reykjavík and the University Iceland. It was through various departments at the City of Reykjavík that I was fortunate enough to find five research participants, who were willing to share their experiences with me. Throughout the following pages I will continuously be referring to these five qualitative interviews. The City of Reykjavík will also provide the financial backing needed to turn this project into an educational brochure. Through channels at the Department of Gender Studies at the University of Iceland I received the invaluable supervision needed to complete this project, and it was also from here that I was able to obtain the pictorial examples, which I will be referring to later on. Before we begin, however, it is crucial that we briefly consider some definitions, which are central to understanding this research.

What is Pornography?

Before we can define pornification, we need to define pornography. Scholars in the field have struggled over this for decades. After all, can all depictions of human sexuality be said to be pornographic? In a word, no. At least in theory there is an open space for depictions of human sexuality that are not pornographic. However, in the culture and society we live in, depictions of human sexuality and pornography have unfortunately become near synonymous to one another. However, in order to keep a theoretical space open for non-pornographic depictions of human sexuality, I will here define pornography as "the graphic sexually explicit subordination of [persons] through pictures and/or words" (Dworkin & MacKinnon, 1992). Put in another way, for something to be considered pornographic, it must not only be sexually explicit, but also contain a hierarchal power dynamic of subordination. In the vast majority of immediately available pornographic depictions, this hierarchal power dynamic exists between women and men, with men presented as the dominant group and women as the subordinate group. Therefore, when I refer to 'pornography' from hereon out, I am talking explicitly about mainstream, male-targeted, heterosexual pornography.

What is Pornification?

It is necessary to draw a line between pornography and pornification. Whereas pornography is by necessity always sexually explicit, pornified words, images or actions may not necessarily be so. It is always sexual, but not always sexually explicit. In other words, pornified elements do not have the form of pornography, but it shares the same content, namely the sexual subordination of persons through pictures, words or actions. Put differently, pornification is the "cultural process by w[h]ich pornography slips into our everyday lives as a commonly accepted and often idealised cultural element" (Sørensen, 2003). The tools of pornification are therefore words, pictures or actions which seek to subordinate persons through a sexual discourse that borrows from the pornographic.

Pornification as Words

Sexual Humor

It is not uncommon for people to share jokes with one another in the workplace. Indeed, in a healthy working environment it would be strange if there wasn't room for jokes and a generally humorous atmosphere among coworkers. However, after interviewing employees at different departments at The City of Reykjavik, it is clear that such humor may often manifest itself as prejudiced or sexually offensive. This has implications for gender equity in the workplace.

Telling sexual jokes has become so commonplace in our culture that we rarely think about why we do it. Such normalization has arguably resulted in the fact that people, who take offense with this kind of humor, are often either labelled as humorless prudes or accused of wanting to infringe on other people's right to express themselves freely. However, since freedom of speech in any working environment should of course be kept sacrosanct, it also becomes all the more important to reflect critically on the meaning and implications behind what we choose to say.

The role of sexual humor in shaping and maintaining power relationships and structures has been known for a long time (Spradley and Mann, 1975), as have the controlling aspects of the negative emphasis on gender and sexual differences in workplaces that this kind of pornified humorous discourse brings with it (Acker, 1990; Burrell, 1984; Hearn & Parkin, 1983; Walby, 1988). Most recently, sexual humor has been shown to function both as a disguise of a person's attitudes toward gender and as a tool used in maintaining existing organizational structures (Brunner and Costello, 2002).

At least at The City of Reykjavík, it would appear that sexual humor circulates predominantly among groups of men. During my in-depth interviews with employees, only sexual humor among men ever surfaced as a topic of discussion. This goes hand in hand with more general research suggesting that, for whatever reason, men enjoy sexual humor more so than do women (Lawrence, 2010), arguably because women are most often the butt of the typical sexual joke. This is not to say that women are incapable of indulging in sexual

humor, but for the time being it is the sexual humor among men, which appears to have the greater impact on working environments at Reykjavíkurborg.

Creating a Gender-Segregated Working Environment

Often when people are joking around in the workplace, they do so with the best of intentions, and they do their best not to be offensive to any of their colleagues. While this might seem like a noble social intention, it may inadvertently help create an unwanted gender-segregated social setting in the workplace. When I talked to Ásgeir, an employee at The City of Reykjavík, I gained a sense of what significance humor might hold in a work place. He said:

> Well, people kind of banter about, and I am no innocent in that regard myself, you know. I know and sometimes tell some pretty offensive jokes -- to selected people -- people that I know are kind of on the same wave length and wouldn't be offended by it, and there are some things that I would only say to men, and other things only to women, so you kind of -- as you get to know people, you kind of size them up and sort of -- where they are positioned, what they will accept and what not, but -- but then also -- I just try to tone it down a few percent, so -- so as not to be obviously offensive.
>
> It's a very limited number of people that I feel I can say just about anything to. My coworker in the office next door, we work extremely closely together -- we run a project together, and do everything hand in hand, and -- just because of the enormous respect I have for her as a colleague and a professional, you know -- even though I probably could say such things, I wouldn't even want to come close to offending her ... But some of the male colleagues, I guess the one I would be sort of most free with, would be [Guðmundur]. He is someone you wanna keep an eye on. It would be interesting to hear his views about all this, cause he's kinda like the "Ahh, this feminism is bullshit"-type, not that I want to paint him out in any certain way, but ... I often just drop into his office and just, as they say, shoot the shit kinda thing.

What is most interesting about Ásgeir's statement is not so much that he openly admits to telling "pretty offensive jokes", but that he seems to go out of his way to make sure that he does not tell the jokes in the wrong context or in the wrong company. Even if he sometimes tells "pretty offensive jokes", he only does so to selected individuals. He seems to be very particular about sizing people up, finding out what kind of people will be able to accept which jokes, and even toning offensive jokes down a bit in order to keep himself safe.

Ásgeir's social selectiveness is well-known to social psychologists. In researching prejudiced communication, Ruscher (2001) points out that "given implicit impression management goals, the transmitter [of the joke] needs to weigh the potential costs and gains" (p. 190). This means for example that if the recipient of a joke has a very predictable reaction, the risks of telling the joke are minimal. This applies for example if Ásgeir was to tell his friend Guðmundur a demeaning joke about women or feminists. Ásgeir knows that Guðmundur has a lot of anti-feminist sentiment, and thus telling him such a joke would be safe. If he, on the other hand, was to tell such a joke to the female colleague for whom he has "enormous respect", the risk of having to stand socially accountable could be far greater.

In this way, Ásgeir's selectiveness as to whom he tells his "offensive jokes" might reflect the best of intentions. As he points out, he "wouldn't even want to come close to offending". However, by choosing to use offensive humor only in the company of certain people at the expense of others, what Ásgeir actually does is to create a small social in-group in which being offensive to people in an out-group is considered acceptable. Moreover, as Ásgeir also points out, there are some things he "would only say to men, and other things only to women". This makes his selectiveness gendered, and as a result, he helps create a social structure in the workplace in which women and men are kept socially separate by way of differences in humorous discourse.

So what implications does such a working environment have for the equity between women and men? After all, if we make sure not to offend anyone's sensibilities, then what does it matter if groups of men and groups of women share humor that is internally different from one another? As we shall see in the following, the implications of such a working environment may indeed be rather severe.

The Boys' Club: Homosocial Bonding

Men's sexual humor may have different implications depending on whether such humor is exercised strictly in the company of other men, or whether the humor is used in the company of women.

In the case of Ásgeir, the humor was kept mainly in male social in-groups, in which case the humor functioned as a social dividing line between genders. For men in general, in-group sexual humor may create tightly knit homosocial male-to-male bonds, which affect men's gendered relationships with women (Flood, 2008). An example of how men's homosocial relationships may affect the gender equity in a working environment is provided by Hrefna. She describes her former workplace at The City of Reykjavík as being "alpha-male oriented". For example, in describing the attitude toward sexual harassment in her former workplace, she says:

> Even when there have been incidents when this one boss has been very discriminating, almost violent, he still gets all the support from the [male] executive. So people don't go and complain ... That's why I left. Because I always thought -- there would be a breaking point, when the head of these workers would realize that he was siding with the wrong guy -- siding with a guy, who was just really bad for the workplace, bad for business, bad for everything. Because he is -- and it's not my personal opinion, it's something everybody is realizing -- but he still does it .. He is backed up by the boss; the head of everything. And he is backed up by this place here [The City of Reykjavík]. So the boys' club is really, really strong. If this is the case, then you just don't complain about stuff like sexual harassment. There's nothing telling you that it is going to be treated properly.

In this example, Hrefna describes how one male boss is able to not just get away with being incompetent at his job, but is able to get away with being highly sexually discriminatory,

bordering on being violent. According to Hrefna, he is able to do so because “the boys’ club is really, really strong.” In this example we see how what appears to be just a single closely knit bond between just two men in one workplace may come to have dire consequences for the overall gender equity of the working environment. In this case, because the women in the workplace were aware of their executive’s close male-to-male relationship with the middle manager, no one dared to make complaints about sexual harassment, because they knew they would be ignored. According to Hrefna, all women at the higher levels of this particular department have since quit their jobs. Only one woman remains, and, as Hrefna also points out, this woman “can’t wait to leave”.

In the above-mentioned example, it is of course almost impossible to know whether sexual humor was a core ingredient in creating the homosocial bond, because male-to-male mutual trust, and thus strict confidentiality, is a precondition for such a bond to form in the first place. What we *can* say, however, is that insofar as sexual humor does create homosocial bonds, a case like the one above is a likely outcome.

Resistance to Female Influence

It becomes much easier to say something about the effect of male-to-male sexual humor when it spills from tightly knit homosocial environments out onto female out-group members. Hrefna provides the following example:

> In my department there was a young woman who was actually very efficient - an extremely good employee ... She came to one meeting with me at the executive level to just explain something she had done, and during the meeting one of those executives said -- because there were no curtains before the windows, and you can see out in the hallway -- and he said “I remember when [Auður] used to walk by here before we got the curtains. It was always so distracting because she’s so hot.” I was sitting in that meeting, and I was talking to somebody during that, and I didn’t hear exactly what he said. I was like “This cannot -- I don’t believe it”. Afterwards I talked to her and asked “Did he say that?”, and she said “Yes”, and so I went to talk with her superior, who also heard it -- but he didn’t do anything about it, because he thought it was -- I mean he would never say something like that himself, but he just -- he just let it slide. And I said “You have to tell him, you can’t just say things like that.”

This is not only another example of how an apparent male-to-male workplace alliance can easily make a complaint from a female employee disappear. It is also an example of how sexual humor is used to maintain a male-dominated status quo. Auður, a young and competent female employee, enters the meeting room with the explicit purpose of actively taking part in executive level decision-making; something which has, according to Hrefna, historically been a predominantly male activity at this particular department. Thus, as she enters the room, she inadvertently triggers a kind of defense mechanism in one of the executives. He decides to downgrade Auður’s professional contribution, by moving the focus from whatever it is Auður is doing at the meeting to her as a woman and a sexual object. He

does so in a humorous way, presumably to provoke laughter with the other men present at the meeting. To both Auður and Hrefna, however, his comment does not signal light-hearted humor, but genuine resistance to female influence in the workplace. In this way, even though such a truly sexist stance may not be visible in day-to-day serious conversation in the workplace, humor here becomes the excuse for venting one's suppressed attitudes about gender (Kahn, 1989). Another example of this is provided by Sigrún, who works at the executive level for the City of Reykjavík:

> We were -- one morning at 8.30 or something like that, on Friday, one of the offices made waffles and they asked people to come from the other offices -- invited them ... And the head of the committee that we have here, he was there. Then in came a young woman that was working at the office ... she was only hired for some weeks or months in a special program ... So she came and the head of the office said "This is [Dagný] ... she is very young and pretty and we are very pleased to have someone like that here." And she blushed and was shy and embarrassed. And I said something like: "What are you talking about?" and he realized that I was angry. I wasn't angry because of me -- I mean he was almost saying "You and the other women here are ugly" -- but he didn't say that, he was just embarrassing her, and I was reacting to that. Then he didn't say anything more, but one of the other women that was there said to me that he had told her on the next meeting -- with all the staff [there] -- he was telling them that I was very sensitive.

As in the previous example, this young woman, Dagný, is stripped of any professional worth by a male executive. In "welcoming" her to the workplace, he chooses to not focus on how her personality and abilities will benefit the workplace, as one might expect him to have done had Dagný been a young *man* fresh out of the university. Instead he chooses to measure Dagný's worth in terms of her looks. She is not a welcome addition to the workplace because she is talented, but because she is "young and pretty". In saying so, the male executive has turned Dagný into an ornament; a piece of human furniture that will be nice to look at while going about one's daily business.

It is also interesting to note how the male executive reacts when Sigrún gets angry with him. He does not hesitate to tell the entire staff at a separate meeting that Sigrún is "sensitive" for being angry with him. He can, without any significant risk of retribution, not only degrade a young female employee to a workplace ornament; he can also make light of the gravity of his own actions by ascribing any possible negative sentiment to female "sensitivity" issues.

The Sexual Infantilization of Women

The male executive's exact use of the words "young and pretty" in the above example is significant not because it is typically the younger generation of women, who speak of these experiences, but because there seems to be a trend towards a general infantilization of women (regardless of their age) in the working environments in which this research was done.

This becomes more clear if we compare the case of Dagný with the following case of a researcher, who was writing her doctor's thesis on the gendered nature of Icelandic work culture back in 2009. The following example is taken from her doctor's thesis and is presented here as a playlet:

'The objectified researcher'
Playlet

Setting: A large lunch room, with kitchen counter, three tables with chairs on both sides which seat up to 15 people.

The researcher [a 36-year-old woman] is dressed in jeans, zipped up turtleneck, and sneakers. Her hair is rather short and she wears very little make up, some black mascara and very pale lip gloss.

[...]

The researcher enters the lunch room; this is her fifth visit to the workplace. On previous visits she had experienced some inappropriate touching by the male manager. The male interviewee is standing at the end of one of the large tables. A male middle manager is sitting on a chair close to the same table. After rather formal greetings between the researcher and the male interviewee, since they are Within the Aura of Gender Equality meeting for the first time, the researcher is offered coffee, she takes a cup and pours coffee into it, standing next to the male interviewee which is also having some coffee. He speaks to the male middle manager.

Male interviewee: You told me some old broad wanted to talk to me, turns out it's a young girl, just around twenty.

The researcher a.k.a. "the young girl": (Smiling at them) What am I hearing.

Male middle manager: (Only addressing male interviewee not the researcher) Wait, I did not say that, I said it was a very good looking woman that wanted to have a talk with you.

The researcher is anxious to start the interview. She asks the male interviewee where they can conduct the interview; he shrugs his shoulders so the researcher asks the male middle manager, him being the highest ranking there at the moment, where she can conduct the interview. Somewhere private she asks, having had to go through uncountable interruptions at former interviews; people were coming in without knocking and phones ringing. A male employee enters the conversation at this point, having stood silent in the background up to now.

Male employee: You can go to the john.

The researcher a.k.a. "the young girl": Is that the only place where there is privacy?

(Pétursdóttir, 2009)

Apart from the sexually suggestive (and near threatening) undertones of these three men's statements, what we should pay close attention to in this particular context is the referral to the 36-year-old researcher as a "young woman". Just like Dagný, who was referred to as "young and pretty", and Auður, a young and new female employee, who was referred to as "so hot", the female researcher in this example is also firstly welcomed into the office with a comment about her age and secondly a comment about her looks.

In all of these three cases it seems that a kind of ageism or infantilization of women inadvertently intersects with sexual objectification. This combination of infantilization and sexual objectification of women mirrors all too well a familiar theme in mainstream pornography, namely that which Dines (2010) calls pseudo-child pornography, that is, when adult film actresses over the age of 18 are made out to look like children whilst engaging in sexual intercourse with older-looking men. In this way, a particular power relationship is mirrored from mainstream pornography onto reality and vice versa. It is a power relationship, which perpetuates male domination over women through two intersecting processes, that is, a sexual objectification process and an infantilization process, which essentially turns women into children.

But it was just for fun!?!

Many might argue that the purpose of humor in the workplace is not only to create a more light-hearted atmosphere, but also a way to break down hierarchal barriers between employees and executives. After all, it is important to be able to laugh together in spite of one's differences. This kind of "diplomatic" argumentation might sometimes be used when a female employee complains about cases in which supposed "humor" has crossed her boundaries, although, as we have seen in a previous example, such complaints may also just be swept away by referral to female "sensitivity" issues.

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, people, who take offense with the underlying messages of particular types of sexual humor, are often either labelled as sensitive, humorless prudes, or accused of wanting to infringe on other people's right to free speech. It is pivotal, however, that we distinguish between actual light-hearted humor on one hand, and serious messages disguised as humor on the other. Thus, "although semantically humour involves confrontation with a subversion of a dominant pattern" (Mulkay, 1988, p. 177), like for example an executive telling a joke to his employees to subvert the power dynamic of the employer/employee relationship, humor is still "used most effectively for serious purposes mainly in structured situations where it works to maintain that pattern" (ibid), like for example when an executive tells a joke which functions as a reminder of his superiority and power over his employees. The examples of humor we have looked at in this chapter falls into this latter category.

Conclusively, to dismiss the complaint of an offended employee on the basis that the offense was wrapped up as a joke is to excuse the misuse of humor as a "medium in which to couch a serious message [and in which] any serious intention and any serious meaning can always be denied" (Brunner and Costello, 2002), because it was 'just for fun'.

Pornification as Images

As we have seen in the previous, pornification as words (or sexual humor) has a profound effect on people and their working environments. However, pornification may also take on a pictorial form, that is, as images. Because images do not constitute an action in the same way that words or a physical gesture does, they are probably the most controversial form of pornification, even though they arguably constitute the form of pornification, which has the most long-term effects exactly because these effects cannot be mapped out in the the moment they are experienced. However, it has long been known that the representation of women and men in mainstream advertising has a negative influence on the gender dynamics in society as a whole (Andersen, 2009). Many have also pointed out how these representations of gender have been borrowed directly from mainstream pornography (Dines, 2010).

In the following we firstly look at a couple of examples of pornified imagery, which were found at The University of Iceland, and we ask which cultural implications such imagery has for the gender dynamics in a learning environment. We then look at a peculiar example of pornified imagery involving men, and finally we try to map out the immediate effects that pornified imagery has on the women, who experience it.

Pilates Balls and Boobs

On a university notice board we found an advertisement for Pilates classes arranged by the law department at the University of Iceland. This is an ad for a Pilates class, yet the picture in the advertisement appears to have nothing to do with Pilates whatsoever. Whoever put together this ad even puts in a disclaimer saying that “the picture does not relate to the advertisement”.

*Ertu stressaður fyrir prófin? Komdu í alvöru lawmasters pilates með ****
**** verður með Pilates æfingakennslu milli 19:15–19:30 í Frikirkjusalnum alla fimmtudaga út maí.*
*Strax að lokinni æfingakennslu *** tekur við létt slökun og nudd. Pilates boltar (og júllur, hehe) verða á staðnum, svo eingöngu þarf að mæta með svitaböndin og góða skapið.*

Ath. Myndin tengist ekki auglýsingunni (beint).

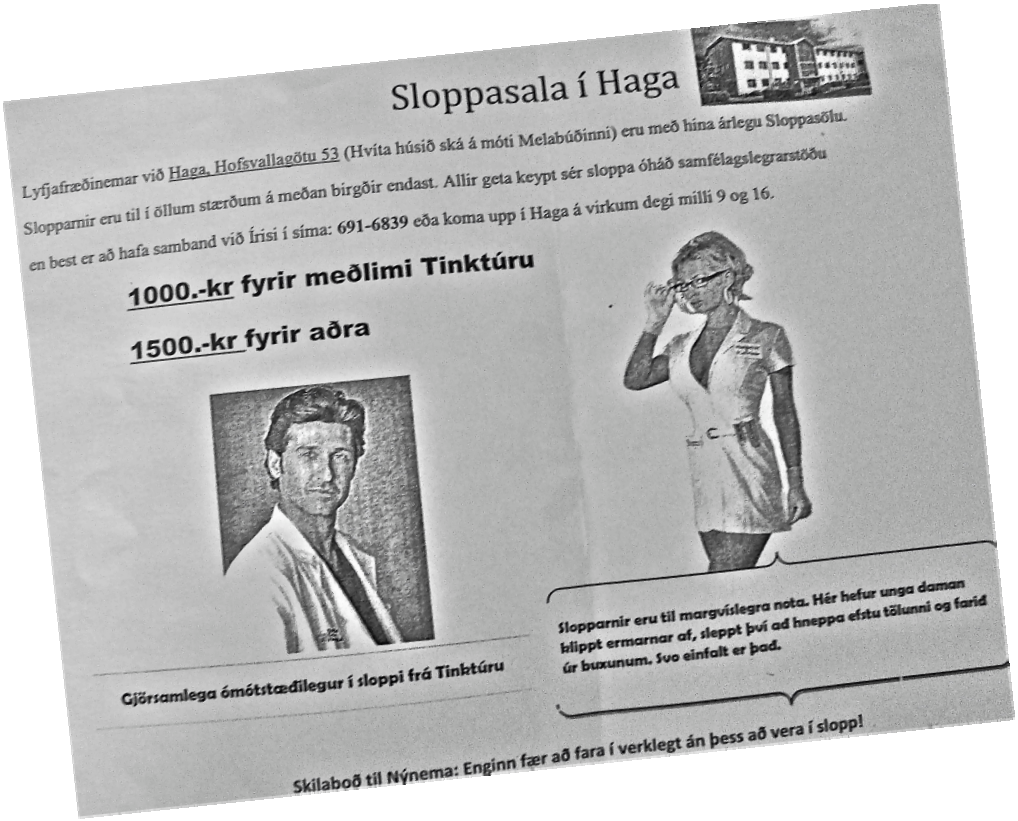
The question we should be asking then is: Why would someone put a picture of an anonymous naked woman in an advertisement for a Pilates class? If we look at the ad's accompanying text, we find part of the answer. After providing the viewer with general information about the time and place of the Pilates class, the author of the ad asserts that there will be "Pilates balls (and boobs, hehe)" at the location. By adding this parenthesis, the author indicates that a benefit of showing up is the opportunity to look at women's breasts. As such, the ad is primarily directed towards heterosexual men, presumably those at the law department. This point is further stressed by the accompanying picture of the anonymous naked woman.

Apart from catering to male heteronormative sensibilities, it is also interesting to observe how the word "boobs" (i.e. women's breasts) is mentioned not in connection with the women, who might show up at the Pilates class, but in connection with the equipment (Pilates balls) available at the location. In this way, a woman's body parts - in this case her

breasts - are being presented here as objects separate from the whole of a human being; objects that heterosexual men have the privilege to enjoy looking at. Overall the ad seems to be implying that women's breasts and the opportunity for male attendants to look at them while working out, is as necessary for a Pilates class as Pilates balls and sweat bands.

Scrub Sale: What else is being sold?

Once a year the students of pharmacology at the University of Iceland host a scrub sale for prospective students. In respectively 2010 and 2011 the advertisements for this event, which were put up on university notice boards, looked like this:



SLOPPASALA

Hin árlega sloppasala Tinktúru, félags lyfjafræðinema fer nú fram í Haga, við Hofsvallagötu 53 (gegnt sundlaug Vesturbæjar). Þar sem enginn fær að mæta í verklegar æfingar án þess að vera í þar til gerðum hlífðarslopp er nauðsynlegt að næla sér í slíkt sem allra fyrst.

Verð:
Óbreyttir borgarar: 1500 kr
Meðlimir Tinktúru: 1000 kr
Borgað eða lagt inn á staðnum
(ath það er hraðbanki t.d. á Háskólatorgi og í VRII)

Hægt verður að koma við í Haga eftir að almenn kennsla hefst eða hafa samband við okkur:
Katrín Alma: 846-1924 / Marianne: 650-8909*

Þessi herramaður stendur sig frábærlega vel í að títra í nýja sloppnum sínum.

Settleg dama í slopp frá Tinktúru (sokkabönd ekki innifalin)

*Við verðum stödd í Haga, Hofsvallagötu 53 miðvikudagskvöldið 31. ágúst frá kl. 20.00-22.00 svo allir ættu að geta nælt sér í slopp fyrir verklegt.

The visual imagery used in these ads in respectively 2010 and 2011 is strikingly similar. In both cases the ad consists of two pictures, each with a small accompanying text. On the left we see the head and upper torso of a young, male doctor with a dignified appearance. On the right we see a picture of a scantily dressed woman looking at the viewer with a seductive look in her eyes. The rubber gloves, filtering flask, name tag, and scrub-like miniskirt allude to the medical profession.

Apart from providing prospective students with hard information about the next scrub sale, the intended message in these ads appears to be one of light-hearted sexual humor, which serves the function of letting prospective students know that scrub sales are fun and that being a student of pharmacology at the University of Iceland is anything but a boring experience. However, if we dig a bit deeper into the cultural and ideological message in these ads, we see a lot more than internal jokes or light-hearted sexual humor. On the surface these might be advertisements for a scrub sale, but we should ask ourselves: Which ideas about gender and about women are also being sold here?

First we should take notice of the side-by-side comparison and strict division of the masculine and the feminine in both ads. The man and the woman are divided by a straight invisible line cutting down through of the ad, literally dividing them into two separate and irreconcilable entities: Men are men and women are women! More importantly, however, is the fact that the binary division of gender in both ads is deliberately created within the context of pharmacological studies at the University of Iceland. As such it sends a clear underlying message to prospective students about what is expected of them in relation to conforming to

preset gender standards at the pharmacology department. Male students are shown to look and act in a certain way; female students in another. So what messages do the ads send to respectively prospective male and female students?

In both examples, the male doctor appears calm, dignified, and, above all, professional. His facial expression and the look in his eyes commands the respect of the viewer. This is a doctor (or pharmacist), who knows what he is doing, and not only that; the 2010 ad describes him as “completely irresistible” (gjörsamlega ómótstæðilegur).

On the right side of both ads, however, a completely different story is being told. The women depicted here appear to be anything but professionals. They look more like porn stars in nurse uniforms. Their full bodily figures are shown, including bare thighs and an exposed cleavage. The 2011 ad goes so far as to reveal a pair of red panties and stockings. This immediately directs attention away from anything having to do with pharmacology, and instead turns the bodies and sexuality of the female pharmacologist into the main point of focus. Unlike the male doctors on the left side of the ads, the women’s facial expressions do not command respect for their occupation. The look in their eyes is flirtatious and their overall bodily postures are sexual rather than professional. In this picture, female pharmacists, nurses, or doctors are downgraded into objects of male desire, holding no power apart from that which they can obtain by offering themselves sexually to men. Moreover, the texts in the ads make everything abundantly clear. No one can work in the laboratory (fara í verklegt) without wearing a scrub, and while male students will be “completely irresistible” when wearing a scrub, women are encouraged to “cut off the sleeves, unbutton the top button, and take off [their] pants” because “it’s that easy”. And since “stockings are not included”, are female students of pharmacology then expected to buy their own?

The Fireman Calendar and the Female Employee

During my research, I was regularly introduced to various staff members in places I visited. In one department of The City of Reykjavík I was introduced to two female employees. As I was politely saying hello and shaking hands, one of them, a woman in her fifties, asked what I would be doing here. In my best broken Icelandic I answered that I would be researching pornification at The City of Reykjavík. When she heard that she immediately asked me to come with her beyond her desk and out back into a little room that connected her office with the rest of the department. The walls of the room were plastered with notes, memos and pictures of different sorts. It looked much like a little private space for the two employees. She promptly walked up to one wall and pulled down a 2011 calendar which contained a series of black and white images of semi-nude Icelandic firemen. This calendar is released once per year to help fund Icelandic firemen’s participation in the World Police and

Fire Games. As she pulled the calendar from the wall she flipped through the pages, commenting on individual pictures while smirking and occasionally chuckling to herself. She then quickly put the calendar back on the wall and said something along the lines of "That's it. Nothing more to see here."

Firstly, what is interesting is that when I personally got a hold of a copy of this calendar, it struck me that it, compared to other examples of pornified imagery containing pictures of women, it did not portray its subjects as sexually subordinate. It did, however, serve a function in relation to shaping understandings of what Connell (1987) calls hegemonic masculinity. Secondly, and perhaps even more interestingly, this employee's first reaction when finding out that I had been hired specifically to provide a critical angle on the pornification of working and learning environments, was to proudly and defiantly show me a calendar of semi-nude men. That she chose to do so is a clear-cut example of what Connell (ibid) calls emphasized femininity.

In the following I will firstly explain how the fireman calendar, as an example of pornification, stands out from pornified imagery displaying women. I will then go over the concepts hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity in turn and link them to respectively the fireman calendar and the reaction of the female employee.

Gender Differentiation in Pornified Imagery

As mentioned earlier, pornification is the "cultural process by w[h]ich pornography slips into our everyday lives as a commonly accepted and often idealised cultural element" (Sørensen, 2003); pornography here defined more specifically as "the graphic sexually explicit subordination of [persons] through pictures and/or words" (Dworkin & MacKinnon, 1992). Whereas all past examples in this pamphlet have fit this description, the Icelandic firemen calendar only does to some extent. The images might be sexual, and one could make the case that the firemen are displayed in a way as to play on the concept of the fireman as the ultimate heroic sex symbol.

However, when comparing pornified imagery containing pictures of women versus that of men, some very crucial differences emerge. If we compare the pictures in the fireman calendar with for example the pictures of the "nurses" from the scrub sale ads that we analyzed earlier, we see a couple of similarities. Both the fireman calendar and the pictures of the nurses portray an occupation (respectively fire fighting and nursing) in a sexualized setting. This, however, is where the similarities stop. Whereas both firefighters and the nurses are undoubtedly sexual, there can be no doubt as to which of the two best fits the working definition of what is considered pornographic.

The nurses in the scrub sale ad are wearing the typical pseudo-satirical attire used to signify a nurse in the typical pornographic film. She is wearing a costume. Oppositely, the men in the fireman calendar are wearing their professional working clothes, that is, apart from a bare upper body. But whereas the nurses' slim bodily figures, large silicon breasts, and exposed panties and stockings represent an all too familiar stereotype, the firemen are portrayed with an array of different body types; from fit and muscular over slightly aged to mildly overweight. This gendered differentiation mirrors mainstream pornography's respectively narrowly defined body image for women and a much more broadly defined body image for men, which in turn mirrors the more general sexual privilege that most men enjoy. Most importantly, however, the facial expressions on these firemen command the respect of the viewer, just as the male doctor in the scrub sale ad. In no way are the firemen presented as sexually subordinate, and for our working definition of pornography, this is a deal-breaker. However, just because the fireman calendar is not pornified, it still serves a function in shaping cultural understandings of masculinity in the context in which it is presented.

Hegemonic Masculinity

The fireman calendar is a textbook example of what Connell (1987) calls hegemonic masculinity, which is but one of many different forms of masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity may be defined as "a social ascendancy achieved in a play of social forces that extends beyond contests of brute power into the organization of private life and cultural processes" (p. 184), or perhaps simply as the currently "culturally idealized form of masculine character" (Connell, 1990, p. 83). It is characterized by a number of different attributes, such as for example domination, control, competitiveness, stoicism, heroism, etc. (Cheng, 1999). Hegemonic masculinity is not necessarily the type of masculinity that encompasses most men, but it is the form of masculinity that most men either admire or at least try to emulate (Carrigan, Connell, & Lee, 1985). One cultural sphere in which hegemonic masculinity takes its most firm hold is in the division of labor. Here hegemonic masculinity is most often associated with heavy-duty, skilled, dangerous and dirty work (Game & Pringle, 1983), and Cheng (1999) specifically mentions military, law enforcement, construction, and, as in our case, firefighting as prime examples.

January entry in the fireman calendar

If we for example take a look at the January entry in the fireman calendar, what we see is a man, who fits the hegemonic model to the letter. His legs are spread, providing him with a immoveable and powerful stance which he holds whilst staring into the ground with a stoic and concentrated facial expression. His concentration is accentuated by his tightened muscles with which he holds his trusted tools, performing the job that he was born to do. He is heroic, powerful, self-assured, determined, and in complete control. He is a man worthy of emulation because he represents the embodiment of hegemonic masculinity.

Emphasized Femininity

Contrary to masculinity, femininity never takes on a culturally hegemonic form. Though power struggles may take place on a personal and private level (e.g. mother-daughter relationships), society in its current form and its ”concentration of social power in the hands of men leaves limited scope for women to construct *institutionalized* power relationships over other women” (Connell, 1987, p. 187, my emphasis). Instead, those who embody and perform cultural understandings of femininity, that is, mostly women, are left with the option of either complying with or resisting hegemonic masculine patterns. Emphasized femininity belongs in the compliance-category. Its primary function is “to please hegemonically masculine men and make them appear more hegemonically masculine--to make them feel stronger, wiser, more competent” (Cheng, 1999, p. 298). A perfect example of emphasized femininity is the case of Princess Diana and Prince Charles. In her bare feet, Diana was only a centimeter shorter than Charles. However, on a postage stamp released after their wedding, she is depicted as a full head shorter than him. In this case Princess Diana’s primary function was to make Prince Charles, who is miles away from the hegemonically masculine ideal, appear as if he was, in fact, a bit closer to it than he actually was (Brownmiller, 1977).

The female employee, who proudly showed me the fireman calendar when she heard about my research, fits, at least in this example, the profile of a person performing emphasized femininity. As soon as she heard that I was to do research that would provide a critical angle on workplace pornification, she immediately decided to show me a calendar of semi-nude men. By doing so she is helping to perpetuate the idea that workplace pornification is by default a harmless non-issue that requires no further investigation. Furthermore, the content and nature of the calendar she showed me embodies ideas of hegemonic masculinity, which she without further inquiry provided with a stamp of approval. In this way the female employee served her function in relation to the hegemonically masculine ideal, not only by dismissing something, which could potentially further gender equality in the workplace, as a trivial issue, but also by showing me, and thereby approving of, the hegemonically masculine ideal.

It is also important to take note of the fact that the female employee was not showing me pornified images of women. As we have discussed earlier in this section, there are crucial differences between pornified images of men and pornified images of women. This poses the question as to whether the female employee would react any differently was she to enter an office in which only men were present, and in which the walls were plastered with calenders of naked women? In the next section we will look at such an example.

“You don’t get to be yourself”: The Violence of Misaddress

Up until now we have been looking at examples of pornification in working and learning environments primarily in terms of their content and cultural significance. While such inquiry is undoubtedly important, it is also crucial that we look at the internal effects and reactions that pornified imagery has on its viewers. One example was that of the female employee in the previous section, who complied and collaborated in the interest of the hegemonically masculine ideal. However, other women take to pornification differently and experience feelings of resistance rather than feelings of compliance. In the following example, Eva, a female employee at the City of Reykjavík describes how she encountered pornography at her workplace:

> Just the other day, I had to pick up my computer, and there was this computer room ... which is just a tiny room and there are just 4 or 5 guys working there. They’re doing repairs on computers and stuff like that. And there was just -- on one of the screens there was this naked woman with silicone breasts -- that type of thing. And there was also some calendars on the wall with naked women ... I didn’t say anything at that time. I talked to the boss later, but I didn’t say anything at the time, and I was wondering why I didn’t. And the answer was -- it’s so difficult to describe how it feels. If you just say “This is offending” -- that’s so superficial. It’s not simply offending -- it’s something deeper that happens. It’s like -- you’re being objectified, and kind of insulted as a person and as a woman. It is very personal. Maybe because you identify -- well, I identify with women, and it’s women on the wall, and -- it’s also this feeling of -- yeah, of -- yeah, I think objectification is the right word. You’re being degraded into some object instead of being a person somehow. It’s really difficult to explain that to some computer guy [and] it makes a distance between us ... But it’s kind of intimidating for me as a person also. There’s kind of -- yes, like sexual harassment -- it’s intimidating. Because you -- you don’t get to be yourself somehow. You kind of -- you get these feelings that you want to say something about it, but you don’t really know how to express them. Or even if you would try to express them, you probably would not be understood .. It’s like you have to put yourself in some kind of -- almost like acting instead of being yourself ... Because you’re trying to keep this very cool attitude and just be doing business. You’re not being friendly, because you don’t want to be friendly with these people. Even if you know that -- they wouldn’t rape you or anything -- I didn’t feel uncomfortable like that, but -- you don’t get to be the person that you really are. And that’s quite intimidating.

The first thing we should take notice of here is Eva’s description of her emotional experience when entering a room with four or five guys and pornified pictures of naked women decorating the walls. Eva describes the feeling as not simply one of being offended, but of being objectified and insulted on a personal level, which in turn makes her feel as if she is being perceived as less than a human being. As we have seen in previous examples, pornified imagery presents almost by default an image of women as objects of male desire. Because Eva identifies as a woman, she experiences this objectification as being projected onto her via the naked women on the wall. In this room, and in the company of the four or five men, she no longer feels that she is perceived as a person or a subject. She feels like an object who is expected to conform to what appears to be these men’s perception of what a woman ought to be like.

Some might argue that these men are probably fully capable of distinguishing between real-life women and the women decorating their office wall. But even if this was entirely accurate, we are still left with the question as to which function pornified material serve in this setting. As Freud (1960b) has argued, when a person is exposed to pornographic material against her/his will, it "compels the person who is assailed to imagine the part of the body or the procedure in question and shows her that the assailant is himself imagining it, [because] it cannot be doubted that the desire to see what is sexual exposed is the original motive of [pornified imagery]" (p. 98). In other words, just like when Hrefna and Auður (in a previous example) experienced sexual humor as a clear sign of resistance to female influence, so too does Eva experience the presence of pornified material as a threat to her subjectivity as a human being, and in turn as a clear sign of resistance to her personal authority. According to Kipnis (1992), this is because "pornography's discourse engages in setting up disturbances around questions of subjectivity and sexual difference [between women and men, and] this fantasy of undifferentiation is perceived as doing violence to female subjectivity" (p. 380-381). Eva also describes her experience as being "intimidating" because she perceives that a set of gendered expectations are being put on her. Thus, while she knows that "they wouldn't rape you or anything", her experience is still one of violation, and "the violence here is that of misaddress, of having one's desire misfigured as the male's desire. It is the violence of being absent from the scene" (ibid), or as Eva describes it: "you don't get to be yourself somehow."

"You look very much like an underwear model"

This "violence of misaddress" is also familiar to Ósk, an employee at the City of Reykjavík. She describes how she was once approached my a male co-worker:

> At one point when I was young here, I don't know, maybe -- 5, 6, 7 years ago, when I was that much younger, 25-ish, [a] guy came to me and said: "You look very much like an underwear model I've seen in Victoria's Secret", and I was like "---- ---- eh --- Oh!?! ---- I don't know what to make of that" ... [It made me feel] kind of naked. Because you want to be taken seriously in a workplace, and you kind of -- all your weapons are taken away from you and you feel a little bit exposed ... It [hurt me], because you want to be taken seriously in a workplace, and they kind of objectify you in that way, and it's like -- 'Ok, what can I do to be taken seriously around here? ... When he made these comments about the Victoria's Secret [model], he actually sent me a photo. He sent me a photo afterwards, like, "This is the woman I was referring to" ... I mean, it was so ridiculous to send me this photo, but I remember -- because we're talking about feelings, and I've never been asked how I felt, basically. And when it was raised again just this winter I felt so embarrassed about this ... because it kind of put me in the spotlight of -- being -- I don't know. It's like -- you're in the spotlight for something you don't want to be in the spotlight for ... Because you want to be -- if you want to be measured against someone, you want it to be someone you look up to, or -- or for something you do, not for how you look, or -- so -- it just made me really awkward, just in this little scenario, because he was making a joke of this -- and then five years later I'm like "Why am I so embarrassed about this?" ... So maybe this digs deeper than one is led to believe ... You don't want to be objectified in this kind of way, and so you make it into a silly thing -- and of course it is silly, but then again it is serious.

In this example Ósk is not just getting an image indirectly projected onto her person like in the case of Eva. She is being directly compared to the picture of an underwear model that her male colleague has recently seen. Her colleague even chooses to minutely hammer home the point by sending her a photo of the underwear model on her email. By doing so he strips Ósk of any kind of professionalism. It tells her that he does not view her in terms of her profession or her skills, but in terms of how she looks. To him, her profession at the City of Reykjavík is worth little more than that of an underwear model. As Ósk explains, this makes her feel “naked” and “exposed”, and as if “all [her] weapons are taken away” from her. This choice of words is interesting. Had her colleague’s offensive remark been about, say, Ósk’s ability to carry out her job, Ósk would have had the “weapons” to fight back in the situation by means of her self-confidence and the pride she takes in her profession. However, her colleague downgrades and offends her in a context in which Ósk has no means of fighting back, and so she is instead left shocked and dumbfounded.

It is also interesting to take note of the fact that Ósk did not initially make much of the incident. The feelings of not being taken seriously, of being judged on one’s appearance, and of being put in the spotlight for something one does not want to be put in the spotlight for only really surfaced years later and caused her to feel embarrassed. This goes back to the discussion of sexual humor. Because it is commonly accepted that we can say anything we want in a working environment, as long as we wrap it up in humorous discourse, Ósk distanced herself from the feelings of hurt and embarrassment that accompanied the incident when she was directly compared to an underwear model. In his way Ósk is absolutely right when she says that “this digs deeper than one is led to believe”. The resistance to being treated as a sex object is so strong that we may expect that many women, including Ósk, might make such incidents “into a silly thing” purely as part of a self-defense mechanism, rather than displaying emotions of anger or hurt in the situation.

Pornification as Physical Harassment

Pornification may take on different forms in different contexts. As we have seen in the previous, sexual humor and pornified imagery are two such forms. Both in the case of sexual humor and pornified imagery, what we see is respectively a lingual and a pictorial manifestation of the discourses that slip from mainstream pornography into our everyday lives as a "commonly accepted and often idealised cultural element" (Sørensen, 2003). But mainstream pornographic discourse, that is, at the core and most generally, sexual subordination of women, can also take on a physical manifestation in the form of sexual harassment or sexual violence.

During my research, very few people were interested in telling me stories about direct, physical and sexual harassment. Interestingly, however, these stories were never put forth as isolated incidents. Stories revolved around multiple incidents taking place in different contexts and happening to different people. We here look at one such example.

"Everybody notices, so nobody does anything about it"

In the following example Hrefna explains what sometimes happens when employees at her department meet outside of working hours at work related events:

> There are a few guys who always end up trying to stuff their hands down women's pants -- it's actually rather gross. It's so obvious that -- just everybody notices, so nobody does anything about it ... I actually think we should be talking about it, but it's really hard because nobody wants to -- say it's -- actually if you say something about it, it's like you want them to get fired, so -- nobody says anything. We have, a few times, had to talk to somebody just during [an] incident, saying: "You have to go home if it's going to be like this", but it's really strange because -- it's not acceptable, and if I hear about something like that in other places, something that's just like disgusting, I have to do something about it -- but it's really hard to do something about it ... There are a lot of incidents. For example, one guy, he used to sit down next to women and just tried to put his hand down their pants -- very graphic. And [another guy] just felt them up and tried to kiss them in front of people.

What Hrefna is talking about here is not a single incident. That men at her workplace are "trying to stuff their hands down women's pants", trying to kiss them or grope them at work related events is something that consistently happens when employees meet outside of working hours at work-related events. We should pay special attention to the statement that "everybody notices, so nobody does anything about it". One should think that if everybody notices, this should be an incentive to do the opposite, that is, to actually address the problem, yet, as Hrefna says, exactly *because* it is "so obvious", the problem remains unaddressed. This is interesting. What this tells us is that the anti-social act of physical, sexual intrusion has obtained a social legitimacy that goes unquestioned in the working culture of this department. In other words, the physical manifestation of the sexually explicit subordination of women in this workplace has become as normalized and as commonly accepted an element in work-related events as the use of sexual humor and pornified imagery. Because these three forms of pornification as work culture cannot be separated from one another. While they all have different content and are expressed differently, that is, lingually, pictorially and physically, they all have the same form. In other words, while there is no question that the symptoms of telling a sexual joke versus physically assaulting a female colleague are vastly different, the causes are the same in each case, and these have their roots in the pornographic discourse of female sexual subordination and objectification.

Here it must be pointed out that there is generally no direct cause-effect relationship between pornographic discourse and sexual violence (Gauntlett, 1998; Jensen, 2004). It is not as if telling a sexual joke will make the male colleague next to you turn into a rapist. It does not function that way, and to think that it does is a common misunderstanding of feminist theories of sexual violence. However, the absence of a cause-effect relationship (e.g. "If not but for a pornified working environment, there would be no cases of sexual harassment") does not mean that there is no connection between a *culture*, which is permeated by pornographic discourse, and the way in which we as a society handle and talk about issues surrounding sexual violence (Jensen, 2004). The same is true for the connection between a pornified working culture (sexual humor, pornified imagery, etc.) and cases of direct, physical and sexual harassment and intrusion. In all cases, the symptoms may have varying degrees of severity, but they can all be traced back to the same cause(s), and so they cannot be isolated from another. Put in another way, in dealing with cases when men are for example "trying to stuff their hands down women's pants", we cannot simply address the single incident; we must see it in relation to an entire working culture, which has spawned a long series of incidents, which are all rooted in pornographic discourse and the sexual subordination of women. This is the cause that must be treated.

“It’s like you want them to get fired, so nobody says anything”

It is also interesting to observe Hrefna’s take on the atmosphere surrounding the possibilities of complaining about sexually intrusive behavior. Earlier, Hrefna mentioned that because “the boys’ club is really, really strong ... there’s nothing telling you that [complaints are] going to be treated properly.” In the example above she elaborates on this by saying that “nobody says anything” about instances of sexual harassment because the general perception is that if one does so, one is thought to, at the same time, be calling for the sacking of the employee in question. When such an atmosphere prevails it is no wonder that “it’s not acceptable” to complain, because one’s complaint might ultimately result in a fellow employee losing his job, and so, as Hrefna says, “it’s really hard to do something about it”. We should ask ourselves how such an atmosphere or organizational climate comes to be in the first place. Why is there a general assumption that a complaint about sexual intrusion or any kind of sexual harassment in a work place may ultimately result in *punishment*? We will now look at this and other issues in the final chapter.

What can be done?

We ended the previous chapter by asking the question as to why we tend to think in terms of 'crime and punishment' when we consider which might be the best solutions for dealing with cases of sexual harassment. While dealing with cases of sexual harassment on an individual basis is certainly an important aspect of treating the *symptoms* of the problem, treating the *causes* (i.e. a pornified working culture) is an often overlooked aspect. In this chapter we will discuss the limitations of treating cases of sexual harassment - be these through words, pictures or direct, physical and sexual intrusion - as isolated incidents.

The Limitations of Policy and Punishment

As a society we are inculcated with the idea of 'crime and punishment'; that crimes are the results of the choices of certain individuals to commit anti-social acts of aggression towards other individuals, and that therefore, such individuals must be *punished* accordingly. Along the same lines, we have arguably learned to think of sexual harassment in the workplace as a result of the choices of certain "deviant" individuals, and thus the best way to deal with the problem is to give said individuals a reprimand or, in severe cases, dismiss them from the workplace. Just as in society in general, such an approach to dealing with issues pertaining to sexual intrusion, harassment or violence fails to address the root causes of the issue. Because, as Bacchi (1999) has argued, sexual harassment is not a product of "the deviant behaviour of deviant individuals" (p. 197). Rather, it is "a product of a particular climate - one in which women hold little institutional influence" (p. 196).

In other words, reprimanding or sacking employees does not do away with an organizational climate in which pornographic discourse (or pornification) continues to legitimize the sexual subordination of female employees. This is *not* to say that firing an employee because of a case of sexual aggression is never necessary. It certainly can be, for example in cases when a workplace wants to secure the emotional well-being of a survivor of severe sexual harassment. This is to treat a *symptom* of sexual harassment, and it can be necessary. That being said, however, it is very naive to think that strict implementation of

department policies, with the possibility of reprimanding or firing employees, who breach such policies, will effectively prevent future cases of sexual aggression from happening. As Mckay (2008) argues, the problem with implementing laws and policies under the threat of punishment, is that the individuals, who commit acts of sexual aggression, are "deprived of the responsibility for developing their own ethical code, and so are less likely to develop "civilised" social standards". Put in another way, because the sexual harasser, who is reprimanded or fired, is being treated as a "deviant" individual, whose actions are seen in complete isolation from the organizational climate in which he works, said harasser does not leave the workplace or his boss' office, after a dismissal notice or a reprimand, with a changed view of women or equity-based working culture. He has been punished; he has not learned from the experience, nor has he stood accountable to the person towards whom the harassment was directed. Thus, as things are, only the possibility of future punishment might scare possible harassers from telling sexist jokes, hanging up pornographic posters, or stuffing their hands down women's pants. Punishment, however, will not change an organizational climate in which such actions will continue to be *perceived* as legitimate by certain groups of male employees (see chapter *The Boys' Club: Homosocial Bonding*).

Radical Problems, Radical Solutions

One might argue, then, that as long as acts of sexual harassment do not physically take place in a given working environment, it is irrelevant if certain groups of employees adhere to a worldview inspired by pornographic discourse. Such an argument, however, is rooted in the misconception of sexual harassment as a from of sexual *distraction* from work obligations, i.e. sexual harassment is bad because it prevents women from working (Pringle, 1988). This view comes with the in-built assumption that sexual harassment does not take place *outside* working environments, and as we saw in the Hrefna's example above, this is certainly not the case. Sexual harassment and the pornification of culture takes place everywhere and is a omnipresent, radical problem, meaning that it infests the roots of our culture, not just certain parts of it. A radical problem cannot be seen or treated in isolation, but calls for a radical solution, that is, a solution that treats the roots of the problem.

Thus, a workplace dealing with cases of sexual harassment needs to recognize that a given incident is never *only* the result of the choice of a certain individual. It is always part of a larger framework of cultural pornification. Effectively this means that while to punish an individual for a particular action might have a positive effect on a working environment in the short term, long-term effects will be very limited. The workplace will still be culturally infested by the pornographic discourse that permeates the rest of society, and under such conditions gender equality can at best become a comforting "aura" (Pétursdóttir, 2009) within which the

sexual subordination of women is still allowed to take place, be this lingually (sexual humor), pictorially (pornified imagery), or physically.

Confronting a Pornified Culture

So what needs to happen? Rather than solely focussing on individual cases when an incident has caused harm to an employee, organizations and institutions also need to grab hold of the root of the problem. It is my contention that this is best done through extensive education of staff, students, or any other member of the organization or institution. Such education should seek to inform organization members of the impact that pornified culture has on working and learning environments, and the immediate effects that both sexual humor, pornified imagery and direct, physical and sexual harassment and intrusion has on the gender dynamics and thus the quality of working life in the organization. I consider the results of this particular piece of research an important incentive for beginning to consider how we may best implement such measures.

Conclusion

As mentioned in the introduction, the transition to a culture in which women are steadily gaining more and more influence has arguably been a difficult reality to accept for many of those men, who have been brought up in the codes of conventional masculinity. For many men, one way of dealing with this reality is to desperately try to uphold a worldview in which female influence continues to be limited. The idealized and commonly accepted pornographic discourse of mainstream society provides the tools for upholding this worldview. As we have seen, pornification of workplaces and learning environments takes on many different forms. Three of these were discussed in this research project; sexual humor, pornified imagery, and direct, physical and sexual harassment and intrusion. All three, as we have seen, are tools, which help men to cope with the reality that women are slowly but steadily gaining more and more influence in society. These tools of pornographic discourse offer up a fantasy world in which women are the butt of sexual jokes, serve as sexual decorative ornaments, or are transformed into sexual objects, whose sole function it is to please aspiring hegemonically masculine egos. Being able to perceive another human being this way provides some men with a sense of power and entitlement, even if just for the briefest of moments. While this can, in theory, work both ways in regards to men and women, the reality is that, in our culture, women are the ones predominantly being objectified.

Pornification in its various forms serves the purpose of reassuring men that they are still in control in spite of the many advances women have made. In a workplace where women are not only more visible, but also steadily gaining more and more influence, a porn calendar on the wall of an office might as well be a sign saying “Men Only”. It is a way to create a protected bubble in which women, feminists, and equality policies are frowned upon, where high-fiving your mates after telling a dirty joke is still not considered politically incorrect, and where you can safely express the anger you hold towards your female colleagues without fear of being called a sexist, because you know ‘the guys’ are on your side. In fact, anger is but one of many well-documented emotions that guys connect with sexual humor and the sharing of pornified imagery (Kimmel, 2008). This might sound strange to the uninitiated, but ask yourself what guys are getting out of sexual humor, pornified imagery and sexual harassment? Sexual pleasure? The truth is that these men are not in the business of utilizing

pornographic elements to get off, but to get even. If these men are able to uphold the illusion of women as powerless objects of male desire, then they are able to take their angry revenge on those women, who they believe now have all the power in a world that has become much too politically correct for their taste. In the words of sociologist Michael Kimmel, this is “a classic illustration of the frustration-aggression principle of social psychology, the axiom that thwarted impulses become transformed into aggression” (p. 188).

Sexual humor, pornified imagery and sexual harassment are ways to tell lies about women. More importantly, however, these things offer us a grain of truth about men (Stoltenberg, 1989). Because what does it say about a male co-worker that he is able to work happily along with his female colleagues at one moment, only to be telling sexist jokes to his buddies the next? To be ogling pictures of underwear models, whilst fantasizing about a female colleague? To be sneaking his hands down her pants after work? It says the same about him as it does about the person who treats his immigrant co-workers nicely in an attempt to keep up with political correctness, before he finds himself laughing at racist jokes with his non-immigrant colleagues.

The level of political correctness that we have reached in this culture through the implementation of law and policy is but a comforting aura of gender equality. As has clearly been shown on these pages, beneath the surface of organizational policies and fancy speeches about gender equality, the roots of patriarchy still have a very firm hold and continue to nurture the pornification of the culture that grows above it. We may treat the symptoms of such a society through law and policy, but we will not *eliminate* the problems before we pull them out root and branch.

One way to do this is by not being afraid of publicly naming the problem of sexual harassment in its broader cultural context. Therefore the results of this research will be transformed into a brochure, which will be distributed throughout the departments of the City of Reykjavík and at the University of Iceland. This will be an important first step in changing the public consciousness about how we treat cases of sexual harassment, and how we as a society read into the gendered nature of the messages we send to one another on a daily basis in our working and learning environments.

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