

The “Anti-Antiporn” Feminist Countermovement, 1983-1985

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After seven years of gaining local, regional, and national momentum, the anti-pornography movement made a crucial turn that magnified fault lines in the feminist movement. Anti-pornography feminists, hoping to build on their success in grassroots conscious-raising and education efforts, moved legal battles over porn to centre stage in their fight against pornography. In 1983, radical feminist author Andrea Dworkin and feminist law professor Catherine MacKinnon drafted the first of many Anti-Pornography Civil Rights Ordinances. Similar ordinances would be presented to several municipal and state legislatures between 1983 and 1985. Although the language of individual ordinances differed, each presented a similar proposition: that those harmed by pornography had the right to seek damages via lawsuits in civil courts, and that pornography was a direct violation of women's civil rights.¹

While none of the ordinances passed, they had a significant collective impact on pornography's place in American life and culture. Debates surrounding municipal ordinances intensified the porn wars on a national scale. As predecessors to the 1986 Ronald Reagan-commissioned *Final Report of the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography*, Anti-Pornography Civil Rights Ordinances catapulted the already divisive debates over porn into the wider public consciousness across the United States, carrying all sides of the porn debate within its orbit. By the time the Attorney General's Commission was announced by Edwin Meese in 1985, ordinances had already forged battlegrounds over pornography in Minnesota, Indiana, California, New York, and Massachusetts. While the ordinances caused significant backlash from

¹ Records of Women Against Pornography (WAP), 1979-1989. Indianapolis Anti-Pornography Civil Rights Amendment, from *American Booksellers Association v. Hudnut*. 90-M153, Carton 7, 364. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.; Public Hearings on Ordinances to Add Pornography as Discrimination Against Women, n.d. Carton 11, 690, WAP; WAP Summary from Los Angeles Civil Rights Ordinance, 1985. Carton 5, 228, WAP Collection; Lindsey Grusen, "Pornography Bill is Issue in Suffolk," *New York Times*, November 13, 1984.

pornography industry, they also ignited seismic schisms that divided feminists, created deeper fractures, and lead to unexpected alliances.

While historians have shown that the feminist movement fractured in the 1970s over issues such as race, the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), and lesbianism, less is known about the shattering impact of the division over pornography. Scholars have charted the anti-pornography movement's impact on feminism, noting that pornography, and more broadly debates about sexuality, violence, and women's representation in media, fractured the facade of the women's movement's unified front.² Much of this literature documents anti-pornography feminist perspectives up until the late 1970s and early 1980s, and details how feminists utilized pornography as a tool to advance broader debates about social, cultural, political, reproductive, and economic equality.³ However, less has been written about pornography's crucial role in dividing the women's movement throughout the 1980s, and more specifically the porn wars from an "*anti-anti-pornography*" feminist lens. Although scholars have recently examined 1980s anti-pornography ordinances from a legal and feminist theory perspective, existing studies overlook the feminist countermovement these ordinances sparked, and alliances created because of anti-porn legislation.⁴

² Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2000); Jane Gerhard, *Desiring Resolution: Second-Wave Feminism and the Rewriting of American Sexual Thought* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2001); Lucy Delap, *Feminisms: A Global History* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2020)

³ Whitney Strub, *Perversion for Profit: The Politics of Pornography and the Rise of the New Right* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2010); Julia Long, *Anti-Porn: The Resurgence of Anti-Pornography Feminism* (London: Zed Books, 2012); Carolyn Bornstein, *Battling Pornography: The American Feminist Anti-Pornography Movement, 1976-1986* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2012)

⁴ There is a wealth of monographs written about the subject from a legal and women's studies perspective. For examples of recent scholarship, see Andrew Altman, "The MacKinnon-Dworkin

Carolyn Bronstein and Whitney Strub address the formation of what they misleadingly call a forceful feminist “pro-sex” or “pro-pornography” movement in defense of sexuality and free speech, yet the significance and complexities of this backlash remains obscured.⁵ During the 1980s, feminists outside the anti-pornography movement expressed their own anxieties, specifically citing that anti-pornography feminism signified an alliance with the New Right during an era when reproductive rights, federal cuts to social service, sex education, and the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment loomed largely over the women’s movement’s progress. Much like anti-pornography feminists, these individuals formed groups, forged outside coalitions and alliances, published literature, and carved out their own space in pornography discourse. Like anti-pornography feminists, these individuals grappled with pornography’s complicated role in women’s lives, sexuality, society, and culture, and used porn as a tool for feminist mobilization. Without an investigation into the “anti-antiporn” backlash and countermovement, the story of porn’s impact on the American feminist movement remains obscure in the existing literature.

Although disagreements over pornography had caused friction within the broader women’s movement since the mid-1970s, legal battles over pornography led to the creation of new feminist organizations like Feminists Against Censorship Taskforce (F.A.C.T), the

Ordinance,” in *Debating Pornography*, Altman and Lori Watson, eds (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 114-123; Max Waltman, “The Anti-Pornography Civil Rights Ordinances, 1983-1991,” in *Pornography: The Politics of Legal Challenges* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021) 167-215.

⁵ Bronstein, “Anti-Pornography Comes Undone: The Rise of the Feminist Pro-Sex Countermovement” in *Battling Pornography*, 279-308. This unraveling has also been discussed in feminist memoirs, such as in Catherine A. MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin, eds. *In Harm’s Way: The Pornography Civil Rights Hearings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Susan Brownmiller, *In Our Time: Memoir of a Revolution* (New York, NY: Random House, 1999)

establishment and problematization of outside alliances, and further polarization concerning ideas and theories of gender, sexuality, activism, and feminism more broadly. Central to this division were anxieties about anti-pornography feminists working in tandem with religious and political conservatives on legal measures against porn. But opponents of a legislative approach to pornography (anti-antipornography) also found strange allies, as they aligned with civil libertarians, free speech advocates, and even at times the mainstream porn industry. Anti-porn advocates maintained those alliances would set back the women's movement or put it at risk. By the time the federal government published the final Meese Report in 1986, the women's movement had atomized over pornography, and the various fragments of the movement had begun to fold themselves into broader cultural freedom and civil rights campaigns, marking the end of second-wave feminism. The legislative orientation of Second-Wave feminists, which had been damaged by the ERA's failure, received a final set-back over pornography. The 1990s and early 2000s would see the cultural turn in feminism, a shift presaged by the anti-antipornography activist's attention to diversity, otherness, and freedom of sexual expression.

The ordinances may have divided feminists, but they also offered a moment of clarity. White anti-pornography feminists, members of the New Right, conservative grassroots groups, and religious leaders across the United States praised the ordinances' ability to interpret pornography's harm on women and children, along with its correlation to crime and violence.⁶ Pornographers, gay and lesbian organizations, civil libertarians, media outlets, and subsections of the women's movement, in the meantime also clarified their goals as they publicly expressed

⁶ Press Conference Briefing and Summary for Minneapolis Pornography Ordinance Hearing, December 17, 1983. Carton 7, 364, WAP Collection; Paul Andrews, "Partners Against Porn," *Seattle Times*, n.d. Carton 11, 702, WAP Collection; Walter Goodman, "Battle on Pornography Spurred by New Tactics," *New York Times*, March 7, 1984.

their criticisms, apprehensions, and anxieties towards the ordinances and its perceived outcomes; particularly issues relating to the mainstream porn industry, censorship, sexual expression and women's sexual autonomy, gay rights, free speech, and accusations that the ordinances favoured a right-wing bias.⁷ Pornography- a synthesis of culture, sex, pleasure, power, and objectification- acted as a powerful divisive force within the second-wave feminist movement while inspiring new approaches to women's rights and freedoms.

This paper seeks to illuminate the porn wars' significance within American feminism, particularly through the lens of an anti-antiporn countermovement that emerged in the mid-1980s. It looks to uncover how competing ideologies over pornography led to deep schisms within the women's movement by the mid-1980s. It also acts as a piece of the larger project that aims to uncover how the porn wars reached a national boiling point during the mid-1980s, culminating in the Meese Commission and even deeper divisions over pornography by decade's end. It asks how feminists outside of the anti-pornography movement responded to a growing, national anti-pornography feminism and its alliances in the 1980s. Secondly, if pornography symbolized patriarchal power imbalance and the male objectification of women, then why did feminists form such a strong, anti-antiporn countermovement? I examine feminist reactions to the Anti-Pornography Civil Rights Ordinances as a case study to help answer these questions.

Examining the backlash through the lens of the 1980s Anti-pornography Civil Rights Ordinances opens an understanding of women's relationship to pornography beyond "pro" and "anti" pornography binaries. I also look to problematize how scholars have labeled feminists

⁷ Larry Bush, "Fat Grants and Sleazy Politics: Reagan's Porn Paranoia," *Playboy*, August 1984; "Minneapolis Asked to Attack Pornography as Rights Issue," *New York Times*, December 18, 1983; National Coalition Against Censorship, "Special Alert: U.S. Appeals Court Strikes Down Indianapolis Porn Law," Fall 1985. Carton 5, 228, WAP Collection.

within this countermovement as having “pro-sex” or “pro-pornography”.⁸ Although several individuals explicitly labelled themselves as such, as well as “anti-censorship”, feminists within the countermovement did not always adhere to a unified stance regarding pornography. Many within the women’s movement expressed their complicated relationships with pornography, while others openly embraced it. Much like the feminist movement itself, feminist relationships with pornography were not monolithic. I have instead chosen to refer to these individuals as “anti-antipornography feminists”, due to their mobilization as a countermovement.

Talking About Sex

Changing discourses about sexual behaviour were a crucial backdrop to feminist and legal battles over pornography. The acceleration of sexual liberalism through the late 1960s and 1970s sexual revolution was linked to a rejection of traditional standards of sexual morality, as well as radicalism, social change, and activism. Secularized and separated from procreation, sex in 1960s America became both a cause for concern to some, but also an avenue for liberation for others. Vietnam War protests, the Civil Rights movement, a politicized youth culture, and the women’s movement generated social upheaval and created new channels to critique existing mores. A new youth counterculture used sex to reject traditional values of monogamy and marital sex. The rise of oral contraceptives also paved new channels for women to explore heterosexuality without risk of pregnancy. As American culture became increasingly secularized

⁸ Scholars have framed feminists who opposed anti-pornography feminism into these two camps since the late 1980s. For examples of this, see Ronald J. Berger, Patricia Searles, and Charles E. Cottle, *Feminism and Pornography* (New York, NY: Praeger, 1991); Gail Chester and Julienne Dickey, eds., *Feminism and Censorship: The Current Debate* (Dorset, Prism Press, 1988); Bronstein, *Battling Pornography*; Nadine Strossen, *Defending Pornography: Free Speech, Sex, and the Fight for Women’s Rights* (New York, NY: Scribner, 1995); Strub, *Perversion for Profit*.

through the 1970s, discussions of sex and women's sexual freedom existed within, rather than on the fringes of American culture and discourse during the 1980s.

As Bronstein notes however, as young women began to embrace a more open sexual culture, some became disenfranchised upon realizing sexual liberation was occurring on male terms. For many women and queer individuals, the sexual revolution fell short of its promises of sexual expression, autonomy, and pleasure. Those within a growing women's movement highlighted a sexual double standard that celebrated men indulging in numerous sexual partners without damaging to their reputation, but chastised women who did the same. Second-wave feminists also pointed out male behavioural changes, stressing that despite contraceptives and less stigma around sexual freedom, women were now at risk of heightened sexual violence, rape, or social sexual double standards. Out of this perception that the sexual revolution had failed to deliver on sexual and social equality for women, feminist of the 1970s began mobilizing around issues of male sexual violence against women, setting the groundwork for an anti-pornography feminist movement in the late 1970s.⁹

The formation of groups like New York's Women Against Pornography (WAP) in 1976, anti-sexual violence demonstrations such as Take Back the Night, marches on Times Square, conferences on pornography and sexuality, and the publication of books and feminist newsletters, were crucial avenues towards women voicing their positions on pornography. The most dominant voices in the early waves of pornography discourse were that of anti-pornography feminists who led grassroots, conscious-raising efforts for those within the women's movement and the wider public- particularly individuals in organizations such as WAP, The National Organization for

⁹ Bronstein, *Battling Pornography*, 33.

Women (NOW), Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW), and The Pornography Resource Centre.¹⁰

Anti-porn sentiments emerged as heterosexual and queer women's mixed responses to media, radical feminism, and reassessments of a 1960s sexual liberation. Feminists' early-1970s consciousness-raising efforts surrounding sexual violence laid the groundwork for the anti-pornography movement, specifically via activism centred on connecting the cultural glorification of violence towards women and men's concrete acts of sexual violence like rape and battery. As women's representations in culture became a topic of concern, many feminists drew their attention to a porn industry that was booming in the wake of the 1960s sexual liberation, home video technology, and growing consumer-base.¹¹

Along with an increased consciousness surrounding hyper-sexualized images of violence in the media, two other factors ignited a fervent anti-pornography feminist movement: a radical feminist critique of heterosexuality, and a sense that the sexual revolution failed to deliver women's sexual liberation. Anti-pornography feminists stressed that men who initially supported women's sexual liberation during the 1960s only did so for hedonistic reasons. Individuals like Andrea Dworkin, a self-labeled radical feminist who spearheaded the anti-pornography movement, stressed that heterosexual men, and more specifically male pornographers, only supported reproductive and sexual agency for male sexual benefit. When it came time for consent, or representing women's sexuality on screens and magazines, heterosexuality catered to

¹⁰ Bronstein, *Battling Pornography*, 1-10; Women Against Pornography. *The Reasons Why: Essays on the New Civil Rights Law Recognizing Pornography as Sex Discrimination* (New York, NY: Women Against Pornography, 1985); Bronstein and Strub, *Porno Chic and the Sex Wars: American Sexual Representation in the 1970s* (Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2016).

¹¹ Bronstein, *Battling Pornography*, 1-10.; See also Laura Lederer, ed. *Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography* (New York, NY: William Morrow, 1980).

a traditional model of patriarchal male dominance and passive female submission. Along with broader issues such as economic and social inequality, anti-pornography feminists stressed sexuality and culture as the two central areas of women's victimization and oppression, with pornography representing the pinnacle.¹²

During the 1970s, concepts such as gender, multiculturalism, as well as sexual and racial identities also entered the public lexicon, igniting not only discourse from left-leaning groups about recognizing and confronting minority's struggles, but also backlash from right-winged groups attempting to preserve traditional "American" identities of gender, sexuality, and religion.¹³ By the 1980s, discourse about sex was commonplace in American culture from all sides of the political spectrum. While American culture shifted left, the political conversation shifted right. As a result, debates about pornography emerged at grassroots and legislative levels, and became an important backdrop within the 1980s culture wars.¹⁴ Pornography was not solely a by-product of the increased sexualization of culture, but an important factor in white, middle-class political consciousness, as made evident by grassroots campaigns against it and the growing moral conservative perceptions of porn's threats on American life.

Conservatives saw pornography as an attack on religion, the family, heterosexuality, marital sex, the innocence of children, and the idealization of womanhood. Pornography, many conservatives argued, created sexually deviant citizens, could lead to extramarital sex, promote

¹² "Seeds of Discontent: The Failed Promise of the Sexual Revolution for Women," in Bronstein, *Battling Pornography*, 25-37; Julia Long, *Anti-Porn: The Resurgence of Anti-Pornography Feminism* (London: Zed Books, 2012), 19-20.

¹³ Hartman, *War for the Soul of America: A History of the Culture Wars* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2105), 1-12.

¹⁴ Jenkins, Phillip. *Decade of Nightmares: The End of the Sixties and the Making of Eighties America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), 4-8.

the “sin” of homosexuality, and lead to crime. The Christian Right and Republicans, from grassroots groups to Ronald Reagan, viewed pornography as a danger to health, morality, and made connections between pornography and criminal activity. Republican anti-pornography discourse also placed women at its center to protect puritan values of femininity that in turn supported neo-conservative institutions of motherhood and family.¹⁵

Feminist perspectives differed from New Right anti-pornography perspectives, in that feminists initially framed pornography as a tool for women’s oppression, objectification, degradation, and dehumanization, rather than as a moral threat to the family and society. Anti-porn feminists sought to prevent female sexual autonomy from being jeopardized, regulated, or objectified by men who produced or consumed pornography. They defined pornography as a system of sexual exploitation and misogyny that caused and perpetuated male sexual violence. Large national feminist organizations like N.O.W. were firm in their stance on pornography. “Pornography is a factor in creating and maintaining sex as a basis for discrimination,” the organization stated at its annual conference in 1984, “it violates the civil rights of women.”¹⁶ Although at different ends of the political spectrum, conservatives and anti-pornography feminists were both concerned about pornographic representations of women, and its impact on American life and sexual behaviour. As a result, an unlikely alliance was forged in the battle against pornography in the mid-1980s.

Anti-Pornography Civil Rights Ordinances, 1983-1985

In May 1977 at the behest of a group of concerned residents, the Minneapolis City Council passed a zoning law to confine the locations of adult bookstores and theatres into a singular area

¹⁵ Strub, *Perversion for Profit*, 179-85.

¹⁶ Walter Goodman, “Battle on Pornography Spurred by New Tactics,” *New York Times*, July 3, 1984.

within the city, away from predominantly white, middle-class neighborhoods. Over a five-year period, the city waited for a judicial ruling on the zoning ordinance's constitutionality. In February 1982, the United States District Court ruled the zoning law unconstitutional in that it obstructed the First Amendment.¹⁷ This ruling reignited local mobilization around the issue of sex entertainment and pornography, resulting in the creation of the Neighborhood Pornography Taskforce- a group comprised of concerned parents, religious leaders, and politic conservatives. When members of the group caught wind of a class on pornography the University of Minnesota on pornography co-taught by Dworkin and MacKinnon in 1983, the Neighborhood Pornography Taskforces extended an invitation for the two to attend a zoning meeting at city hall.¹⁸

Upon hearing concerns regarding the city's failure to restrict the spread of porn shops and adult theatres, MacKinnon and Dworkin offered a new approach to combatting pornography-one that framed it as a violation of women's civil rights. Following the meeting, Republican City Councillor Charlee Hoyt persuaded fellow council members to hire Dworkin and MacKinnon to draft anti-pornography legislation based on their civil rights model. In late 1983, Dworkin and MacKinnon went to work on their first draft of the Minneapolis Anti-Pornography Civil Rights Ordinance, which would come to represent a powerful force in the porn wars.¹⁹

The 1983 Minneapolis ordinance positioned pornography as a violation of women's civil rights, an act of sex discrimination, and a cause of women's psychological and physical harm. It defined pornography as the "graphic sexual subordination of women" that presented women as

¹⁷ "Minneapolis Asked to Attack Pornography as Rights Issue," *New York Times*, December 18, 1983; Goodman, Walter, "Battle on Pornography Spurred by New Tactics," *New York Times*, July 3, 1984.

¹⁸ Neighborhood Pornography Task Force, *Minneapolis Citizens Against Pornography Newsletter*, Summer 1984. Carton 5, 226, WAP Collection.

¹⁹ Andrea Dworkin and Catherine A. MacKinnon eds. *In Harm's Way: The Pornography Civil Rights Hearings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 1-28.

dehumanized, sexualized objects who enjoyed pain or humiliation, experienced sexual pleasure in being raped, and/or were abused physically (i.e., tied up, cut, mutilated, or bruised). The ordinance also presented more ambiguous definitions of pornography, including material that entailed women being presented in “postures of sexual submission”, women being reduced to “[body] parts”, and women presented “as whores by nature”. It sought to create the right for any person alleging harm caused by pornography to bring civil action against an individual or group who produced, sold, or distributed pornographic material. The ordinance also looked to make three acts unlawful: the trafficking of pornography, the coercion of others into pornographic performances, and the “forcing of pornography” upon another person.²⁰

Along with proposing a civil remedy for victims of “any assault or physical attack” caused by porn, the Minneapolis ordinance also represented a merger between anti-pornography feminist ideology and social and cultural conservatism. It echoed the broader anti-pornography feminist ideology that framed porn as a direct cause of male sexual violence, abuse, battery, and rape. Anti-porn feminists defined porn as a system of sexual exploitation and misogyny that perpetuated male sexual violence. Pornography was not simply a fantasy, but instead a glossary of methods in which men could use to subordinate and harm women emotionally, physically, and

²⁰ Amending Title 7, Chapter 14 of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances relating to Civil Rights Administration and Enforcement. January 1, 1985. Carton 12, 707, WAP Collection; Ralph A. Rossum and Alan G. Tarr, *American Constitutional Law Volume II: The Bill of Rights and Subsequent Amendments* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2014).

sexually.²¹ Put more simply by feminist author Robin Morgan, “Pornography is the theory, and rape is the practise”.²²

Although coming from different ends of the political spectrum, both conservatives and anti-porn feminists saw pornography as harmful and, aligned in their efforts to combat an approximately \$7 Billion dollar porn industry that had reached all corners of American life, including telephone lines, cable television, magazine stands, and home video.²³ Both anti-porn feminists and conservatives also united over the belief that the 1970 *Presidential Commission on Obscenity and Pornography*’s ruling had minimized pornography’s true danger to American’s safety. The 1970 report concluded that obscenity and pornography were not notable social issues, that there was no evidence that linked porn exposure to harmful acts, and that policy initiatives against pornography were more likely to create problems than solve them.²⁴ Conservatives heavily criticized the Democrat-commissioned report as “morally bankrupt”, while both feminists and conservatives argued that it enabled a harmful, violent pornography industry to grow and flourish over the course of the 1970s and into the 1980s. Pornography, both groups argued, was not a victimless crime. In their separate calls for new legislation against pornography, feminists and conservatives united around anti-pornography ordinances as a solution.

²¹Laura Lederer, ed. *Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography* (New York, NY: William Morrow, 1980); Andrea Dworkin, *Letters from a Warzone* (New York, NY: Lawrence Hill Books, 1989); Berger, Ronald J., Searles, Patricia, and Cottle, Charles E. eds., *Feminism and Pornography* (New York, NY: Praeger, 1990).

²² “Theory and Practice: Pornography and Rape,” in Robin Morgan, *Going too Far: The Personal Chronicle of a Feminist* (New York, NY: Random House, 1978), 163.

²³ David Hoffman, “Reagan Hears Pleas to Battle Pornography,” *Washington Post*, March 29, 1983.

²⁴ Commission on Obscenity and Pornography. *The Report*. Washington, DC: The President and Congress of the United States, 1970.

Anti-porn feminists also supported the ordinances because they were not constructed as obscenity laws, but rather as legislation that sought to compensate women for harm caused by pornography. “We have been concerned that [prior] legislation against obscenity might be used to censor women and members of other oppressed groups,” wrote WAP in a 1984 letter to the Minneapolis city council in support of the ordinance. They continued, however, that they felt confident in giving their “wholehearted support” and hoped that the ordinance would “serve as models for city and state governments throughout the country.”²⁵

In December 1983, the first ordinance was passed by the Minneapolis City Council, although it was vetoed in January 1984 by Mayor Donald Fraser. In July 1984, an identical ordinance was passed, but was vetoed once more. Dworkin and MacKinnon worked with legislators in Indianapolis to pass a nearly identical ordinance in 1984. Other ordinances surfaced between 1984 and 1985 in Los Angeles and Suffolk County, NY, independent of Dworkin and MacKinnon. Feminist groups in Cambridge, MA also aligned with local legislators, succeeded in making the ordinances a voter-initiated law on the municipal election ballot, but the ordinance was not passed.²⁶ The 1984 Indianapolis ordinance had the most legislative success, being supported by both mayor William Hudnut and the city council. Despite being ruled unconstitutional by the District Court, Hudnut lodged an appeal. In 1985, the Court of Appeal ruled that the ordinance was unconstitutional once again.²⁷

Judge Frank Easterbrook claimed to support the analysis of pornography outlined in the ordinance but ruled that it could not “supersede the absolute principle of freedom of speech”

²⁵ WAP, “Letter to Minneapolis City Council,” December 7, 1983. Carton 7, 376, WAP Collection.

²⁶ Waltman, *Pornography: The Politics of Legal Challenges*, 168-72.

²⁷ “U.S. Court Rejects Anti-Smut Law,” *New York Times*, August 28, 1985.

encoded in the U.S. Constitution. “Depictions of subordination tend to perpetuate subordination,” Easterbrook stated. “The subordinate status of women in turn leads to affront and lower pay at work, insult and inquiry at home, battery, and rape on the streets. But this simply demonstrates the power of pornography as speech.” Despite being unsuccessful in the Seventh District Circuit Court of Appeals, Hudnut, along with anti-porn advocates, lodged a further appeal to the Supreme Court. In February 1986, the Supreme Court upheld the Court of Appeal’s ruling. However, the Supreme Court summarily affirmed the circuit court’s decision, meaning that they did not partake in hearing evidence, reading briefs, or offering an opinion. Following this decision, the Supreme Court upheld the use of zoning to restrict pornography.²⁸

Feminist Backlash to Civil Rights Ordinances

Despite sharing a unified feminist goal of women’s social and economic equality and putting an end to male sexual violence, one of feminism’s most significant fracture points in the 1980s was how to approach pornography. In response to anti-pornography ordinances, feminists contested anti-porn legislation in forums such as magazines, conferences, academic articles, interviews, and through organizations like F.A.C.T in urban centres across the United States. Feminists outside the anti-porn movement were committed to ending male sexual violence, consistently calling for more legislation towards women’s safety and resources like shelters and social services.²⁹ Despite taking issue with pornography civil rights ordinances and anti-pornography feminism, anti-antiporn feminists were not simply champions of pornography. They criticized

²⁸ Waltman, *Pornography: The Politics of Legal Challenges*, 175-80.

²⁹ *Sojourner* September 1985, 21-23; “Pornography Debate Saps Feminist Energy,” *New Directions for Women*, October 1985; Lisa Duggan and Ann Snitow, “Porn Law is About Images, Not Power,” 1985. Carton 7, 375, WAP Collection.

heterosexual mainstream and hardcore porn, labelling specific films like *Deepthroat* and publications like *Penthouse* as sexist, objectifying, and an amplification of traditional gender norms that put male sexual pleasure above women's.³⁰ However, a key characteristic of the anti-antiporn movement were the ways in which they problematized anti-porn feminist's definitions of pornography, specifically regarding ordinances that framed pornography as the root of male sexual violence, battery, domestic abuse, and rape.

According to some anti-antiporn feminists, pornography could be treated as an arena for social, sexual, and cultural change that benefited women, rather than a political tool that confirmed women's subordination and victimization. Many argued that not all pornography was violent nor was it a direct cause of male sexual violence, citing academic studies, while still acknowledging that mainstream and hardcore pornography perpetuated broader issues of sexism and patriarchy in culture.³¹ Instead of fighting the porn industry head-on, anti-antiporn feminists suggested that reclaiming pornography as a path for women's sexual pleasure and expression had the potential to carve out women's sexual autonomy where the 1960s sexual revolution had failed. Rather than taking a unified "pro-pornography" stance, or presenting a monolithic definition of pornography, anti-antiporn feminists converged around the idea of what pornography was *not*. More specifically, they mobilized around the notion that anti-pornography

³⁰ Kate Ellis and Beth Jaker, eds., *Caught Looking: Feminism, Pornography, and Censorship* (Seattle, WA: Real Comet Press, 1988), 4-10; F.A.C.T., "Feminism and Censorship: Strange Bedfellows," 1984. Carton 5, 240, WAP Collection; Paula Webster, "Pornography and Pleasure," *Heresies*: "Sex Issue," no. 12, 1981; Carol Vance, ed. *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality* (Boston, MA: Routledge, 1984), 6-9.

³¹ Varda Burstyn, ed., *Women Against Censorship* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1985); Lisa Duggan, Nan Hunter, and Carol S. Vance, "False Promises: Feminist Anti-Pornography Legislation in the U.S." 62-76 in *Feminism and Censorship, the Current Debate*; Duggan, "Censorship in the Name of Feminism," 77-86 in *Feminism and Censorship*; Jan Boney, "F.A.C.T.," *WomaNews*, April 1985, 4.

ordinances were not a viable solution to the collective feminist goal of ending violence against women, as well as representing women's sexuality in culture through a feminist lens. Anti-pornography ordinances, they contended, would do more harm than good to the women's movement.

The anti-antiporn feminist movement, echoing second-wave feminism more broadly, was dominated by white feminists and failed to adequately address distinct forms of oppression faced by women of colour within the porn and sex work industries. Much like the anti-porn feminist movement, anti-antiporn feminism in the early 1980s was advanced mainly by white heterosexual women, but it also involved queer individuals, and those that participated in sex work. As newsletters and magazines from the time indicate, gay men often allied themselves with anti-antiporn feminists, citing similar concerns regarding conservative opposition to pornography and homosexuality. Gay magazines such as *The Advocate*, *Gay Community News*, and *The Body Politic* criticized the ordinances, and acted as a forum where heterosexual and queer anti-antiporn feminists could express their views on pornography legislation. Lesbian feminists were also some of the most vocal within the anti-antiporn movement. Along with queer feminists who founded F.A.C.T., other lesbians sought to create their own porn publications such as *On Our Backs*, while others like Gayle Rubin and Pal Califia were active members and champions of the S&M community.

Backlash Against Ordinances & Anti-Pornography Feminism

As several feminists observed, anti-pornography ordinances were not censorship laws, nor were ordinances a direct attack on the First Amendment.³² "Labelling the bill censorship is a

³² Adrienne Rich, "We Don't Have to Come Apart Over Pornography," *Off Our Backs* 15, no. 7, July 1985, 30; "Readers Speak Out on the Porn Ordinance," *Sojourner*, November 1985, 14-15;

misnomer,” wrote feminist journalist Peg Byron, “censorship is state-sponsored control of material...in this case, the *victim* of a specific piece of porn must prove damages before a judge is empowered to take action against the accused material.”³³ Groups like WAP, National Organization for Women (NOW), and later Dworkin and MacKinnon themselves stressed that anti-pornography ordinances were not to be conflated with existing or historical censorship and obscenity laws, particularly those that labeled contraceptives or male homosexuality as obscene.³⁴ Although various testimonies at hearings called for the eradication of pornography, none of the proposed ordinances’ final drafts specifically called for porn to be censored.³⁵ However, the ordinance’s perceived threat against free speech, sexual expression, and women’s movement’s gains since the 1960s remained at the epicentre of the anti-antiporn discourse. Anxieties about censorship therefore became the cornerstone of the anti-antiporn feminist countermovement from 1983 onwards.

Anti-antiporn feminists read beyond anti-pornography ordinances’ function of seeking compensation for pornography’s victims and repercussions for depictions or acts of sexual subordination. Instead, they perceived the ordinances as a symbolic attack on the women’s movement’s progress towards equality, sexual expression, free speech, and as a potential pathway to stringent censorship laws. The first F.A.C.T. group was founded as a direct response

Melba Wilson, “Opening the Gate: Making a Care for Balances Comment,” 218-220 in *Feminism and Censorship*; Brownmiller, *In Our Time*, 297.

³³ Peg Byron, “What We Talk About When We Talk About Dildos,” *Village Voice*, March 5, 1985.

³⁴ Dworkin and Mackinnon, *In Harm’s Way*, 1-28.; WAP Press Release on Minneapolis Ordinance, 1984. Carton 7, 362, WAP Collection.

³⁵ “Public Hearings on Ordinances to Add Pornography as Discrimination Against Women,” Minneapolis City Council, Government Operations Committee, December 12 and 13, 1983. Carton 7, 365, WAP Collection.; Statement of Stella Ohanseian at Los Angeles Civil Rights Ordinance Hearings, February 1985. Carton 7, 363, WAP Collection.

to pornography ordinances in Minneapolis in 1984. Between 1984 and 1985, several local F.A.C.T chapters formed across America, particularly in states like California, Massachusetts, and New York, where pornography legislation was an issue of public debate.³⁶ From the outset, anti-antiporn feminists took the position that not all pornography was violent, and criticized ordinances for being hyper-focused on a small percentage of hardcore porn that didn't reflect mainstream adult magazines, books, and films. They were also critical that the ordinances wouldn't require victims to provide evidence of the pornography that injured them.³⁷

Social psychologists and scientists invited to speak at hearings, such as Edward Donnerstein, stressed that the limited scope of existing research made it difficult to measure evidence that pornography was a contributing factor to male sexual violence. Donnerstein, a social scientist who studied the link between violence and media, noted that male participants within studies became desensitized to violent pornographic images but concluded it would be difficult to correlate images, fantasy, and sexual behaviour.³⁸ Anti-antiporn feminists stood behind this logic and maintained that images of gun violence, sexual assault in films and television, as well as the hyper-sexualization of women in media and advertising, were far more accessible to the public, and likely more dangerous. "Violent and misogynistic images are pervasive in our culture. Nothing in the research cited by the Appellants proves their hypothesis that these messages are believed in a qualitatively different way when they are communicated

³⁶ F.A.C.T, *Caught Looking*, 1-3.

³⁷ F.A.C.T, "F.A.C.T Brief," 1984. Carton 5, 240, WAP Collection; Kelly, *Feminism & Censorship*, 50-62; "New F.A.C.T Group Battles Censorship Laws," *New Directions for Women*, February 1985, 13.

³⁸ Transcripts of Donnerstein's research and testimonies, Carton 7, WAP Collection.

through the medium of sexually explicit material,” F.A.C.T noted in response to the 1984 Indianapolis ordinance.³⁹

Although the ordinances were centred around reparations for those injured by pornography, anti-antiporn feminists read the ordinances as violations of the First Amendment guarantee of free speech and the Fourteenth Amendment guarantee of equal treatment under the law. They worried that the ordinances’ porn trafficking provisions would be co-opted into New Right censorship campaigns against all sexually explicit materials that fell within vague definitions of pornography, such as “sexually explicit subordination”, “sexual object”, and “scenarios of degradation.” Anti-antiporn feminists aligned themselves with broader feminist campaigns that sought to eradicate violence against women and social subordination. However, they feared that the ordinances’ definitions of pornography would be applied to outside contexts and would “reinforce rather than erode archaic and untrue stereotypes about women’s sexuality.”⁴⁰

Perceiving the ordinances as a pathway towards broader censorship against women’s sexual expression, F.A.C.T argued that anti-porn legislation would support government power over free speech, women’s sexual behaviour, and bodies.⁴¹ Although the ordinances were an example of court action against sexual violence and oppression, anti-antiporn feminists were

³⁹ Varda Burstyn, ed., *Women Against Censorship* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1985); Gail Chester and Julianne Dickey, eds., *Feminism and Censorship: The Current Debate* (New York, NY: Avery Publishing Group, 1988); Pat Califia, “See No Evil: An Update on the Feminist Anti-Pornography Movement,” *The Advocate*, September 3, 1985, 35-39; F.A.C.T et al., “Brief Amici Curiae of the Feminist Anti-Censorship Taskforce, 1985,” in *University of Michigan Journal of Law Review* 21, no. 1 (1988): 88-90.

⁴⁰ F.A.C.T et al., “Brief Amici Curiae of the Feminist Anti-Censorship Taskforce, 1985,” in *University of Michigan Journal of Law Review* 21, no. 1 (1988): 88-90.

⁴¹ F.A.C.T, “Feminist Against Censorship Taskforce: The Case Against Indianapolis,” *Off Our Backs* 15, no. 6, June 1985, 12-13; Barkey, Jeanne. “Minneapolis Porn Ordinance,” *Off Our Backs* 14, no. 12, February 1984, 1-2.

concerned about the method for its control. More specifically, they were worried that it would backfire on the women's movement. As feminist discourse on issues of sexuality became more elaborate throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s, anti-anti-porn feminists worried that conservative forces would use the ordinances as part of a larger agenda to reverse feminist gains via moral crusades against abortions, queer rights, sex education, and economic equality. "The Right seeks to use legitimate feminist concern about sexual violence and oppression to reinstate traditional sexual arrangements," wrote F.A.C.T in response to the Indianapolis ordinance.⁴²

A 1985 F.A.C.T leaflet sought to raise alarms about porn legislation, stating that "the proposed anti-pornography laws are misguided, dangerous, and ineffective strategy in the battle against sexism and violence". Although the original ordinances were geared towards compensations for victims, F.A.C.T members perceived that the ordinances represented anti-porn feminists "entrusting the patriarchal state with the task of legally distinguishing between permissible and impermissible sexual images".⁴³ They also stressed that the ordinances perpetuated women's "victim and powerlessness" narrative in laws and culture. They cited ordinances as a "symbol of women's sexual defeat", and as pieces of legislation that promoted sex difference double standards that painted women as sexually passive and men as sexually aggressive.⁴⁴

Others within the movement, along with F.A.C.T believed that emphasizing extreme gender relations, particularly through porn bills that sought to draw a clear line between sexual

⁴² F.A.C.T et al., "Brief Amici Curiae of the Feminist Anti-Censorship Taskforce, 1985," in *University of Michigan Journal of Law Review* 21, no. 1 (1988): 72.

⁴³ Lisa Duggan, Nan D. Hunter, and Carole S. Vance, "False Promises: Feminist Anti-pornography Legislation," in *Sex Wars: Sexual Dissent and Political Culture* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1995), 45.

⁴⁴ F.A.C.T. "Feminism and Censorship: Strange Bedfellows," 1985. Carton 5, 240, WAP Collection.

aggressor and sexual victimhood, only emphasized social, sexual, and economic mores that feminists sought to challenge. F.A.C.T criticized the ordinances and anti-porn feminists for framing pornography as the cause, rather than symptom of women's oppression.⁴⁵ Anti-anti porn feminists framed the ordinances as sexist, positing a "great chasm" that perpetuated sexual difference, depicting women as "helpless victims and people who could not seek or enjoy sex" and men as "aggressive beasts". "Men are not attack dogs," F.A.C.T. wrote in response to the Indianapolis ordinance, "but morally responsible beings...the ordinance reinforces a destructive sexist stereotype of men as irresponsible beasts who cannot be held responsible for their actions, and therefore lets them off the hook."⁴⁶ Because they proposed enshrining in legislation a binary view of women as sexually passive and men as sexually aggressive, anti-porn feminists saw pornography ordinances as threatening a broader feminist goal that illuminated the fluidity and malleability of gender and sex roles.⁴⁷ As F.A.C.T summarized in 1984:

"[The ordinance] presumes men (and only men) are conditioned by sexually explicit depictions to commit acts of aggression and to believe misogynistic myths. Such assumptions reinforce and perpetuate central sexist stereotypes; they weaken, rather than enhance, women's struggles to free themselves of archaic notions of gender roles. In doing so, the ordinance itself violates the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment."⁴⁸

F.A.C.T. and other anti-antiporn feminists believed that ordinances were "squarely within the tradition of the sexual double standard", and that they perpetuated the notions that all

⁴⁵ Duggan, "Censorship in the Name of Feminism," *Village Voice*, October 16, 1984, 11; Duggan and Snitow, "Porn Law is About Images, Not Power," September 26, 1984. Carton 7, 375, WAP Collection; Kate Ellis, "Keeping the Enemy in Sight," *New Directions for Women*, June 1985.

⁴⁶ F.A.C.T., "Feminists Anti-Censorship Taskforce: The Case Against Indianapolis," *Off Our Backs* 15, no. 6, June 1985, 12.

⁴⁷ Califia, "See No Evil" *The Advocate*, September 3, 1985, 35; F.A.C.T. "Feminism and Censorship: Strange Bedfellows," 1985. Carton 5, 240, WAP Collection.

⁴⁸ F.A.C.T et al., "Brief Amici Curiae of the Feminist Anti-Censorship Taskforce, 1985," in *University of Michigan Journal of Law Review* 21, no. 1 (1988): 122.

sexually explicit materials were degrading or subordinating to women. They stressed that sex and pornography was contextual, and that the existence of pornography did not mean women's automatic degradation and subordination. Anti-antiporn feminists cited feminist art and literature, magazines, lesbian and gay pornography, erotic novels, sex education texts, and the broader S&M community as examples when consensual "subordination", "sex object", or "submission" may be affirming.

"When sex is detached from its traditional moorings, men allegedly benefit and women are the victims," noted F.A.C.T., taking issue with the ordinances' definitions of pornography as "morally charged terms".⁴⁹ Anti-antiporn feminists also rejected Dworkin's claims that all pornography represented a male hatred and dehumanization of women, and that men were naturally sexual aggressors, stressing that Dworkin herself perpetuated double standards and sexual binaries that feminists sought to challenge.⁵⁰ Although Dworkin and other anti-porn feminist groups like WAP were against censorship and supported women's sexual pleasure and agency, anti-antiporn feminists saw their radical takes on pornography, and alliance with conservatives on anti-porn ordinances, as problematic.

Anti-antiporn feminists viewed the ordinances as a potential risk to *all* images or texts that contained depictions or references to women's sexual behaviour. Many within the movement took issue with the ordinances' vague language when referencing the type of materials that could cause harm. The bulk of the writings critical of the Minneapolis and Indianapolis ordinances highlighted clause V, "women in postures of sexual submission...inviting penetration," and

⁴⁹ F.A.C.T et al., "Brief Amici Curiae of the Feminist Anti-Censorship Taskforce, 1985," in *University of Michigan Journal of Law Review* 21, no. 1 (1988): 115.

⁵⁰ Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* (New York, NY: Putnam, 1981), 1-15; ⁵⁰ F.A.C.T., "Feminist Against Censorship Taskforce: The Case Against Indianapolis," *Off Our Backs* 15, no. 6, June 1985; "F.A.C.T Brief," 1984. Carton 5, 240, WAP Collection.

clause VIII “women being penetrated by objects”, could be used in future legislation to censor material involving sexual depictions of women in sex education material, masturbation, art that expressed women’s own sexual experiences, literature that recounted personal experiences of sexual assault, or pornography created by women.⁵¹

Anti-antiporn and anti-porn feminists had shared goals of dismantling and addressing existing power imbalances in laws, society, and popular culture. Although mainstream heterosexual pornography was rife with power imbalance, objectification, and sexism, anti-antiporn feminists stressed that achieving social and legal equality via battles against pornography was counterproductive. Many anti-antiporn feminists argued that the ordinances had an underlying conservative agenda of framing all depictions of female sexuality as perverse, victimizing, a moral threat to society and heteronormativity, and something to be controlled by men through puritan legal regulations. They alleged that the ordinances would create a domino effect and would generate more and more severe censorship and reinforce traditional gender values. Anti-antiporn feminists were particularly concerned with additions made to the Suffolk County ordinance, which noted pornography was a threat to morality and the family home.⁵² Within this framework, individuals, and groups like F.A.C.T put perceived threats of censorship at the heart of their rhetoric and backlash against anti-porn feminism and ordinances.

⁵¹ F.A.C.T, “Feminist Against Censorship Taskforce: The Case Against Indianapolis,” *Off Our Backs* 15, no. 6, June 1985; Duggan, Hunter, and Vance, *Women Against Censorship*, 130-151; F.A.C.T, “F.A.C.T Brief,” 1984. Carton 5, 240, WAP Collection

⁵² Califia, “See No Evil” *The Advocate*, September 3, 1985, 35; F.A.C.T. “Feminism and Censorship: Strange Bedfellows,” 1985. Carton 5, 240, WAP Collection; Rubin, Gayle. “Anti-Porn Laws and Women’s Liberation,” *Gay Community News* December 1984

Along with the Women’s Legal Defense Fund, F.A.C.T created an amicus curia against pornography ordinances, comprised of a brief and eighty signatures from groups and individuals outspoken against anti-antiporn feminism, censorship, and pornography bills. The brief reflected the anti-antiporn movement’s broader concerns that ordinances were “useless” and unable to help women. *Images* of sex did not cause sexism, violence, or misogyny, anti-porn feminists asserted. They rejected Dworkin, MacKinnon, and WAP’s argument that porn was a central factor in maintaining the discrimination of women, instead stressing that material factors like job segregation, responsibility for childrearing, and lack of reproductive freedom were more threatening to women’s social and economic equality. As F.A.C.T outlined in 1985, “Suppression of sexually explicit material will not eliminate the pervasive sexist images of the mainstream culture or the discriminatory economic and social treatment that maintains women’s second-class status.”⁵³

Akin to other free speech advocates in the anti-pornography fight like civil libertarians, male pornographers, and the ACLU, anti-antiporn feminists conflated pornography and images of women’s sexual expression with “sexually explicit speech” or simply speech. “Sexually explicit speech needs more protection, not less”, F.A.C.T noted in response to the Indianapolis ordinance.⁵⁴ “Women do not need the illusionary solution of censorship. Women need real equality, real power.” noted Betty Brooks, a member of F.A.C.T and one of the co-founders of the LA Rape crises hotline, “[the LA ordinance] treads on the dangerous ground of deciding what material is appropriate for people in a democratic society to view.”⁵⁵ Although Brook’s statement

⁵³ “F.A.C.T Brief,” 1984. Carton 5, 240, WAP Collection

⁵⁴ F.A.C.T, “Feminist Against Censorship Taskforce: The Case Against Indianapolis,” *Off Our Backs* 15, no. 6, June 1985; “F.A.C.T Brief,” 1984. Carton 5, 240, WAP Collection

⁵⁵ Cathleen Decker, “Feminists Resist Pornography Law.” *LA Times*, March 16, 1985.

is a mis-reading of the ordinance's actual legal function, anti-anti-porn feminist rhetoric was fueled by anxieties that conservatives who opposed feminist ideologies would use the ordinances to declare feminist books, erotic literature written by women, or sex could be censored.

They also had concerns that gay and lesbian pornography, bars, and bookstores would be some of the first victims of a potential moral censorship crusade against non-marital sexuality.

As activist Gayle Rubin noted in response to NOW's resolution supporting the Minneapolis and Indianapolis ordinances:

“I'm not so worried about why they did it as I am about the impact it will have. The state and the Right have been attacking the women's movement and the gay movement by starting off with the parts of those communities that are the most vulnerable, the easiest to bust, the least able to defend themselves, and the least able to get support from other people...in the long run it's going to damage the mainstream women's and mainstream gay movement.”⁵⁶

Many also worried that ordinances and censorship put sex education at risk, specifically texts published by women like *Our Bodies Ourselves*, published by the Boston Women's Health Collective in 1970.⁵⁷ Along with anxieties about pornography ordinances snowballing into censorship against women, queer individuals and sexual expression, feminist expressed fears about feminist ideologies slipping into the wrong hands.

Feminists & New Right Alliances

Anti-anti-porn feminist anxieties regarding censorship and the ordinances were also fueled by trepidations surrounding an alliance between anti-pornography feminists and the New Right.

Although at different ends of the political spectrum, Republicans and anti-pornography feminists

⁵⁶ Nancy Wechsler, “A State of Siege: The New Right and Sexual Repression,” *Gay Community News*, 1983.

⁵⁷ Varda Burstyn, ed., *Women Against Censorship*; Gail Chester and Julianne Dickey, eds., *Feminism and Censorship*; Pat Califia, “See No Evil: An Update on the Feminist Anti-Pornography Movement,” *The Advocate*, September 3, 1985, 35-39.

were both concerned about pornographic representations of women. Republicans, from grassroots groups to the White House, conflated pornography with obscenity, arguing that it threatened the family as a stable institution, women, and children's safety, and led to crime. Conversely, anti-pornography feminists placed pornography at the heart of their rhetoric, arguing that it fostered misogyny, took advantage of women's sexual freedom that was forged during the 1960s women's liberation movement, and encouraged male sexual violence. Republican anti-pornography discourse also placed women at its center to protect puritan values of femininity that in turn supported neo-conservative institutions of motherhood and family. Meanwhile, feminist discourse and pornography ordinances sought to prevent female sexual autonomy from being jeopardized, regulated, or objectified by men who produced or consumed porn.⁵⁸

From 1983 onwards, anti-antiporn feminists repeatedly accused Republicans and anti-porn feminists of working in tandem. Mainstream media outlets also noted that anti-porn legislation had made feminists and political conservatives into "strange bedfellows".⁵⁹ Ordinances in Minneapolis and Indianapolis resulted from a coalition between Dworkin, MacKinnon, local anti-pornography feminist groups, conservative concerned citizens and neighborhood groups, self-identified Republic councillors and mayors.⁶⁰ Anti-antiporn feminists also took issue that later iterations of civil rights ordinances written without Dworkin or MacKinnon, such as those in Los Angeles and Suffolk County, NY, where bills and hearings were conducted by political conservatives, without feminist consultation. Much like anxieties

⁵⁸ Bronstein, *Battling Pornography*, 1-28.

⁵⁹ Paul Andrews, "Partners Against Porn," *Seattle Times*, 1985, Carton 7, 362, WAP Collection; Lisa Duggan, "The Dubious Porn War Alliance," *Washington Post*, September 1, 1985.

⁶⁰ Dworkin and MacKinnon, *In Harm's Way*, 1-12; Paul Andrews, "Parents Against Porn," *Seattle Times*, n.d. Carton 11, 702, WAP Collection; Walter Goodman, "Battle on Pornography Spurred by New Tactics," *New York Times*, March 7, 1984.

surrounding censorship, anti-anti-porn feminists viewed this alliance as a threat that had the power to jeopardize women's fight for social, economic, sexual, and political equality; specifically in the wake of Republican opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment, resistances to the queer community during the increasing AIDS pandemic, cutbacks to family social services, pushback against reproductive rights, and the rise of a right-wing women's movement.⁶¹

Between 1983 and 1985, feminist literature sought to highlight the conservative backgrounds of politicians who worked in tandem with Dworkin, MacKinnon, and other anti-porn feminists who supported the ordinances. They emphasized how Republican legislators such as Suffolk County's Michael D'Andre, Indianapolis mayor William Hudnut, and Indianapolis councillor Beluah Cougenou were previously outspoken opponents of issues close to home for feminists; particularly the ERA, abortion, sex education, and gay liberation.⁶² Correspondence to groups like WAP also indicates that conservative women, grassroots organizations, and religious organizations supported anti-pornography feminists in their fight against pornography, often showing support for pornography legislation and requesting resources such as pamphlets, reading lists, slideshows, tours, or speakers.⁶³

New Right and feminist alliances invoked worries that the women's movement's progress from the 1960s to 1980s would be erased. Republican's claims that pornography undermined the

⁶¹ Califia, "See No Evil" *The Advocate*, September 3, 1985, 35; F.A.C.T. "Feminism and Censorship: Strange Bedfellows," 1985. Carton 5, 240, WAP Collection; Rubin, Gayle. "Anti-Porn Laws and Women's Liberation," *Gay Community News* December 1984

⁶² "Porn Busters," *Reason*, October 1985. Carton 5, Folder 221, WAP Collection; Duggan, "The Dubious Porn War Alliance," *Washington Post*, September 1, 1985; F.A.C.T. Newsletter, "Feminism and Censorship: Strange Bedfellows," 1985. Carton 5, 240, WAP Collection; Peg Byron, "What We Talk About When We Talk About Dildos," *Village Voice*, March 5, 1985.

⁶³ Letter from Dorothy Calvini of Mercy Coalition, December 1985, Carton 1 Folder 40, WAP Collection; Letter from Robert M. Close or John Calvin Presbyterian Church, March 1984, Carton 2, 88, WAP Collection; Letter from Citizens Concerned for Community Values, October 1983, Carton 2, 82, WAP Collection.

stability of the family unit and home, threatened women's sexual purity, deviant behaviour such as sex outside the home, and encouraged homosexuality, alarmed feminists. "Feminism and porn have something in common." noted feminist author and artist Sara Diamond in response to ordinances, "Both have made sex an experience open to public examination, and now, debate."⁶⁴ Aligning with the New Right in pornography legislation, anti-antiporn feminists feared, would open avenues for conservatives to discuss, and potentially penalize non-martial or non-heterosexual sexualities in legal contexts.

Anti-antiporn feminists heavily criticized what an alliance between Republicans and anti-porn feminists epitomized. Much like the perceived threat of censorship, anti-antiporn feminists were concerned with Republicans co-opting a feminist civil rights approach to pornography for New Right political gain. F.A.C.T stressed that Republicans would use anti-porn legislation as capital to promote traditional ideals of gender and sexuality, such as heteronormativity, confining sex to marriage, framing queer sexualities as deviant and immoral, and celebrating women's sexual purity over sexual expression and agency. F.A.C.T co-founder Lisa Duggan criticized Dworkin and MacKinnon for their "contribution to a moral crusade" that could lead Republican's to co-opt feminist's fight against sexism and abuse for New Right gains against women's sexual expression, reproductive rights, and sex education.⁶⁵

Ordinances in Suffolk County and LA also signified to many anti-antiporn feminists that conservatives had co-opted feminist language to support for broader New Right campaigns aimed at imposing forms of sexual morality. Republican legislators and council members utilized

⁶⁴ Sara Diamond, "Pornography: Image and Reality," 40, in *Women Against Censorship*.

⁶⁵ Duggan, "Censorship in the Name of Feminism," 77-86 in *Feminism and Censorship*; Lisa Duggan and Ann Snitow, "Porn Law is About Images, Not Power," 1985. Carton 7, 375, WAP Collection

terms traditionally uttered by feminists, such as “the sexually explicit subordination of women”, citing the women’s movement as an important ally in the battle against pornography.⁶⁶ Anti-antiporn feminists feared that feminist language would be appropriated by the New Right, puritan, and religious allies in their campaigns against secularized culture that contained instances of sexual expression in films, music, TV, and art. “How can feminists be entrusting the patriarchal state of legally distinguishing between permissible and impermissible sexual images?”, F.A.C.T co-founders noted in 1985. Not interfering with the co-opting of feminist ideology, they noted, “...takes feminists very close-indeed far too close- to measures that will support conservative, anti-sex, pro-censorship forces in American society, for it is with these forces that women have forged alliances in passing such legislation”.⁶⁷

Anti-antiporn feminist anxieties were not only fueled by the ordinances themselves, but also by the statements of conservatives who attended the hearings or showed their support for anti-porn legislation. Feminists outside the anti-porn movement also had specific anxieties about the Suffolk County ordinance, which was championed by conservative religious leaders, and individuals like Phyllis Schlafly, a strong opponent of feminism, gay rights, the ERA, abortion, and founder of the conservative Eagle Forum group. Suffolk County legislator Michael D’Andre, F.A.C.T reported from one post-hearing interaction, allegedly supported the ordinance because he believed his constituents were “sick and tired of this promiscuous society” and wanted to “restore these ladies to what they used to be”. Support for the Suffolk County ordinance from groups such as Citizens for Decency Through Law, the National Federation for Decency, and

⁶⁶ F.A.C.T, “Feminism and Censorship: Strange Bedfellows,” 1984. Carton 5, 240, WAP Collection

⁶⁷ Lisa Duggan, Nan Hunter, and Carole S. Vance, “False Promises: Feminist Antipornography Legislation in the U.S.,” 130-151 in *Women Against Censorship*, ed. Varda Burstyn (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1985).

Morality in the Media also concerned anti-antiporn feminists.⁶⁸ However, in the face of anxieties about New Right alliances and censorship, anti-antiporn feminists proposed their own solutions to the pornography issue that had taken America by storm.

Conclusion

One of the alternative solutions anti-antiporn feminists offered to sexism and violence in pornography was to call on heterosexual and queer women to consider their own sexualities, relationships with pornography, and the burgeoning genre of feminist porn. Anti-antiporn feminists argued that pornography was not just personal, but political. They framed pornography as a potential pathway towards women's own sexual expression, a tool for queer communities to carve out community and pleasure outside of a restrictive heteronormative culture, and a sounding board for women's fight against male objectification. F.A.C.T noted that porn could be useful in conveying the message that "sexuality need not be tied to reproduction, men, or domesticity.", but instead an avenue for women's sexual agency and expression.⁶⁹ "To accept rather than struggle against the idea that sex is dangerous, and polluting is to fear ourselves as much as the men who rape and hurt," wrote F.A.C.T member Ann Snitow, "we need to be able to reject the sexism in porn without having to reject the realm or pornographic sexual fantasy as if that entire kingdom were without meaning or resonance for women."⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Pat Califia, "See No Evil: An Update on the Feminist Anti-Pornography Movement," *The Advocate*, September 3, 1985, 35-39; *Sojourner* September 1985, 21-23; "Pornography Debate Saps Feminist Energy," *New Directions for Women*, October 1985; Lisa Duggan and Ann Snitow, "Porn Law is About Images, Not Power," 1985. Carton 7, 375, WAP Collection.

⁶⁹ F.A.C.T., "Feminists Anti-Censorship Taskforce: The Case Against Indianapolis," *Off Our Backs* 15, no. 6, June 1985, 12; Janice Irvine, "Carole Vance Discusses FACT," *Sojourner*, December 1985, 18.

⁷⁰ Ann Snitow, "Retrenchment Versus Transformation, The Politics of the Antipornography Movement," 117, in *Women Against Censorship*.

Along with calling for a movement of creating feminist pornography and increasing resources for women's sex education, anti-antiporn feminists suggested that rather than civil rights ordinances, feminists should instead mount their efforts towards fighting cultural conservatism and patriarchal culture more broadly. They stressed that effort should be spent fighting specifically for resources that helped victims of abuse, sex workers, and other women facing issues related to sexual violence and sexism. Anti-antiporn feminists aligned themselves with sex workers groups such as COYOTE (Call off Your Tired Old Ethics), who suggested that censoring pornography would only create more dangerous conditions for women as an underground industry, and that attention should instead be focused on more laws and federal to combat against women's coercion, rape, and kidnapping in sex industries and in communities more broadly.⁷¹

Examining the anti-antipornography movement's reaction to pornography ordinances and when they represented helps to support an understanding of *how* the porn wars divided feminists and became a contested issue. It also offers further clarity into the origins and longevities of the porn wars' fractures and alliances. Furthermore, it reveals important clues as to how women discussed, conceptualized, and debated ideas of gender and sexuality during the 1980s. Despite pornography's ability to embody sexism, misogyny, power imbalance between sexes, and objectification, anti-antiporn feminists mounted a substantial effort to fight anti-porn legislation. Anxieties about censorship, feminist alliances with the new right, and framing anti-porn feminism as a crusade that could impede women's movement, led some feminists to form a countermovement against anti-pornography campaigns. Responses to pornography ordinances

⁷¹ Marcia Pally, "X-Rated Feminism: Ban Sexism, Not Pornography," *The Nation*, June 1985. Carton 5, 240, WAP Collection.

and anti-porn feminism not only solidified a new front in the porn wars, but also provided the foundation for new alliances and voices as the federal government sought to deliberate porn on an even larger national scale through the 1986 Meese Report.

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