NAVIGATING A TABOO TOPIC IN PARENT-CHILD COMMUNICATION: YOUNG ADULT STORIES ABOUT CONVERSATIONS WITH THEIR PARENTS ABOUT PORNOGRAPHY
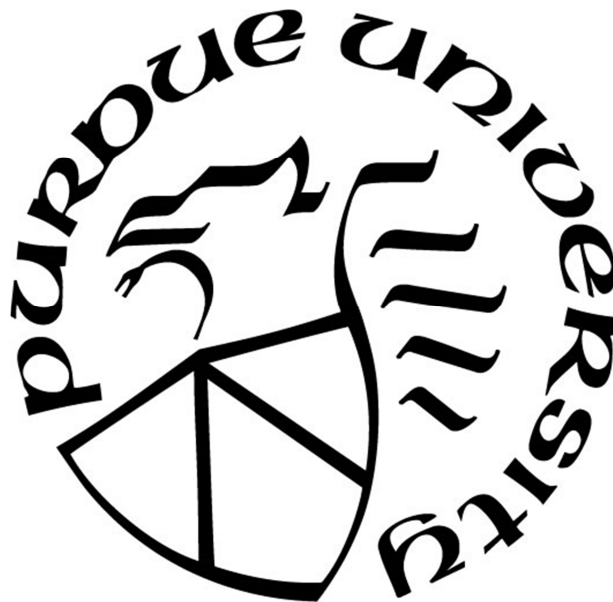
by

Joshua D. Johnson

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Purdue University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Brian Lamb School of Communication

West Lafayette, Indiana

August 2021

THE PURDUE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL
STATEMENT OF COMMITTEE APPROVAL

Dr. Emily Buehler, Chair

Brian Lamb School of Communication

Dr. Felicia Roberts

Brian Lamb School of Communication

Dr. Jake Burdick

College of Education

Approved by:

Dr. Marifran Mattson

For those who are curious and seeking wholeness.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

After two years of preparation and research, the completion and success of this project goes to so many people. First, I want to thank my advisor, Emily Buehler, for her constant support, encouragement, and wisdom in navigating this project. The number of hours you have spent pouring into me and my work is nothing short from incredible and I cannot thank you enough for every edit, comment, and word of encouragement throughout these last two years. I also want to thank my undergraduate mentors and advisors Ariana Molloy, Dorothy Calley, and Brian Moe for their contributions in preparing me for Purdue and shaping my passion for teaching and research.

Second, I want to thank Maria Venetis for her support in letting me propose this project in her interpersonal communication class fall of 2019. Your kindness, positivity, and genuine support for me gave me the passion to start researching what I love. I am deeply grateful for your guidance in helping shape this project.

Third, I want to thank my committee members Felicia Roberts and Jake Burdick for their contributions to this project. Your wisdom, insight, and encouragement towards me and this research have really spurred me on as an aspiring academic.

Fourth, I want to thank my parents Wayne and Candace Johnson for their never ending love and support. I study family communication because of your wisdom and commitment to truth and kindness. Also want to give a shout out to my fun and encouraging siblings David, Noah, Grace, Joy, Faith, and Hope.

Fifth, I want to especially thank my grandfather Mark Johnson for helping me financially in my undergrad. Your generous love and support gave me a strong foundation to build on and I would not be at Purdue without you.

Sixth, I want to thank my Wednesday night small group. Through it all, you all have been a source of incredible joy, prayer, and support throughout this academic journey. Thanks for the impromptu movie nights and opportunities to rest from grad school responsibilities.

Finally, I want to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for paving the way for me to do this project. Without You, Your redemption, and Your kindness, I would not be who I am today. You take my weaknesses and display Your amazing strength. I love You and thank You for all You have done for me. This project is Yours.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

ABSTRACT

Although many communication scholars have explored how parents and children navigate difficult conversations about taboo topics, little to no research exists concerning pornography, specifically from the perspective of the child. To fill this research gap, the following qualitative study utilized a narrative framework and methodology to explore characteristics in parent-child conversations about pornography that illicit positive or negative perceptions from children about those conversations. 18 young adults (18-25 years old) participated in semi-structured interviews in which they shared stories about conversations they had with their parents about pornography. Five major themes surfaced from the thematic analysis of the data: (1) *open/closed relationship*, (2) *discussion-/lecture-based conversation structure*, (3) *specificity/ambiguity of conversation details*, (4) *affirmation/denial of curiosity*, and (5) *appropriate/inappropriate conversation context*. The findings have theoretical implications and contextual contributions for family communication scholars in further exploring the topic of pornography as well as practical insights for parents to reflect upon in seeking to strengthen their conversations about pornography with their children.

Keywords: parent-child communication, pornography, taboo topics, narrative theory

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Parents possess the communicative power to shape the outcomes of difficult conversations with their children about taboo topics (Forward et al., 2008; Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006; Schrodt & Shimkowski, 2017). When parents maintain a receptive, informal, and composed nature with their children about the topic of sex, parents report feeling less anxious and less avoidant about the issue (Afifi et al., 2008). Parents who research the issue and conduct themselves in a conversational manner also report experiencing success in helping their children avoid risky sexual behaviors (Afifi et al., 2008; Holman & Koenig Kellas, 2018). Adolescents report that when their parents display care and understanding through storytelling to explain certain points, they experience higher levels of sense-making, mental health, and personal well-being regarding healthy sexuality (Askelson et al., 2012; Henry, 1994; Holman & Koenig Kellas, 2018; Jackson et al., 1998). The findings of these studies suggest that healthy parent-child communication about taboo topics, especially sex and sexuality, has implications for physical, mental, and emotional health.

Considering the easy accessibility and exposure to online pornography among children (Greenfield, 2004; Sabina et al., 2008), it is an important topic of conversation for parents to navigate with their children. In the studies conducted by family communication scholars about sex and sexuality, few have explored how parents and children talk about pornography. Scholars recognize that parents who maintain open communication with their kids about porn are better able to navigate the complexity of the issue (Byrne & Lee, 2011; Dailey, 2006). Moreover, children respond more positively to parents who communicate openly and without judgement (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Although scholars know a lot about how *parents* report these conversations going, less is known about how *children* perceive these conversations. For

10

example, many parents feel unprepared to talk about porn with their children and report experiencing a wide range of emotions when dealing with its uncomfortable and controversial nature (Rasmussen et al., 2015; Rothman et al., 2017). Questions remain about how children experience these conversations.

Taking a narrative approach to studying parent-child communication about pornography that focuses on the child's perspective allows for a better understanding of children's perceptions of conversations with their parents about pornography. Stories provide holistic insights into conversation context, identity, and the words and phrases utilized in parent-child communication (Koenig Kellas, 2005; Trees & Koenig Kellas, 2009). Research shows that sharing stories increases the health and well-being of the narrator (Koenig Kellas et al., 2015) and helps them make sense of their lives, relationships, and personal identity (Koenig Kellas, 2005; Koenig Kellas et al., 2010; Trees & Koenig Kellas, 2009). When research participants share stories, it benefits the participant and allows the researcher to understand the factors that influence interactions. Previous studies have focused largely on how parents perceive conversations with their children about pornography, creating the need for further investigation on how children perceive these conversations.

Overview of Chapters

The purpose of this study is to fill existing gaps in family communication research about how children perceive conversations about pornography with their parents. This study explores characteristics that emerge in parent-child conversations that elicit positive and negative perceptions from children about those conversations. To better understand how young adults perceive conversations about pornography with their parents, Chapter 2 provides a review of literature surrounding pornography, parent-child communication about taboo topics like sex and

pornography, and narrative theory as a useful framework for understanding the topic of porn in family communication. The chapter concludes with an overview of two main research questions that guided the present study. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the narrative methodology utilized in this study, including my statement of purpose and approach to inquiry. The chapter describes the participants recruited for the study, details the recruitment method, explains the interview procedures, and provides an overview of data analysis and data saturation procedures.

The last two chapters of this study explore the study results and a general discussion of how the emergent themes connect with existing communication literature. Chapter 4 explores five major themes that emerged from the data, discussing each theme in two subsections for further thematic understanding. Each subsection provides definitions, examples, and direct quotes from participants of the study. Finally, Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the findings by exploring theoretical implications, contextual contributions, and practical implications of the themes of this study, connecting them to existing literature as well as describing their contributions to family communication scholarship. The chapter concludes with an overview of the study limitations and provides suggestions for future research about family communication and pornography.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

To understand how children report conversations with their parents about pornography, the following review of literature synthesizes what scholars in public health, psychology, and communication have already explored. It provides an overview of pornography (e.g., what it is), taboo topics, parent-child communication about sex, and the research gaps in parent-child communication about porn. It also examines narrative inquiry and why storytelling offers family communication scholars a helpful framework in deepening their understanding of how children perceive conversations with their parents about difficult topics like sex and porn. The chapter concludes with two proposed research questions to help further understand how children perceive conversations about pornography with their parents.

Pornography Defined

Many scholars struggle to define pornography because of its ambiguous nature and its dependency on the content being viewed (D'Orlando, 2009; Rasmussen et al., 2015; Robinson, 2010; Willoughby & Busby, 2015). As Owens et al. (2012) described in their work, "There are almost as many definitions for sexually explicit material as there are individuals who have studied it" (pp. 102-103). For example, Peter and Valkenburg (2009) identify pornography in their work as any material that displays sexual activity in "unconcealed ways" (p. 408). Tsitsika et al. (2009) define pornography in their research as any online material portraying "sexual behaviors and practices" (p. 546). And Reid et al. (2011) define porn as any material that (a) "creates or elicits sexual feelings or thoughts" and (b) "contains explicit images or descriptions of sexual acts" (p. 360). Although some similarities connect each of the previously stated definitions, they vary in terms of what content is considered pornography and whether the

content producers intend for the content to be interpreted as pornographic, making porn difficult to define.

For the purposes of this study, I refer to pornography as any material that displays nudity or sexual activity, behaviors, or practices that elicit sexual feelings and thoughts. This definition privileges the content that might be viewed as pornographic and downplays the content producer's intent. The rationale for referring to porn in its broadest form is that this definition encompasses the wide range of positions that people in general may have in categorizing pornography and offers a holistic understanding of pornography when discussing it. Doing so acknowledges the many positions that study participants may have concerning what pornography is. Many of the scholars cited earlier referred to the words of Justice Stewart in *Jacobellis v. Ohio* (1964):

> I shall not today attempt further to define the kinds of material I understand to be embraced within that shorthand description; and perhaps I could never succeed in intelligibly doing so. But I know it when I see it ("Concurring Opinion of Mr. Justice Stewart," para. 1).

Justice Stewart affirms the varying definitions scholars express in their research on pornography while also acknowledging the simplicity of knowing what the content is when accessed or viewed. Utilizing a broader definition of pornography is important for this study because it accounts for the varying definitions participants may have for what constitutes pornography.

Accessibility and Child Exposure

In a digital age shaped by the Internet, the easy accessibility of online pornography has increased, resulting in children becoming increasingly exposed to the material (Hertlein, 2012; Sabina et al., 2008). It is approximated that as much as 30% of data usage on the Internet comprises pornographic material (Weiss, 2019) and that porn is shared across a variety of

platforms including websites, messaging apps, and social media platforms (Stroud, 2014). Some

children are first exposed to the material as early as 11 years old (Greenfield, 2004), with 93% of

boys and 62% of girls first viewing it before age 18 (Sabina et al., 2008). Worldwide sampling of

adolescents shows that internet pornography use increases with age and that boys show higher

levels of interest in it than girls (Mead, 2016). Thus, it is not a question of *if* children will view

online pornography but rather a question of *when*.

Ethical Perspectives

It is worth noting that scholars vary in their opinions and judgements about the ethics and

morality of pornography. Although some scholars view porn as a helpful tool for sexual

minorities or romantic relationships (Sabina et al., 2008; Štulhofer et al., 2012), others view it as

harmful material in need of constructive solutions and attention (Perrin et al., 2008; Taylor, 2018;

Wright & Randall, 2012). Research shows that pornography use can sustain "sexist and

unhealthy notions of sex and relationships" (Flood, 2009, p. 389) among users, exacerbating

violent behavior, affecting young children more than other forms of sexual media. It also

influences users' attitudes about adopting sexual behaviors, sexualizes girls and women, and

increases child pornography consumption among adolescents and young adults (Hertlein, 2012;

Rasmussen et al., 2015; Whisnant, 2016). In other words, many studies suggest that pornography

consumption can have negative consequences concerning attitudes, health, and behaviors.

Some scholars also label pornography as a public health issue because of the increase in

addictive habits and behaviors among pornography viewers. Porn addiction refers to a person's

inability to control their impulses in watching porn, resulting in negative interpersonal,

vocational, and personal consequences (Sniewski et al., 2018). Approximately 9% of online

viewers of pornography fall within the category of addiction, watching porn at least 11 hours a

week (Cooper et al., 2000; Cooper, et al., 2001; Sniewski et al., 2018; Weiss, 2012). Scholars recognize that early pornography exposure among children sometimes results in porn addiction later in life (Sniewski et al., 2018), and early exposure to porn correlates with higher levels of depression and anxiety, sex addictions, substance use disorders, and memory problems (Bostwick & Bucci, 2008; Sniewski et al., 2018; Wood, 2011). Considering the increase in addictive habits and behaviors among addicts of pornography, recognizing these issues is important for scholars in understanding pornography consumption, particularly among children.

Overall, the increased accessibility of online pornography has resulted in children becoming increasingly exposed to the material with scholars sharing varying perspectives about the issue. The range of ethical perspectives on porn makes it a difficult topic to navigate, demonstrating that the issue should be handled with respect but also an understanding of potential negative consequences. Because pornography consumption can have negative consequences for children, parents should talk to their children about it. Thus, in order to understand how parents are effectively and ineffectively talking with their kids about pornography, the next section considers the challenges parents experience with taboo topics, including sex and pornography.

Taboo Topics: Barriers to Communication

With an understanding of what pornography is and how accessible it is for children to view, it is important to also understand how porn functions as a taboo topic within interpersonal and family communication contexts. According to Baxter and Wilmot (1985), in interpersonal relationships, individuals often encounter taboo topics, or topics that one or more individuals in a relationship perceive as "off limits" to discuss (p. 254). Although examples from their study include talking about relationships, sex, religion, and privacy (Baxter & Wilmot, 1985), this list

16

is not exhaustive. Scholars have also identified pornography, abortion, obscene language, sexual orientation, discussion of family problems, alcohol and substance abuse, as well as academic expectations as taboo topics (Evans et al., 2000; Middleton et al., 2017; Pariera & Turner, 2020). The parent-child relationship is an interpersonal relationship in which one or both individuals may perceive the discussion of porn as "off limits." Given its taboo nature, exploring how pornography is perceived by parents and children is important for understanding how families talk about it.

According to family communication scholars, parents struggle to talk with their children about taboo topics because of their uncomfortable nature and their potential to promote risky behavior (Byrne & Lee, 2011; Grossman et al., 2018; Holman & Koenig Kellas, 2018; Keating et al., 2013). Particularly during their children's teenage years, parents report having to navigate difficult conversations with their adolescents about topics like sex, alcohol, and substance abuse (Guerrero & Afifi, 1995). Many parents report negative experiences with their kids regarding these issues because of poor communication. For example, Middleton et al. (2017) found that when parents discover alcohol and substance abuse among their adolescents, they fail to respond calmly and effectively, often implementing direct and forceful approaches with their children that strain those relationships. Although scholars agree that parents possess the communicative power and capacity to shape the outcomes of these difficult topics in constructive ways (Forward et al., 2008; Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006; Schrodt & Shimkowski, 2017), these issues still elicit challenges because of their uncomfortable nature and their ability to promote risky behavior among adolescents.

The developmental period of adolescence also complicates conversations between parents and children. The need for autonomy increases among teenagers between middle school

and high school (Allen et al., 1990; Fuligni & Tsai, 2015; Williams & Thurlow, 2005). During

that period, parents struggle to navigate difficult conversations not just about alcohol but about

issues of sex and sexuality (Grossman et al., 2018; Noller, 1994). In addition to puberty and

changes in the brain (Steinberg, 2005), adolescents during their teenage years are "conscious of

the *power differential* between themselves and adults" (Williams & Thurlow, 2005, pp. 229-230),

making conversations about taboo topics more challenging for parents to navigate. Although

some of these topics may be known to the whole family (e.g., alcohol or substance abuse), others

may be kept secret to one or more individuals (e.g., issues of sex and behavior) (Vangelisti,

1994). The hidden nature of pornography or sex can create communication barriers in parent-

child relationships. Considering that sex is a taboo topic and parent-child conversations about sex

are a topic of interest among family communication scholars, the following section explores

parent-child communication about sex in greater detail.

Parent-Child Communication about Sex

Many parents express feeling uneasy when addressing the issue of sex with their kids.

Both parents and adolescents report experiencing fear and uncomfortableness surrounding the

issue. Parents report feeling unprepared to discuss the issue with their kids and young people

report experiencing fear over what their parents may say in those conversations (Grossman et al.,

2018; Keating et al., 2013). Despite these feelings of discomfort, research suggests that parents

who seek out information about the issue and actively present themselves to their children in a

conversational manner report helping their children avoid risky sexual behavior (Afifi et al.,

2008; Holman & Koenig Kellas, 2018). Children experience higher levels of physical, mental,

and emotional health when their parents display care and understanding in their conversations

together about sex (Askelson et al., 2012; Henry, 1994; Holman & Koenig Kellas, 2018; Jackson

et al., 1998). The findings of these studies suggest that healthy parent-child communication about taboo topics regarding sex and sexuality have implications for physical, mental, and emotional health.

Holman and Koenig Kellas (2018) recently conducted a qualitative-narrative study examining the conversations young adults report having with their parents about sex. They examined memorable conversations (i.e., conversations young adults had with their parents that they easily remembered as unique and/or worthwhile) and preferred conversations (i.e., conversations young adults wish had occurred or had been handled differently by their parents). In their findings, Holman and Koenig Kellas (2018) discovered that parents tend to avoid conversations about sex because they are afraid they do not have enough knowledge about sexual behavior. Nevertheless, when they chose to engage their children in the conversation by prioritizing issues of safety (i.e., how to protect yourself from health risks like sexually transmitted diseases), their adolescents took necessary risk-preventing steps to implement what their parents talked about. Moreover, when parents had a comprehensive conversation with their kids and showed little fear in talking about the issue, adolescents reported appreciation of their parents for taking the initiative to do so. If anything, their findings suggest that adolescents want their parents to talk to them about sex.

Although many parents experience discomfort when talking about sex with their children, when they engage in information seeking about the issue and speak conversationally with their children about it, children experience higher levels of physical, emotional, and mental health. Moreover, if parents prioritize issues of safety in conversations about sex, their children often implement necessary risk-preventing steps for their sexual health. Research shows that parents possess the communicative capacity to positively shape uncomfortable conversations about taboo

topics. Since pornography shares many similarities with the theme of sex, the following section

explores what communication scholars have found concerning parent-child communication

about pornography and the current research gaps that exist.

Parent-Child Communication about Pornography

Scholars recognize that parents possess the relational and influential status to engage their

children about the pervasiveness of online pornography through open communication and active

mediation of online material (Byrne, et al., 2014; Hertlein, 2012). Although negative stigma from

religious and social groups as well as poor parent-child communication stifle children from

talking with their parents about porn (El-Shaieb & Wurtele, 2009; Grubbs et al., 2015; Pariera,

2016; Stone, 2012; Zurcher, 2019), research shows that openness in family communication

regarding pornography strengthens those conversations (Byrne & Lee, 2011). Open parent-child

communication refers to a freedom in "disclosing or discussing thoughts, feelings, or viewpoints

about the self, others, or events" (Dailey, 2006, p. 435). Adolescents are more likely to share

information if they perceive their parents as "responsive and accepting," not "rejecting and

judgmental" (Dailey, 2006, p. 435). In other words, young adults tend to open up more with their

parents about pornography when they perceive their parents as receptive in their communication.

Research shows that in addition to open communication, active parental mediation of

online material influences how children deal with online material, including pornography. Active

mediation refers to "parent-child discussion of the media or media content that is intended to

impact how and the extent to which children are influenced by media exposure" (Rasmussen,

2013, p. 384). Byrne and Lee (2011) found that parents who engaged their children in household

prevention strategies (i.e., engaging in "co-viewing" of online material and initiating "critical

discussions" of the material) (p. 91) with an open communication posture reported their children

20

being less resistant to those strategies. Regarding pornography specifically, Rasmussen et al. (2015) found that when parents actively talk with their adolescents about porn, their children report having less positive attitudes towards it and tend to view the material less. Some parents do not mediate their children's technology use until they sense their children are watching the material or beginning to display negative attitudes or behaviors (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008; Nathanson, 2002). This can be problematic because parents who avoid talking about the issue until their child has already watched it can strain the parent-child relationship. Even if parents do have a conversation about porn with their kids before they are exposed to it, scholars have found that some parents do not speak with their children about the issue due to its sensitive nature and the potential for it to disrupt family functioning and relational quality (Zurcher, 2017). Overall, active mediation complemented by open communication plays an important role in influencing how children interact with pornography and online material in general.

Scholars recognize that parents often avoid conversations with their children about pornography because of fear and judgement. Zurcher (2017) found that parents who discovered their children had viewed pornography were filled with fear and embarrassment and felt hesitant, uncomfortable, and anxious. In addition to being reactive in their responses, parents reported the conversations with their kids being emotionally charged and unproductive, resulting in negative experiences for both them and their kids. Zurcher (2019) also found that parents were hesitant to talk to their children about porn because of their fears of how others would view their family. Fear of judgment from the community and people within the family "perpetuate closed family communication patterns" (Zurcher, 2019, p. 526) and dissuade parents from engaging in conversations with their children about pornography. Overall, these studies show that some

parents experience fear, pressure, and discomfort when addressing the issue of porn with their children.

The majority of studies reviewed to this point examine how parents experience conversations about porn with their children. However, underrepresented in the literature are children's stories about these conversations. Understanding the perceptions of children in these conversations is important because the perspectives of children may differ from the perspectives of their parents. Additionally, these potential differences in perspectives may influence how parents and children interact with one another and reveal more about how families navigate taboo issues like pornography. It is important for scholars to understand perceptions from both the parent and their children in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of these conversations surrounding pornography. Thus, further research is needed to investigate how children perceive these conversations. In order to explore the child's perspective, the proceeding section explores how and why storytelling (i.e., a narrative framework) provides a helpful lens to better understand parent-child conversations about pornography.

Narrative Framework

The act of sharing stories is an ongoing practice across families, cultures, and nations (Jackl, 2018a). Stories refer to personal accounts given by an individual to another person (Koenig Kellas, 2005). Context, setting, conversation moments, and characters shape stories, and stories elicit themes and values that are important to the narrator (Clair et al., 2016; Clair & Mattson, 2013; Koenig Kellas, 2005). Stories convey holistic experiences that occur at specific places and times (Koenig Kellas, 2005; Trees & Koenig Kellas, 2009). Koenig Kellas (2005) found that family members who share life experiences about difficult circumstances with one another and engage in perspective-taking during those conversations report higher feelings of

"family cohesion, adaptability, satisfaction, and overall family functioning" (p. 385). Trees and Koenig Kellas (2009) also found that when seeking to make sense of difficult topics, parents and children who share their stories and life experiences with one another strengthen their relationships. Because storytelling is an essential part of how people communicate, understand themselves, and relate to those around them (Jackl, 2018b), utilizing a narrative framework offers the present study a unique lens to explore how children talk about difficult topics, particularly pornography, with their parents.

Scholars position storytelling as an act of identification, meaning that as narrators share their stories with people, they begin to make sense of their own lives through the lived experiences they talk about (Koenig Kellas, 2005; Trees & Koenig Kellas, 2009). When individuals share life experiences with friends or family members, they jointly create conversational spaces where people are able to understand one another (Koenig Kellas, 2013). The same applies to how researchers and participants interact together (Clair et al., 2016; Clair & Mattson, 2013; Koenig Kellas, 2005). When research participants share stories with researchers, researchers are better able to understand participants' subjective experiences. Using a narrative lens, storytelling allows the audience to participate in and empathize with the narrator. Whether these stories are categorized as "personal, historical, religious, political, ancestral, and so on" (Clair et al., 2016, p. 482), empathy and reflexivity are essential components of identification and perspective-taking that allow both parties to better understand themselves and the world around them.

A narrative framework offers a helpful lens through which to investigate the voices of emerging adults as they recall conversations with their parents about pornography. This framework affirms that sharing stories allows for a better understanding of the narrator's

personal experiences, not to mention how they communicate and what they experience in the world around them (Gergen & Gergen, 1988). Stories enable people to communicate and share their values, ideas, and life experiences in different ways (Clair et al., 2016; Clair & Mattson, 2013; Koenig Kellas, 2005). Narratives comprise story-like components, including beginnings, ends, characters, story arcs, and settings, all of which provide helpful context and information in understanding someone better. Moreover, issues of identity, well-being, and health comprise many themes that arise through storytelling (Clair et al., 2016; Koenig Kellas, 2005). Overall, listening to someone share their story allows the audience to learn more about the narrator and accumulate life details about the person that otherwise may have not been shared in other contexts. Thinking about the issue of pornography for this study, narrative theory is particularly useful because it offers a space for young adults to share their stories about conversations they had with their parents about the topic. It provides a space for them to make sense of their own lives as well as share what they think and feel about the topic.

Research Questions

Given that stories elicit meaning and understanding about other people, exploring children's stories of their conversations with their parents about pornography would contribute to research in family communication on this topic. Many scholars have explored how parents report conversations going with their children about pornography; however, less research is devoted to understanding the child's perspective of these conversations. Further research is needed to understand the child's perceptions of the conversations with their parents, including what they perceive as positive about those conversations as well as negative. Narrative theory offers a helpful theoretical lens because it allows participants to make sense of their experiences, thoughts, and emotions surrounding the topic.

As research on family communication shows, characteristics of parent-child conversations about pornography like fear, judgement, active mediation, and open communication all impact how parents navigate and perceive these interactions, whether positively or negatively. However, little is known about what characteristics impact the positive or negative perceptions of children in these conversations. Utilizing a narrative framework with young people is important because it provides a unique perspective on pornography, helping scholars further understand parent-child conversations about pornography from the perspective of the child. To better understand the experiences of young people, the following research questions seek to explore what characteristics in parent-child conversations about pornography influence the perceptions children have about those conversations:

RQ1: What characteristics emerge in parent-child conversations about pornography that elicit *positive* perceptions among children about those conversations?

RQ2: What characteristics emerge in parent-child conversations about pornography that elicit *negative* perceptions among children about those conversations?

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

This study explored the stories of young adults about past conversations they had with their parents about pornography. Although family communication scholars have explored how parents perceive these conversations (Rasmussen, 2013; Rasmussen et al., 2015; Zurcher, 2017, 2019), little to no research has sought to understand the perspectives of young adults. Thus, little is known about how young adults perceive these conversations. A narrative methodology provides a unique outlook on these conversations because it enables young adults (i.e., the participants) to explore the depth and breadth of factors that potentially shape their interactions with their parents through storytelling. Thus, by exploring parent-child conversations about pornography through a narrative methodology, the goal is to better understand these conversations from the perspective of young adults. Considering the lack of research in hearing the stories of young adults (Miller-Day et al., 2013), collecting stories from young adults fills current research gaps. In this chapter, I will first state the purpose of this study. Then, I will provide an overview of the study participants and the interview procedures. Finally, I will discuss how the data were analyzed.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this narrative study was to solicit stories from young adults to better understand the conversations they have had with their parents about pornography. As discussed in Chapter 2, pornography is defined as any material that displays nudity or sexual activity, behaviors, or practices that elicit sexual feelings and thoughts. Parent-child communication refers to the conversations parents and their children have, and this study focused specifically on parent-child communication about pornography. Finally, stories refer to the personal accounts of

participants recalling how their conversation went with their parents about pornography. This study focused on stories told by young adults about past conversations with their parents about pornography. Therefore, by exploring young adult perspectives about these conversations, insight may be gleaned from their stories to equip families for future conversations about the topic as well as further family communication research surrounding this topic.

Approach to Inquiry

For the purpose of this research, I approached the study with an interpretive lens. I sought to value and understand the individual voices and stories of the participants. Communication scholars committed to interpretive work value the "native's point of view" (Braithwaite & Schrodt, 2015, p. 9), seeking to value and understand the individual realities of each participant. Although I do not reject objective realities, I recognize that individuals vary in personal experiences. Depending on context, people, and other external or internal factors, one participant may interpret the same experience as another participant in different ways, and vice versa. From an interpretive lens, each of these stories and experiences should be taken as they are.

Utilizing an interpretive lens was important for conducting this study because it complemented the narrative methodology. Interpretive work seeks to understand the subjective position of each participant (Braithwaite & Schrodt, 2015, p. 9), and I reached this understanding by hearing participants' individual stories and reporting them as they are. By utilizing an interpretive lens in my study, I prioritized each participant's story as unique and special, allowing for rich analysis and thematic understanding to emerge. In the data analysis section, I will expand more on how this allowed for thematic understanding to emerge. Before discussing the data analysis section, I will explain how I assessed my research role and bias for this study as well as cover an overview of the study participants and data collection.

Assessing Researcher's Role and Bias

As the principal researcher of this study, I collected and analyzed the data. I recruited, consented, and interviewed all the participants. I also recorded, transcribed, coded, analyzed, and made meaning of each of the interviews. In other words, as the researcher, I fully immersed myself in the data collection and analysis process.

I acknowledge that I hold a biased view of pornography. The notion that pornography often sustains unhealthy views of women, sex, and relationships (Flood, 2009; Hertlein, 2012; Rasmussen et al., 2015; Whisnant, 2016) resonates with me. I agree with many public health scholars, psychologists, and communication researchers that pornography is a public health issue that impacts mental health and personal well-being (Cooper et al., 2000; Sniewski et al., 2018; Weiss, 2012). Acknowledging and taking steps to check this bias are necessary and important because interpretive work seeks to allow participant stories and themes to emerge naturally without external tampering. As such, I utilized two of Lincoln and Guba's (1985) strategies to assess and manage bias in the data analysis: member checking and audit trail. I will elaborate on these strategies in the data analysis section.

Participants

Participants ($N = 18$) included a convenience sample of undergraduate students enrolled in communication classes at a large, public university in the Midwestern United States who received extra credit for their participation. The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 25 years old ($M = 20.17$, $SD = 1.74$). The sample comprised slightly more females ($n = 10$) than males ($n = 8$). A majority ($n = 12$) of participants self-identified as white/Caucasian, two participants self-identified as Black/African American, two participants self-identified as Hispanic/French, and

two participants self-identified as Asian/Indian. The following table provides a list of all

participants (pseudonyms used instead of real names) and their age and gender.

Table 1. Participants

Participant Pseudonym	Age	Gender
Allen	23	Male
Amy	21	Female
Bella	21	Female
Caleb	25	Male
Ellen	19	Female
Emily	19	Female
Eric	22	Male
James	18	Male
Katie	18	Female
Kayla	20	Female
Kyle	21	Male
Laura	18	Female
Lilly	19	Female
Logan	18	Male
Lucy	18	Female
Ryan	21	Male
Sophia	21	Female
Will	19	Male

To be eligible for the study, participants had to be (a) 18 to 25 years old, (b) able to recall

a conversation or brief encounter they had about pornography with their parents, and (c)

comfortable sharing their story about that experience. In addition to pornography being used

most by 18- to 25-year-olds (Buzzell, 2005), the reason for selecting participants from this age

range is because 18- to 25-year-olds experience greater autonomy from their parents during this

time (Cullaty, 2011), making them more likely to open up about experiences they have had with

their parents. Factors like college or alternative life experiences after high school also provide

18- to 25-year-olds with spaces outside of the home to process their lives through peer-to-peer

interactions, classes, and jobs (Kins et al., 2009). This age range also allows young people to

more easily reflect on recent interactions they had with their parents about pornography, even if they occurred several years prior.

Participant Recruitment

Before recruitment began, this study was submitted to and approved by the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) during the Fall 2020 semester. Upon receiving approval, a study abstract, description, and eligibility requirements were uploaded to the research participation system of the university's communication department to recruit participants (see Appendix A). Individual timeslots were created to allow interested and eligible participants to sign up voluntarily and anonymously for a 30- to 60-minute phone interview.

Once participants signed up to participate in the study, I sent a confirmation email to each participant to (1) confirm their appointment time, (2) ask for email verification that they meet the study criteria, and (3) obtain their phone number for the phone interview (see Appendix B). I also attached an IRB consent form for the participant to look over before the interview (see Appendix C). To ensure participant responsiveness, I mentioned in the email that if I did not receive a response before the interview time, the interview would be canceled and they would need to reschedule. Once the participant replied verifying their eligibility for the study and providing their phone number, I proceeded with the phone interview on the day and time at which they signed up. Twenty-three participants signed up to participate in the study. Of these 23 individuals, two canceled their appointments, three were no-shows, and the remaining 18 were eligible and consented to participate in the study.

At the beginning of each interview, participants were first asked if they had any questions about the consent form and time was allotted to answer those questions. Once any questions were answered, participants indicated their consent to participate in and be recorded for the study at

the beginning of the interview by audibly answering "yes" to two questions: (1) "Do you consent to being recorded for this study?" and (2) "Do you consent to the material mentioned in the consent form?" Each of the 18 participants provided their verbal consent to these two questions. After receiving verbal consent, I provided a brief summary of the study to give additional context for the interview before proceeding with the questions prescribed in the interview script (see Appendix D). After completing the interview, participants received 1% extra credit for the communication course in which they were enrolled.

Interview Procedures & Data Saturation

Interviews took place over a three-month period, from late November 2020 to late February 2021. I conducted each interview via phone from a private location, which ensured that no one else could hear the interviews. Participants were also asked to engage in the interview from a private location of their choosing. Each interview was recorded using a Sony IC Recorder device.

As indicated above, I conducted 18 interviews for the present study. Polkinghorne (1989) recommends conducting between five to 25 interviews in order to reach data saturation. Data saturation occurs when no new themes arise from the collected data sample (Saunders et al., 2018). Initially, I aimed to conduct at least 10 interviews to assess when data saturation was reached. Following recommendations by Lincoln and Guba (1985), I conducted an audit trail to record my thoughts and analyses of the interviews as I conducted them, thereby assisting with data saturation assessment. After reviewing my notes and observations, I concluded by the ninth interview that five major themes had arisen from the data and no new themes emerged. Verification of data saturation is documented in the audit trail. To further verify these observations, I followed Lincoln and Guba's (1985) recommendation to confirm data saturation

by doubling the initial sample size, which involved conducting an additional nine interviews for a final sample of 18. After conducting the final interview, I made observational notes that the data collection process felt complete and ready for further analysis. After conducting 18 interviews, I can confirm that data saturation was reached after the first nine interviews.

Data Collection

This study utilized a qualitative research design, specifically one grounded in narrative. I conducted 18 semi-structured phone interviews with participants to elicit stories about conversations they had with their parents about pornography. All interviews were conducted over the phone (1) because of the COVID-19 pandemic and (2) to ensure participant anonymity (i.e., I do not know what they look like).

Utilizing a qualitative narrative design allowed me to better understand the stories young adults shared about conversations they had with their parents about pornography, specifically recalling moments, experiences, emotions, and thoughts they had during those conversations. Moreover, a narrative methodology allowed me to understand (1) the lived experiences of the participants (Clair et al., 2016), (2) how the participants relate to other important people in their lives (Koenig Kellas, 2013), and (3) how to engage in empathy and perspective-taking with the participants (Clair et al., 2016). This method provided for a holistic understanding of the conversations that children had with their parents about pornography, allowing for the collection of rich data.

Narratives were elicited through semi-structured interviews that utilized open-ended questions. I utilized a semi-structured interview approach, which allowed me to prepare questions beforehand (e.g., "Tell me about the conversation you had with your parents" or "Tell me about the moments leading up to your conversation") but also provided me with some

32

freedom to ask follow-up questions during the interview (e.g., "You mentioned X. Can you tell

me more about that?"). To assess the specific stories participants shared about conversations they

had with their parents about pornography, I combined narrative interviewing and traditional

interviewing in a semi-structured interview process. Narrative interviewing involves participants

sharing a detailed story about their experience while the researcher listens and interjects very

little (Riessman, 2008). Traditional interviewing involves the researcher asking follow-up

questions to specific details that the participant mentions in the story (Weiss, 1994). This two-

fold process allows the participants to narrate for a significant portion of the interview and

simultaneously allows for follow-up conversations to emerge, resembling that of a

conversation—not an interview—and feeling less static.

During the interview process, I utilized my initial script, which was reviewed and revised

after the first few interviews to strengthen the flow of the interview as well as ensure consistency

in the questions asked of participants. Each interview was recorded and the length of interviews

ranged from 20 to 51 minutes ($M = 35.06$ minutes, $SD = 10.14$). After each interview, recordings

were safely uploaded to Box, a cloud-based, secure, and password-protected storage location

approved for the storage of research data by the university's IRB. The recordings were then

deleted from the Sony IC Recorder. To protect participants' identities and personal information

during the data collection process, an encrypted codebook was kept on Box with participant

emails, phone numbers, and information concerning their full names. The codebook outlined

pseudonyms for all participants so that descriptive details about the participants would not be

identifiable during transcription. The codebook also noted the interview date, time, and length.

For transcription, departmental funds were utilized to pay for an online transcription

service called Temi. Temi is a secure online transcription service that provides an initial word-

for-word transcription of recordings uploaded to the platform. Temi offers editing software on its

platform that allows the researcher to review and edit the transcript while simultaneously

listening to the recording. The program provides the first transcript free and each subsequent

transcript at $0.25 a minute. Funds totaling $152.25 were utilized to pay for 17 transcription fees.

Transcripts varied in length from 9 to 17 pages ($M = 11.78$, $SD = 2.68$), resulting in 212 pages of

transcript. After each transcript was finalized, it was downloaded from Temi and uploaded to

Box. Transcripts, recordings, and the codebook were all stored in separate folders to protect

participants' identity and confidentiality.

Data Analysis

Data analysis consisted of a thematic analysis approach. For each interview, I took 10 to

15 minutes to write down initial thoughts, observations, and reactions to the interviews in my

audit trail. This process of keeping an audit trail enabled me to make sense of the interviews in a

reflective manner and allowed me to progressively start labeling themes that I saw emerge in the

data. Then, each interview was transcribed using Temi. As I transcribed the recordings, sections

and quotes were highlighted as I identified important quotes, key words, ideas, and patterns that

arose from the data. After finishing the transcriptions, I listened to each recording again while

reading along with the transcript to (1) ensure transcription accuracy and (2) further look for

arising themes and patterns. This two-step process of transcription and listening to recordings

allowed for an immersive, reflective process. This process followed recommendations for

thematic analysis from Braun and Clarke (2006): (1) "comparing incidents applicable to each

category" (p. 340) and (2) "integrating categories and their properties" (p. 342). In other words,

throughout this process, I first compared portions of each transcript to one another to develop

categories for emerging themes. Second, after identifying initial themes, I integrated themes together to combine them into major and lesser categories.

While transcribing and listening to the recordings, I utilized Owen's (1984) thematic analysis, which assumes that participants' stories elucidate primary themes based on three criteria: recurrence, repetition, and forcefulness. Recurrence occurs when at least two of the stories being collected have "the same thread of meaning" (p. 275), even though different wording might occur. Repetition occurs when "key words or phrases" explicitly repeat the "same wording" (p. 275) over and over again. Finally, forcefulness occurs when participants utilize "vocal inflection, volume, or dramatic pauses" (p. 275) to stress or indicate importance of key concepts or ideas. As I repeatedly listened to the recordings and read the transcripts, I made sense of themes through the recurrence, repetition, and forcefulness of key words, phrases, and ideas that continued to emerge from the data. Throughout this process, I organized my notes in a document to track the emerging themes.

I also utilized Lincoln and Guba's (1985) strategies of member checking and audit trails to check my research bias and ensure accuracy of the analysis. Member checking involves asking participants to participate in assessing the researcher's analysis of the collected narratives at the end of the study. Member checking allows the participant to assess the accuracy of the findings. At the end of each interview, I asked participants if they were interested in allowing me to follow up with them about the accuracy of the analyses. Of the 18 participants, 15 expressed interest in participating in a follow-up assessment. Interested participants were emailed a copy of the research results and asked to reply with thoughts or concerns they may have had about the work (see Appendix E). Three participants provided feedback, expressing that the results were accurate representations of their experiences and that they were grateful for the opportunity to

review the findings. One participant made a few editing suggestions but praised the document as well written and reflective of their experience, expressing interest in reading the final manuscript when it was finished. The other two participants expressed general thanks for being able to read the document and shared that they felt like the results represented their experiences well. This intensive process ensured that (1) as the researcher I remained accountable to the participants during the interviews and data analysis by recounting their stories fairly and (2) my bias did not interfere with the reporting of themes that emerged naturally from the interviews. Through member checking, the findings were confirmed through the perspectives of several participants.

I also kept a personal audit trail while proceeding through interviews with participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). An audit trail assumes that as the researcher collects stories from participants, they remain personally aware of their own feelings and reactions to the stories being shared by the narrators. This awareness is tracked through notetaking and journaling. After each interview, I intentionally spent 10 to 15 minutes debriefing the experience for myself personally and reflecting on the interview process (e.g., what feelings, thoughts, or emotions emerged for me and how those are different and/or similar to the stories shared by the participants). This process of debriefing and reflecting ensured that my bias remained checked in seeking to understand the participants' stories as they are, not through my own interpretation of what I think they are. Ultimately, this process enabled me to prioritize the voices and stories of the participants. The objective of member checking and audit trails was to best understand the participants' stories in a way that was detached from my own biases as much as possible.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

This chapter describes the answers to the two previously stated research questions. The first question asked what characteristics emerge in parent-child conversations about pornography that elicit *positive* perceptions among children about those conversations. The second question asked what characteristics emerge in parent-child conversations about pornography that elicit *negative* perceptions among children about those conversations. After analyzing the recordings and transcripts for recurring and repeating themes, five key characteristics emerged that impact how children positively or negatively perceived conversations about pornography with their parents: (1) *Open/Closed Relationship Climate*, (2) *Discussion-/Lecture-based Conversation Structure*, (3) *Specificity/Ambiguity of Conversation Details*, (4) *Affirmation/Denial of Curiosity*, and (5) *Appropriate/Inappropriate Conversation Context*. The following table highlights these five themes and how each theme corresponds with the two proposed research questions:

Table 2. Emergent Themes for Each Research Question

Themes	Positive Perceptions of Conversation (RQ1)	Negative Perceptions of Conversation (RQ2)
Relationship Climate	Open	Closed
Conversation Structure	Discussion-based	Lecture-based
Conversation Details	Specificity	Ambiguity
Curiosity of Child	Parental Affirmation	Parental Denial
Conversation Context	Appropriate	Inappropriate

To understand each theme, the following sections describe each theme by providing definitions, examples, and quotations from participants. All names of participants mentioned in this section are pseudonyms and not the real names of participants.

Relationship Climate

The first theme that emerged from the data concerned how open or closed the relationship climate was between participants and their parents. The openness or closedness of the relationship climate influenced how participants perceived their conversations with their parents about pornography. Young adults perceived conversations about porn with their parents positively when they experienced an open relationship climate in the family (RQ1), whereas they perceived conversations about porn negatively when they experienced a closed relationship climate in the family (RQ2). To understand this spectrum of open and closed relationship climates, the following subsections explore (1) how an open relationship climate influenced young adults' positive views of these conversations and (2) how a closed relationship climate influenced young adults' negative views of these conversations.

Open Relationship Climate

An *open relationship climate* refers to a family communication environment in which participants felt free to talk about anything with their parents. Whether it was sports, major life events, or emotions, participants expressed feeling the freedom and comfortability to dialogue with their parents about a variety of topics. One way participants expressed how this relationship climate unfolded for them was spending time together with their parents and building their relationship with them through shared activities, conversations, and life experiences. This

openness through conversations and activities resulted in participants perceiving conversations

with their parents about pornography more positively.

Lucy recalled feeling comfortable and able to dialogue with her parents about anything,

which exemplifies an open relationship climate. For example, when reflecting on her relationship

with her parents, she described her interactions with her mother and father as follows:

> Talking about my mom, she's probably one of the first people I turn to for
> anything, like asking for advice or telling her major moments of my life. My dad
> was really big growing up in my athletic life, so, he's really a big part of that.
> We're really close because of that. So we talk about everything. I'm a college
> athlete, so that's still a big part of my life. –Lucy, age 20

Lucy experienced the openness of her relationship with her mom by talking about how she could

turn to her mom for advice or tell her mom about major moments in her life. With her father,

Lucy described having an open relationship climate with him when mentioning how she could

talk with him about anything. She experienced that when her father actively participated in her

athletic life and talked with her on a regular basis. This open relationship climate Lucy

experienced with both of her parents later helped her feel comfortable when talking about

pornography with her mom. Lucy described how the first time she witnessed pornography in the

home was on her sister's television. During this moment, Lucy described how her mom was very

open with her and expressed wanting to talk with her about it. Lucy perceived this interaction as

a positive one, connecting her open relationship climate with her parents with the conversation

about pornography with her mom.

Participants also described how an open relationship climate produced positive outcomes

with their parents in conversations and activities, helping strengthen positive perceptions about

conversations with their parents about pornography. For example, Katie described in-depth the

open relationship climate she experienced with her parents and how it built trust and a close bond in her family:

> I don't often find people that are as comfortable around their parents as I am. I would prefer to hang out with my parents rather than hang out with most of my friends to be honest just because my parents obviously know everything about me cuz they raised me. They're both really cool people, like really genuine and, I would say like nontraditional, American family type of dynamic. I never grew up with extended family. It was always just my mom, my dad and my siblings. So, I would say I'm just very close to them and I trust them. There are the occasional arguments with my mom cuz we don't communicate well sometimes. But other than that I would say we have a pretty decent relationship. –Katie, age 18

For Katie, having the relationship climate to talk with her parents about anything enabled her to trust them more and build strong relationships with them. She described the relationship with her parents as comfortable, having a mom and dad who were genuine in their interactions with her and wanted to do activities together. This openness in conversation and shared activities with her parents helped Katie perceive her conversation with her mom about pornography in a positive light. Katie described how she and her mom sat down to talk about pornography in the context of media and music and how their established, open relationship made it feel comfortable and normal to her. Katie described how she experienced trust with her parents, even more so than her friends. This close family bond illustrates how an open relationship climate helps young adults perceive conversations about pornography with their parents in a positive light.

Participants also specified the kind of language their parents used with them to reinforce an open relationship atmosphere, each having positive perceptions about conversations with their parents about pornography. Kayla described how her parents' use of the words, "I love you," meant so much to her and reinforced other messages she heard growing up like, "You got this," "I know you can do it," or "We believe in you." Sophia described that her parents would continually say to her, "Everything happens for a reason," and that this message comforted her

when she did not get an internship she had applied to. Caleb recalled how his mom would encourage him and his sister in his school by saying, "You are geniuses," "You are very smart people," and "You can do it." These kinds of messages all reinforced an open relationship climate. Kayla, Sophia, and Caleb all described having positive perceptions of the conversations they had with their parents about pornography.

Some participants expressed feeling closer to one parent over another and how in their conversation about pornography with a parent, it was with the parent they felt most open with. For example, Logan described his relationship with both of his parents as "very constructive" but highlighted his relationship with his father as "really good" and how "it's just easy to work with him" compared to his mother who he described as more "passive aggressive" yet still "supportive." For example, Logan recounted the following experience with his dad, specifically concerning the topic of pornography:

> Like, he'll be home after work like watching Netflix and like drinking wine or something and my other family will be asleep and we'll just talk about just stuff in general and then [porn] sometimes it'll come up. It's not like super often, but it just comes up. –Logan, age 18

For Logan, this was an example of when he and his father would hang out together more closely than he and his mom, illustrating the closeness of their relationship. It also described how their close relationship allowed for the topic of pornography to come up naturally compared to Logan's interactions with his mother. For Logan, an open relationship climate enabled him to comfortably approach his father about the topic and discuss it openly. Laura described a similar situation as Logan. For Laura, she experienced feeling closer to her mother than her father:

> I guess me and my dad have never really seen eye to eye or been the closest, so I've never really gone to him for anything, you know? I feel like me and my mom's bond is just so tight that I would just go immediately to her for anything. – Laura, age 18

Laura described earlier in the interview how she felt like she could tell her mom anything and how she would often gossip with her about school and friends and loved "going to her and getting her take on whatever is happening." Laura described how this close, open bond with her mother is the reason she chose to eventually initiate a conversation with her mom about pornography.

Overall, participants expressed how an open relationship climate with their parents resulted in them having positive perceptions of the conversations they had with their parents about pornography. Having the freedom to talk about anything with their parents allowed participants to engage with their parents openly about a variety of topics, whether it was sports, major life events, emotions, or even pornography. This open relationship climate also allowed participants to spend time together and build relationships together. All of these factors created a relationship environment where they felt comfortable and open talking with their parents about pornography, perceiving them as positive experiences. This subsection illustrates how an open relationship climate is one characteristic that resulted in participants viewing conversations about pornography with their parents more positively.

Closed Relationship Climate

A *closed relationship climate* refers to a family communication environment where participants expressed feeling reserved and sometimes avoidant in talking with their parents about a variety of topics, but especially about pornography. In other words, the relationship climate felt closed. Participants in this relationship climate described spending less time with their parents and living more detached from their parents. This closed relationship climate in both conversation and family activities resulted in participants perceiving conversations with their parents about pornography more negatively.

Bella described the closed nature of her family relationship climate by talking about how her father stressed strong themes of independence among family members. In one encounter, Bella recalled the following from her father:

> My father's perspective is that, growing up, he taught me as much as he can and he expects that you know the knowledge to manage [your] everyday functions. And it's not really a thing where like my parents feel the need to be in my everyday life on the phone with me, everyday things like that. So very just kind of, "I raised you to be a certain way. I expect you to be this way and you know, I'm here if you need me, but I've got a life as well, and that's that." –Bella, age 21

Bella described that her father's approach to raising her and her siblings was very independent. For Bella, the language of "I'm here if you need me, but I've got a life as well" communicated to her and her siblings that although her father was available if they needed him, he was acting independently from them and they should be independent themselves. Bella did not view this as a negative thing as she already expressed feeling quite independent; however, she described how this impacted her relationship with her father because she did not speak much with him growing up, feeling like her relationship with him was detached. When it came to the issue of pornography, they did not talk about it.

Allen described a similar situation with both of his parents. He explained how his parents' divorce strained the relationship climate between him and his parents, making the climate more reserved. Allen confessed that he often avoided opening up with his parents conversationally and he felt like their relationship climate inhibited dialogue:

> I don't see [my dad] very often, but I do talk to him a lot. I think I sometimes struggle with kind of sharing back and forth and that's probably more uncomfortable, especially when it comes to probably relationships and stuff and asking him about that stuff. I really don't do that. And same with my mom, I don't really do that either. I think it's interesting though that especially with relationships, I think they have their own views on that, partially from what they individually learned from a divorce. And I think then that kind of reflects on me to where I do not want to talk about it or share in that way for the most part. I

mean, we do talk about it, but they have their own opinions on it which are completely different. –Allen, age 23

Allen highlighted the reality of divorce for him and his parents and how this strained his willingness to open up with them about topics like romantic relationships and pornography. He also expressed that the relationship climate with his parents impacted how he and his parents viewed topics like relationships, describing how they each had different views about relationships and pornography. With pornography more specifically, he described how the relational strain with his parents impeded his willingness to open up with them about it in a conversational manner. Bella's and Allen's stories highlighted how a closed relationship climate resulted in participants perceiving conversations with their parents about pornography in a negative light. Due to relational reservations, conversation avoidance, and detachment, many participants experienced a closed relationship climate with their parents, having negative perceptions about these conversations with their parents.

Participants also used specific words and phrases to describe the closed relationship climate they experienced with their parents, perceiving the conversations with their parents about pornography negatively. For example, James described how growing up he did not recall many memorable words that his parents used with him except things like, "Try your best," when referring to school. Kyle recalled how his relationship with his parents was "strained" and how he had "helicopter parents," meaning they were always involved in his life but in ways that restrained his autonomy. Emily recalled how her family relationship climate was "pretty rocky to say the least," describing it as complicated, unhealthy, confusing, and isolating at times. She also described how phrases like, "Figure it out," "Be quiet," or "Go to your room," were common phrases in the house growing up. For James, Kyle, and Emily, the words their parents

communicated to them a closed relationship climate, causing them to perceive conversations with their parents about pornography in a negative light.

Ryan described how although he loved his family and enjoyed spending time with his father and siblings, his parents were "pretty strict with rules and stuff." Ryan spoke for many participants when he premised how his conversation about pornography with his parents "wasn't a regular conversation that maybe another family would have." Emily described the uncertainty she felt when her mother did not know how to handle the topic of pornography, describing it as something like, "Don't talk about it, but we're going to talk about it all the time cuz it's there, so it's very important, but you need to pretend that it's not." In each of these experiences, participants expressed the nature of how a closed relationship climate impeded conversation openness and resulted in participant reservation and avoidance with their parents, particularly about pornography. The reservation and avoidance participants experienced caused them to view conversations with their parents about porn negatively.

Overall, participants expressed how a closed relationship climate with their parents resulted in them having negative perceptions of the conversations they had with their parents about pornography. Experiencing reservation, avoidance, and detachment with their parents, participants described a closed relationship climate that inhibited conversation and resulted in less family interactions. This subsection illustrates how a closed relationship climate is one characteristic that resulted in participants viewing conversations about pornography with their parents more *negatively*. Having explored the first theme of relationship climate in its spectrum from open to closed, the next section details the second theme, conversation structure, and how it also impacted children's perceptions of their conversations with their parents about pornography.

Conversation Structure

The second theme that emerged from the data involved the structure of the conversations between parents and participants about pornography, specifically in terms of the extent to which they were discussion-based or lecture-based. These two conversation types shaped young adults' perceptions of the conversations with their parents about pornography. Discussion-based conversations were perceived more positively (RQ1) and lecture-based conversations were perceived more negatively (RQ2). This theme is distinct from relationship climate because it explores the reciprocity (or lack thereof) of conversations between parents and children about pornography. Whereas relationship climate describes the general tenor of the entire relationship parents and children experience together, conversation structure pertains to the specific level of the conversation parents and children have regarding pornography. At the level of the conversation, the structure may be discussion-based or lecture-based. Although an open/closed climate may contribute to a discussion/lecture conversation structure, the distinction is found in how the conversations are structured.

The following two subsections explore conversation structure in its two forms: discussion-based conversation structure and lecture-based conversation structure. The first subsection explores the discussion-based conversation structure, which resulted in participants perceiving conversations with their parents about pornography in a positive light. The second subsection explores the lecture-based conversation structure, which resulted in participants perceiving conversations with their parents about pornography in a negative light.

Discussion-based Conversation Structure

A *discussion-based conversation structure* refers to a collaborative, two-way interaction between both the participant and their parents about pornography. In these discussion formats,

parents typically asked more open-ended questions and sought the perspective of the young adult, making the interaction feel mutual, comfortable, and back-and-forth. Young adults who experienced this conversation type described how their parents valued their opinion and treated them as adults. In other words, a discussion-based conversation structure made the child feel respected and as though their parents valued their opinion. This discussion-based structure is similar to an open relationship climate because it highlights the openness of the relationship between parents and children. However, this theme is different because a discussion-based conversation focuses on the structure of the specific interaction episode and how that specific structure made the child feel, causing young adults to perceive conversations with their parents about pornography in a positive manner.

To illustrate the structure of a discussion-based conversation and how participants felt like their perspectives mattered with their parents, Sophia used the language of "discussion" versus "lecture" when recalling the conversation she had with her parents about pornography:

> [My parents] weren't really like, "This is bad. Don't ever watch porn. Don't ever do this. Don't ever…" They were more…it wasn't really a lecture. It was more of a discussion. –Sophia, age 21

Sophia described this discussion-based conversation as one where her parents did not lecture her about the issue but rather invited her into a back-and-forth conversation about the issue. Later in the interview, Sophia described how her parents "gave it to me straight" but she did not experience any "censoring" while they spoke with her, saying, "I really appreciated that." The language of censorship was important to Sophia, showing that a discussion-based conversation structure allowed for her to feel heard and to express her perspective about the issue. Katie also expressed a similar experience with her parents:

> Whenever I mentioned something or whenever [my parents] think of something, they don't censor it or feel like they're too adult for me to have that conversation

with me, which, you know, I've always appreciated. Like, I never felt like my parents hid anything from me because of that reason. –Katie, age 18

Katie respected her parents for letting her feel like she had a place in the conversation to talk with them about pornography, recalling it as a positive experience. For Katie, this discussion-based structure enabled her to dialogue with her parents about the issue as if it were a back-and-forth interaction.

In addition to not experiencing censorship in a discussion-based conversation structure, participants described having parents who asked them questions to engage them about the issue. After one of her friends had nudes leak to the public, Laura went to her mother to talk about the situation. She described the interaction as follows:

At that point, [my mom] was kind of like, "You see what could happen? How would you feel if this was you?" And I was like, "I would be devastated…crushed." I think that's kind of the route she went. –Laura, age 18

In Laura's situation, her mom asked several questions to help Laura think critically about the situation of her friend. By asking questions, Laura's mom created the space for reciprocity between the two of them, allowing for a mutual and back-and-forth interaction that felt like a discussion. Laura described the interaction as a positive one and mentioned experiencing gratitude toward her mom for asking her questions and giving her the space to also talk about the issue with her. In this interaction, Laura described the conversation structure as one that went back and forth, very much like a discussion.

Lucy also described a situation where questions were utilized by her mom in helping them talk about the issue of pornography. Lucy described a situation where, as a little girl, she had accidentally stumbled across pornography on her sister's television and then the following conversation took place:

It was definitely like a learning moment, like a lesson, but it was very calm. It was talked about obviously and it was like, "Are you okay? Are we okay?" kind of thing. –Lucy, age 20

Although Lucy described the experience as a learning moment, she did not speak of it in a negative light. Quite the contrary, she felt like her mom allowed the conversation to be more discussion-based through the questions she asked. Lucy experienced both an open relationship climate and a discussion-based conversation structure with her mother. Lucy mentioned how her mother was very open with her about the issue of pornography and utilized open-ended questions to facilitate a discussion-based structure, helping Lucy perceive this interaction positively.

A discussion-based conversation structure also enabled the child to ask questions of their parents concerning the issue of pornography as well as voice their concerns about the issue. For example, Kayla described a situation in which her father hired a man from their small community who had a previous track record as a sex offender. The man had gone to prison, served his term, and then sought work in the local community but ended up back in prison because he confessed in court to watching pornography. Kayla explained that her father hired him to give him a second chance. When Kayla found out about this, she described the following conversation between them:

When we talked about it at dinner, I was like, "Say that one more time: you did what? You hired this man? How could you do that?" And my dad's like, "If I wouldn't have given him a second chance, who would have?" We live in a very small town. We've got like a thousand people. Like, [this man's] opportunities aren't very diverse […] and because of his financial background he couldn't afford the gas on his car […] And my dad's like, "So I did what I felt I needed to do to help him." So, I gained more respect [for my dad]. I was like, "Okay, okay."—Kayla, age 20

Kayla engaged in a discussion with her father about the man her father hired because she wanted to know why he would hire such a person. During the interaction, the issue of pornography came up several times because the hired man had ended up in prison because of his addiction. In

seeking to understand the situation with her father, Kayla explained how because her dad prioritized a discussion-based conversation structure, she was able to ask him questions about their family situation and find answers to her questions. She described how in having the space to go back-and-forth with her father about the issue, he listened to her and gave her the space to talk freely during the conversation. This discussion-based structure left a positive impression on Kayla in how this conversation went. She later described how this made her feel more comfortable about the topic of pornography and that she felt heard by her dad through their interaction. Caleb also described a similar scenario where he was talking with his mother and sister about the issue of pornography together in their living room. They would have weekly conversations about topics that they wanted to talk about and one day the topic shifted to pornography. In this interaction, Caleb described how he talked with his mom about previous interactions he had with pornography and how their discussion-based conversation structure strengthened their conversation about the issue:

> [My mom] asked me, "Hey, do you still watch pornography?" And I told her, "Okay, sometimes. I'm dealing with it, but it's not all the time." I was kind of more open with my sister because she's younger [and] she doesn't judge me so to speak. But yeah, you know, "Yeah, I sometimes [do], but I'm trying to live with it. I know that it's wrong, but it's not that easy. It's not that I don't want to do it and I stop watching it and that's it. No…" It was kind of a tough conversation every time that the addiction problem comes up. I go with quick comments and she goes with quick comments about, "It's an addiction. Why do people do that?" And I tell her, "Okay mom, it's not easy, remember. It's not easy." – Caleb, age 25

Despite the difficulty of navigating conversations about issues of addiction and pornography with his mother, Caleb felt satisfied with discussing the issue with his mom back and forth. Although he described the scenario as more intense, Caleb felt like their discussion format enabled him to talk about the issue with his mom more openly and comfortably. Caleb recalled the experience as a positive one, saying "I'm happy that I can be open with [my mom] and that

we had the chance to talk about it." For Caleb, the intensity of the conversation was an indicator of how his opinions were valued by his mother and that they could discuss issues like pornography together in a mutual manner.

Overall, participants who experienced a discussion-based conversation structure with their parents about pornography expressed having positive perceptions about those conversations. A collaborative, two-way interaction between the parent and child reinforced those positive perceptions, particularly when parents asked open-ended questions and sought the perspective of their children. A discussion-based structure made the conversations feel comfortable and back-and-forth. Whereas open relationship climate is about openness at the level of the relationship as a whole, a discussion-based conversation structure touches on openness at the level of the specific interaction episode. The next subsection explores the opposite of a discussion-based structure, a lecture-based conversation structure that brought about negative perceptions from young adults about these conversations.

Lecture-based Conversation Structure

A *lecture-based conversation structure* refers to a less collaborative, one-way interaction between the child and their parent about pornography. In these lecture conversation formats, parents either did not ask any questions or asked close-ended questions to their children and tended to talk more and listen less. Even if they did ask questions, parents were less invitational and more confrontational in their conversation structure. Participants in these conversation situations reported not feeling heard and described feeling uncomfortable. In other words, the conversation felt like a lecture. This lecture-based conversation structure resulted in participants perceiving the conversations more negatively.

James provided an example of a lecture-based conversation structure when his father discovered that he had been looking at pornography. His dad took him into a private room and began talking with him, not allowing James to speak or interject in the conversation:

> I felt extremely uncomfortable. I didn't know what to do while I was sitting there. He just kept on talking. I didn't really talk much in that scenario. And right after, we just pretended like nothing happened. –James, age 18

The nature of the discomfort for James was not just the issue itself but not being able to speak up or talk in the conversation. Kyle described a similar situation after he and his brother had looked up some pornography on the internet. He described how their mom found out while they were at school, resulting in the following situation:

> I remember I was at the bus stop or something like that cuz I would take the bus home and, like, my mom actually drove to school that day and picked me and my brother up and was like, "Nah, like we're gonna like talk about this" or whatever. And then she like gave us a talk about porn, like, then and there in the car ride back. She said, "You shouldn't be looking stuff like that up." –Kyle, age 21

Kyle described how his mother gave them a "talk," in which she told them a lot of information but they felt like they could not discuss the issue with her. Kyle explained that "she wasn't happy" and that he felt "confused" by the entire interaction. Both interactions for James and Kyle illustrate that a lecture-based conversation structure left them feeling uncomfortable and talked down to, inhibiting back-and-forth dialogue.

In addition to not feeling heard, many participants who experienced a lecture-based conversation structure expressed how they wished their parents had asked them more open-ended questions about the issue. Emily described how her mom regularly sat both her and her brother down at the dinner table and would tell them what they needed to know about pornography. The issue was prevalent in their home because their father was a recovering sex addict who was regularly caught watching porn. Emily expressed the following:

> I really would have preferred for there to be so many more questions asked of me to figure out like what I'd actually seen, what I had thought and experienced about it. Like essentially the question you're asking me… rather than sitting an immature kid down and giving them a spiel. I don't think they can really digest that. I think to talk to a kid about this, you need to know where they're at and what they already understand about the subject matter, and then you take it from there. And that was just never done, predominantly I think in my case because my mom didn't really want to know how much we already knew about it because then it would make her feel bad. –Emily, age 19

As Emily recalled, she felt like her mom did not communicate any interest in wanting to know how Emily felt or thought about the topic. Her mother used a lecture structure, which stifled conversations and made Emily and her brother feel uncomfortable and confused. To remedy this, Emily wished her mother would have asked more questions to invite back-and-forth dialogue about the issue.

Concerning the nature of close-ended questions, Ryan recalled his experience when his mother found out he had watched porn. He described how he had looked up what pornography was on his family's iPad because he was curious about the subject matter. His mom found out, brought him home from school, and sat him down for a five-minute conversation that he described as very uncomfortable. At first, she asked him, "Do you want to talk to me about what was on the iPad the other night or what you were looking up?" but Ryan described how the question made him feel like he was in trouble and guilty. It was a close-ended question in which he felt like he could not open up with his mom about it. She kept pressing with more questions, eventually leading to the following situation:

> She was like, "What else? What else are you doing?" She was like, "Are you… are you masturbating?" And I thought, "I don't know what that meant." Like, "What do you… what is that, mom?" I really didn't cuz at the time I was like looking all this stuff up like porn and masturbation like, "What is this stuff?" So she was like, "You better not be doing other stuff." That was like a five-minute conversation but kind of like yelling at me. So I was like, "Alright, I'm done. I'm never looking this stuff up again." –Ryan, age 21

In the end, Ryan described the interaction as a five-minute lecture in which he felt very uncomfortable. His mom asked many close-ended questions, inhibiting dialogue and preventing Ryan from expressing himself. He felt like he could not express to his mom his thoughts or feelings about the subject matter because she kept talking and asking close-ended questions.

Overall, participants who experienced a lecture-based conversation structure with their parents about pornography expressed having negative perceptions about those conversations. A less collaborative, one-way interaction where parents asked close-ended questions elicited negative perceptions of these interactions. Participants felt like these conversations were less invitational and more confrontational in nature. This conversation format inhibited back-and-forth dialogue and resembled the structure of a lecture. The lecture-based conversation structure resulted in negative perceptions of these conversations. Having explored the first two themes of relationship climate and conversation structure, the next section explores the third theme of conversation details and its impact on young adults' perceptions of conversations with their parents about pornography.

Conversation Details

The third theme that arose from the data pertained to the specificity or ambiguity of details provided in the conversation with parents about pornography. Participants identified how the level of specificity or ambiguity of what was discussed influenced how they perceived these conversations, whether positively or negatively. Participants reported perceiving conversations more positively when their parents provided sufficient information and details about the issue (RQ1), whereas they reported perceiving them more negatively when their parents were more ambiguous with information (RQ2). To illustrate this spectrum of conversation details, from specific to ambiguous, the following subsections explore the theme in its two forms:

conversation specificity and conversation ambiguity. The first subsection explores conversation specificity, which resulted in participants perceiving conversations with their parents about pornography in a positive light. The second subsection explores conversation ambiguity, which resulted in participants perceiving conversations with their parents about pornography in a negative light.

Conversation Specificity

Conversation specificity refers to the level of details and information that parents provided in conversations with their children about pornography. Participants who experienced conversation specificity reported having parents who shared about their own personal experiences with pornography or discussed issues of health, safety, and personal responsibility when navigating the material. Participants also described how parents utillized examples and illustrations to help describe their points, regardless of what they were talking about. In other words, the conversations were laden with information and specificity that helped the young adult think more critically about the material. Participants who had parents who prioritized conversation specifics when talking about the issue of pornography described having more *positive* perceptions about those conversations.

Eric described a scenario in which he approached his father about the issue of pornography and how his father gave him advice based on his past experiences. Eric described how he had been experiencing erectile dysfunction because he was watching too much pornography. This made him concerned about his physical health so he approached his dad about the topic and described the experience as a positive one:

> Fortunately, I have parents that are very open and easy to talk to. So I eventually talked to my dad about [my condition]. I thought that [pornography] was part of the problem. I had just never attempted to solve it really or put too much effort

into it, so I approached him, basically spelled out all of that information, and it was him referencing his own personal battles with addiction and how he fought them. […] [It] gave me the inspiration to really stop my exposure to pornography. It really helped. –Eric, age 22

Eric explained that when his father shared about his own personal battles and how he overcame pornography, this resulted in Eric perceiving the conversation as positive and constructive. Although Eric did not describe exactly what his father shared in detail during the interview, he did describe feeling inspired by his father and how his father's focus on issues of health gave Eric the information he needed to deal with his problem. Specifically, Eric's mentioned how his father encouraged him to seek proper medical care for his medical condition of erectile dysfunction and to reduce his porn consumption to help elevate the strain on his eyes. Eric's father chose to disclose important information about his own life with Eric that helped Eric overcome his pornography addiction. All of this helped Eric perceive the conversation with his father positively.

Amy also described similar situations with her parents when they would all talk about pornography. Amy described that her father and mother would often talk about issues of sex, sexuality, and pornography in connection to other issues like relationships in their various church experiences. Amy's parents also talked about issues like sex trafficking in connection to pornography, helping Amy and her sister think critically about the material in order to engage with neighbors and classmates about the material. Amy described some of what her parents said to her on an ongoing basis concerning the issue of pornography:

In our family, we talk a lot about being a nurturer or an explorer, and with [my parents] being teachers, they've really been practitioners of nurturers and just "seeking wholeness," as they like to say. –Amy, age 21

Amy's parents connected the issue of pornography with specific, tangible things Amy and her sister could engage with in conversations with friends and events they attended as a family. Amy

described how when her parents said things "being a nurturer" or "seeking wholeness," these were phrases encouraging them to take what they talked about regarding pornography into other facets of life, such as school and church. For Amy, the content of what her parents chose to speak to her about when talking about pornography helped her view these conversations in a positive light because they were concrete and filled with practical information to help navigate issues at school. Amy respected her parents because they modeled in their actions and conversations what they wanted to communicate to their children. The specifics of their conversations made these conversations positive experiences for Amy.

In addition to parents sharing personal information, one of the topics for which parents provided lots of details was on the issue of safety. The topic of safety brought about specific details, illustrations, and examples in how they talked about pornography. Allen described how when he talked with his father about pornography, his dad talked about the harms of addiction and not letting something control you. "You're addicted to something," Allen recalled his dad saying. Allen recounted a specific moment when his father used the example of UFC fighting to illustrate his point of safety when it came to handling pornography:

> "You probably don't want to watch that much UFC cuz it's the same thing [as] watching porn where it's like you get these like jolts in your brain of excitement and then like an actual relationship that you have could be lessened because of that. […] It's just not healthy." –Allen, age 23 quoting his father

Allen described this example as "a pretty good way of explaining it" and that he appreciated his dad sharing this with him in a lot of detail. The illustration from his father provided details that Allen described as helpful in navigating how he thought about the issue of pornography. Lilly also described a similar situation where she and her mom had a conversation about online safety concerning pornography. The conversation arose when a family cousin had been discovered by

their parents watching too much pornography and had contracted several viruses on their

computer from the Porn Hub website. Lilly described her conversation with her mom as follows:

> I was like, "Mom, like, wow. I really didn't expect that." And she was like, "Yeah, I didn't either." And she's like, "But that just goes to show you like if you don't have [a] conversation with your children, they have to make those decisions and don't understand the repercussions that can come from using a service like Porn Hub and getting viruses from it." –Lilly, age 19

Lilly described how she and her mom talked about the importance of internet safety because of

her cousin's situation. Talking about services like Porn Hub, computer viruses, and the

repercussions of viewing risky online sites helped Lilly process her cousin's situation in greater

detail while also helping her think more critically about the material. Lilly described the

conversation as positive because her mom spoke about the harms of not navigating the internet

safely and potentially contracting computer viruses without proper safety. Although Lilly did not

describe in extensive detail everything her mom shared with her, she did express how her

mother's attention to details helped her navigate the issue. Thus, Eric's father and Lilly's mother

both engaged their children in talking about information pertinent to safety, whether for one's

physical health or one's online safety. Kayla also recalled how her parents discussed with her the

"repercussions of sending nudes," similar to Laura whose mother talked with her about the

devastating possibility of having those photos leaked to the public. Each of these interactions

resulted in positive perceptions among participants about these conversations.

Many participants also recalled having parents who encouraged them to prioritize

responsibility when dealing with and researching the issue of pornography for themselves. Will

described how his parents had a conversation with him and his brother about the repercussions of

posting sexual content online and it having repercussions for work situations and family: "They

basically told my brother and I just going forward to be aware of those things." In other words,

instead of saying, "Don't do it," Will's parents communicated to him and his brother the potential risks of posting sexual material online and how they should take steps of responsibility to navigate this material. Kayla mentioned how her parents talked with her and her brother about the use of social media and being careful in what they posted because of the effects it could have on future jobs and opportunities: "Social media was really the leeway that opened up the door to that conversation [about pornography], especially with my brother being older than I was." For Kayla, the specificity was seen in how her parents talked with her about social media and how her choices online would impact her future career. These specific details for Will and Kayla both helped them perceive these interactions with their parents in a positive light.

Participants also mentioned how after having specific and informed conversations with their parents about pornography, many of them did their own research on the issue. Some saw this as an extension of personal responsibility to be aware of the issue and know what they were consuming, if at all. Some participants mentioned how the issue of sex trafficking and child pornography came up a lot in their research or in conversations with their parents. For example, after having several conversations with her parents about pornography, Amy described how she became more informed about the issue of sex trafficking in greater detail:

> I think at first we were mainly talking a lot about as a family with just like the human trafficking focus and the people who are like… their life is vastly different and then what we would see as like normal life. And then we kind of started delving into more topics of like people whose lives seem normal and look normal and you see them at school every day and you have no idea what's going on actually like in their life like behind closed doors and that kind of thing. – Amy, age 21

For Amy, she and her family talked extensively about the issue of porn because of their passion for raising cultural and social awareness to the bondage and reality of sex trafficking, particularly in the pornography industry. This level of conversation specificity inspired Amy to form her own

opinions about the issue of sex trafficking as well as research the issue for her own understanding:

> Knowing what I know today as a result of these conversations and, again, with my sister, I just… it's just sad. Like, it honestly just breaks my heart. The fact that [pornography] is so widely consumed again and again without being considered, like, the people in pornography, like, that's somebody's brother, somebody's sister, somebody's daughter, somebody's son, somebody's friend. […] It just feels exploitive to me. – Amy, age 21

In the end, Amy's conversations with her parents encouraged her to do her own research on the issue and make her own decisions about it. Katie mentioned a similar situation in that having talked with her parents about pornography, her mom would say that "it would be my choice if I wanted to watch it." Katie felt like her mom gave her sufficient and specific information about pornography to help her make an informed decision about the issue for herself. Again, the overarching factor was that conversation specificity from parents enabled young adults to make responsible, informed decisions for themselves about the issue.

Overall, participants who experienced conversation specificity with their parents reported having more positive perceptions about these conversations with their parents. In these conversations, participants described having parents who went into detail about the issue of pornography by sharing personal experiences about their interactions with pornography as well as discussing the importance of health, safety, and personal responsibility when navigating the material online. Furthermore, participants recalled having parents who utilized examples and illustrations to help describe their points in greater detail, providing specificity that helped them think more critically about the material. Participants who had parents who prioritized conversation specificity about the issue of pornography reported having more positive perceptions about those conversations. The following subsection explores how conversation

ambiguity resulted in participants having negative perceptions of conversations with their parents about pornography.

Conversation Ambiguity

Conversation ambiguity refers to conversations between parents and children about pornography that lacked specific details or guidance about the issue. Participants who experienced conversation ambiguity reported having parents who struggled to know what to say, who jumped to saying, "Don't do it," without providing explanations of why, and/or who indirectly communicated to their children to figure this issue out for themselves without much guidance. Conversation ambiguity also involved situations in which parents spoke in less concrete language and often assumed their children knew more about the topic than they actually did. Participants who had parents who conveyed conversation ambiguity when talking about pornography described having more negative perceptions about those conversations.

For many participants, conversation ambiguity presented itself with parents who struggled to know what to say and assumed that their children knew more about the topic than they did. James described how growing up, his parents never fully explained things when it came to difficult topics like pornography, resulting in a negative experience about the topic:

> As in teaching their kids, I feel like they don't really know too much about what they should teach their kids. It's like they assume we should know [about porn], but a lot of things I just learned on my own. Like, such as the like the birds and the bees, I never had that talk. –James, age 18

For James, the ambiguity of many conversations with his parents was seen in how his parents did not really know much about the topics when they addressed him about them. This ambiguity was witnessed in how James' parents did not know what to say and often assumed James knew more about issues like pornography than he actually did. James explained that he had to do research on

his own to fill in the knowledge gaps because his parents did not provide details or specificity in their interactions. Many participants experienced similar interactions to James.

Participants experienced ambiguity in conversation when parents used less concrete language and vague terminology. James described another situation that illustrated the ambiguity he felt with his mom specifically in talking about sex and sexuality. In this interaction, he described what his mom was saying as he was heading off to college:

> "Oh, you're going off to college" and stuff… "Don't do anything bad." And she's like, "You know what I mean?" And she obviously never said anything but I understood the context because I was getting the HPV vaccine at the time so she's like, "Okay, I'm getting you this vaccine, but like, you know, don't do anything bad." And I'm like, "Okay."

James described the ambiguity of this conversation as one where his mom assumed he knew what she was talking about, but he had to make certain assumptions based off what life experiences had just happened in his life (i.e., he received the HPV vaccine and was getting ready to go off to college). Moreover, he described this interaction as negative because his mom did not speak in concrete language but was vague in what she was referring to. For many participants, the uncertainty in navigating these issues made it difficult for them to have conversations with their parents about difficult topics, especially pornography, because their parents were vague.

Some participants also recalled having parents who addressed them about pornography by saying, "Don't do it," often avoiding defining "it" and leaving the participant guessing about why their parents wanted them to avoid "it." Kyle recalled a situation with his brother where their mom communicated this idea to both of them:

> I feel like when it comes to sexual things, I feel like [my mom] came at it with similar things, like over time [she] kind of loosened up. Like, as I got older, it was like, "Uh, you know [you] shouldn't be doing this or like that with girls or stuff like that." […] Like, she wasn't telling me like incorrect information, […] it was

like, "Stay away from girls. They're like no good," kind of thing, […] [And] if it came to something like drugs, [it] was always like, "Please, please, please don't do drugs. I'll be very sad if you do drugs." –Kyle, age 21

For Kyle, he described his mom's language as vague and categorical as, "Don't do it." This confused Kyle because he later described being in relationships with girls during college and how his mother's language barred future conversations about the issue, whether it was sex, sexuality, or pornography. For many participants, the idea of "Don't do it" was very pervasive, leaving participants confused and having to explore for themselves what they thought about issues pertaining to sex, sexuality, and/or pornography.

Another factor that highlighted conversation ambiguity for participants was when parents indirectly communicated to their children that the children needed to figure this issue out for themselves. Emily described many conversations with her mom about pornography as negative because her mother would not address real world concerns that Emily later researched for herself and wished they had talked about. This made Emily feel like the issue was abstract, broad, and intangible, detached from specific issues in the world around her:

> I think from [my mom], I know it was just very consistently like we are here on earth to bring glory to God, and participating in sinful activities such as pornography is not glorifying to God. That was kind of her logic which is fine, I guess. But I think there's a lot more real-world applications that should actually be brought into the conversation. Like, for example, the human trafficking industry, basically being capitalized by Porn Hub and like just no one talks about it, you know? It's a legitimate business and stuff, like… talk to your kids about that. Don't just sit them down and be like, "You're going to hell because you can find sexual things online," you know? –Emily, age 19

Emily described how she researched the issue for herself and was frustrated that her mom never helped her think in a comprehensive way about the issue of pornography aside

from talking about it from a religious perspective. Her mom would talk about pornography from a religious perspective, but Emily wanted to understand if her mom's beliefs connected to real world struggles that Emily researched for herself about human trafficking and industries like Porn Hub that fuel the pornography industry. Emily expressed that she respects her mother's religious convictions but felt like the conversations they had were incomplete, lacking concrete details of social issues and how to navigate the issue personally. Like many participants in this study, Emily wanted her parents to have a conversation about specific, current issues about pornography. She wanted to navigate the issue of porn with her parents but felt like the conversation was limited by the ambiguous nature her mother conveyed in their conversations. Emily described how the lack of comprehensive engagement surrounding the issue of porn with her parents meant she ultimately had to research the topic for herself.

Ryan provided another helpful example of conversation ambiguity where his parents talked with him about pornography but shared convictions without explaining them to Ryan in greater depth. Ryan described his family as very family-oriented but lacking in regards to talking about difficult topics like porn:

> As a family-oriented family, it wasn't like a regular conversation that maybe another family would have like, you know, like sit down, "Hey, I want to talk to you about, you know, this and that." It was more of like a confronting me and kind of calling me out on it and just also kind of [my mom] saying like, "Hey, you know, I'm disappointed in you— me and your dad are disappointed and now we don't want to talk to you." And also saying like, "Hey, that's all garbage, that's all fake stuff, porn..." –Ryan, age 21

In Ryan's situation, his parents shared their convictions about the topic but failed to explain why they believe what they believe and why they were disappointed in him when he was caught watching pornography. Ryan expressed how he did not want to disappoint

his parents, but not having specifics about how or why they were disappointed in him confused him. The conversation lacked necessary details to help him navigate the issue and how his parents felt and thought about him.

Overall, participants who experienced conversation ambiguity with their parents reported having more *negative* perceptions about these conversations. In these experiences, participants perceived their parents as struggling to know what to say. Parents quickly jumped to saying things like, "Don't do it," and often provided explanations without explaining why. Parents also communicated indirectly with their children to figure this issue out for themselves, often without guidance and direction. Parents spoke with less concrete language and often assumed their children knew more about the topic than they actually did. Participants who had parents who conveyed conversation ambiguity when talking about pornography described having more negative perceptions about those conversations. Having now assessed relationship climate, conversation structure, and conversation details, the next section explores the fourth theme of child curiosity and how parental affirmation or denial of child curiosity impacted how participants perceived these conversations.

Child Curiosity

The fourth theme that arose in the data was the extent to which parents affirmed or denied the curiosity of their children in navigating conversations about pornography. Participants reported having more positive experiences when their parents affirmed their curiosity about the topic (RQ1), whereas they reported having more negative experiences when their parents denied or did not encourage their curiosity about the topic (RQ2). Although affirmation/denial of curiosity may sound similar to the second theme of a discussion- or lecture-based conversation structure, the theme of child curiosity is distinct because it focuses on how participants perceived

65

their parents reacting to their curiosity about pornography and less on how the conversation was structured. Conversation structure and parental affirmation/denial of child curiosity likely go hand-in-hand together, but the focus of the latter is on how parents responded to their child's curiosity.

To further understand how reactions to child curiosity impacted parent-child conversations about pornography, the following two subsections explore the theme in its two forms: parental affirmation of child curiosity and parental denial of child curiosity. The first subsection explores parental affirmation of child curiosity, which resulted in participants perceiving conversations with their parents about pornography in a positive light. The second subsection explores parental denial of child curiosity, which resulted in participants perceiving conversations with their parents about pornography in a negative light.

Parental Affirmation of Child Curiosity

Parental affirmation of child curiosity refers to the willingness of parents to validate, express understanding, and encourage elaboration of the child's questions and interest in the topic of pornography, even if the parent wanted to shield their child from viewing the material. Participants who experienced affirmation of curiosity reported having parents who went out of their way to remain calm and affirm the child in what they were feeling. The parents also helped their child navigate the issue from an information-seeking position, often advising them in how to navigate the issue. The parents also directed the curiosity of the child towards further critical thinking about the topic. Participants who had parents who affirmed their curiosity in conversations about pornography described having more positive perceptions of those conversations.

Many participants expressed having parents who validated, expressed understanding for, and encouraged elaboration of their questions and interests in the topic of pornography. Sophia described the first time she was exposed to pornography and how she approached her mother about the issue to answer some questions. She recalled the following interaction with her mom:

> [I was] in high school and I [had] just gotten Snapchat. I was a freshman and there was a senior guy and he was poking around and, um, he asked me for nudes, and I didn't know what those were. So, being the 14-year-old that I was, I asked my mom about it, which is kind of embarrassing actually looking back. But, my parents kind of dove in on like, "Maybe don't send nudes cuz the internet lives forever" and then it kind of expanded on to what pornography is like, "Do you know what that is?" And I was like, "No, I don't know what that is." And yeah, basically they just kind of wanted me to have all the information. –Sophia, age 21

Sophia had several questions after her encounter with this senior guy from school, resulting in her approaching her mom about the issue. This interest in approaching her mom highlighted Sophia's initial curiosity about the subject matter. As reflected in the questions asked of her, Sophia recalled how her mom expressed understanding towards her and encouraged Sophia to elaborate on what had happened. Sophia described this experience as a positive one, recalling later on how "it was [a] very mature conversation, especially at the age of 14." In other words, Sophia felt like she was treated like a mature adult and that her questions about pornography were encouraged by her parents, thereby affirming her curiosity.

Laura described a similar situation in which a friend's nudes were released to the public without her consent. When Laura heard about the situation with her friend, she described being "scared" and not knowing what to do: "That was like new territory for me, so that's how it all got brought up." Laura described that when she decided to bring it up with her mom, her mother expressed initial shock and concern for Laura's friend. However, she remained calm and proceeded to ask Laura questions to help inquire about how Laura was feeling and what she was thinking about in this situation: "You see what could happen? Like, how would you feel if this

was you?" Laura felt like she could confide in her mother, showing that her experience was affirmed by her mother as witnessed in Laura feeling validated in her curiosity. Laura perceived this interaction positively.

Lucy highlighted a different scenario where she was exposed to pornography unintentionally at a young age yet received validation and reassurance from her mom in the moment. Lucy described how when she was little, she wandered into her sister's room where the TV was playing pornography on the screen. No one was in the room, and she described how she was initially "fascinated with it," asking herself the question, "What are these people doing?" However, shortly afterwards, her mother walked into the room. Lucy described how in the moment before her mom spoke with her, she felt like she "was doing something wrong, like [she] was going to get in trouble." Nevertheless, her mom quickly recognized what was happening and relayed the following to Lucy:

> I remember she was just like, "It's okay. You're not in trouble, but you cannot be watching this. You are too little for this and this is what some adults do and that's okay." Like, it was never even like a shame of like, "You should never watch this, it's bad." It was just like, "You're too young for this." –Lucy, age 20

Lucy initially wondered if this would be a situation where she would get in trouble. However, she described feeling reassured in her feelings of curiosity by her mom who gently navigated her through the situation. Lucy's mom did not want her watching the material at such a young age, but she handled the situation well by helping Lucy process what she had seen, validating her curiosity and interest in the topic. Lucy described this experience as a positive one, perceiving her mom's handling of the situation as positive and affirming.

Overall, participants who had parents who affirmed their curiosity about pornography reported having more positive perceptions about these conversations. Participants described conversations in which their parents validated, expressed understanding for, and encouraged

elaboration of their questions and interest in the topic of pornography. Even if their parents sought to deter them from the material, participants mentioned experiencing affirmation in their curiosity and support in navigating the issue with responsibility. In other words, participants who had parents who affirmed their curiosity about pornography described having more *positive* perceptions about the conversations. The next subsection explores how parental denial of child curiosity resulted in negative perceptions of the conversations with parents about pornography.

Parental Denial of Child Curiosity

Parental denial of child curiosity refers to a lack of parental validation and encouragement to elaborate on children's questions or interests about pornography. Participants who experienced denial of curiosity reported having parents who expressed judgment and evaluation, not understanding or explanation, when talking with them about pornography. This repudiation of curiosity often manifested in parents denying or neglecting to hear the feelings or thoughts of their children, making participants feel uncomfortable and confused. Participants perceived that their parents often lacked the communication skills to help their child navigate the issue and often discouraged the child from thinking critically about the issue. Participants who had parents who denied their curiosity in conversations about pornography described having negative perceptions of these conversations.

Allen provided a helpful example in understanding how his parents denied his curiosity about the subject matter by expressing judgment and a sense of negative evaluation towards him. Allen recalled how he had learned about something in school and returned home to look it up on the internet to answer some questions. He described the following interaction with his mom about the issue:

I think there was probably something in school. […] I went home, tried to look up what it was, and of course [looking it up] on the home computer [was] not a very smart way to approach that. […] I think my mom obviously caught [me] and first was mad. She was like, "Why? Why are you doing this?" […] I said, "I was curious." […] I was probably like 11 or 12. –Allen, age 23

Allen described how his mom seemed mad. She asked very direct questions that appeared judgmental and evaluative, not inviting Allen to elaborate on why he had looked up the material in the first place. Allen later recalled that although his mom loosened up towards the end of their interaction, he still categorized the experience as "miserable," saying that "as uncomfortable as it was for the kid, it's probably really uncomfortable for the parents," speaking of his own experience and those like him. Allen described this experience as a negative one because his mom denied the curiosity he had about the subject matter.

Kyle recalled a similar situation where he and his brother one day asked themselves the question, "'Hey, what would happen if we just looked up like "hot girls" on the internet or whatever?' So we just did that and like, all of a sudden, a bunch of stuff showed up." He described how he and his brother were just "curious kids" and how he specifically had always been a curious person. Kyle recalled that his mom found out through the search history on the computer and chose to pick them up from school instead of let them take the bus home. Kyle described how she "yelled at me" and "I remember at the time getting a sense of like, 'Huh…' Like, I felt weird." Kyle recalled feeling confused and as if he had done "something bad." He did not feel like he could talk with his mom about it because she reacted intensely and seemed to deny the curiosity he and his brother had about the subject matter.

Ellen provided another example of parental denial of curiosity in which she described some of the feelings she experienced after her mother denied the questions she asked about pornography. Ellen described a situation where she looked up on Google how to translate an

70

English word into her native language on the home computer and how the search engine took her

to a YouTube link. Ellen asked herself, "Oh, what's this link?" and then it took her to some

random pornographic site. Ellen described her experience similarly to Kyle and Allen:

> It's curious. You look at something and you know you're not supposed to be
> looking at it. And you're like, "Okay, I want to go and see it again... What is
> happening? Why did that come up?" –Ellen, age 19

Ellen described initial curiosity in stumbling across the material even though she had originally

been looking up something else on the internet. She described returning to the link several times

because she was curious and did not know what to make of the material she had found online.

Later on her mother found out and Ellen described how her mom just frowned when she talked

with Ellen about it. Her mom did not ask Ellen why she had looked at the material or looked it

up, her mom just said, "You should never view it. It is wrong." This is similar to conversation

ambiguity, but for Ellen, the hardest part of this reaction from her mother was the sense of mom

shutting down the conversation. For Ellen, her mother's response created a space in which Ellen

was not allowed to describe why she had stumbled across the material. Ellen's mother continued

with, "You know what would happen if I told your father." Ellen described feeling "disgusted"

about herself because of the way her mother handled the conversation.

Many participants mentioned how they wished their parents would have approached the

topic from a less judgmental and less evaluative perspective and instead have given them the

space to elaborate and ask questions about the topic. Ellen described how she wished the

conversation with her mom had gone differently, explaining that she felt judged and disgusted

with herself. She described the following, talking as if she were speaking to her mom in the

interview:

> Why don't you explain why are you against it, like, "Okay, if you waste a lot of
> your time, it's going to get you distracted. What's the point? So you can always

do it when you grow up. You will have a life. Let's not rush into things." If you explain that concept, that would be better rather than making me feel disgusted about myself because every time she got angry, I felt like, "Oh, I'm a really disgusting person." And I think that's wrong. –Ellen, age 19

For Ellen and many participants in this study, their parents denied or neglected to hear their children's thoughts or feelings about the subject matter, making them feel uncomfortable and confused. Although this sounds similar to the theme of conversation ambiguity, parental denial of curiosity involved the parent's rejection of the child's emotions and feelings, whereas conversation ambiguity involved the parent's vague or absent explanation of details about the topic. For Ellen specifically, she described how she would have been fine talking with her mom about the issue from the standpoint her mother had about the issue. What made Ellen dissatisfied with the conversation was how her mom did not acknowledge Ellen's feelings or thoughts in the moment, making her feel disgusted with herself.

Overall, participants who had parents who denied their curiosity about pornography reported having more negative perceptions about these conversations. In these interactions, parents expressed judgment and evaluation when talking with their children about pornography. This often denied or neglected the thoughts and feelings of their children, making participants feel uncomfortable and confused. Participants perceived that their parents lacked necessary communication skills to help their children navigate the issue and often pushed the child further away from thinking critically about pornography. Participants who had parents who denied their curiosity in conversations about pornography described having negative perceptions about these conversations. Having now explored the first four themes that emerged from the data, the final section explores the fifth theme of conversation contexts and how the appropriateness of the context shaped participants' perceptions of conversations with their parents about pornography.

Conversation Context

The fifth and final theme that emerged from the data was the extent to which the context in which the conversation about porn occurred was perceived as appropriate by the children. Conversation context included the time and place in which the conversation occurred and the extent to which that time and place was perceived as appropriate or inappropriate by the children. Participants reported having more positive experiences when the conversation context was appropriate to the situation and (RQ1). Participants reported having more negative experiences when the conversation context was inappropriate to the situation and (RQ2).

To further understand how the conversation context impacted participants' perceptions of the conversation with their parents about pornography, the following two subsections explore the theme in its two forms: appropriate and inappropriate conversation contexts. The first subsection explores appropriate conversation contexts, which resulted in participants perceiving conversations with their parents about pornography in a positive light. The second subsection explores inappropriate conversation contexts, which resulted in participants perceiving conversations with their parents about pornography in a negative light.

Appropriate Conversation Context

In *appropriate conversation contexts,* the timing and location of the conversation strengthened the interaction between participants and their parents about pornography. Whether the context was the dining room table, the living room, or the car, appropriate conversation contexts made the participant feel comfortable and willing to open up more with their parents about the issue. Participants' identification of appropriate contexts was more about subjective experiences than objective spaces. In other words, the appropriateness of a context was less about the actual space and more about how the space was perceived by the participant.

73

Participants who experienced an appropriate conversation context with their parents in conversations about pornography perceived these interactions as more positive.

One location that several participants referred to was the dining room table, specifically during dinner time. Amy described how the topic of pornography was something she and her parents could discuss almost anywhere at any time. Specifically, she explained that, "It's kind of like dinner table conversation," and that it has been "a big thing among our dinner table conversations." Amy described that over time, the conversations with her parents around the dinner table became more and more "normalized" to the point where "there couldn't be discomfort." For Amy, the dinner table was an appropriate and expected context to have conversations with her parents about pornography and a range of other topics.

Participants also mentioned the living room, and specifically the couch, as another location where the participant and their parents would typically talk together. Sophia described having her conversation with her mom about pornography on the couch in their living room, a location she described as comfortable and appropriate for the context of their conversation. She described how after a senior guy from high school approached her asking for nudes, Sophia approached her mother on the couch while she was watching TV to inquire about the situation:

> It was at my house and [my mom] was just on the couch watching TV and I kinda just sat on the couch next to her. I was like, "Hey, what is… what's going on here?" –Sophia, age 21

Although Sophia did not mention much more about the couch context after this point in the interview, it is clear that she felt comfortable approaching her mother in a large open space where she could sit comfortably with her mom and talk about this issue freely. It was implied from her response that Sophia seemed regularly able and comfortable with approaching her mom on the couch in the living room. Similarly, Will and his brother had a conversation with their

parents about pornography in which they felt like it was a normal and similar experience compared to other conversations they had with their parents. Will described the setting as together in the living room, dialoguing about the issue of pornography. Will recalled the conversation context as an appropriate and comfortable one.

Several participants also mentioned the importance of how they and their parents utilized the space when talking about pornography, whether they were standing up or sitting down. Katie recalled a situation in which she and her mom unintentionally started talking about pornography because of the music Katie was listening to and how they both sat down to talk about this topic with more intentionality:

> I was about 15 and I was listening to Lofi study music and my mom was like, "What are you watching? That sounds like eighties porno music." And I was like, "What?" […] My mom was like, "This sounds like eighties porn music" and I was like, "No, this is study music." And I was like, "What do you mean this sounds like porno music?" and my mom would be like, "Oh, oh gosh," so we had to sit down and my mom had to be like, "Okay, so there were very bad films back in like the eighties…" not bad as in like morally bad but bad as in like not well put together. –Katie, age 18

Katie specified that she and her mom "sat down," showing intentionality in the thought of having this conversation. Katie mentioned earlier that she was at home, and although she did not specify exactly where she was in the home, it was implied that the context mattered to her because they were both sitting down. Logan also recalled the intentionality his dad took when approaching him about pornography and how his dad handled the space of the conversation. Logan described how his father approached him in his room after it had been discovered that Logan had been watching pornography:

> [My dad's] good at having hard conversations. […] When he came into my room, I wouldn't say it was awkward, but he was just like… I think he was standing up, so I stood up as well. And he was like, uh, "Look, if you're going to do [porn], if you're going to do this, don't get caught." –Logan, age 18

Logan appreciated that his dad did not appear to dominate the space in his room but rather walked in like he always would and simply engaged Logan about the topic of pornography. Logan later described the interaction with his dad as something he appreciated about his father, someone who was "good at having hard conversations." Logan perceived that his father was good at having hard conversations as witnessed in how his father utilized the space around them. Logan also later described how this interaction with his dad led to more interactions together where they would watch movies together in the living room and how they would open up more together about issues like pornography.

One additional context that participants mentioned as appropriate for conversations with their parents about pornography was driving in the car. Kayla described many memories of growing up spending time in the car with her family, whether it was traveling to and from the store or more specifically during long family road trips. In many of their car rides, Kayla described talking with her parents and brother together about issues like finances and social media. In these situations, Kayla recounted how her parents intentionally spoke with her and her brother about the dangers of social media and being careful about what they posted online. In several of these situations, Kayla's parents brought up the topic of pornography. What is unique about this experience is Kayla found it appropriate and normal to talk with her parents about pornography in the car, a space where she and her family frequently shared life together and talked about difficult issues.

Overall, participants who had parents who utilized the conversation context in an appropriate manner reported having more positive perceptions about these conversations. Participants recalled how the time and space of these conversations with their parents strengthened the interactions they had together when talking about pornography. Whether it was

the dining room table, the living room, or the car, participants described feeling comfortable and willing to open up more with their parents about the issue because of the space they were in. Although it was less about the actual space and more about how the parents and participants utilized that space together, each participant perceived the space as appropriate for the conversation. In other words, participants who experienced an appropriate conversation context described having more positive perceptions about those conversations. The next subsection explores how an inappropriate conversation context resulted in young adults' *negative* perceptions of the conversations with their parents about pornography.

Inappropriate Conversation Context

In *inappropriate conversation contexts,* the timing and location of the conversation weakened the interactions between participants and their parents about pornography. Whether it was their bedroom, the car, or the dining room table, inappropriate conversation contexts made participants uncomfortable and unwilling to open up more with their parents about the issue. Similar to the theme about appropriate conversation context, participants' responses to the conversation context were less about the actual space and more about how the space was perceived by the participant. In other words, one context was not objectively appropriate or inappropriate, but instead subjectively experienced as appropriate or inappropriate by the participant. Many of the spaces mentioned in this section are similar to spaces mentioned by participants who experienced an appropriate conversation context with their parents. The difference in perceptions of the context lied in how parents used them, highlighting how this theme centers on the use of the conversation space and how participants perceived them as appropriate or inappropriate. Participants who perceived the context for the conversation about pornography as inappropriate perceived these interactions more negatively.

One location that several participants perceived as inappropriate was the bedroom. For example, Bella described a situation in which her brother had been discovered watching porn. Her mom approached him in his bedroom and Bella described how "everyone ended up drawn to or drawn around the conversation," referring to most of their family members. What initially was a private discussion between Bella's brother and mother evolved into a family discussion that did not necessarily have to occur with everyone in the house. In other words, people entered that space without permission, and Bella described how initially her brother felt very uncomfortable. James also described a similar situation when his dad found out he had been looking at pornography: "He brought me into the room and he sort of looked upset. And so while he was talking, being upset, that just really made me uncomfortable and stuff." Unlike situations in which participants felt uncomfortable in response to a parent denying their curiosity, James felt discomfort because his personal, private space had been invaded. In both instances, denial of curiosity and inappropriate conversation context, participants described feeling uncomfortable because their parents looked upset. Here, however, the discomfort stemmed from James' father inviting himself into his room rather than from James' father reacting negatively to James' curiosity.

Ellen also described a similar experience when she was called into her mom's room by her mom to discuss how Ellen had been looking at pornography: "[My mom] called me inside the room and she was frowning at me and she was like, 'What did you do today?'" For Ellen, it felt like her mom took control of the room and that she did not have any agency or say over the space she was brought into. Ellen highlighted how in addition to her mom's negative conversational tone, the space felt strange and intense. It felt like she was summoned to a space that she could not leave until her mom let her go, making Ellen feel like she was in a lower

78

power, submissive position compared to her mom. This conversation context made Ellen uncomfortable, perceiving the space as inappropriate for the conversation and the interaction as negative.

Another context that several participants perceived as uncomfortable and inappropriate was talking about pornography with their parents in the car. Allen recalled how oftentimes on his way to school, his father would bring up the topic of pornography in the car while driving. Allen recalled how the context of being in the car with his dad made him feel uncomfortable because the space of the conversation felt inappropriate considering it was a short drive to school:

> [My dad] was like, "Hey buddy, like I know you're probably looking at porn and stuff like that, but just know that this stuff is unhealthy. Do what you're gonna do, but it's unhealthy just in like the overall sense of you can kind of be more sucked into these types of things in the real world." –Allen, age 23

For Allen, this context felt really uncomfortable and the timing felt inappropriate. He described later on that he felt like he was receiving a bunch of information from his dad right before being dropped off at school. He could not talk with his dad about the information for eight hours until school was finished. By that point, he was not interested in following-up with his dad about the issue because it felt rushed and put into a conversation space that did not feel appropriate for the topic. For Allen, the conversation felt ill-timed and out of place for a regular commute to school. Kyle recalled a similar experience to Allen when he and his brother were picked up from school by their mom and she decided to start talking with them about porn. "You shouldn't be looking stuff like that up," Kyle remembered his mom saying to them. He described feeling surprised by the encounter and like it was irregular behavior: "I was not expecting to see her that day [until] I got home." Similar to Allen, this context felt inappropriate for talking about pornography because there were significant spaces of time in between the conversation and when the

participants could follow-up with their parents about it. By then, participants like Allen and Kyle had no interest in following-up on the topic.

Another conversation context that participants perceived as inappropriate was the dining room table. Emily described how her mom would speak to her and her brother about pornography at the dining room table during lunch on a repeated basis and that the interactions "always felt random." Emily explained that her father was a recovering sex addict and how her mom felt the need to talk about it all the time. She described how "a lot of times it would just be [my mom] kind of wedging it into our lunches if my dad was gone." The language of "wedging it into our lunches" described for Emily how the issue of pornography did not fit well at the dining room table. Her mom tried talking about it there, but for Emily and her brother, this felt inappropriate and unnecessary. Emily described later on in the interview how she wished her mom had approached the topic differently and had utilized a more appropriate conversation context with her and her brother, though she never specified where. Emily did describe going out to eat with her father at a restaurant to talk with him about the issue and how that space felt more appropriate and comfortable compared to her mom's approach. Nevertheless, the spaces at home felt inappropriate for Emily to talk about the issue, particularly at the dining room table.

Overall, participants who had parents who utilized the conversation context in an inappropriate manner reported having more negative perceptions about these conversations. Participants described how the time and space of these conversations, whether in the bedroom, the car, or the dining room table, weakened their interactions with their parents about pornography. Because of the ways their parents utilized these spaces, participants described feeling uncomfortable and unwilling to open up more with their parents about pornography. Again, for participants, this was less about the actual space and more about how their parents

utilized that space and how the participants perceived the space. In other words, participants who

experienced an inappropriate conversation context described having more negative perceptions

about those conversations.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

The overall goal and purpose of this study was to understand parent-child conversations about the taboo topic of pornography from the perspective of the young adult. Although the topic of pornography was viewed by many participants as taboo, meaning it was something uncomfortable to talk about, many participants perceived their conversations with their parents about the issue in a positive way. Previous studies have explored these conversations from the perspectives of parents (Rasmussen, 2013; Rasmussen et al., 2015; Zurcher, 2017, 2019), yet little to no research has explored them from the perspective of the children. This study fills gaps in family communication research by analyzing young adult perspectives about conversations with their parents about pornography through a narrative theoretical lens and methodology, highlighting young adult stories about the subject matter. Specifically, this study expands research on parent-child communication about pornography by analyzing the characteristics of parent-child conversations about pornography that children perceive as positive or negative.

This final chapter provides a brief summary of the study findings as well as an overview of how the research results bear theoretical implications, specifically in narrative theory, relational dialectics, family communication patterns, communication climate, and verbal person-centeredness. It also explores contributions to our knowledge about the context—parent-child conversations about pornography—and practical implications for researchers and families to consider when navigating this issue. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the study, an overview of future directions for research, and concluding thoughts.

Summary of Findings

This study answered two proposed research questions assessing the characteristics of parent-child conversations about pornography that elicit positive or negative perceptions among children. In response to the first research question, participants expressed having positive perceptions about these conversations with their parents when there was an open relationship climate, a discussion-based conversation structure, specificity in the conversation details, parental affirmation of their curiosity, and perceptions of an appropriate conversation context. In other words, participants valued a relationship environment with their parents where they could express their thoughts and feelings freely. They appreciated when their parents facilitated collaborative interactions with them, which helped them feel heard and treated like adults. Participants also valued when their parents talked about their own experiences with pornography and helped them make healthy, safe, and responsible choices when navigating pornographic material. They felt loved and heard when their parents validated their curiosity and encouraged them to elaborate on questions and thoughts about pornography. Finally, they valued spaces that they perceived as appropriate for the conversation, often because these were spaces where they were accustomed to having conversations with their parents.

In response to the second research question, participants expressed having negative perceptions about these conversations with their parents when there was a closed relationship climate, a lecture-based conversation structure, ambiguity from parents in the conversation details, parental denial of their curiosity, and perceptions of an inappropriate conversation context. In other words, participants found it difficult to talk with their parents about pornography in a family environment where they generally felt reserved and avoidant about talking with their parents. For interactions about pornography, a one-way conversation in which parents asked close-ended questions, did not ask questions at all, or talked more than they

listened was viewed negatively by the participants. Participants did not appreciate when their parents would speak vaguely about the subject matter or when their parents struggled to know what to say, often saying things like, "Don't do it," without explaining why. Participants also did not appreciate when parents failed to validate their emotions or neglected to encourage elaboration on questions or thoughts they had about pornography. Finally, participants were apprehensive about conversation contexts that were perceived as inappropriate for the topic, either because the setting took them by surprise, did not allow for follow-up questions, or simply made the interaction more uncomfortable. Overall, these five themes influenced young adults' perceptions of the conversations with their parents about pornography.

Theoretical Implications

The five themes that emerged in this study connect to existing theory and research in family and interpersonal communication. In order to understand these connections, the following subsections explore in greater depth how each theme relates to selected bodies of theory and research in communication. First, this section focuses on the overall findings as they relate to narrative theory and the management of dialectical tensions in parent-child relationships. Then, this section proceeds to elaborate on connections between the themes from the present study and other existing theory and research in interpersonal and family communication. Since this study utilized a narrative framework in understanding young adult stories of conversations with their parents about pornography, the following section explores theoretical implications for narrative theory.

Narrative Theory

The themes that emerged from this study contribute to and build on existing research on narrative theory, particularly with elements of storytelling, identity, and health. As participants shared their stories about conversations they had with their parents about pornography, they relayed personal accounts about their experiences. These accounts contained storytelling identifiers like context, setting, and characters (Clair et al., 2016; Clair & Mattson, 2013; Koenig Kellas, 2005), all of which impacted the experiences participants had with their parents. These components of setting, plot, and characters were witnessed in the findings of this study, particularly conversation context. Participants shared how the manner in which their parents utilized the space for their conversation impacted how they perceived those conversations. Moreover, as participants shared their stories about interactions with pornography, they mentioned their parents, friends, and siblings as important characters in developing or participating in those conversations, showing that stories communicate holistic experiences with varying contexts and people (Koenig Kellas, 2005; Trees & Koenig Kellas, 2009). Context matters for these conversations because how parents and children navigate them allows for spaces where family members can or cannot understand one another (Koenig Kellas, 2013). The existing literature on narrative theory is witnessed in the findings of this study, particularly conversation context.

Theory and research on narratives emphasizes that storytelling is more than just recounting an experience but also a process of identification and sense-making (Clair et al., 2016; Holman & Koenig Kellas, 2018), and participants shared themes of identity as witnessed in their feelings and thoughts about the conversations they had with their parents about pornography. Whether it was discussing the affirmation or denial parents expressed to their children about pornography or how open or closed the relationship climate was for the family, participants

communicated how these interactions shaped them emotionally and mentally in their own personal growth. Previous research suggests that family communication shapes mental and emotional growth, particularly in storytelling (Trees & Koenig Kellas, 2009). Research shows that storytelling enables the narrator to engage in perspective-taking and increases emotional and mental well-being (Koenig Kellas, 2005). Participants appreciated when their parents affirmed their curiosity and maintained an open relationship climate with them about the issue of pornography. Parental affirmation of child curiosity was seen in parents asking their children questions about what they felt about the issue and helping them think critically about the material, which strengthened participants in understanding themselves and the world around them better. This connects to existing research because narratives are not just products of the narrator but also products of social interactions, meaning that shared experiences involve collaboration where two parties help one another make sense of something (Clair et al., 2016; Gergen & Gergen, 1988). Thus, the study findings connect to existing literature about storytelling as it relates to sense-making and identification.

Finally, in addition to elements of storytelling and identity, the emergent themes of this study connect to literature about narratives and how individuals navigate issues of health. Garro and Mattingly (2000) argue that storytelling is an essential component of personal health because "narrative mediates between an inner world of thought-feeling and an outer world of observable actions and states of affairs" (p. 1). In other words, when a narrator shares their story with someone during a time of physical or emotional duress, they connect their feelings and thoughts with the outside world and often feel better about those situations. Whether it is illness or addiction, sharing stories provides a practical way for individuals to experience inner healing and process difficult circumstances (Charon, 2001; Elwyn & Gwyn, 1999; Greenhalgh, 1999).

White and Epston (1990) also highlight how patients who reframe less positive experiences and people they have interacted with through storytelling experience relational restoration by restructuring how they view relationships. Many participants in this study expressed gratitude for having the space to share their stories about conversations they had with their parents about pornography in the interview. Several expressed how the interviews gave them the space to process these interactions with their parents emotionally and mentally, which current research shows is a byproduct of storytelling (Elwyn & Gwyn, 1999). The implications of these findings are that for some participants, these interviews are the beginning point of experiencing emotional and mental healing by talking about them in a narrative structure. Overall, the results of this study connect well with narrative theory in terms of storytelling structure, identity, and health.

Relational Dialectics

The themes of this study also connect with interpersonal research on relational dialectics theory (RDT). Although the theory is multifaceted and continually evolving (Baxter & Braithwaite, 2008), one of the central tenets of the theory is that within interpersonal relationships, individuals experience conflicting and interconnected forces that affect their communication (Cools, 2006; Fox et al., 2014; Johnson et al., 2018; Montgomery, 1993). These dialectical tensions are both inevitable and necessary because meaning emerges from the tension between different and often opposing discourses (Baxter & Braithwaite, 2008). Dialectical tensions represent a push and pull between simultaneous, opposing forces, and people inevitably and regularly experience these dialectical tensions in their close relationships. They are not necessarily a bad thing, but one of the features of satisfying relationships is becoming comfortable with those dialectical tensions (Wood, 2020). For instance, parents and children often experience a tension between autonomy and connection, meaning they feel a push and pull

between wanting to spend time together and feel closely connected to one another while also desiring independence (Allen & Loeb, 2015). Other dialectical tensions include openness-closedness, expressiveness-protectiveness, and judgment-acceptance (Baxter & Norwood, 2015; Montgomery, 1993). Within any interpersonal relationship, there are conflicting motives or forces that individuals experience with one another simultaneously.

For this study, the theme of relationship climate shares many similarities with the dialectic of autonomy-connection. Autonomy and connection refers to the push and pull between wanting to feel close to someone while also desiring independence (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Participants who experienced closed relationship climates expressed feeling like they had to navigate the issue of pornography independently from the support of their parents and felt like they could not openly discuss the issue together. Some expressed wanting to have open conversations with their parents about the issue but felt like the relationship climate did not allow for them to speak about it. On the other hand, participants who experienced open relationship climates mentioned how their parents facilitated a relational atmosphere where they shared life experiences together and could talk about anything together. This tension in both of these relationship climates bears similarities to autonomy-connection where two individuals may struggle with wanting to experience independence from one another in one context while simultaneously wanting to experience community together in another context. Research shows that young people, particularly during adolescence, experience relationship challenges with their parents because of the autonomy-connection dialectic (Allen & Loeb, 2015). This showcases how the theme of relationship climate overlaps with the relational dialectics of autonomy-connection in that parents and children have to manage these tensions constructively. Participants in this study had to navigate conversation characteristics that either helped them

perceive conversations about pornography with their parents positively or negatively, sharing similarities to the dialectic of autonomy-connection.

The themes of conversation structure, details, and context also share similarities with relational dialectics, particularly expressiveness-protectiveness. Expressiveness and protectiveness refers to the push and pull between wanting to express one's feelings and thoughts while also wanting to refrain from sharing personal thoughts in order to shield someone from unnecessary emotional harm (Afifi & Guerrero, 1999; Baxter & Scharp, 2015). Depending on how they perceived the conversation with their parents, participants wrestled with knowing when to express their feelings and thoughts about the issue of pornography. They perceived conversations about pornography with their parents positively when there was a discussion-based conversation structure, specificity in the details they talked about with their parents, and a context that they perceived as appropriate to talk about the issue. They perceived it negatively if they had parents who spoke with a lecture-based conversation structure, used less concrete language, and talked in a context that was perceived as inappropriate. Each of these themes influenced how willing they were to express what they were feeling and thinking about the topic. Participants felt most comfortable revealing personal information about the issue of pornography when their parents asked them open-ended questions, providing spaces for them to discuss specific information about the issue of pornography in an appropriate conversation context. They felt like they had to conceal more personal information when their parents utilized closed-ended questions, speaking in less concrete language in a context that was perceived as inappropriate. Overall, participants perceived conversations about pornography with their parents differently depending on the conversation structure, details, and context shares, which share similarities with relational dialectics, specifically expressiveness-protectiveness.

Finally, the theme of parental affirmation and denial of child curiosity shares similarities to many relational dialectics, including judgment-acceptance. Judgment and acceptance is when people experience the push and pull to critically evaluate someone while also wanting to provide understanding and empathy to the person (Bridge & Baxter, 1992). Participants expressed having positive perceptions of conversations with their parents about pornography when their parents validated, expressed understanding for, and encouraged elaboration on their questions and interest in the topic of porn. The opposite occurred when participants had parents who denied their curiosity. Within the theme of child curiosity are shared ideas that relate to research about the dialectic. Participants expressed having positive perceptions about these conversations when they felt like their parents were less critical of them for being curious about porn and instead communicated understanding and empathy towards them. Overall, applying RDT to the findings of the present study, there are many competing forces with which parents and children wrestle when having conversations about pornography. Whether it is autonomy-connection, expressiveness-protectiveness, or judgment-acceptance, the themes uncovered in this study can be better understood through the lens of RDT.

Family Communication Patterns

The results of this study may also be interpreted through the theory of family communication patterns (FCP). The theory of FCP states that families vary in orientation type because of predictable and stable patterns of communicative behavior among parents and children (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002; 2006). Koerner and Fitzpatrick developed the theory of FCP to help scholars distinguish between family types as defined by two orientations: conversation and conformity orientation. *Conversation orientation* refers to a continuum of how high or low families are in terms of spending time together, talking with one another, and sharing

thoughts and ideas together (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2013). *Conformity orientation* refers to a continuum with high levels of order and hierarchy on one end and high levels of independence and equality on the other end. Order refers to parental expectations of uniformity of attitudes, values, and beliefs while hierarchy refers to the authority parents have over children. Independence refers to parental acceptance of different attitudes, values, and beliefs while equality refers to varying roles across parents and children. The two dimensions of FCP, conversation and conformity orientation, ultimately create four main family types: *consensual families* (high in both conversation and conformity orientations), *pluralistic families* (high in conversation orientation, low in conformity orientation), *protective families* (low in conversation orientation, high in conformity orientation), and *laissez-faire families* (low in both conversation and conformity orientations).

The theme of an open relationship climate shares many similarities with high levels of conversation orientation and low levels of conformity orientation within the theory of FCP. Participants who described experiencing an open relationship climate with their parents expressed sharing activities and openness with their parents while also experiencing parental acceptance of their attitudes and beliefs about pornography, which are consistent with high conversation orientation and low conformity orientation. Research shows that in families where parents encourage their children to communicate openly and freely with them, conversation orientation is negatively associated with communication apprehension (Elwood & Schrader, 1998). Additionally, families that emphasize high communication orientation over low communication orientation when talking about issues like sex result in adolescents talking more openly about sex with their parents (Fisher, 1986). Similar to this past research on the outcomes of high conversation orientation within families, the present findings suggest that an open

relationship climate helps young adults perceive conversations about pornography with their parents positively due to shared family activities and openness in communication. For an open relationship climate, participants valued family dynamics where they felt like they could be open with their parents and share their emotions and thoughts with them about pornography.

An open relationship climate also allows children to process their emotions freely with their parents as well as navigate the issue of pornography responsibly, similar to research conducted about FCP. Research shows that conversation orientation positively predicts reappraisal of emotions within families whereas conformity orientation positively predicts parental suppression of emotions (Jones et al., 2017). In other words, families experience beneficial effects in navigating emotions when conversation orientation is prevalent while they experience deleterious effects in navigating emotions when conformity orientation is prevalent. Participants in this study mentioned how they had more positive perceptions about their parents and conversations with them about pornography when they felt the openness and freedom to navigate the issue responsibly and with guidance from their parents. The responsibility participants experienced with their parents is similar to low conformity orientation (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 1997; 2002) where parents accept different attitudes, values, and beliefs about issues and treat their children in more equal roles. As is seen in the literature, FCP relates strongly to the theme of open relationship climate.

The present findings also suggest some parallels between high levels of conversation orientation and low levels of conformity orientation and the themes of discussion-based conversation structure and conversation specificity. Foundational to FCP and high conversation orientation is that families spend lots of time together and share in activities, thoughts, and feelings together (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2013). Part of this process of sharing life together as a

family is witnessed in parents and children engaging in asking questions of one another to facilitate dialogue about difficult topics (Keating et al., 2013). Asking questions and dialoguing together about ideas as a family both share similarities to a discussion-based conversation structure where participants felt more comfortable talking about pornography when their parents asked them about how they felt about the issue. The opposite occurred when parents made the conversation feel more like a lecture, creating less space for dialogue. Spaces where participants experienced less dialogue with their parents share similarities with low conversation orientation. Moreover, similar to conversation specificity, families that experience high conversation orientation "value the exchange of ideas" (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2013, p. 138), meaning that they enjoy discussing beliefs and ideas in great detail with one another. Participants expressed having more positive perceptions about conversations with their parents about pornography when they felt like the conversations focused on concrete details, which is similar to high conversation orientation. Thus, the themes found in this study share many similarities with FCP.

Communication Climate

The findings of the present study also connect to scholarship on defensive and supportive communication climates. Communication climates refer to the mood and environment between people shaped by verbal and nonverbal communication, whether it is "warm or cold, safe or anxious, accepting or rejecting, [or] open or guarded" (Wood, 2020, p. 226). In other words, communication climates between individuals function as either supportive or defensive in nature (Gibb, 1965). For example, when an individual perceives a threat within a communication situation, they become more defensive in their language and behavior. When they perceive a reduction in the communication threat, they become less defensive and more supportive in their language and behavior. Gibb (1965) did a study on interpersonal dynamics to categorize what

communicative behaviors constitute defensive or supportive communication climates. They identified six major categories that constitute defensive communication and supportive communication. Defensive communication climates involve behaviors such as using evaluative language, exerting superiority over the conversation partner, and expressing certainty that one's ideas are the 'right' ideas. Supportive communication climates involve behaviors such as using descriptive language, communicating a sense of equality with the conversation partner, and expressing openness to the other's ideas. Scholars have utilized these concepts in research pertaining to family communication climates (Barbato et al., 2009; Rozema, 1986), highlighting how communication impacts the mood and environment between parents and children.

The theme of a discussion-based conversation structure shares many similarities to a supportive communication climate, particularly those behaviors that communicate a sense of acceptance. Acceptance refers to when an individual feels like their emotions and thoughts are validated in a particular communication climate (Wood, 2020). Participants in this study mentioned perceiving conversations about pornography with their parents more positively when their parents made the conversations more collaborative and asked open-ended questions, resembling the supportive communication climate idea of acceptance. In other words, participants felt like they were treated like adults, which contributed to a more supportive communication climate. Children who experienced a discussion-based conversation structure felt that their parents equalized the conversations with them, making both parties felt comfortable in talking about the issue.

On the other hand, the theme of a lecture-based conversation structure shares many similarities to a defensive communication climate, particularly where individuals feel anxious and guarded in their behavior. Individuals in a defensive communication climate may feel

anxious or guarded because of the way someone speaks or through the tone or mood of the conversation, making them more closed in what they say or do not say (Wood, 2020). Participants in this study mentioned perceiving conversations about pornography with their parents more negatively when their parents made the conversations more one-way and asked close-ended questions, resembling that of a defensive communication climate. Participants felt like they were limited in what they could talk about with their parents because of the way their parents spoke to them. Many parents were perceived by their children as controlling and not giving them space to talk in the conversation. Although a lecture-based conversation structure is not exactly the same as a defensive communication climate, it is possible some participants felt like their parents were communicating that they were superior to them.

Supportive and defensive communication climates may also help understand the implications of the themes of open/closed relationship climates and parental affirmation/denial of child curiosity. Research shows that supportive and defensive communication climates within families vary depending on parental motives in talking with their children (Barbato et al., 2009). When parents are more willing to show affection towards their children, the affection facilitates a supportive communication climate to their children. On the other hand, when parents are seek to control their kids and express less affection, their behavior facilitates a defensive communication climate to their children. Open relationship climates and parental affirmation of child curiosity both share similarities to supportive communication climates because participants in this study expressed having positive perceptions about conversations with their parents about pornography when their parents express affection for them and facilitated spaces that allowed them to elaborate on what they felt about the issue of pornography. Likewise, closed relationship climates and parental denial of child curiosity share similarities to defensive communication

climates because participants experience negative perceptions of these conversations when their parents sought to control these interactions, often inhibiting dialogue about why they were curious about the topic in the first place. Overall, the themes of this study share many similarities with communication research on supportive and defensive communication climates.

Verbal Person-Centeredness

Some of the present results connect to the concept of verbal person-centeredness (VPC) and may be better understood by expanding on this concept. VPC refers to how much an individual explicitly expresses empathy and legitimizes the feelings and perspectives of another person (Burleson, 1994). In other words, when an individual offers comfort to another person, VPC assesses how supportive their message is. Within VPC are three levels: low person-centeredness (LPC), moderate person-centeredness (MPC), and high person-centeredness (HPC) (Burleson, 1994). Messages that display LPC deny the distressed person's needs, messages that display MPC implicitly acknowledge the person's feelings, and messages that display HPC explicitly affirm the person's feelings. Thus, when offering support to others, an individual may behave in a way that varies according to verbal person-centeredness, from denying the other person's feelings to explicitly acknowledging and validating the other person's feelings.

Although this study did not specifically study supportive communication, the theme of parental affirmation or denial of curiosity shares several points of overlap with VPC. Research shows that people look to close relationships for emotional support, especially children with their parents (McCarty et al., 2005). Participants in this study who perceived conversations with their parents about pornography in a positive light recalled having parents who affirmed their curiosity about porn by validating, expressing understanding for, and encouraging elaboration of their questions and interests in the topic. Parental affirmation of child curiosity connects to present

96

scholarship about VPC and how children need validation from parents in navigating challenging issues (Adrian et al., 2018). Participants also mentioned that their parents remained calm, affirmed what they were feeling, and often advised them how to navigate the topic responsibly. Although participants were not asked to evaluate how supportive their parents were, one might speculate that when parents communicated moderately or highly person-centered messages, the conversations about pornography were perceived more positively by the children. Indeed, many of the participants recalled explicit forms of support provided to them by their parents.

Participants perceived the conversations in a negative light when their parents denied their curiosity about porn by invalidating their questions and interests in the topic. Denying, invalidating, or ignoring the other person's thoughts and feelings are hallmarks of low person-centered messages. Parental denial of curiosity manifested in parents not expressing understanding for their children's feelings and thoughts, which made participants feel uncomfortable and confused. Parental denial of child curiosity connects to research on VPC and parental invalidation, showing how a lack of emotional support from parents damages childhood development as well as creates perceptions of narcissism about parents from children (Huxley & Bizumic, 2017). Moreover, scholarship shows that parents who deny the emotions of their children hinder children from coping with difficult familial circumstances (Mirabile, 2015). One might speculate based on the stories disclosed by participants that when parents communicated low person-centered messages, the conversations about pornography were perceived more negatively by the children. Future research can investigate whether the level of verbal person-centeredness in parent-child conversations about pornography contributes to children's perceptions of the conversations as positive or negative.

The theme of conversation specificity/ambiguity also shares several points of overlap with VPC. Participants who experienced conversation specificity with their parents reported having parents who focused on details when navigating the issue of pornography, often about health, safety, and personal responsibility. In other words, the messages were concrete and had specific information that helped the participants navigate the issue. Applegate (1980) and Burleson (1982) identify highly person-centered messages as ones that explicitly contextualize and elaborate on the feelings of the support seeker, which help that person navigate the issue more concretely. The similarities between conversation specificity and high person-centered messages is contrasted with low person-centered messages that deny the support seeker's feelings or moderate person-centered messages that implicitly acknowledge the support seeker's emotions but do not elaborate on the issue nor contextualize the information. Similar to conversation specificity, HPC messages provide specific details in the message to help the support seeker navigate their situation. On the other hand, similar to conversation ambiguity, LPC and MPC messages either deny the situation entirely or support the individual implicitly, meaning the support is less concrete and could be considered vague. Overall, the results of this study share connections and similarities with VPC.

Contextual Contributions

In addition to the theoretical implications of the present study, the results provide many contextual contributions for communication research surrounding pornography and parent-child perceptions of these conversations. Many participants described their personal views on pornography and their observations of how pervasive pornography is in culture today, particularly in films and social media (Hertlein, 2012; Sabina et al., 2008; Weiss, 2019). They shared about the inevitability of seeing porn at some point in their lives, particularly about how

they and their friends viewed it from a young age, sometimes as early as middle school. These results suggest that for the participants of this study, it is not a question of if someone will view pornography but when. Although the findings of participants being exposed to pornography cannot be generalized to larger populations, the implications are that young people are susceptible to watching pornography, particularly online. Moreover, the varying opinions about pornography expressed by participants were as diverse as those of scholars (e.g., Perrin et al., 2008; Sabina et al., 2008; Štulhofer et al., 2012; Taylor, 2018; Wright & Randall, 2012). Some participants expressed having positive experiences with pornography while other participants expressed having negative experiences with pornography.

In addition to child exposure and child perceptions of the material, the present findings also connect to existing research on how parents navigate their children's pornography and media consumption. Participants reported perceiving conversations about pornography with their parents as more positive when their parents were open, specific, and affirming. Openness, specificity, and affirmation share similarities to active mediation, which is the process by which parents discuss online content with their children and help them navigate it (Byrne et al., 2014; Hertlein, 2012; Rasmussen, 2013). In each of these previous studies, the results suggested that parents who prioritized open communication, prioritized clear expectations, and affirmed the needs of their children experienced more positive interactions with their children.

Finally, this study also expanded scholarly understanding of parent-child communication about the taboo topic of pornography, particularly from the lens of the children. Extensive research has examined how parents respond to conversations about pornography with their children (Rasmussen, 2013; Rasmussen et al., 2015; Zurcher, 2017, 2019). This study provides insight into the stories and experiences of young adults in their conversations with their parents

about pornography. An open relationship climate, a discussion-based conversation structure, specificity in conversation details, parental affirmation of child curiosity, and an appropriate conversation context emerged as characteristics of the conversation that contributed to young adults' positive perceptions of the conversation. On the other hand, a closed relationship climate, a lecture-based conversation structure, ambiguity in conversation details, parental denial of child curiosity, and an inappropriate conversation context were characteristics of the conversation that contributed to young adults' negative perceptions of the conversation. Knowing what characteristics positively or negatively shape the perceptions of young adults in parent-child conversations about pornography has many practical implications. The following section will cover these practical implications in greater detail.

Practical Implications

For a study focused on the perspectives of young adults, the findings offer many practical suggestions for parents. In this study, I interviewed 18 participants about their experiences, and five themes emerged that influenced how these young adults perceived conversations with their parents about pornography. Due to the interpretive nature of this work, these five themes cannot be generalized beyond the 18 participants of this study; however, the findings nevertheless offer helpful starting points for parents to better navigate these conversations with their children.

In facilitating open relationships with their children about issues like pornography, parents possess the communicative capacity to form positive, supportive, and affirming experiences for their children. Participants reported that anything from going on family vacations, spending time at the dinner table, or just going on walks are all great activities that facilitate openness and connectedness in relationships. Research shows that conversationally oriented families facilitate more open and connected environments through shared activities and open

communication (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2013). Participants also valued parents who were intentional with them and who worked hard to create household environments that supported them and helped them think critically about the world around them, including with the issue of pornography. Research shows that families that balance communicating expectations while demonstrating support for the thoughts and feelings of one another help children open up more with their parents about issues like sexuality (Fisher, 1986). Parents who facilitate strong, open relationships with their children may find that their children perceive those conversations in a more positive light (Byrne, et al., 2014; Hertlein, 2012), which is consistent with findings from the present study. When established norms of open communication are created in the home, this can strengthen conversations about many topics (Byrne & Lee, 2011), including pornography. The implications for the findings of this study show that parents possess the communication skills needed to form positive, supportive, and affirming experiences for children surrounding the issue of pornography.

Parents can also consider changing their approach to difficult conversations about pornography with their children. Instead of censoring or limiting what their children say about the issue, parents may consider asking more open-ended questions to their children and providing them with the space to speak. Dailey (2006) found that in parent-child communication about difficult topics, parents who are receptive and accepting towards their children have children who are more likely to disclose information about that topic. Parents who choose to listen like some of the participants' parents in this study may find that their children perceive conversations with them about pornography more positively. Participants in this study valued conversations with their parents in which they felt like they were a welcome voice in the

discussion, and parents who can facilitate these kinds of conversations, as opposed to giving a one-sided lecture to their kid, may experience stronger connections with their children.

The results also imply that parents who share information about themselves, provide specific details, and talk about issues of health, safety, and personal responsibility in their conversations with their children about pornography will have young adults who perceive those conversations more positively. Parents who can continue to seek out information (Zurcher, 2017, 2019) and disclose more with their children about personal experiences they have gone through may be able to communicate more comfortability about the topic with their kids and come across more confident with their children. Research shows that parents who educate themselves about topics of sex while conducting themselves in a conversational manner with their children report experiencing success in helping their children in avoiding risky sexual behaviors (Afifi et al., 2008; Holman & Koenig Kellas, 2018). The results of this study show that many young adults value having parents who communicate concrete details about the issue and appear informed about the issue.

Parents should also be careful not to give off the impression that they know everything about a topic but should instead ask their children questions. Research shows that many parents often do not inquire about their children's online activity until they sense a problem (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008; Nathanson, 2002), which can create issues in the parent-child relationship. Several participants in this study recalled how sometimes their parents would just assume they knew what was going on in the lives of their children without actually inquiring. Participants expressed wanting to have honest conversations about the topic but were frustrated when their parents tiptoed around the issue. As several participants shared, open relationship climates can help facilitate more positive conversations about taboo topics like porn, and previous research

suggests that positive parent-child conversations about porn may reduce any potential for disrupting family functioning and relational quality (Zurcher, 2017). Instead of making assumptions about their children and the issue, parents should initiate honest and direct conversations with their children to help navigate the issue.

Finally, parents may consider selecting more intentional locations to have a conversation about pornography with their children. As participants indicated, the appropriateness of the context is less about an objective location that is universally appropriate and more about the child's subjective perception of the time and place as appropriate. Choosing an appropriate conversation context may require that parents reflect more on the relationships they have with their children, when and where they typically have conversations about difficult and sensitive topics, and what they can envision their child being more comfortable with. Being intentional with the space is almost as important as the conversation itself according to many participants. Overall, the results of this study provide helpful tips and suggestions for parents to think about when navigating the issue of pornography with their children.

<div align="center">**Limitations and Future Directions**</div>

Despite the strengths of the present study, several limitations to this project warrant discussion. First, the sample was a convenience sample of college students from a large, public university in the Midwestern United States. The individuals included in the sample were limited to students from one university, which limits the possible experiences, beliefs, perspectives, family dynamics, and attitudes about pornography represented in the study. Given that the present study is interpretive in its approach, the aim of this project was not to generalize the results from this sample to the broader population. Still, future research may find it worthwhile to examine whether the present results generalize to other samples. Future research could

approach this topic through quantitative methods that would better allow for generalizing the findings to a broader population. It is also worth noting that several of the participants in the study mentioned that their culture impacted the ways that they talked about pornography with their parents, and future research can explore how culture may impact parent-child conversations about pornography.

The results of this study also share many similarities with family communication research about family communication patterns, a theory that scholars may find worthwhile exploring in greater detail concerning parent-child communication about pornography. According to Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2006) in a review of literature surrounding family communication patterns, FCP has been studied in multiple communication contexts like conflict resolution, family rituals, and political conversations; however, in issues pertaining to sex and sexuality, FCP has not been studied extensively. Keating et al (2013) explored FCP in the context of parent-child communication about sex and sexuality, but the issue of pornography needs further investigation. The theory of FCP states that families vary in conversation and conformity orientation type because of predictable communicative behaviors between parents and children. Although this study explored the topic of pornography from a narrative lens, a FCP theoretical lens would help scholars explore parent-child communication in greater, more generalizable ways. The theory of FCP could be used to examine how the four family types (i.e., consensual, pluralistic, protective, and laissez-faire) handle these conversations. Future studies could explore different family types from the perspectives of parents and children, providing further application for the theory and greater understanding about how conversation orientation and conformity orientation impact the topic of pornography.

Future research can also investigate the role of gender in parent-child communication about pornography. Throughout the interviews I conducted, it was interesting to note the number of women in the present study who approached their parents to talk about pornography because of revenge porn incidents or the solicitation of nudes, whether experienced by themselves or their women friends. On the other hand, the men who participated in the present study tended to approach their parents to talk about the actual content of pornography. From these initial interviews, it appears that gender may impact how parent-child conversations about pornography came about and how young men and women perceive these conversations differently.

Gender may also impact how parents prepare to talk about the issue with their children. For example, women may be motivated to speak differently with their parents about pornography than men. In this study, many women had parents who helped them navigate issues related to safety and relationships while many of the men discussed the actual content and how to navigate it as a consumer of the content. Some of the young men discussed pornography in the context of relationships, but it was often after they had been caught watching the material or initiated a conversation with their parents to process how they should navigate the material. Either way, parental strategies in helping their kids navigate the topic may depend on the gender of the child. Future studies can explore how the gender of the child may affect the approach that parents should take. Moreover, many of the participants mentioned having one parent that they went to more than the other about pornography, typically the parent of the same gender as the child: The young men tended to go to their dad, and the young women tended to go to their mom. There were a few exceptions where participants mentioned having conversations about porn with the opposite-gender parent and either (a) those conversations did not go well or (b) they went really well but were rare stories. One participant specifically said that he believed gender may play a

role in his interactions with his parents about this topic. Future research can explore the factors affecting children's choice of the parent with whom to have a conversation about pornography.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to better understand parent-child conversations about pornography, specifically from the perspective of the child. Although previous research has explored how parents perceive these conversations, little to no research has explored the young adult perspective. In conducting this study, I hoped to better understand what characteristics emerge in parent-child interactions about porn that make these conversations positive or negative for children. The findings of this study suggest that children perceive conversations about pornography with their parents negatively when there is a closed relationship climate, a lecture-based conversation structure, conversation ambiguity, parental denial of their curiosity, and an inappropriate conversation context. On the other hand, children perceive these conversations positively when there is an open relationship climate, a discussion-based conversation structure, conversation specificity, parental affirmation of their curiosity, and an appropriate conversation context.

Overall, this study contributes to family communication research about pornography by approaching the topics through the narrative lenses of children rather than from the perspective of the parents. The present study filled research gaps surrounding what characteristics of parent-child conversations about pornography elicit positive and negative perceptions about those conversations among children. The findings of this study may help parents and children communicatively navigate conversations about pornography in a way that is more constructive for the children.

REFERENCES

Adrian, M., Berk, M. S., Korslund, K., Whitlock, K., McCauley, E., & Linehan, M. (2018). Parental validation and invalidation predict adolescent self-harm. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 49*(4), 274–281. https://doi.org/10.1037/pro0000200

Afifi, W. A., & Guerro, L. K. (1999). Motivations underlying topic avoidance in close relationships. In Petronio, C. (Ed.) *Balancing the secrets of private disclosure*. Psychology Press.

Afifi, T. D., Joseph, A., & Aldeis, D. (2008). Why can't we just talk about it?: An observational study of parents' and adolescents' conversations about sex. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, *23*(6), 689-721. https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558408323841

Allen, J. P., Aber, J. L., & Leadbeater, B. J. (1990). Adolescent problem behaviors: The influence of attachment and autonomy. *Psychiatric Clinics*, *13*(3), 455-467. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0193-953X(18)30354-X

Allen, J. P., & Loeb, E. L. (2015). The autonomy-connection challenge in adolescent-peer relationships. *Child Development Perspectives*, *9*(2), 101-105. https://doi.org/10.1111/cdep.12111

Applegate, J. L. (1980). Person-centered and position-centered teacher communication in aday care center. *Studies in Symbolic Interactionism*, *3*, 59–96. Retrieved from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/j.1468-2958.2001.tb00793.x

Askelson, N. M., Camp, S., & Smith, S. (2012). Mother-daughter communication about sex: The influence of authoritative parenting style. *Health Communication*, *27*(5), 439-448. https://doi.org/10.1080/10410236.2011.606526

Barbato, C. A., Graham, E. E., & Perse, E. M. (2009). Communicating in the family: An
examination of the relationship of family communication climate and interpersonal
communication motives. *Journal of Family Communication*, *3*(3), 123-148.
https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327698JFC0303_01

Baxter, L. A., & Braithwaite, D. O. (2008). Relational dialectics theory: Crafting meaning from
competing discourses. In L. A. Baxter & D. O. Braithwaite (Ed), *Engaging theories of
interpersonal communication* (pp. 349-357). SAGE Publications, Inc.

Baxter, L. A., & Norwood, K. M. (2015). Relational dialectics theory: Navigating meaning from
competing discourses. In Braithwaite, D. & Schrodt, P. (Eds), *Engaging theories in
interpersonal communication* (2nd ed.) (pp. 321-334). SAGE Publications, Inc.

Baxter, L. A., & Montgomery, B. M. (1996). *Relating: Dialogues and dialectics*. Guilford Press.

Baxter, L. A., & Scharp, K. M. (2015). Dialectical tensions in relationships. In C. R. Berger & M.
E. Roloff (Ed.), *The International Encyclopedia of Interpersonal Communication*. John
Wiley & Sons, Inc. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118540190.wbeic0017

Baxter, L. A., & Wilmot, W. W. (1985). Taboo topics in close relationships. *Journal of Social
and Personal Relationships*, *2*(1), 253-269. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407585023002

Bostwick, J., & Bucci, J. (2008). Internet sex addiction treated with naltrexone. *Mayo Clinic
Proceedings*, *83*(2), 226–230. https://doi.org/10.4065/83.2.226

Braithwaite, D., & Schrodt, P. (Eds). (2015). *Engaging theories in interpersonal communication*
(2nd ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc.

Braun, V., & Clark, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in
Psychology*, *3*(2), 77-101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Bridge, K., & Baxter, L. A. (1992). Blended relationships: Friends as work associates. *Western Journal of Communication*, *56*(3), 200-225. https://doi.org/10.1080/10570319209374414

Burleson, B. R. (1982). The development of comforting communication skills in childhood and adolescents. *Child Development*, *53*(6), 1578–1588. https://doi.org/10.2307/1130086

Burleson, B. R. (1994). Comforting messages: Features, functions, and outcomes. In J. A. Daly & J. M. Wiemann (Eds.), *Strategic interpersonal communication* (pp. 135–161). Erlbaum.

Buzzell, T. (2005). The effects of sophistication, access, and monitoring on use of pornography in three technological contexts. *Deviant Behavior*, *26*(2), 109-132. https://doi.org/10.1080/01639620590518988

Byrne, S., Katz, S. J., Lee, T., Linz, D., & Mcilrath, M. (2014). Peers, predators, and porn: Predicting parental underestimation of children's risky online experiences. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *19*(2), 215-231. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcc4.12040

Byrne, S., & Lee, T. (2011). Toward predicting youth resistance to internet risk prevention strategies. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, *55*(1), 90–113. https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2011.546255

Charon, R. (2001). Narrative medicine: Form, function, and ethics. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, *134*(1), 83-87. https://doi.org/10.7326/0003-4819-134-1-200101020-00024

Chen, G. (2009). Relationships of the dimensions of intercultural communication competence. *Communication Quarterly*, *37*(2), 118-133. https://doi.org/10.1080/01463378909385533

Clair, R. P., & Mattson, M. (2013). From accident to activity: An ethnographic study of

 community engagement—From symbolic violence to heroic discourse. *Tamara Journal*

 for Critical Organization Inquiry, *11*(4), 27-40. Retrieved from

 https://search.proquest.com/docview/1470048302/fulltextPDF/F3CB298A00AB4254PQ/

 1?accountid=13360

Clair, R. P., Rastogi, R., Blatchley III, E. R., Clawson, R. A., Erdmann, C., & Lee, S. (2016).

 Extended narrative empathy: Poly-narratives and the practice of open defecation.

 Communication Theory, *26*(4), 469-488. https://doi.org/10.1111/comt.12100

Cools, C. A. (2006). Relational communication in intercultural couples. *Language in*

 Intercultural Communication, *6*(3-4), 262-274. https://doi.org/10.2167/laic253.0

Cooper, A., Delmonico, D. L., & Burg, R. (2000). Cybersex users, abusers, and compulsives:

 New findings and implications. *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity: The Journal of*

 Treatment and Prevention, *7*(1–2), 5–29. https://doi.org/10.1080/10720160008400205

Cooper, A., Griffin-Shelley, E., Delmonico, D., & Mathy, R. (2001). Online sexual problems:

 Assessment and predictive variables. *Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity: Journal of*

 Treatment and Prevention, *8*, 267–285. https://doi.org/10.1080/107201601753459964

Cullaty, B. (2011). The role of parental involvement in the autonomy development of traditional-

 age college students. *Journal of College Student Development*, *52*(4), 425-439.

 https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2011.0048

Dailey, R. M. (2006). Confirmation in parent–adolescent relationships and adolescent openness:

 Toward extending confirmation theory. *Communication Monographs*, *73*(4), 434–458.

 https://doi.org/10.1080/03637750601055432

D'Orlando, F. (2009). The demand for pornography. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, *12*, 51-75.

      https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-009-9175-0

Elwood, T. D., & Schrader, D. C. (1998). Family communication patterns and communication

      apprehension. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, *13*(3), 493-502. Retrieved

      from https://search.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/family-communication-patterns-

      apprehension/docview/1292312616/se-2?accountid=13360

Elwyn, G., & Gwyn, R. (1999). Stories we hear and stories we tell: Analysing talk in clinical

      practice. *BMJ*, *318*(1), 186-188. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.318.7177.186

El-Shaieb, M., & Wurtele, S. K. (2009). Parents' plans to discuss sexuality with their young

      children. *American Journal of Sexuality Education*, *4*(2), 103-115.

      https://doi.org/10.1080/15546120903001357

Evans, R. W., Avery, P. G., & Pederson, P. V. (2000). Taboo topics: cultural restraint on

      teaching social issues. *The Clearing House*, *73*(5), 295-302.

      https://doi.org/10.1080/00098650009600973

Fisher, T. D. (1986). Parent-child communication about sex and young adolescents' sexual

      knowledge and attitudes. *Adolescence*, *21*(83), 517–527. Retrieved from

      https://search.proquest.com/docview/1295905016?accountid=13360

Flood, M. (2009). The harms of pornography exposure among children and young people. *Child*

      Abuse Review, *18*(6), 384-400. https://doi.org/10.1002/car.1092

Forward, G. L., Livolsi, A. S., & McGovern, J. (2008). College student communication, religiosity and family communication: The importance of opposite-sex parent relationships. *Journal of Communication & Religion*, *31*(2), 245-271. Retrieved from http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=a7532ab9-5cfb-40c6-a7a4-c5dd417093fc%40sessionmgr104

Fox, J., Osborn, J. L., & Warber, K. M. (2014). Relational dialectics and social networking sites: The role of Facebook in romantic relationship escalation, maintenance, conflict, and dissolution. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *35*(1), 527-534. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2014.02.031

Fuligni, A. J., & Tsai, K. M. (2015). Developmental flexibility in the age of globalization: Autonomy and identity development among immigrant adolescents. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *66*, 411-431. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010814-01511

Garro, L. C., & Mattingly, C. (2000). *Narrative and the cultural construction of illness and healing*. University of California Press.

Gergen, K. J., & Gergen, M. M. (1988). Narrative and the self as relationship. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (*Vol. 21*, pp. 17–56). Academic Press. https://doi.org/10.1016/s0065-2601(08)60223-3

Gibb, J. R. (1965). Defensive communication. *ETC: A Review of General Semantics*, *22*(2), 221-229. Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/42574118

Greenhalgh, T. (1999). Narrative based medicine in an evidence based world. *BMJ*, *318*(1), 318-323. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.318.7179.323

Guerrero, L. K., & Afifi, W. A. (1995). Some things are better left unsaid: Topic avoidance in

    family relationships. *Communication Quarterly*, *43*(3), 276-296.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/01463379509369977

Greenfield, P. M. (2004). Inadvertent exposure to pornography on the Internet: Implications of

    peer-to-peer file-sharing networks for child development and families. *Applied*

    Developmental Psychology, *25*, 741-750. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2004.09.009

Grossman, J. M., Jenkins, L. J., & Richer, A. M. (2018). Parents' perspectives on family

    sexuality communication from middle school to high school. *International Journal of*

    Environmental Research and Public Health, *15(1)*, 107–121.

    https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph15010107

Grubbs, J., Exline, J., Pargament, K., Hook, J., & Carlisle, R. (2015). Transgression as addiction:

    Religiosity and moral disapproval as predictors of perceived addiction to pornography.

    Archives of Sexual Behavior, *44*(1), 125–136. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-013-0257-z

Henry, C.S. (1994). Family system characteristics, parental behaviors, and adolescent family life

    satisfaction. *Family Relations*, *43*(4), 447–455. https://doi.org/10.2307/58537

Hertlein, K. M. (2012). Digital dwelling: Technology in couple and family relationships. *Family*

    Relations, *61*(3), 374-387. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3729.2012.00702.x

Holman, A., & Koenig Kellas, J. (2018). "Say something instead of nothing": Adolescents'

    perceptions of memorable conversations about sex-related topics with their parents.

    Communication Monographs, *85*(3), 357-379.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/03637751.2018.1426870

Huxley, E., & Bizumic, B. (2017). Parental invalidation and the development of narcissism. *The*

    Journal of Psychology, *151*(2), 130-147. https://doi.org/10.1080/00223980.2016.1248807

Jackl, J. A. (2018a). "Do you understand why I don't share that?": Exploring tellability within

    untellable romantic relationship origin tales. *Western Journal of Communication*, *82*(3),

    315-335. https://doi.org/10.1080/10570314.2017.1347274

Jackl, J. A. (2018b). Rules of telling: Exploring narrative adaptation. *Journal of Social and*

    Personal Relationships, *35*(2), 263-283. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407516681539

Jackson, S., Bijstra, J., Oostra, L., & Bosma, H. (1998). Adolescents' perceptions of

    communication with parents relative to specific aspects of relationships with parents and

    personal development. *Journal of Adolescence*, *21*(3), 305–322.

    https://doi.org/10.1006/jado.1998.015

Jacobellis v. Ohio, 378 U.S. 184 (1964)

Johnson, W. B., Jensen, K. C., Sera, H., & Cimbora, D. M. (2018). Ethics and relational

    dialectics in mentoring relationships. *Training and Education in Professional*

    Psychology, *12*(1), 14-21. https://doi.org/10.1037/tep0000166

Jones, S. M., Bodie, G. D., & Koerner, A. F. (2017). Connections between family

    communication patterns, person-centered message evaluations, and emotion regulation

    strategies. *Human Communication Research*, *43*(2), 237-255.

    https://doi.org/10.1111/hcre.12103

Keating, D. M., Russell, J. C., Cornacchione, J., & Smith, S. W. (2013). Family communication

    patterns and difficult family conversations. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*,

    41(2), 160–180. https://doi.org/10.1080/00909882.2013.781659

Kins, E., Beyers, Wim, Soenens, B., & Vansteenkiste, M. (2009). Patterns of home leaving and

    subjective well-being in emerging adulthood: The role of motivational processes and

    parental autonomy support. *Developmental Psychology*, *45*(5), 1416-1429.

    https://doi.org/10.1037/a0015580

Koenig Kellas, J. (2005). Family ties: Communicating identity through jointly told family

    stories. *Communication Monographs*, *72(4)*, 365–389.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/03637750500322453

Koenig Kellas, J. (2013). Framing family: An introduction. In J. Koenig Kellas (Ed.), *Family*

    storytelling: Negotiating identities, teaching lessons, and making meaning (pp. 1–13).

    Routledge.

Koenig Kellas, J., Kranstuber, H., Willer, E. K., & Carr, K. (2015). The benefits and risks of

    storytelling and storylistening over time: Experimentally testing the expressive writing

    paradigm in the context of interpersonal communication. *Health Communication*, *30*(9),

    843–858. https://doi.org/10.1080/10410236.2013.850017

Koenig Kellas, J., Trees, A. R., Schrodt, P., LeClair-Underberg, C., & Willer, E. K. (2010).

    Exploring links between well-being and interactional sense-making in married couples'

    jointly told stories of stress. *Journal of Family Communication*, *10*(3), 174–193.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/15267431.2010.489217

Koerner, A. F., & Fitzpatrick, M. A. (1997). Family type and conflict: The impact of

    conversation orientation and conformity orientation on conflict in the family.

    Communication Studies, *48*(1), 59-75. https://doi.org/10.1080/10510979709368491

Koerner, A. F., & Fitzpatrick, M. A. (2002). Understanding family communication patterns and

family functioning: The roles of conversation orientation and conformity orientation.

Annals of the International Communication Association, *26*(1), 36-65.

https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.2002.11679010

Koerner, A. F., & Fitzpatrick, M. A. (2006). Family communication patterns theory: A social

cognitive approach. In D. O. Braithwaite & L. A. Baxter (Eds.), *Engaging theories in*

family communication: Multiple perspectives (pp. 50-65). Sage.

Koerner, A. F., & Fitzpatrick, M. A. (2013). Communication in intact families. In A. L.

Vangelisti (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of family communication* (2nd ed.; pp. 129-

144). Routledge.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage Publications, Inc.

Livingstone, S., & Helsper, E. J. (2008). Parental mediation of children's Internet use. *Journal of*

Broadcasting and Electronic Media, *52*(4), 581–599.

https://doi.org/10.1080/08838150802437396

Maccoby, E. E., & Martin, J. A. (1983). Socialization in the context of the family: Parent-child

interaction. In P. Mussen (Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology* (Vol. 4, pp. 1–101). Wiley.

McCarty, C. A., Zimmerman, F. J., Digiuseppe, D. L., & Christakis, D. A. (2005).

Parental emotional support and subsequent internalizing and externalizing problems

among children. *Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics, 26*(4), 267-275. Retrieved

from

https://journals.lww.com/jrnldbp/fulltext/2005/08000/parental_emotional_support_and_s

ubsequent.2.aspx?casa_token=X6D3R9e_DsEAAAAA:0f4WMP9HfrCP_0JMWxUe0Kz

0wV0zynKUXdSLO_zcJaJBgGROiVskuiV2JiZpDpPNoQYAQnSnbjjtC6dJepJJqCNp#ej-article-sam-container

Mead, D. (2016). The risks young people face as porn consumers. *Addicta: The Turkish Journal on Addictions*, *3*(3), 387–400. https://doi.org/10.15805/addicta.2016.3.0109

Middleton, A. V., Pusateri, K. B., & Caughlin, J. P. (2017). A normative approach to parent-young adult child communication in the context of substance use disorders: Explicating parents' communication challenges and strategies. *Journal of Family Communication*, *17(1)*, 49–64. https://doi.org/10.1080/15267431.2016.1251918

Miller-Day, M., Pezalla, A., & Chesnut, R. (2013). Children are in families too! The presence of children in communication research. *Journal of Family Communication*, *13*(2), 150-165. https://doi.org/10.1080/15267431.2013.768251

Mirabile, S. P. (2015). Ignoring children's emotions: A novel ignoring subscale for the Coping with Children's Negative Emotions Scale. *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, *12*(4), 459-471. https://doi.org/10.1080/17405629.2015.1037735

Montgomery, B. M. (1993). Relationship maintenance versus relationship change: A dialectical dilemma. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *10*(2), 205-223. https://doi.org/10.1177/026540759301000203

Nathanson, A. I. (2002). The unintended effects of parental mediation of television on adolescents. *Media Psychology*, *4*(3), 207–230. https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532785XMEP0403_01

Noller, P. (1994). Relationships with parents in adolescence: Process and outcome. In Montemayor, R., Adams, G. R., & Gullotta, T. P. (Eds.), *Personal relationships during adolescence* (1 ed., pp. 37–77). Sage.

Owen, W. F. (1984). Interpretive themes in relational communication. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, *70*(3), 274-287. https://doi.org/10.1080/00335638409383697

Owens, E. W., Behun, R. J., Manning, J. C., & Reid, R. C. (2012). The impact of internet pornography on adolescents: A review of the research. *Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity*, *19*(1-2), 99–122. https://doi.org/10.1080/10720162.2012.660431

Pariera, K. L. (2016). Barriers and prompts to parent-child sexual communication. *Journal of Family Communication*, *16*(3), 277-283. https://doi.org/10.1080/15267431.2016.1181068

Pariera, K. L., & Turner, J. W. (2020). Invitational rhetoric between parents and adolescents: Strategies for successful communication. *Journal of Family Communication*, *20*(2), 175-188. https://doi.org/10.1080/15267431.2020.1729157

Perrin, P. C., Madanat, H. N., Barnes, M. D., Carolan, A., Clark, R. B., Ivins, N., Tuttle, S. R., Vogeler, H. A., & Williams, P. N. (2008). Health education's role in framing pornography as a public health issue: local and national strategies with international implications. *Promotion & Education*, *15*(1), 11-18. https://doi.org/10.1177/1025382307088093

Peter, J., & Valkenburg, P. M. (2009). Adolescents' exposure to sexually explicit internet material and notions of women as sex objects: Assessing causality and underlying processes. *Journal of Communication*, *59*(3), 407–433. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2009.01422

Polkinghorne, D. E. (1989). Phenomenological research methods. In R. S. Valle & Halling, S. (Eds.), *Existential phenomenological perspectives in psychology* (pp. 41-60). Plenum Press. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4615-6989-3_3

Rasmussen, E. E. (2013). Theoretical underpinnings of reducing the media's negative effect on

    children: Person-centered, negative-evaluative mediation within a persuasion framework.

    In E. L. Cohen (Ed.), *Communication Yearbook 37* (pp. 379–406). Routledge.

Rasmussen, E. E., Ortiz, R. R., & White, S. R. (2015). Emerging adults' responses to active

    mediation of pornography during adolescence. *Journal of Children and Media*, *9*(2), 160-

    176. https://doi.org/10.1080/17482798.2014.997769

Reid, R. C., Li, D. S., Gilliland, R., Stein, J. A., & Fong, T. (2011). Reliability, validity, and

    psychometric development of the Pornography Consumption Inventory in a sample of

    hypersexual men. *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy*, *37*(5), 359–385.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/0092623X.2011.607047

Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Sage.

Robinson, S. L. (2010). Defining pornography. *Social Sciences Journal*, *10*(1), 69-74.

    https://repository.wcsu.edu/ssj/vol10/iss1/15

Rothman, E. F., Paruk, J., Espensen, A., Temple, J. R., & Adams, K. (2017). A qualitative study

    of what US parents say and do when their young children seek pornography. *Academic

    Pediatrics*, *17*(8), 844-849. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acap.2017.04.014

Rozema, H. J. (1986). Defensive communication climate as a barrier to sex education in the

    home. *Family Relations*, *35*(4), 531-537. Retrieved from

    https://www.jstor.org/stable/584514

Sabina, C., Wolak, J., & Finkelhor, D. (2008). The nature and dynamics of internet pornography

    exposure for youth. *Cyber Psychology & Behavior*, *11*(6), 691-693.

    https://doi.org/10.1089/cpb.2007.0179

Saunders, B., Sim, J., Kingstone, T., Baker, S., Waterfield, J., Bartlam, B., Burroughs, H., & Jinks., C. (2018). Saturation in qualitative research: Exploring its conceptualization and operalization. *Quality & Quanitity*, *52*, 1893-1907. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-017-0574-8

Schrodt, P., & Shimkowski, J. R. (2017). Family communication patterns and perceptions of coparental communication. *Communication Reports*, *30*(1), 39-50. https://doi.org/10.1080/08934215.2015.1111400

Sniewski, L., Farvid, P., & Carter, P. (2018). The assessment and treatment of adult heterosexual men with self-perceived problematic pornography use: A review. *Addictive Behaviors*, *77*, 217-224. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2017.10.010

Steinberg, L. (2005). Cognitive and affective development in adolescence. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, *9*(2), 69-74. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2004.12.005

Stone, N. (2012). 'Where do babies come from?' Barriers to early sexuality communication between parents and young children. *Sex Education*, *13*(2), 228-240. https://doi.org/10.1080/14681811.2012.737776

Stroud, S. R. (2014). The dark side of the online self: A pragmatist critique of the growing plague of revenge porn. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, *29*(3), 168-183. https://doi.org/10.1080/08900523.2014.917976

Štulhofer, A., Buško, V., & Schmidt, G. (2012). Adolescent exposure to pornography and relationship intimacy in young adulthood. *Psychology & Sexuality*, *3*(2), 95-107. https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2010.537367

Taylor, E. (2018). Pornography as a public health issue: Promoting violence and exploitation of children, youth, and adults. *Dignity: A Journal on Sexual Exploitation and Violence*, *3*(2), 1-49. https://doi.org/10.23860/dignity.2018.03.02.08

Trees, A. R., & Koenig Kellas, J. (2009). Telling tales: Enacting family relationships in joint storytelling about difficult family experiences. *Western Journal of Communication*, *73(1)*, 91–111. https://doi.org/10.1080/10570310802635021

Tsitsika, A., Critselis, E., Kormas, D., Konstantoulaki, E., Constantopoulos, A., & Kafetzis, D. (2009). Adolescent pornographic Internet site use: A multivariate regression analysis of the predictive factors of use and psychosocial implications. *CyberPsychology and Behavior*, *12*(5), 545–550. https://doi.org/10.1089/cpb.2008.0346

Vangelisti, A. L. (1994). Family secrets: Forms, functions and correlates. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*. *11*(1), 113-135. https://doi:10.1177/0265407594111007

Weiss, R. S. (1994). *Learning from strangers: The art and method of qualitative interview studies*. The Free Press.

Weiss, R. (2012). How much porn is too much porn? *PsychCentral*. Retrieved from https://blogs.psychcentral.com/sex/2012/03/porn/

Weiss, R. (2019). The prevalence of porn. *Psych Central*. Retrieved from https://blogs.psychcentral.com/sex/2013/05/the-prevalence-of-porn/

Whisnant, R. (2016). Pornography, humiliation, and consent. *Sexualization, Media, & Society*, *2*(3), 1-7. https://doi.org/10.1177/2374623816662876

White, M., & Epston, D. (1990). *Narrative means to therapeutic ends*. W.W. Norton & Company.

Williams, A., & Thurlow, C. (Eds.). (2005). *Talking adolescence: Perspectives on communication in the teenage years*. Peter Lang.

Willoughby, B., J. & Busby, D. M. (2015). In the eye of the beholder: Exploring variations in perceptions of pornography. *The Journal of Sex Research*, *53*(6), 678-688. https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2015.1013601

Wood, H. (2011). The internet and its role in the escalation of sexually compulsive behavior. *Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy*, *25*(2), 127–142. https://doi.org/10.1080/02668734.2011.576492

Wood, J. T. (2020). *Interpersonal communication: Everyday encounters*. Cengage Learning.

Wright, P. J., & Randall, A. K. (2012). Internet pornography exposure and risky sexual behavior among adult males in the United States. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *28*(4), 1410-1416. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2012.03.003

Zurcher, J. D. (2017). Exploring descriptive norms of parent-child communication about pornography among parents of middle-schoolers. *Journal of Children and Media*, *11*(4), 381-398. https://doi.org/10.1080/17482798.2017.1312471

Zurcher, J. D. (2019). The interplay between peer and authoritative injunctive norms of parents discussing pornography with adolescents. *American Journal of Sexuality in Education*, *14*(4), 514-530. https://doi.org/10.1080/15546128.2019.1635059

APPENDIX A. RESEARCH PARTICIPATION SYSTEM INFORMATION

Abstract	This study is about how young adults perceive conversations they have had with their parents about pornography.
Description	The purpose of this study is to understand the stories young adults share about conversations they have had with their parents about pornography. You will participate in a 30-60 minute phone interview by signing up for an available time on the following page, followed by the researcher's contact information.
Eligibility Requirements	To be eligible for the study, you must be (a) 18 to 25 years old, (b) able to recall a conversation or brief encounter you've had about pornography with your parents, and (c) be comfortable sharing your story about that experience
Preparation	After signing up for an interview timeslot, the researcher will contact you to confirm your eligibility, provide more information about the study, and get your phone number for the phone interview.

Participant Sign-Up Deadline	72 hours before the study is to occur
Participant Cancellation Deadline	24 hours before the study is to occur

APPENDIX B. PARTICIPANT CONFIRMATION EMAIL

Hi [Participant],

Thank you so much for signing up to participate in the study "Parent-Child Communication About Pornography" on **[Day], [Month], [Year] at [Time]**. My name is Josh Johnson and I will be facilitating our phone interview.

To clarify, eligibility for this study means you are (a) 18-25 years old, (b) able to recall a conversation or brief encounter you've had with your parents about pornography, and (c) comfortable sharing your story about that experience.

Before proceeding, ***please reply to this email message*** to (1) confirm you meet the study eligibility criteria and (2) provide your phone number. **If I do not receive this information before the interview timeslot, the appointment will be canceled**.

Attached to this message is an electronic version of the study consent form. Please review this *before* our phone interview. You will want to find a private location of your choice from which to participate in the phone interview. I will also conduct the phone interview in a private location myself. The day of the interview, I will call you at the appointment time.

Please let me know if you have any questions!

All the best,

Josh Johnson

APPENDIX C. CONSENT FORM

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM
Research Study Title: Parent-Child Communication About Pornography
Researcher(s): Josh Johnson, Emily Buehler
Brian Lamb School of Communication
Purdue University

Key Information

Please take time to review this information carefully. This is a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary which means that you may choose not to participate at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may ask questions to the researchers about the study whenever you would like. If you decide to take part in the study, you will be asked to sign this form, be sure you understand what you will do and any possible risks or benefits.

This study is about how young adults perceive conversations they have had with their parents about pornography. Your responses will give us important information and insight about how young people experience these conversations and why they respond the way they do. Your participation in this study will take approximately 30-60 minutes.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this study is to understand the conversations about pornography that young adults have had with their parents. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are between 18 and 25 years old, able to recall a conversation or brief encounter you have had about pornography with your parent(s), and comfortable sharing your story about that experience. We would like to interview up to 25 people.

What will I do if I choose to be in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, you will participate in a phone interview with one of the researchers. During the interview, you will be asked questions about your views on pornography, the conversation you had with your parents about it, and questions concerning family relationships and dynamics. The interview will be audio-recorded and only the researcher will have access to the recording.

How long will I be in the study?

If you agree to be in this study, the interview should take about 30-60 minutes to complete.

What are the possible risks or discomforts?

The known risks of this study are no greater than you would encounter in a conversation with a friend. Some individuals may experience discomfort or loss of privacy when answering questions. Some individuals may disclose information that, if revealed outside the context of the study, could pose a risk for social stigmatization.

Due to the sensitive nature of the topic of this study, if for any reason you wish to speak to a counselor or psychologist about thoughts or feelings brought up during the course of this study, please call Purdue's Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at (765) 494-6995 to set up an appointment.

Any names or identifying information (e.g., names, locations) you share during the interview will be removed or replaced with pseudonyms when the interviews are transcribed. Transcripts and audio recordings will be managed in separate folders in Purdue Box, which is highly encrypted and password protected. Breach of confidentiality is always a risk with data, but we will take precautions to minimize this risk as described in the confidentiality section.

Are there any potential benefits?
Participants may not experience direct benefits of participation in this study; however, research shows that sharing stories often helps individuals make more sense of their own lives. The findings from this project will vary depending on participant experiences and relationships with parents. Your participation may help us to learn more about improving these conversations between parents and children. We hope the knowledge gained from this study will benefit others in the future.

Will I receive payment or other incentive?
You will receive extra credit for a communication course, as stated in your course syllabus.

Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?
Your confidentiality will be maintained by assigning an identification number to identify your interview responses when they are transcribed. All records will be maintained in password-protected computer systems. The interview will be audio-recorded and sent to a third party service for transcription. No one but the researcher will access the recording and transcription.

If information from this study is published or presented at scientific meetings, your name and other personal information will not be used.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information or what information came from you. Although it is unlikely, there are times when others may need to see the information we collect about you. For instance, the project's research records may be reviewed by the US DHHS Office for Human Research Protections and by departments at Purdue.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?
You do not have to participate in this research project. If you agree to participate, you may withdraw your participation at any time without penalty. Your decision to withdraw from your participation won't affect your grade, your relationship with your instructors, or your standing with Purdue University.

You will receive extra credit in exchange for your participation. Keep in mind that you can receive an equivalent amount of credit by completing an alternative should you choose not to

participate in this study. You can learn more about non-research alternatives to earning extra credit by reviewing your course syllabus or asking your course instructor.

Who can I contact if I have questions about the study?

If you have questions, comments or concerns about this research project, you can talk to Joshua Johnson, john2577@purdue.edu, (909) 913-4117.

To report anonymously via Purdue's Hotline see www.purdue.edu/hotline

If you have questions about your rights while taking part in the study or have concerns about the treatment of research participants, please call the Human Research Protection Program at (765) 494-5942, email (irb@purdue.edu) or write to:
> Human Research Protection Program - Purdue University
> Ernest C. Young Hall, Room 1032
> 155 S. Grant St.
> West Lafayette, IN 47907-2114

Documentation of Informed Consent
I have had the opportunity to read this consent form and have the research study explained. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research study, and my questions have been answered. I am prepared to participate in the research study described above.

You will be asked to verbally provide your consent to participate in this study during the phone interview. By answering "YES" during the phone interview, you certify that you are 18-25 years old, are able to recall a conversation or brief encounter you have had about pornography with your parent(s), are comfortable sharing your story about that experience, and agree to participate in the above described research study. You may be offered a copy of this consent form upon request.

APPENDIX D. INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Title of Research: Navigating a taboo topic in parent-child communication: Young adult stories about conversations with their parents about pornography

Principal Researcher: Joshua Johnson

I. INTRODUCTION

[Establish Rapport] Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this study. I'm grateful for your willingness to be interviewed about this important topic. The reason I'm interested in pornography is because I too have had conversations with my parents about pornography. As I reflect on my own experiences with my parents, I've grown curious in wondering what other people like myself have experienced, so I'm excited to hear your story as I am genuinely curious about what those conversations looked like for you.

[Purpose] During our time together, I want to hear more about your experience when you and your parents had that conversation about pornography. I know from your initial interest in the study that you have had a conversation with your parent(s) about pornography, so I want to hear more in depth about that experience, what happened leading up to that conversation, how you felt during it, and the conversation proceeded step by step.

[Motivation] My hope is that from our time together, I can gain a better understanding about your story, what your experience was like, and that you can hopefully gain a better understanding of yourself and your relationships with your parent(s).

[Timeline] Our time together should take approximately 30-60 minutes, but please feel free to expand on any responses you give. Do you have any questions before we begin?

*(**Transition:** Let's begin with a few starter questions before delving into the conversation you had with your parents about porn. To begin, I want to hear your thoughts and opinions about what you think about pornography in general)*

II. BODY

A. Tell me about yourself
- Age
- Gender
- Race
- Ethnicity

B. How would you describe your relationship with your parent(s)?

       1. Were they supportive?
           a. How did their words impact you growing up?
           b. Do you recall any key words or phrases that they used with you growing up

c. What examples come to mind?

        3. What emotions did you feel in these interactions?

B. <u>Can you tell me a story about yourself that was really impactful regarding that?</u>

*(**Transition:** So far you have shared about yourself and your parents. I'd like to transition into the some questions about your views about porn and delve into the conversation you had with your parent(s) about pornography)*

A. <u>When you hear the word pornography, what comes to mind? What do you think about it? Do any emotions, feelings, or thoughts come with it?</u>
        1. Can you tell me what is perhaps good about pornography?
        2. Can you tell me what is perhaps bad about pornography?

B. <u>Tell me about that conversation (e.g., Where were you? How old were you? What was the setting like? How did your parents address you?) Draw me in to that moment and what it was like</u>

        1. Where were you?
        2. What was the setting like
        3. How did your parents address you?
                What parts about the conversation stood out to you?
        4. What were you feeling?

        5. Thinking about the conversation you had with your parents about porn, did your parents approach other conversations growing up in similar/different ways?

C. <u>If the conversation could have occurred differently, what would you have preferred had happened? What would you have liked to have seen changed?</u>

D. <u>Since this conversation with your parents, have your views on pornography changed/shifted in any way?</u>

III. Conclusion

A. Is there anything else you would like to tell me? Any last thoughts or comments?

B. This is voluntary: are you willing to participate in a follow-up assessment for this study? I am looking for participants who are willing to review the final results of this study and assess if what is written reflects their experiences.

C. Thank you so much for taking the time to tell me more about your family, your upbringing, and your conversation with your parents about pornography. Your participation is helpful and I appreciate you taking the time to participate in this study. Many thanks!

APPENDIX E. STUDY FOLLOW-UP ASSESSMENT EMAIL TO PARTICIPANTS

Greetings!

You're receiving this email because you recently participated in the study ***"Parent-Child Communication About Pornography"*** and indicated at the end of or our interview that you would be interested in participating in a follow-up assessment.

<u>Procedure</u>: If you are still willing/available to participate, ***this follow-up assessment should take no more than 1-2 hours of your time***. You will (1) review the study results and (2) provide any feedback of any kind concerning the results (feedback you provide can be as short or long as you want). Feedback can be as simple as replying in an email response, "This really resonates with me, thank you so much!" or "This part did not make sense to me; can you clarify this or change this?" or anything like that. It could also include providing feedback in the document and/or just providing some overall response(s) to me in an email reply. Whatever you want!

<u>Purpose</u>: The purpose of this follow-up assessment is for me to (1) hear your thoughts about the results and (2) ensure that I have done my job as the researcher in adequately representing each story from participants to the best of my ability in this study.

<u>Response Deadline</u>: If you choose to participate, please provide any feedback by NEXT week, ***<u>Wednesday, April 14th by 5 PM EST</u>***. This will ensure I have time to review your feedback.

Attached to this message is the study results. It is about 30 pages, double-spaced, but don't let the size of the document surprise/overwhelm you. You can skim/read as much as you want. I collected stories from 18 participants (including yourself) and the results yielded five main themes that average about 5-6 pages each. This is normal for qualitative research. I will also mention that this is a rough draft of the manuscript. There may be grammar/writing errors unknown to me. Revisions will continue to be made in the upcoming weeks though the initial five themes are solidified.

Thank you SO much for your willingness to help! I really look forward to any feedback you can provide. Please let me know if you have any questions!

All the best,

Josh Johnson