Deviant domesticity: An exploration of the spatial arrangement of erotic spaces of webcam models

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Declaration

I certify that the work contained in this thesis, or any part of it, has not been accepted in substance for any previous degree awarded to me or any other person, and is not concurrently being submitted for any other degree other than that of Doctor of Philosophy which has been studied at the University of Greenwich. I also declare that the work contained in this thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise identified and acknowledged by references. I further declare that no aspects of the contents of this thesis are the outcome of any form of research misconduct. I declare any personal, sensitive or confidential information/data has been removed or participants have been anonymised. I further declare that where any questionnaires, survey answers or other qualitative responses of participants are recorded/included in the appendices, all personal information has been removed or anonymised. Where University forms (such as those from the Research Ethics Committee) have been included in appendices, all handwritten/scanned signatures have been removed.

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Abstract

The advancement of technological devices and ‘Web 2.0' has allowed users the opportunity to consume and produce content in different ways. Despite the growing significance of the internet, and its increased use for erotic purpose, research on webcamming is lacking, specifically regarding the relationship between the performer and how they construct and interact with their space. By taking an ethnographic approach to research, this thesis contributes to the understanding of the relationship between domestic space and sexual performance. From the data gathered in this research, I coined the term ‘constructed authenticity’ to show how performers carefully construct their performances spaces to appear authentic to their viewers, demonstrating the interplay between 'real' and 'reel'. Throughout this research, I argue how the interconnectivity that webcamming provides creates a more fluid idea of how surveillance and visibility in the domestic space can be understood, moving past the binary concept of the private and public realms. This thesis provides a contribution to the criminological understanding of erotic spaces of webcam performers and how these spaces can be linked to gender performativity.

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1. Introduction

It was my first year of my PhD study. I was looking at deviant spaces yet struggled to commit to a specific research question. As such, I did like most hopeless souls do, I took a flight to Amsterdam. It was a freezing cold Saturday night in November as I walked through the cobbled streets of the red-light district. Faint light illuminated the women standing behind glass: some people could not stop staring at them, others passed with no consideration, as if they were just props in a window. I made up part of the former. I was immediately captivated by the visibility of these women. There was something so fascinating, so foreign, about the display of sexuality, so visible, yet somehow, also hidden away in the darkness. After this experience, I knew I wanted to consider how sexuality and performance were understood, yet I still maintained a love for the domestic. Throughout my Bachelor's and Master's, I explored the domestic space, its boundaries and how the home can be understood and navigated. This sparked my interest in how private space can be explored and the importance of the boundaries of the home. The domestic was an important element in my Master's dissertation and I wanted to continue my analysis through my PhD. It was shortly after my trip to Amsterdam when I was introduced to the world of webcamming, something which was entirely new to me at the time. To me, it appeared like an online reflection of the women I saw in the windows, only the glass of the window became the glass of my laptop screen. Webcamming was a perfect symbiosis of my passion for the domestic and scholarship of visibility and surveillance. From here my appreciation for webcamming grew, which led me to sit, write, and reminisce of that exceptional night in Amsterdam. [1]

Unlike earlier work which largely considers feminist perspectives of webcam performers, the structure of the webcamming sites, and experiences of the performers themselves, the focus in this thesis is exclusively on the construction of the webcam models physical spaces (Senft, 2008; Velthuis and Van Doorn, 2020; Jones, 2016). By using innovative methodologies, such as netnography and object analysis not fully utilised in criminology, I explore the relationship between domestic space and sexual performance. This thesis is an examination and exploration of the material objects that construct the workspace of webcammers and considers issues of privacy, security, and surveillance within performers domestic spaces.

[1] Please see section 4.5.3 for information regarding the use of vignettes in this thesis

1.1 Notable literature and the gap in research

Jennifer Ringley is widely considered as the first webcam performer. She created a website in 1996 called JenniCam. With a camera set up in her bedroom, photos were relayed to her website every 15 minutes, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It quickly picked up traction and at its peak, the site got seven million hits a day. She then acquired more cameras and increased the camera's refresh rate from every 15 minutes to every 3. Eventually, viewer interest in the site began to diminish, and in late 2003, Jennifer announced that she was shutting the website down. This viewership of Jennifer was an indication of the success the webcamming industry would have in the future. In the 21st Century, the webcamming industry has flourished due to wider access to the internet. Informally referred to as "camming", webcamming is a form of sex work in which performers provide sexual services online via a live video broadcast. Ronald Weitzer (2010) explains how webcamming can be considered as a form of indirect sex work, due to a lack of physical contact between the buyer and the seller. Much like other divisions of the sex industry, webcamming monetises sexual desire and intimacy. However, webcamming research does not feature proportionality within the current literature on sex work. The majority of research regarding sex work has largely focused on more traditional understandings of physical sex work, such as prostitution and escort services. Due to the pace of development and breadth of sex work research, it would be impracticable to consider all of the literature in this realm. As such, I have set out a brief review of the key literature and historical literature of online sex work to provide the research background in which this thesis positions itself.

Considering the multiple facets of sex work, there is a vast array of interest in various niche areas. Some research has considered voluntary sex work, focusing on prostitution (Bernstein, 2007; Sanders et al, 2017), with others focusing on forced sex work and sex trafficking (Weitzer, 2011; 2015; Kempadoo et al, 2015). There has also been some research conducted into other forms of sex work such as stripping and erotic dance (Bradley-Engen and Ulmer, 2009; Jackson, 2011; Sanders and Hardy, 2014). Research generally has focused on female sex workers, rather than male sex workers, although the literature regarding males has been slowly growing recently (Minichiello, 2002; Walby, 2012; Ellison and Weitzer, 2016). Additionally, it must be remembered

that the majority of sex work research focuses on offline forms of sex work as it precedes the advent of online sex work, so it is understandable why there is a greater wealth of research on what is considered more traditional offline forms of sex work. However, there has been a growing amount of research on online forms of sex work. Christine Harcourt and Basil Donovan (2005) identify over 25 different forms of sex work, which can be broadly categorised into 'direct' and 'indirect'. 'Direct' sex work refers to in-person services, such as prostitution, and 'indirect' sex work refers to services offered without physical contact such as telephone sex and webcamming.

Online sex work can broadly be split into two different categories. The first refers to workers who primarily use the internet as a way of advertising their profiles, in which the work is carried out in offline locations with direct physical contact with the client. The second refers to how online sex work can also be understood as workers who use the internet as a way to offer online services. This encompasses webcam models who perform live broadcasts via the internet to their clients. A large amount of research focuses on the former, using the internet as a means of advertising in-person services (Lee-Gonyea et al, 2009; Jonsson and Svedin, 2014; Burghart, 2018). These two categories are not mutually exclusive, and some sex workers diversify the services they offer to include both online and offline services, as well as solely online workers also advertising online. This rise of the online realm has not necessarily caused a migration of sex workers to change their working habits, rather online sex work reflects the expansion of the sexual commerce market. Kevin Walby states how "today most sex work begins online or is mediated through internet communication, a configuration that creates a different sort of workspace. The internet makes possible work that is no longer tied to a particular locale, spreading work out across conventional boundaries and borders" (2012: 168). This market has inspired wide research into the online realm of pornography (Patterson, 2004; Van Doorn, 2010; Attwood, 2011) which has more recently included research into technological advancements such as virtual reality in pornography and sex robots (Simon and Greitemeyer, 2019; Döring and Poeschl, 2019; Orel, 2020).

Jennifer Nash (2014) explains how the focus of sex work research has overlooked less traditional forms of sex work including webcam performers. Although there is research available on the webcamming industry, it largely falls into three categories: feminist debates on exploitation and empowerment (Senft, 2008), how webcam sites are structured (Jones, 2015; Velthuis and Van

Doorn, 2020) and performers' perspectives of their work (Jones, 2016; Sanders et al, 2016; Sanders et al, 2017; Jones, 2020c). Research outside of these realms does exist but it is small in quantity. Notable works include the representations of gender identities in webcamming (Jones, 2020b) and how webcam performers conduct dynamic shows (Weiss, 2018). Angela Jones' research on webcamming is discussed throughout this thesis. She focuses on structural issues of race and gender identity, concerns of exploitation, and the motivations for engaging in online sex work. Jones' work has been very significant in the field of online sex work and has been influential to this thesis. However, I take a different approach in my field of study. This thesis is an examination and exploration of the material objects that construct the workspace of webcammers and also considers issues of privacy, security, and surveillance within performers domestic spaces.

Although there has been a growing body of work examining webcamming, the relationship between the performer and how they construct and interact with their space has not been considered within research. Research needs to address how models curate, structure, and perform in their workspaces. Despite webcamming being a relatively new phenomenon within sex work, the working environments of the performers tended to be taken for granted, with little exploration in scholarly research. It is also important that this research not only examines female performers, who are the dominant focus in current webcam literature, but needs to consider male and transgender performers, and how they construct and curate their webcamming spaces, as this has been largely overlooked in research. Therefore, the aims of this thesis are to develop an understanding of how performers construct their working environments and how they perform their gender identity through these spaces. I aim to explore and gain a better understanding of the deviant subculture of webcam performers and the role of the domestic within these eroticised spaces to bridge this gap in knowledge.

As such my research questions are as follows:

1. How do webcam models curate their physical space for webcamming?
2. How does the performance of sexuality inform the construction of space?
3. How is the subculture of 'deviant' sex workers represented within their domestic space?

To answer these questions, I employed innovative methods such as netnography and object analysis. By using observational data, with supplementary participant interviews, I have been able to use the rich data collected to generate a response to these research questions. I employed theory from a variety of disciplines as a way of fully exploring this topic which has been overlooked in criminology. Through the data I have gathered, this thesis makes an original contribution to knowledge. I developed Bernstein's (2007) 'bounded authenticity', which she defines as a manufactured connection between a buyer and seller, that aims to simulate a 'real' relationship. I further this by exploring notions of manufactured authenticity to non-human elements, environments, and atmospheres. I develop this into new conceptualisation which I refer to as 'constructed authenticity', highlighting my original contribution to knowledge. From my data, I argue that performers create spaces to appear as authentic yet are comparable to theatre sets using this notion of 'constructed authenticity'. A range of objects, colour, and lighting are all carefully considered by models as to how they perform sexuality through their webcam identity, all contributing to the perceived authenticity of the space. The notion of 'constructed authenticity' as introduced by this research will be developed and applied in the discussion chapters, which applicable to a range of disciplines with multiple applications and directions for further research.

The research aimed to gain a better understanding of how performers construct their webcamming environments and how this informs the performativity of gender and sexuality. Throughout this research, I explore how erotic online spaces can be understood and analysed within criminology, and how this challenges theories of surveillance and visibility. This thesis has contributed to the criminological understanding of erotic spaces of webcam performers and how these spaces can be linked to gender performativity.

1.2 Just how big is the webcamming industry?

Webcamming is a fundamental element of the sex industry. Industry insiders and analysts estimate the revenue generated by camming sites is upwards of $2 billion annually (Rabouin, 2016). The current figure is likely to be much higher, given this article is five years old. Harry Varwijk of cams.com estimated that the profits yielded by webcamming sites would reach up to $10 billion by 2020 (Stuart, 2017). One popular webcam site, livejasmin.com, has a reported 40 million

visitors a day, making its founder Gyorgi Gattyan, Hungary's richest man (Stuart, 2017). Camming advice website, Ready Set Cam, conducted a survey with 655 actively working webcam performers between July and October 2020 to estimate how much money webcam performers were earning (Ramer, 2021). They found the average webcam performer earns $1,043 per week, working 18 hours a week. This, of course, varies based on the amount of experience a performer has, the time they dedicate to camming, the site which they use, as well as a variety of other factors. The top earning performers in the United States earned as much as $6,000 a week, compared to performers just starting out who earned as little as $100 a week. Experience made a large difference to the amount of money performers were making, with newer models who had less than 1 year of experience, making an average of $804 a week, or $43 an hour. This rose significantly when examining performers with over 5 years' experience who earned three times as much, averaging at $2,875 a week or $103 an hour (Ramer, 2021). Ready Set Cam also provide statistics for earnings broken down into types of broadcaster and provide information regarding the differences in female, male, trans, and couples earnings. Generally, they found that female broadcasters earned the most per hour on average, but also spent the most time camming, earning an average of $1,093 a week. Trans performers were the next highest earning performers, earning $940 a week. In comparison, male performers earned significantly less, averaging at $409 a week. The lowest earning performers were couples earning $205 a week, but couples also spent less time camming when compared to any other type of broadcaster (Ramer, 2021). These figures were also reported by Graham Isador, a Vice reporter, who spoke to a webcam performer (Isador, 2019). The performer noted that the financial reward was fluid and regularly changed: on average they made around $1,500-$2,000 a month from camming. However, when they dedicated more time to camming, they earned upward of $3,000, stating in their best month they made $6,000. They noted how "camming can be quite a beneficial and stable career once you get the hang of your schedule, marketing strategy, and business plan. Figure out what works for you and what doesn't" (Isador, 2019: N.P). This is clearly evident in the correlation between experience and time spent performing compared to the financial revenue earned. What is crucial to remember going forward is the growth webcamming has experienced, and its vital place in the sex industry.

1.3 The layout of this thesis

We will first situate this thesis in the literature relating to domesticity and webcamming, considering the literature more deeply, and will begin unpacking the current literature on online sex work and how this informs my research going forward. By positioning the literature that considers webcamming, I am able to fully recognise the gaps in literature that my thesis begins to fill. Firstly, I establish the growth of technological devices and the internet that has allowed for services such as webcamming to thrive. Webcamming's revenue and market size is discussed as a way of positioning it within the sex industry as a whole. UK legislation is briefly considered, of which, there is no webcam specific legislation. Here we begin to explore the more business-related issues, such as capping and doxxing concerns and creating a personal brand. Then I start to unpack ideas around the blurring of the physical and virtual spaces, drawing on literature from Phil Hubbard (2018), Zabet Patterson (2004) and Stewart Cunningham et al (2018). The internet has allowed for navigating between 'real' physical spaces and 'virtual' online spaces, which becomes more significant when considering webcamming. The exploration into physical space is developed through more 'classical' research on domestic space, considering what the home is and what it represents, which is later used to frame the discussion on webcamming environments. This continues the discussion on private spaces, and how webcamming acts as a means of disrupting the boundary between private and public space. Additionally, I examine literature exploring authenticity in webcamming, focusing on Elizabeth Bernstein's (2007) research on what she refers to as 'bounded authenticity': a way for performers to act various forms of erotic connection for their customers. The literature on authenticity in regard to webcamming is relatively sparse, a few lines might be added to an article, which consequently has led to a gap in literature. Within this thesis, authenticity is a theme that commonly emerges. Although agency is not a key consideration of this thesis, I have highlighted the literature relevant to this thesis as a basis of understanding, as it also informs some of the theoretical work on bedroom culture and feminised spaces. Within this discussion, I bring in research concerning the gaze and gender performativity, notable works include Judith Butler (1999) and Michele White (2003) which both become integral parts of my analysis. This chapter concludes exploring the recent effects of COVID19 in relation to the growth of the webcamming industry.

In Chapter 3, I expand on the theoretical framework which has informed this research design and analysis. This chapter is constructed in three main components: The Cyborg and Actor Network

Theory, the 'Reel' and the Real, and surveillance, visibility, and spatial theory. By connecting theory from various disciples, I utilised an interdisciplinary design to explore areas and ideas that criminology has not considered. This unique combination of multi-disciplinary theoretical lenses allowed me to draw on a variety of perspectives which resulted in a broader reflection of webcamming. Firstly, I explore how advancements in technological devices have unified the virtual and physical realms through Donna Haraways's (1991) notion of the cyborg. The figure of the cyborg allows for a reconstruction of identity and highlights how the virtual and physical are indistinguishable. Although not without its critics, Haraways's notion of the cyborg can be used as a way of moving beyond traditional boundaries of gender, feminism, and politics. Given this research is focused entirely on the online domain, and how individuals behave and communicate through this virtual realm, consideration must be given to how this has been theorised. When unpacking issues such as the performance of sexuality in online spaces, as I do throughout this thesis, the notion of the cyborg is a way of examining how the self and technological devices are connected, and the effect this has on identity and performance. The cyborg is coupled with Actor Network Theory (ANT) (Law, 1999; Latour, 2005). The importance of human and non-human actors working together is explored, again with reference to online and physical connectivity. ANT is a unique theory in that it not only considers people but also objects and organisations. ANT provides a useful approach to exploring a phenomenon such as webcamming, given the volume of non-human elements that are crucial to its success. This theory also influenced my decision to use object analysis as part of my methodological process, highlighting the significant non-human objects.

Moving through to the second component, I discuss the 'Reel' and the Real, drawing on theory regarding the presentation of self (Goffman, 1978) and the notion of ontology (Ozgun, 2015). Erving Goffman's (1978) theory of The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life is used to as a way to explore the authenticity and identity of webcam performances. This is connected to Aras Ozgun's (2015) notion of ontology in relation to what is real and truthful. The idea of the 'real' is important, both to the viewer and the performer. This realness, or lack of, becomes an integral element of what I go on to refer to as 'constructed authenticity', that is witnessed in both the staging and performance of webcamming. This leads into discussions of the rise of 'real' sex in pornography and how webcamming is positioned as a way of offering 'real' sex to viewers. I

explore theory connecting authenticity and online sex more deeply. Additionally, social media and its importance is acknowledged in this section, with a focus on online identities and the virtual realm in which we live.

The last section in this triad unpacks ideas relating to both the distinctions and blurring of public and private realms. Here I examine what it means for a space to be private and public, and in turn how these spaces have been blurred by growing interconnectivity facilitated by technological devices and the internet, as well as bringing in my interpretation of the private/public continuum. Michel Foucault's (1982) and Thomas Mathiesen's (1997) theories of surveillance are also key to this research. Within this section, I unpack how the webcam can be likened to the synopticon, leading on to discussions on how surveillance has become potentially desirable in society. This leads into more gendered discussions on surveillance and how the webcam can be understood within both public and private realms. Theory from Hille Koskela (2002/2004/2006) and Laura Mulvey (1975) begins to unpack the ways the male gaze and the commodification of the female body can be considered in webcamming. This section concludes with the exploration of bedroom culture, and how traditional 'girl culture' has been utilised by webcam performers. The focus is on how the traditionally private feminised spaces are displayed and understood in society. By challenging the notions of surveillance, particularly within private spaces, theory on bedroom culture provides an insightful way of examining how women in particular use their femininity as a consumer commodity.

The methodological approach used in this thesis is presented and unpacked in Chapter 4. I introduce online ethnography, which I refer to as netnography, as a way of applying the ethnographic lens to research groups based in the online realm. Deniz Tunçalp and Patrick Lê (2014) state that the methods chosen must be appropriate for the research questions, and as my research field is based in the online realm, a netnography lends itself well to answer my questions. For this research, I explored three mainstream webcamming sites, conducting 40 hours of observations across these sites, in line with Benjamin Weiss' (2018) research. Within these observations, I assumed the role of 'lurker' consistent with Shelley Correll's (1995) research, lurking within the performers' rooms, without declaring my role as researcher. To the performer and the other viewers, I appeared as another anonymous viewer, able to see the same elements as

another anonymous viewer could. My role as lurker allowed for the acquisition of rich and detailed knowledge of relatively unknown subcultures of webcam performers which was pertinent in exploring my research questions.

As a methodological component, I explore Clifford Geertz' (1973) notion of thick description as a way of describing not only what is immediately visible but also the contextual understanding of these behaviours that make the action meaningful and how this informed my research process. Capturing the whole environment, such as sounds, lights, objects, verbal, and nonverbal communication played a vital role in being able to fully analyse these scenes. Object analysis, again, has been overlooked as a methodological tool in criminology. Using work from Pauline Garvey (2001) on material culture of domestic spaces, I analyse how objects and the movement and arrangement of objects is significant in creating the webcamming environment. As Garvey states "the domestic raw materials that ordinarily feed normative expectations of the social self become suddenly playful and alterable, significant because of their triviality" (2001: 66).

Finally, this research was supplemented with semi-structured interviews with webcam performers. Christine Hine states how "[c]yberspace is not to be thought of as a space detached from any connections to 'real life' and face-to-face interaction" (2000:64). Tunçalp and Lê (2014) adds that several netnographies combine online and offline approaches to gain a broader perspective, which I have achieved this by including interviews alongside my observational data. Within this chapter, I also discuss the ethical considerations of this research, as well as the issues I faced when challenged by ethical dilemmas. I consider my own positionality, as a white, middle class, cisgender woman who has never participated in sex work, considering how my own researcher bias may influence my research process.

We begin the discussion chapters by exploring the understanding of the merging of public and private realms. By using key surveillance theories from Foucault and Mathiesen, I unpack how all actors involved in webcamming are under a surveillance gaze. Firstly, I explore how webcamming sites are structured and operated, setting out the inner workings that usually go unseen in research. Not only does understanding the structure and operation of these sites help those who may be unfamiliar, but it also reveals dynamics of surveillance and power, such as female only spaces on

mainstream sites. Then we explore the multiple layers of surveillance that occur in various ways. The commodification of this surveillant gaze highlights some of the reasons why performers choose to broadcast their private space. The private space is then examined further in detail to gain a better understanding of the private and public realms, and how webcamming can act as a way of blurring these. My observations of the bedroom space support what Kristina Hofer refers to as "pornographic domesticity". There are no clear boundaries "between work and the home, labour and pleasure, public and private spheres, rather than from a separation of these domains from one another" there is a fluidity between them (2014: 335). This leads into a discussion on private and public boundaries, to which I argue that the current perspective of these is too dichotomous. The interconnectivity that webcamming provides blurs the private and public realms, creating a more fluid idea of how privacy can be understood. The importance of the home and private space is crucial to gain an understanding of how these spaces are broadcast by performers and consumed by viewers. This chapter concludes with the exploration of these private spaces and how they are presented as 'real' and potentially hyperreal to viewers.

Chapter 6 then begins to unpack the domestic space and visibility in the private domain. I begin by framing the domestic and its position within the webcamming realm. The more micro elements of the bedroom space are examined, such as the bed and its importance within webcam environments. Too often the bed is forgotten by researchers, yet it is immensely important, and I discovered it is usually the largest and most significant component within webcamming set ups. The domestic, bedroom space is not merely a coincidental backdrop for performers, rather as my observations show, it is a curated space in which to work. This is in line with Sharif Mowlabocus (2008) research who explained how the domestic space establishes a 'girl next door' illusion. The traditional role of what the bedroom space is for and how it is understood becomes changed for the webcam performer: the space is no longer serving its purpose as a bedroom, rather a stage for a performance. The performer is exploiting the implied intimacy and traditionally associations of the bedroom space. The bedroom space transforms into a stage for performances, even when the performers are not broadcasting. Considering Henri Lefebvre's (1991) argument that social space is a social product, the bedroom space is created and maintained by gendered power relationships, patriarchy, and capitalism. This continues the discussion on how webcamming disrupts 'girl culture' and the role of the domestic as traditionally feminine space. Webcam performing becomes

synonymous with the blurring of the private and the public realms, combining the extreme private and the extreme public together. I then explore how the notion of 'girl culture' does not retain its cultural relevance, given the access and connectivity that permeates what was once considered private space. I conclude this chapter exploring how men occupy the bedroom space, given the feminine association of the bedroom. The configurations of masculinity are considered by male performers, given the interject between their sexual orientation and their audience. There is sexual fluidity introduced and permitted on webcamming sites for male performers.

Based on my research results, I argue that the performance space is comparable to a stage in a theatre. In Chapter 7, I use the concept of *mise-en-scène*. *Mise-en-scène* is used to describe a film's visual elements. This phrase is typically used within the context of film and theatre production, but it provides a way of exploring visual elements that are seen on screen, albeit on a smaller scale. I break *mise-en-scène* into four key components: setting the scene, props and costume, colour and lighting, and technological devices; this is reflected in the structure of Chapter 7. Each component is explored through acts. Although traditionally a three-act play is seen in theatre, here I use a four-act structure, complete with an encore section. The first three components have roots in what is historically regarded as *mise-en-scène* elements (Martin, 2014: Deldjoo et al, 2016). The fourth, however, is a unique addition to encapsulate how technological devices are used and seen within webcam performances. This category encapsulates established elements, such as camera positioning, however due to the performer taking on the role of 'shot producer' and performer, this extends the idea beyond its original meaning. Additionally, technological devices are a huge consideration when dealing with something that would not be able to happen, should such devices not exist, and I wanted this to be reflected with my analysis at this stage. Within these components, there are of course overlaps, such as props being described in colour, however my discussion has been constructed to highlight what I consider the most significant aspects of a particular scene, behaviour, or object.

We start by setting the scene in which I explore how performers take on the role of set designer, director, and performer. The camera was almost always positioned in a bedroom-like space, something which I explore in much more detail in Chapter 6. Female performers followed a similar pattern: bed visible, clean sheets on a made bed, perhaps a few fluffy pillows or throws, soft fairy

lights strewn across the background. These spaces which are broadcast have been carefully considered and curated by the performer: they are not the authentic spaces in which they may appear to the viewer. Using Goffman's (1978) The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, I explain how the performance environment can be likened to a theatre stage. This frontstage, as seen by the viewer, has been carefully constructed to reveal a specific atmosphere. Authenticity is something frequently cited as a reason why amateur pornography and webcamming is becoming more popular in viewership (Jones, 2015; Morrish, 2018; Pornhub, 2019). In both my observations and interviews, I discovered that authenticity is rarely apparent. As such, I conceived the term 'constructed authenticity' to explain the paradox of a performance appearing to be 'true' contrasted with the theatre and act of the space.

One way in which this is revealed is by the lack of physical objects shown in broadcasts: this lack of personal items creates an environment that is antithetical with authenticity. The lack of objects is in direct contrast with Garvey's research conducted into domestic spaces. Garvey states that the home has long been viewed as a means of self-decoration. Here, the observations show, for the most part, there is no self-presentation reflected in these spaces. The spaces that are presented to the viewer are carefully constructed to exclude the personal objects that are key to the real identity of the performer. Costume and props were both considered as important elements in the set up and performance of a broadcast. My findings partially supported Jones' (2015) research that stated female performers often wore lingerie and more provocative clothing, however, although this was common, not all performers conformed to this. There is an appeal for some viewers being presented with a fully clothed performer, as it highlights an element of tease for the viewer.

Colour is an important consideration in both how performers choose and display colour within their environments, as well as how consumers understand and interpret these colours. My discussion largely focuses on the colour pink: how it is used and viewed. While colour may seem like an insignificant element, it has great significance in the scenes created. Here I unpack how the colour pink is utilised by female performers, through costume, background, and props, as a means of performing gender identity. Pink is suggestive of female sexuality. Different shades of pink are used to convey different identities: the light powder pink reflecting cuteness and girliness contrasted with a brighter hot pink reflecting exuberance. The colour white is also explored, in its

appearance in female performers rooms: highlighting their portrayal as innocent, pure and clean. All of the rooms observed displayed a form of lighting in varying degrees of professionalism, ranging from relying on ceiling lights and lamps, to more professional style spotlights. For one of my interview participants, domestic items, in this case an ironing board and desk, were repurposed as platforms to create the best lighting setup. Fairy lights were also seen, less as a lighting source, but more as an aesthetic addition to rooms, revealing another layer of 'girliness' and softness to a space.

Mise-en-scène is used by film producers to guide the viewer's eye through each scene: a similar effect is observed in webcam performances. Performers control the gaze through their controlling of the framing of the camera. Additionally, the keyboard plays a huge role as a communication device allowing for the performer and the viewer to interact. Across all groups, there were a number of performers who made attempts to 'hide' the keyboard. I argue how this keeps the viewer in suspended reality. I compare research in virtual technology environments, arguing that one less actor, the keyboard, in the network is visible, which allows for the collapse between physical and geographical bounds. The technological specifications set out by the sites themselves also were instrumental in how performers set up and constructed their webcamming environments. High quality technological devices were crucial, as explained by my interview participants. This included high-definition cameras, high speed internet connection, as well as website specific software. This all occurs within the backstage; viewers are unaware of what has happened to the space in order to meet these specifications. To be successful it is not as simple as turning on a webcam anymore. The audience only sees the 'finished product', once the cameras, lighting, computer, and devices have been set up. It enables the notion of the 'girl next door' illusion (Mowlabocus, 2008) to be maintained by the viewer, further perpetuating the notion of 'constructed authenticity'. I conclude with the encore, exploring 'hardware', notably how teledildonics can be understood in physical and virtual realms. Elements of gender and power struggles in relation to a popular teledildonic device, Lovense, are discussed. The performer is within their own space collapsing the boundary between the viewer and the performer. The Lovense acts as a mediator, bringing together two parties through technology. The body can be transformed, reconfigured, and established in different ways through the use of these devices, which adds to the unstable private and public boundaries.

1.4 Terminology

The words we as individuals, and as researchers, choose to use to describe other individuals, groups, theory, and ideas are significant for the construction of their meanings. Labels that have become attached to sex work often, consciously, or unconsciously, categorise this work in two channels: positive and negative. The labels that are more positive characterise this line of work as not necessarily being exploitative or degrading, rather being liberating and empowering. More sex positive terminology often acknowledges and includes a more diverse range of actors within this industry, including male, transgender, and non-binary individuals. Within the realm of sex work, it becomes challenging to use this generally quite bipartite terminology without implicitly 'picking a side'. Thus, consideration of the terminology used in research is important, hopefully with an aim for the future to move past using such dividing terms. The terms 'camgirls' (Senft, 2008) and 'camboys' (Bocij, 2004) have been used within webcamming research, however I have chosen not to use these terms as they conceal nonbinary and transgender identities. As a result, throughout this thesis, I have referred to the individuals offering webcamming services largely as performers but occasionally as models. This is in line with Paul Bleakley's (2016) and Jones' (2016) research, who use these terms also. It is important as these terms are not inherently gendered so can be used when referring to all groups and identities. Additionally, it is worth noting that within this thesis, I do consider and refer to webcamming as sex work and performers as sex workers. This reinforces the idea that sex work is an occupation rather than an identity (Henry and Farvid, 2017). Whilst this is not a space for my own personal struggles with aligning myself to a specific brand of feminism, it is important I position my own views as being, for the most part, aligned with a sex positive perspective of sex work. Now we must enter the world of webcamming and unpack the literature that has led to the development of this thesis and highlight the gap in research that I develop.

2. Entering the world of webcamming

2.1 Introduction

The growth of the internet, and connectivity online, has been the foundation to the success of webcamming through recent decades. Technological devices allow us to engage with people and have contributed to the growth of webcamming platforms. These technological developments have been part of the reason webcamming has expanded in popularity in recent years. In this chapter I establish and review the growing literature on online sex work. I continue to explore webcamming's revenue and market size, positioning it within the sex industry as a whole. UK legislation, or the lack of it, is then briefly considered. Here I also cover the more business-related issues, such as capping and doxxing concerns and the development of online identities and personal branding for performers. The next section begins to unpack ideas around the blurring of the physical and virtual spaces, drawing on literature from Phil Hubbard (2018), Zabet Patterson (2004) and Stewart Cunningham et al (2018). I set out more 'classical' research on domestic space on how the home is traditionally understood and represented, which is later used to frame my discussion on webcamming environments. This continues the discussion on private spaces, and how webcamming can potentially disrupt the boundaries between private and public realms. I set out literature regarding gendered space, including bedroom culture and gendered aspects of visibility. I briefly examine literature exploring authenticity in webcamming, focusing on Elizabeth Bernstein's (2007) research on what she refers to as 'bounded authenticity'. Within this discussion, I bring in research concerning the gaze and gender performativity, notable works include Judith Butler (1999) and Michele White (2003) which both become integral parts of my analysis. I conclude, exploring the effects of COVID19 pandemic in relation to the growth of the webcamming industry.

2.2 Sex in the digital realm

The relationship between sex and space has changed immensely within the last decade. The developments of technological devices have allowed bodies to engage in sex in different ways and has had an impact on several aspects on individuals' lives. New forms of sexual solicitation have

arisen with the development of the internet, including forms of sex work that take place entirely within the online realm, such as webcamming. Mobile applications with geographical referencing, including Tinder, creates the opportunity for individuals to pursue sexual encounters with unknown strangers, sometimes within unknown spaces (Jones, 2016). Angela Jones explains individuals can pursue sexual encounters remotely, within online spaces, including webcamming sites and chat rooms. The internet has allowed for new opportunities for sexual solicitation (Jonsson et al, 2014). Kristian Bankov outlines what webcamming entails in the following quotation:

> "In these online spaces one can dance and blow kisses in a public room for small tips, show nudity for larger tips, or perform hardcore actions in a private room for even larger tips. On some webcam sites couples have sex in front of the camera for tips [and] interact with the audience" (2019: 11).

The majority of research regarding sex work has largely focused on more traditional understandings of sex work, such as prostitution and erotic dancing (Bernstein 2007; Walby, 2012; Sanders and Hardy, 2014; Ellison and Weitzer, 2016; Sanders et al, 2017). The issue of webcamming has not received the same level of research in comparison to other forms of sex work (Henry and Farvid, 2017). Christine Harcourt and Basil Donovan (2005) explain there are over 25 types of sex work, many of which have not been researched. Gender and sexualities scholar Jennifer Nash (2014) adds how sex workers, including webcam performers and porn actors/actresses, have been overlooked within sex work research. Research has begun to recognise that a large majority of sex work is now either mediated or conducted through digital technology (Jones, 2015a, 2015b; Sanders et al, 2016; Van Doorn and Velthuis, 2018; Brasseur and Finez, 2020). Predominately, sex work, both in-person and online, is largely marketed through online based advertising (Pajnik, 2015). Sex work is facilitated though online communications which includes chat rooms, forums, phone lines, and webcamming (Jones, 2015a). The migration to online based sex work is also evident through the decline of in-person services with the street-based market decreasing, as well as a significant reduction in managed premises that sell sex such as brothels (Brooks-Gordon et al, 2015; Brown and Sanders, 2017). Of the research that explores the emergence of digital facilitated sex work, there has been a focus on the structure of platforms

and how this effects sex worker behaviour (Choudary, 2018; Wood et al, 2018, van Doorn and Velthuis, 2018). Consideration has also been given to the 'gig economy' style of work, who is conducting this work, and the motivations behind them (Sanders et al, 2016; Jones, 2020c). Agency and the 'gaze' in the online realm are explored in how it may differ from in more traditional forms of sex work (White, 2003; Attwood, 2011a).

Academic research into webcamming is an under-researched field. Jones states that "we still do not know enough about how the internet has affected the work experiences, wages and working conditions of many sex worker" (2015: 558). Of the research that does exist, the vast majority focuses on the experience of the workers, the structure of the webcamming sites, as well as feminist perspectives of webcam performers (Velthuis and van Doorn, 2020). There are significant gaps in knowledge, notably the spaces in which the webcamming takes place, and how the domestic influences performers.

2.3 UK legislation regarding webcamming (or the lack of it)

Despite the huge growth and revenue being generated by the webcamming industry, there is a distinct lack of legislation in the United Kingdom. UK law focuses on the uploading of pornographic recordings but does not explicitly cover erotic performances when streamed live on the internet via webcamming sites. The Sexual Offences Act 2003 includes a section relating to Voyeurism (Section 67: 127 - 130). Section 128 Subsection 2 covers "person (A) operating equipment with the intention of enabling another person, for his sexual gratification, to observe a third person (B), doing a private act, where A knows that B does not consent to being so viewed", which includes covert webcams. Furthermore, Section 129, Subsection 3 covers "person (A) recording another person (B) doing a private act with the intention of looking at the recording for his own sexual gratification, or intending other people to look, for their sexual gratification, at the recording, and where he knows that B does not consent to the recording of that act with that intention". Both of these are concerned with webcams and images being recorded where there is a clear lack of consent. Voyeurism of consenting performers broadcasting on webcamming sites is therefore not covered by The Sexual Offences Act 2003, but it would cover sexual exploitation of children on webcamming and similar non-consensual acts involving webcams.

The Audio-Visual Media Services Regulations 2014 ban certain acts from being depicted and uploaded by pornography producers, but only focuses on acts that have already been produced and uploaded. This legislation has no effect with webcamming as performances are being live streamed as opposed to being recorded and uploaded. The focus is more on the distribution of explicit material and there are no provisions for live broadcasting. Additionally, The Digital Economy Act 2017 seeks to restrict minors' access to pornographic material online yet makes no reference to sexual webcamming sites. This legislation was intended to prevent access of pornographic material for individuals under 18 years old (Ailoaiei, 2020). As of 2020, all of the webcamming sites that I accessed required a confirmation by pressing a button that the user was over 18. Currently, there are no further verification checks used that were proposed within the Digital Economy Act 2017.

Although not explicitly referring to UK legislation, sociologist Ronald Weitzer (2005) explores some of the legal issues regarding selling sex within public space. Street prostitution is targeted by law enforcement due to the observable visibility of the workers. This visibility allows for more arrests with fewer difficulties, as well as less funding used on more technical covert operations that might be required when trying to target indoor sex workers. Consequently, sex workers on the street who have fewer arrests have an improved status and reputation which benefits them as their clients also do not wish to be arrested (Holt and Blevins, 2007). However, if the trend of online sex work continues to grow, Chris Ashford (2009) states that law enforcement will put more resources into the creation of operations to tackle the presence of sex work online. Although there is a lack of legislation in the UK now, this does not mean that it will always remain this way. It can take a considerable amount of time for the law to catch up with society. However, although the UK may not have legislation targeting webcam workers, the Philippines has made erotic webcamming illegal, with a potential fine of £3,700 and imprisonment for up to six months (BBC News, 2012). Webcamming has become a significant component of the pornography business, so while there is no legislation currently, as the industry continues to grow, we may see a government response in the form of legislation.

2.4 Webcamming as business

2.4.1 Creating an identity and a brand

The perception of intimacy regarding online sexual interactions characterises online sex as an act, but as there is also an inability to physically interact, which also makes this experience is categorised as an image (Kibby & Costello, 2001). There is a personal desire for involvement in the online sex realm that leads to the development of managed yet 'authentic' identities (Kibby & Costello, 2001). How a model brands themselves and their persona, authentic or otherwise, is key to their success within the camming industry (Jones, 2018). Performers use a range of tags on both camming websites and on social media in order to attract a specific audience. To use Jones' terminology, performers with obesity note how using the correct tags such as BBW (big, beautiful woman) and BBBW (big black beautiful woman) can be used to market themselves. By using these tags, consumers who are looking for this specific type of performer can easily find webcam models who relate to these tags. It also allows models to brand themselves in specific ways that will increase their revenue stream and enjoyment while webcamming. Additionally, some tags are associated with what a performer is likely to be asked to do: for example, models who use the SSBBW (super-sized big, beautiful woman) tag are more likely to be requested to eat during a performance. Niche websites exist for BBW performers. The models using these sites explain how there are both benefits and drawbacks of using these websites. These sites allow them to reach consumers who are actively looking for obese female models, however they do not reach a wide audience with these websites. With mainstream websites, models are able to reach more consumers and subsequently create more revenue through more traffic and higher paying customers. As a result, models tend to stream on both sites simultaneously to get the best combination of both websites. Webcamming has opened up spaces for self-acceptance and creates a feeling of empowerment for these performers (Bailey, 2009; Bleakley, 2014). Being able to direct, brand, and market themselves as they choose, alongside the agency to design their own performances, empower these models. BBW performers are able to explore their own sexualities in an empowering fashion whilst also earning money.

Tags are also used by trans performers (Jones, 2020a). Jones observes how the popular camming site LiveJasmin, only uses a binary gender system: there are only sections for female and male performers. Tags are used by transgender performers as a way of increasing visibility online as

they do not have a specific space to be found. Jones' participants informed her that even when a webcamming site did have a space for trans performers, this space was for transfeminine performers. While tags can be helpful for viewers to find content they prefer, there are still limitations as to how helpful they are for performers to market themselves. These tags are not only seen on the webcamming sites themselves but are also utilised on social media platforms. Jones (2020c) explains how on Twitter, cam performers used tags to promote themselves. Popular tags included #camgirl, #camboy, #bigtits and #hugecock. Tags were also used as a way of promoting what specific platform they were broadcasting on, for example #myfreecams, #chaturbate and #streamate. These tags, and more generally how webcam performers brand themselves, become a point of analysis in this thesis when we explore authenticity and how performers present themselves and present their workspaces to their audience.

2.4.2 Opportunity for diversity

Webcamming as an industry creates space for a diverse range and representation of bodies. As explored above, larger women have more representation within cam work than in mainstream traditional pornography. With some exceptions, any individual can choose to work on a cam website regardless of their size, race, gender, sexual orientation, or nationality. Cam websites have the ability to host vast numbers of performers at one time. However, beyond the rules explained earlier, models have full control over their performances: how they conduct these performances and the content of specific shows. Webcamming provides a diversity of models that have higher levels of agency when compared to mainstream traditional pornography. Kibby and Costello add how: "interactive sex entertainment has the potential to enable individuals to write their own sexual identities, accommodating diverse desires and a range of cultural meanings" (2001: 360). There is an opportunity for performers to try out different personas and identities on the internet. This newfound inclusion of non-dominant, non-hegemonic groups becoming producers and consumers of sexual content "could have an unparalleled appeal for [them] as they could finally be able to customize their own erotica" (Wagner, 1994: 3).

Jones (2015b) explains how there are niche websites for webcamming including websites specifically for 'ebony models', highlighting how the marketplace for webcamming is not racially

neutral. Customers' consumption of online sex work is affected by discourses of race and racialised bodies. This is problematic as Jones (2015b) notes how webcam models are involved in a form of aesthetic labour in that webcam models used their attractiveness as a means of enhancing their revenue. Her participant observation on a webcamming website noted how black models were positioned further down the website and customers would need to scroll to find them. The majority of the top models were Caucasian. It is noted that webcam models are able to identify methods of exploiting racial discourses which provide them with revenue. However, Jones' observation of a webcamming website suggested that black webcam models were assuming stereotypical 'white, feminine' aesthetic and subsequently gaining higher cam scores. Black models appeared to have chemically straightened hair or weaves, coloured contact lenses as well as physically being thin. No black women in her research left their hair natural. Jones notes how "lower erotic capital is conditioned by racist discourses about ‘‘look’’ and lower erotic capital results in a lower cam score on this website. A lower cam score means a lower position on the website—and a lower position on the website means decreased visibility" (2015b: 794). Jones concludes highlighting the importance of the spaces created by new technology but not to overlook the racial discourses that black models are faced within these spaces:

> "before we applaud new digital technologies for the ostensibly agentic and lucrative potential spaces they create for women, let us realize that these benefits are clearly contingent on the race and nationality of the model" (Jones, 2015b: 795).

Physical aesthetics and “look” becomes relevant to the discussion in Chapter 7 with a wider reference to gender performativity and femininity.

Now we can continue to expand the discussion of diversity in webcamming by considering non-female performers. Chris Ashford (2009) reports that there has been little research into male sex work, particularly involving same sex male sex work. Whilst there is limited research, there has been an emergence of research focusing on the role of the internet and sex work. This has allowed researchers to conduct online observations noting the expansion of male sex work in this domain. Al Cooper (1998) states how the internet offers its users a trio of access, affordability, and anonymity which results in the internet playing a role in sexuality. Tim Gregory (2018) states how

only certain types of bodies, particularly certain naked bodies, are able to be “anonymous in pseudo-public spaces like Chatroulette” (ibid: 662). Chatroulette is a free, randomised webcam site that connects the user with another user via webcam. Although this website was originally designed to create random encounters online, and does not necessarily show explicit content, it was soon a site used to display the naked body. Paul Bleakley (2014) explains how there has been a proliferation of amateur pornography within the adult entertainment industry. As a result:

> “young women have been able to participate in online sexual entertainment from the comfort of their own homes, operating independently of mainstream pornography producers as members of the burgeoning camgirl community” (Bleakley, 2014: 893).

With the technological advances developed in the last century, access to the online sex industry has become easier and we have seen the increase in diversity of performers as a result of this.

2.4.3 Benefits and issues for performers

Despite this growing diversity conceived as a generally positive development, webcamming encompasses several benefits and issues for performers. Literature on online based digital sex work has focused on the way the internet provides benefits in reference to advertising, selling, and performing sexual services. For example, sex work that is based online produces improved working conditions for sex workers (Weitzer, 2010; Jones, 2015). Additionally, online sex workers are also experiencing better rates of pay as sex workers are able to gain high-end customers. Bernstein adds how:

> "for many indoor sex workers, it has become easier to work without third-party management, to conduct one’s business with minimal interference from the criminal justice system, and to reap greater profits by honing one’s sales pitch to a more elite and more specialized audience" (2007:93).

In regard to online communication from clients, Teela Sanders et al (2016) stated that most of the time the communication was respectful. Communication also enabled relationships between

workers and clients, supporting research that emotion and intimacy is a key element in commercial sex work (Sanders, 2008; Milrod and Monto, 2012). Sanders et al (2016) state that the majority of their respondents have a positive relationship with their clients. Although the internet has broadened the ability for workers and customers to connect (Weitzer, 2010), it also raises questions regarding the social networks between the sex workers. Contradictory conclusions have been made regarding networks between sex workers with some research stating online sex work diminishes solidarity between workers (Walby, 2012; McLean 2012). Other research suggests the sex workers can harbour relationships more easily online (Feldman 2014). Andrew McLean (2012) adds how the internet allows other sex workers to see other individuals working in the sex industry: their competition. Comparison and competition between themselves and the other sex workers, McLean argues, can lead to dissociative behaviour stating how sex workers can be " [...] actively avoiding developing informal, casual relationships (i.e., friendships) with other workers, further compounding a sense of disconnection from any form of sex worker 'community' amongst men in this population" (ibid: 77).

Safety while working online is also a major consideration for sex workers. Sanders et al (2016) report that over half of respondents indicated that they believed they possessed the skills and technical knowledge to keep themselves and their identity safe online. Digital technology does however provide opportunities for stalking and harassment. Sex workers become victims of crime through this, with limited power to report to the police out of fear of stigma. Abusive behaviour has a low level of being reported, with reasons varying from lack of confidence in the police to fear of being arrested for selling sexual services (Sanders et al, 2016). A concern for webcamming performers is capping and doxxing. Capping is a process in which individuals use software to screen record the audio and visual webcam feeds and turn this into a rewatchable video. While there is little academic research on capping, Joshua Roberts and Scott Hunt (2012) state that cappers can also try and persuade the individuals being watched to perform certain sexual acts or get undressed. These images and recordings are then shared with others without the victim's knowledge or consent. Webcam models explained how some customers record their shows and upload this content onto pornographic websites (Jones, 2016). If a webcam model identifies their video uploaded onto these sites, they can request to take the content down. This comes with its own challenges, particularly involving the process required to submit a takedown request. The

model needs to fill out a form which includes information such as name and contact details, which the person who originally posted the capped video could potentially obtain (Jones, 2016). However, some models see benefits in their shows being capped and uploaded onto pornographic websites. These videos can lead to increased customers due to 'free advertising' which ultimately leads to increased revenue.

There is also a concern over doxxing which is the acquisition of a model's identifiable details and distributing them (Jones, 2016). Viewers use a variety of open-source search techniques to locate models, even if they have used preventative methods to protect their identity. In order to safeguard themselves, models must maintain technological protections such as firewalls. Additionally, Jones (2016) notes how manufactured identities must be created as a means of disguising a performer's real identity. Customers can obtain information from doxxing which can geographically locate the models. Aside from the safety risk this poses for the models, it highlights another way in which the virtual space leaks into the real world. Sociologist, Paul Ryan (2019) explains how the practice of doxxing has been used to harass and stalk sex workers which "reinforces the challenge of creating intimacy while maintaining distance and anonymity at the same time" (2019: 114). McLean (2015) furthers this with regard to male online sex workers stating how sex work can be conducted online for as short or long time as desired by the worker. It can be temporary and sex workers are able to pause or fully delete their accounts, leaving the sex industry. The anonymity and control are cited as benefits of online sex work as personal information is not required, unlike in some forms of traditional sex work. Sanders et al sum up this challenge of security online stating that:

> "while sex workers have a myriad of strategies to protect their identity and are often aware of strategies to protect themselves, the risks from the digital world are complex and ever changing" (2016: 143).

This literature is important to consider when regarding how the virtual and physical spaces are blended together, and the issues that have arisen as a result. It demonstrates how these two realms are not separate which is developed later through the theoretical framework and in the discussion of how virtual and physical spaces have been blurred together.

2.5 Physical and virtual spaces

2.5.1 The blurring of the public and private spaces

Public space is traditionally associated with visibility, paralleled to private space which is connected to invisibility (Brighenti, 2007). Erving Goffman (1971) argues that that there is an increased vulnerability associated with public life, in comparison to private spaces. Despite research suggesting that women are more at risk in a private sphere (Hanmer and Saunders, 1983), Gill Valentine (1989) explains how women perceive risk from unknown strangers in public spaces. Susan Gal (2002) explains how the private and public have been understood as separate spheres with Andrea Brighenti (2007) adding how there is a dichotomy of how public and private are viewed, highlighting the importance of visibility within the social sciences. Bill Hillier and Julienne Hanson state how "[i]t is through its realisation in space that we can recognise that a society exists in the first place. But a society does more than simply exist in space" (1984: 27). Phil Hubbard et al (2017) explains how the rise of the internet has had implications on the traditional boundaries of public and private space. The dichotomies of 'intimate' and 'shared' spaces are blurred:

> "[...] traditional divides between private and public life (and home and work) are breaking down thanks to the layering of socio-technical forms of life in the city, this issue hence considers how new commodity forms are being produced through the selective enfolding of bodies, images, objects and rituals in cities, at the same time that others are being repressed or devalued" (ibid: 569).

Hubbard (2018) reinforces the importance of the relationship between geography and sexuality. Sexual intimacy can exist beyond the physical and can be accessed online across the world through various channels including webcam and pornography websites. Sexual content can be consumed at any time across the world. As a result, the notions of what is intimate must be expanded to include this non-proximate consumption of sex. Hubbard adds how those "relational understandings of space that demand that we must recognize any place as simultaneously

constituted through interactions" including those on a global macro scale as well as those on an intimate micro level (2018:1297). The very fact that space is continuously changing has implications when examining the relationship between sex and space. Hubbard (2018) explains how there is a potential within research to explore how sexuality can be negotiated within 'real' and 'proximate' space as well as 'distant' and 'imagined' space. Bernstein also notes how:

> "[t]he spatial, social, and emotional privatization of sexual labor that has occurred in recent years has endowed sexual commerce with historically unprecedented forms and meanings" (2007: 69).

Webcamming is part of an emerging and diverse market which sex workers can use for both advertising and the selling of sex services online. The internet has constructed more space for the selling of sex services. Sex workers can use this additional space in various ways and can navigate between 'real' physical spaces and 'virtual' online spaces (Jones, 2015a). Cunningham et al (2018) created a typology of online spaces which highlights the vast and varied virtual spaces that are available to sex workers and customers alike. Platforms include webcamming, multi-service adult entertainment, personal sex worker websites, forums, and various social media. Sex is accessible in various ways and through various mediums within the virtual space. The importance of technology is highlighted in Cunningham et al's research, stating sex workers have more opportunities for marketing and building their own business without interference of a third party. Online performers have “more opportunities to manage their own business, have more control over their client interactions and work patterns” (2018: 54). Online technologies provide a space where traditional dangers of sex work on the street can be bypassed, yet there are new online dangers as we have explored earlier. The internet has generated new ways for solicitation. Linda Jonsson et al (2014) note how sex workers are using chat rooms and non-sexual websites in order to meet new customers. Sex workers are using non-sexualised virtual spaces as a means to generate interest and ultimately revenue. Webcamming work is conducted on an online platform and there is no physical contact between the performer and customer. Webcam models are considered sex workers, as money is exchanged for sexual services (Jones, 2016). Webcamming is understood by Weitzer (2010) as of form of indirect sex work. Madeline Henry and Pantea Farvid (2017) define webcamming as a form of online sex work, involving individuals using webcams to stream

themselves performing sexual acts including stripping and using sex toys. Webcamming is often conducted within the models own personal residence (Bleakley, 2014). Bleakley continues noting how:

> "as technology has advanced and become more readily accessible, young women have been able to participate in online sexual entertainment from the comfort of their own homes, operating independently of mainstream pornography producers as members of the burgeoning camgirl community" (ibid: 893).

Acts are generally performed in private spaces which are broadcasted to the public. Patterson (2004) adds that online spaces are constructed as a "private space within a public environment" that "opens out onto a larger space of the Internet, a space which is itself importantly both public and private" (ibid: 120). Patterson continues arguing that current configurations of online pornography have the potential to alter the nature between the performer and the viewer. The distance is collapsed between the object, the performer as a spectacle, and the viewer. The line between passive and active is blurred. Human Geography scholar, Eleanor Wilkinson, continues explaining how "[...] cyberspace provides a vital function as it is a space that can grant both control over publicity and also a space for privacy" (2011: 498). Additionally, Aras Ozgun (2015) states how the anonymity of the webcam has several benefits, one of which is the creation of a space to express and engage in less common forms of sexual desire which may not be considered acceptable or mainstream in society. A viewer of these webcams does not even have to leave their home to access this material, unlike if they were to visit a strip club. This notion is also true for the performer who does not need to go into another geographical location out of fear of being recognised. They can conduct shows from their own homes. This literature enables the notion of privacy to be unpacked further and is relevant in the later discussion of how privacy can be understood in the domestic.

As the internet allows for absolute anonymity and privacy, users with concealed sexual identities in the physical world, can feel more connected to online spaces as a result of this anonymity. Important parts of their identity no longer need to be concealed on the internet (Adler and Adler, 2008; Deshotels and Forsyth, 2007; Quinn and Forsyth, 2005). These deviant subcultures live in

“back places … where people of similar preferences [feel] no need to conceal their pathology and openly [seek] out one another for support and advice” and the internet provides a vast array of these back places (Goffman: 1963: 81). Internet users are admitted access to spaces of sexual exploration that are not available in face-to-face real-life interactions. Access to virtual sex allows users to overcome deviant labels associated with the real world (Lynch, 2010). The internet is a space for users to anonymously try various sexualities and sexual scripts that are inaccessible through physical interactions. Here, I am going to explore this through the practice of bondage, discipline/ domination, sadism, and masochism (BDSM).

Eleanor Wilkinson notes how legislation on BDSM practices creates a contradiction between real and virtual spaces. Where a sexual act can be legal in a 'real' space, the representation of that same act online is illegal. She continues stating how '[t]he recent UK legislation on ‘extreme pornography’ has once again attempted to further limit the spaces that sadomasochists can inhabit by making it a criminal offence to possess certain images". (2011: 495). Although this research is now ten years old, this extreme pornography law still remains in Part 5 of the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008. The BDSM community has a lack of access to public spaces, therefore the internet becomes a space for these communities and minority groups. Individuals who practice BDSM acts have to maintain a form of public invisibility through fear of harassment. Lynne Hillier and Lyn Harrison (2007) add how the internet is a salient space for those individuals who may not be able to access public space. In their research they concluded that the internet allowed for young individuals with space to practice various elements of their sexual identities.

Although BDSM as a sexual practice is spatially marginalised (Herman, 2007) it obtains a great deal of publicity. This publicity brings BDSM into the public space but only to discuss how abhorrent it is and consequently shuns it back into the private sphere (Bell, 1995). As Wilkinson (2011) continues, the access and consumption of these materials is no longer a private matter. The right to privacy is overwritten by the institutional protection of so-called 'public morality'. Cyberspace gives marginalised groups a means to challenge these preconceived ideas surrounding their sexual practice as well as providing individuals with a space to network with people who share their views (Brown and Knopp, 2003). Cyberspace can be accessed instantly and easily from the privacy of a person's home. As a result, not only spatial boundaries are broken down but also

identity boundaries. Individuals are able to separate themselves from the everyday world and get lost in a virtual world. These anonymous virtual spaces allow for people to explore without fear of persecution. The norms and values of society can be escaped via cyberspace and sexual practices can be explored. The private, virtual space acts allow for the liberation from societal judgement regarding BDSM practices.

Tim Gregory adds that within the public/private dichotomy, websites such as Dirtyroulette[2] challenge this separation of private and public realms (2018). The users of this site need to occupy physical space through their webcam, whether this be bedrooms, living rooms, bathrooms etc. Gregory argues "[t]he privilege necessary to transform these spaces into post-pornographic spaces—spaces to fuck, to be watched fucking and to watch fucking—can be easily missed" (2018: 699). Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner (1998) claim that public spaces protect the heterosexual identity stating how:

> "By heteronormativity we mean the institutions, structures of understanding and practical orientations that make heterosexuality seem not only coherent - that is, organized as a sexuality - but also privileged (1998: 548).

Private spaces systematically sustain the public heteronormative rhetoric, compared to public spaces that do not follow heteronormative scripts, such as Dirtyroulette. Public space is a space privileged by economic and social systems that exist in a heteronormative society. These spaces are established against problematic queer acts. Virtual online sites such as Dirtyroulette provide non-normative eroticism that avoids user identification and allows for the public to engage in pleasure that they are not held accountable for in the public realm.

2.5.2 Domestic as private, protected space

[2] Dirtyroulette was originally created as a model based on the website Chatroulette which randomly connects two users via webcam. Dirtyroulette was specifically marketed as a sexualised version based on the same premise as Chatroulette. Users are able to go onto the website, without having to login in or register, and are connected to another user via webcam. Webcam audio and video options can be switched off according to the user's preference.

> “the home is invested with meanings, emotions, experiences and relationships that lie at the heart of human life. Geographies of home are both material and symbolic and are located on thresholds between memory and nostalgia for the past, everyday life in the present, and future dreams and fears” (Blunt and Varley, 2004: 3).

Earlier research regarding the domestic has focused on the atmosphere constructions, security, and the significance of this space (Bachelard, 1958/1994; Busch, 1999; Rybczynski, 1986). Philosopher Gaston Bachelard (1958/1994) produced an exceptionally idealised concept of the home. The house is a space that induces memories, thoughts, and dreams. It is present in the beginning of a life. The most familial place for many people. There is an intimacy within the home, creating an almost dream-like atmosphere. A sense of comfort is established within the home, by the inhabitant recalling memories of security and shelter. There is a centrality to the home with Bachelard stating how "...our house is our corner of the world. As has often been said, it is our first universe..." (1958/1994: 4). Akiko Busch (1999) also provides a Panglossian approach to the home, describing the intimacy of the home, room by room, highlighting the elements of peace and relaxation. The home is described as a constant sanctuary of peace, intimacy, and relaxation. Home is considered as focal for individuals: not only is it the location where many people spend a large section of their lives, but it is also a space where family and friends revolve.

Within western culture, the home possesses unequivocal significance. It is a predominant element in individuals’ lives, creating its centrality within society. For most, the home is a place where individuals mature and experience life. There are many life experiences that occur within the home, which in part helps create the idealised image of what the home represents for many. Bachelard (1958/1994) explains how the home evokes nostalgic memories of protection and security. Shelley Mallet (2004) furthers this stating how the house in which an individual grows up holds a certain significance. It is the place where journeys begin. The house, according to Mallet, is a comfortable space filled with familiar people and objects, including family and possessions. This research, as with Busch’s, has an idealised perspective of what the home is and what it represents. Tim Putnam (cited in Morley, 2000) noted how within the majority of research conducted into the meaning of the home, similar terminology emerged. Common themes associated with the domestic included security, intimacy, comfort, and control. Significance was placed on the notions of security and

safety being most frequently assigned to the domestic (Rybczynski, 1986). Mallet (2004) explains how the house is a space that is considered comfortable and familiar. In a critical review of research conducted into the home, Mallet concludes that the house is a complex site. It can represent and exist in many different forms. The interdisciplinary approaches taken to study the home have reaped a diverse range of perspectives, which is important to consider when attempting to analyse the representation of the home. It is important to consider the house as more than just four walls. It, both physically and psychologically, holds many memories, as well as the family.

The emphasis on the home as a dividing line between public and private space has been established in cultural and architectural research (Steiner and Veel, 2019). Maria Kaika (2004) summarises how the house is used as a means of separation, between the inside and the outside, which is not a new phenomenon in domestic space research. The house has become symbolic of the line between the outside opposed to the inside (Sennet, 1990): it becomes emblematic of the separation between the dual spheres (Heidegger, 1971). John Ruskin (1865/2002) stated that for the house to become a home, a private utopian space, two main exclusions are necessary. It must exile both the unwanted social and the unwanted nature. Witold Rybczynski (1986) considered the need for clear established boundaries between the 'inside' and 'outside'. This refers not just to the physical elements that separate space, but also the metaphorical meaning of who belongs inside and outside this division. Bachelard (1958/1994) considered the separation between the home and the outside. The locks on the house are one of the physical aspects of the home that demonstrates this notion. Locks give a definitive detail that exemplifies what belongs inside and what is not allowed to cross the threshold. It is simultaneously both a physical and psychological conception of ownership and socially constructed thresholds. Brighenti (2007) adds how public space is connected with visibility whereas private space is connected with invisibility. This is something that will take on an additional resonance when we turn more explicitly to the practice of camming within domestic settings.

There is a distinct divide between the danger of the urban street space and the warmth and safety of the private home space. David Seamon (1979/2015) presents the home as an intimate space: it is a separation from the world in which the inhabitants have a degree of control. The house is a space that can only be entered with invitation (Sibley, 1995). There is a desire shared by all

inhabitants for the home to be a purified space. As this space is invitation only, the inhabitants have the control over who is allowed beyond the threshold. This idea of power and control is challenged by Tony Kearon and Rebecca Leach (2000). They explain how this perceived control is merely a fantasy. The home in western society holds significant importance: it is a symbolic space which provides a sense of ownership and level of control, whether imaginary or otherwise, over an individual's home.

The physical boundaries of the domestic home contribute to its atmosphere. Paul Pennartz (1999) notes how an atmosphere is projected onto a room. The way in which the inhabitants project their mood contributes to this atmosphere. To create a pleasant atmosphere there must be a harmonious family unit, which creates a level of safety which is a necessity to relax (Pennartz, 1999). Geographer Edward Relph (1976) explains how space provides a sense of familiarity within individuals. There is an explicit and important relationship between individuals and the space they are inhabiting. Private spaces, including domestic spaces, have also been analysed through spatial syntax theory. Hillier and Hanson (1984) developed spatial syntax techniques to analyse spatial characteristics. Key to this approach is the connection between space and the effects space has on individuals. As the everyday space, the home, is at the deepest level of significance, it is seen by Hillier and Hanson (1984) as the most important space to mediate the relationship between the inside and outside spheres. Spatial syntax has been used to illustrate the configurational aspects of spaces of the house (França and Holanda, 2003). In this research, they concluded that the bedroom space constituted a sense of social isolation. The bedroom is spatially segregated within the house, uncovering its private nature. The inhabitants of the house are classified into spaces for individual use, such as bedrooms, and places of collective use, such as the kitchen and living room.

Furthering this understanding of the relationship between spatial elements and the atmosphere of home, literature has also considered domestic architecture and fear (Ellin, 1997; 2001; Troutman, 1997). This work highlighted how domestic research does not always subscribe to a Panglossian view of the home, such as that explored above. The home, according to Anne Troutman, is not a place of safety. Contrasting with Busch's ideas of the bedroom being a space for dreaming and intimacy, it is rather a space for unrecognised and half-lived dreams. The house holds fears, desires, and fantasies. Walls represent and reflect both fear and security (Marcuse, 1997). Peter

Marcuse explores the boundaries of the home, explaining that the term boundaries is neutral by definition. It is through the situation that the relationship is formed. In the context of the domestic, the relationship is seen as hostile and fearful that reinforces the boundary. "[...] walls were used as protection against threats from the outside, whether from beasts or hostile human marauders" (Marcuse, 1997: 103). Walls are the solution to a society filled with problems and fear. There is a shared desire by all inhabitants for the home to be a purified space to shelter from the outside world (Sibley, 1995). Victor Turner's (1966) work on liminality is important to consider when examining the threshold. The liminal, literally meaning the threshold, is an ambiguous concept that can be applied to both temporal and spatial aspects. The territorial nature of the home is a dominant theme within a western society, according to Jonathan Simon (2007). As the home is constructed as a crime free space, this lends itself to be an ideal space to invade. The privacy and intimacy of the home allows it to be vulnerable to invasion. There is a juxtaposition created encompassing the ideas of the private home. The privacy of the home constructs the notion that the home is a place that law enforcement cannot breach. However, this is intersected with the issues arises from home-based crimes, such as child abuse and domestic violence. There are implications of the privacy the home embodies. This research is an important foundation when considering how the private space of the webcammer in invaded by the viewer. There is a transgression of boundaries across virtual space that this research develops in the discussion.

More gendered perspectives of the home have also been explored in domestic research. Work has discussed the gendered implications of the home in various ways (Leo, 2011; Cieraad, 1999; Walker, 2002). There is a distinct focus on the role of gender and the interactions of the family within an abundance of housing research (England, 2006; Russell, 2010). Moira Munro and Ruth Madigan (1999) explored this in greater depth examining how the family home can operate. The facade of the home being a comforting space begins to be challenged with research examining societal insecurity. Munro and Madigan (1999) state how the representation of the family home as a “haven in a heartless world” is not accurate and is a potentially dangerous portrayal to make of the home. (ibid: 108). For some women, the home can be imagined as a prison-like space. It is a "locus of oppression" where women can be restricted to a domestic role or become continuous victims in their own home (Munro and Madigan, 1999: 108). It is well documented that crimes are committed inside of the home. Crimes such as domestic violence, cyberbullying, and child abuse

mostly remain inside the threshold of home (Chung et al, 2000; Shariff, 2008; Duggan et al, 2002). To the victims of these crimes, the home is not considered a safe space in which to escape from the world. Ellen Gordon-Bouvier also explores the women's experiences of unpaid work within the domestic, arguing that the ideology of domesticity is "founded on the existence of a public and a private sphere, with women being considered temperamentally suited to the domestic private realm, where their work is materially and metaphorically concealed" (2019: 481). She concludes noting how work performed by men typically has stronger associations to the public realm, with "women's work" based in the domestic is more likely to be concealed by the facade of the home, on a spatial and temporal basis (ibid: 492). The idea of 'women's work' is developed in Chapter 6 and is considered in a wider discussion of the domestic as traditionally understood as a private feminine space.

2.5.3 Camming at home and bedroom culture

Cam models are traditionally based in their bedrooms, a space which is considered historically private. The 'bedroom culture' becomes publicly exposed through webcam performances, blurring the boundaries as to what is considered public or private space. Brooke Knight (2000) states how webcamming holds a variety of issues from surveillance, domestic space, intimacy, and pornography. Webcamming has created a new form of social space: the private is performed in the public with the interaction initiated by the performer: "this exposure of the self shifts the surveillance model. Those being seen control what is to be seen" (Knight, 2000: 21). Knight notes how successful webcam models tend to feature a young, attractive female as the focus who tends to spend a majority of her time at home. The home being the background to these webcams is significant. These female performers feel a sense of comfort at home and have the ability to organise their space and time how they wish. This environment also leads to a "peeping tom" authenticity which fulfils the voyeuristic desire. Diana Dragu and Christian Delcea add how "voyeurism maintains the concept of violation of a woman's intimacy but this time it is a secret aggressive triumph on the feminine sex" (2020: 16). Voyeurism is generally classified as "the act of looking at individuals who do not realize that they are, as a rule, strangers, who are naked, in the process of stripping or engaged in sexual activity" (Popa and Delcea, 2020: 64). We can see how webcamming meets several of these elements, adding to this voyeuristic desire of viewing

women in what at least appear to be authentic domestic spaces. There is an ambiguous interplay between voyeurism and intimacy, hiding and revealing, simulation and authenticity, that are part of the webcamming performance.

Broadcasting seemingly everyday life, particularly sexualised performances, via a webcam from domestic spaces such as the bedroom, raises questions of visuality (Mirzoeff, 2002) and surveillance (Wise, 2004). Jones (2015b) states that webcam models, and their rooms, are performative. Their rooms, even if they are staged in a certain way, often appear to be that of a real bedroom. Everything in the webcam experience appears to be real, to be authentic, to the viewer. Victor Burgin adds that the bed in particular has aspects of tease, there is an "eroticism of absence" (2002: 229). By this, he is referring to the various roles the bed plays. Within the case of Jennicam, as explored in the introduction, Burgin explains how the bed was used in multiple ways, not always just for erotic purposes, whether this be sleeping or relaxing. The bed is always visible within Jennicam's broadcasting but its role changes. Burgin more widely argues that "there is something of striptease in the way the space is revealed" (2002: 233). There is something exposed, but some secrets remain hidden. Peter Weibel adds to this noting regardless of how much of the space is revealed "there is still something invisible in the visible" (2002: 209).

Nicholas Mirzoeff's (2002) analysis generates questions regarding the public/private divide, the notion of privacy and the transformation of domestic space. He notes that "webcam users make the bedroom interior the scene of action" (ibid: 13). He argues webcamming creates a unique form of visibility in which the Foucauldian panoptic gaze is inverted. This visibility in turn creates a scenario where "the viewer sees the ostensibly private space of the photographer" (Mirzeoff, 2002: 13). Henri Lefebvre (1995) argues that a social space is a social product. Given this, Alp Biricik (2008) claims that the bedroom is a space that is "constituted and regulated within the networks of various gendered power relations, particularly patriarchy and capitalism in" (ibid: 103). The bedroom is not a private space by default and given the dynamic relations the bedroom has transformed into a privatised space. This privatised space within the domestic has been most recognisable as a feminine space. Hille Koskela explains, in a similar line to Mirzoeff, that there are several questions surrounding home webcams in private spaces that remain unanswered: "how do the home webcams modify their owners' identity? What are the motives behind installing the equipment? Why do people 'voluntarily' make themselves visible? How does it feel to be seen by

a global unknown audience?" (2006: 173). Michele Rapoport (2012) explains how the home has long been perceived as a space for privacy: free from surveillance technologies that are prolific within public spaces.

Amy Dobson (2007) makes a useful commentary on the contrast between traditional girl culture and 'cam girl' culture. Girl culture is conventionally understood as private, hidden, and invisible, whereas contrastingly 'cam girl' culture is characterised by extreme visibility. Girl culture may involve being private, yet Catherine Driscoll adds how there is an element of women viewed as objects to be watched (2002). Laura Mulvey discusses how the female body in society connotes "to be looked at ness" (1989: 19). Women are subjected to intense and unrelenting public gaze, through both surveillance and objectification. Women are now choosing to disclose their own private lives and their bodies which further blurs the boundaries between private and public realms. The 'cam girl' becomes synonymous of the blurring between the private and the public combining the extreme private and the extreme public together. Dobson (2007) notes that 'cam girls' demonstrate notions of visibility and surveillance whilst maintaining and representing femininity as private and contained to interior spaces. The phenomenon of online technology has affected women's activities: 'cam girl' culture is pertinent because it both reinforces and widens the boundaries of traditional girl culture. The internet has allowed individuals to publicly display their private space and private lives, all whilst being safely in their own private space. Dobson (2007) notes in her observations of webcam shows, there was often private and personal information and activities being carried out in these public realms. Therefore, the viewer of these webcam performances is offered access to the private lives and activities of the girl. Cam performers' use of the internet for these displays do not necessarily signify a change to traditional girl culture, rather make the previously invisible aspects visible.

The 'cam girl' remains in the space traditionally assigned to her. Angela McRobbie (1991) states that men have been able to occupy public space for their leisure activities whilst women make use of private spaces, especially bedrooms, for their activities. This idea of men being in the public space is not new. Within a bourgeois ideology, Griselda Pollock (2003) states how, historically, genders were segregated in public and private spaces: men were able to move freely between public and private realms, capable of exploring urban space and spaces of pleasure whereas women

were not afforded this privilege. Women were restricted to the realms of domesticity. Pollock notes how bourgeois women that were in the public realm would visit the promenade, go shopping or were just on display, showing their status as a high-class woman. Working class women who were often in the public realm were not labelled as their bourgeois counterparts. Instead, these women are subjected to judgements of status. These working-class women had their femininity questioned: they were labelled as prostitutes or lesbians. Consequently, women were deprived the right to act as the flâneur[3]. During the nineteenth century the flâneur was conceived as a male figure, women were not able to stroll around and observe the city with the same freedoms awarded to men (Dreyer and McDowall, 2012). Women were conceptualised as belonging in the domestic realm, with only 'lower-class' women entering the masculine public realm (Wolff, 1990).

They could not watch, look, examine: the female flâneur is a contradiction in terms, it could not exist. Men were the ones permitted to watch; women were positioned as the subject of this vision. Pollock further argues how this dichotomy represents the male gaze: their visual and voyeuristic power. Much of the research discussing the male gaze refers to Laura Mulvey's seminal work within film studies. Mulvey (1975) combines feminist perspectives and psychoanalytic approaches to analyse images of women within mainstream films. Through this analysis, she constructs women as being passive objects of the male gaze. This passivity can also be related to power. We will return to Mulvey's notion of the male gaze shortly.

Digital society, through technological advances, contributes to the rebalance of power. Kate Hardy and Camille Barbagallo (2021) posit how research regarding digital sex work still needs critical insights into how power and control can be understood in these platforms. The webcam acts as a way of reconstructing the concept of the flâneur: viewers can watch, examine, look, moving through virtual spaces rather than the physical spaces. 'Cam girls' are often seen doing activities in their personal space, such as listening to music, posing for the camera, and talking to friends. This visibility of 'cam girl' culture acts as a means of reinforcing presumptions made about girls belonging in the domestic space. However, the research by McRobbie (1991) and Dobson (2007)

[3] The flâneur is a nostalgic figure who wandered around the city, immersed in the crowd, yet also remained an outsider. As Coverly (2007) states the flâneur is a mysterious figure, strolling and observing the city streets.

only examines women in the domestic space. What we need to consider is that webcam performing is not solely done by women. There are many men that now contribute to the webcam culture which questions their role as traditionally seen in the public sphere, asking if the men's webcamming is disrupting this notion of gendered roles in public and private realms. This research literature forms the foundation for exploring how of webcam models curate their physical space for webcamming,

2.6 Gendered aspects in webcamming

There are gendered aspects within the field of vision (Wilson, 1995: Koskela, 2002). Koskela (2006) states that the female body is an object of gaze in a distinct way from the male body. Knight (2000) considers the female body as idealised: it becomes commodified. When women present intimate images via their home webcams, they rebel against the modesty that is ingrained within the notion of private space. Koskela (2004) argues that these women broadcasting their lives:

> "may be 'normal' in some sense but they are also automatically outside some of the conventional notions of normal, exactly because of their cameras. They *refuse to be humble* [...]" (ibid: 210, emphasis in original).

In these various discussions the male body is rarely mentioned, and when it is, it is merely as a form of comparison. The concept of the 'male gaze' becomes blurred and complicated as the webcamming is inherently self filmed (Mulvey, 1975). White (2003) notes that 'cam girls' may be presented in objectified and sexually normative ways, however the women themselves are making the choices on how they are portrayed by their viewers. Patrice Opplinger (2008), however, argues that through their visibility online, women who are broadcasting themselves via webcam reproduce images that objectify the female body, only perpetuating the male gaze, which is a concept I will unpack later. Dobson (2007) also highlights the recognisable links between female webcam performers and the pornography industry which have encouraged a revival of oppressive anti-female stereotypes. Some feminist perspectives have argued that this type of imagery further promotes dehumanising judgements that women are objects to be consumed (Bennett, 2002).

A large majority of research into sex work focuses on the supplier, rather than the consumer, of sex (Bernstein, 2001: Sanders, 2006: Weitzer, 2009). Research on sex work has largely been framed around the oppression paradigm and the empowerment paradigm. Weizter (2009) adds how the deviancy theory is based on traditional stigma of sex work and the ways in which individuals are subjected to discriminatory treatment as a result. The oppression paradigm argues how sex work is an expression of patriarchal gender relationships, as male consumers dominate female suppliers. The empowerment paradigm comes in direct contrast to this, focusing on how sexual commerce "qualifies as work, involves human agency, and may be potentially empowering for workers" (Weitzer, 2009: 215). Radical feminists, for example, claim that women who are engaged in the selling of sex and sexual services, cannot consider this work as they are treated as objects within a patriarchal society, in line with the oppression paradigm. There is no space for consensual commercial sex due to the structural power relations (Barry, 1995; Jeffreys, 2008). These accounts do tend to be based on street prostitution as this form of sex work contains the highest levels of vulnerability and risk (Brown and Sanders, 2017). Radical feminism also excludes the voices of male sex workers as this contrasts with the notion that prostitution and sex work is male violence against women (Sanders et al, 2016). Additionally, Marxist feminist scholars consider sex work under a capitalist society, stating it is inherently exploitative. They argue that sex work is oppressive and cannot be considered empowering as it takes place in a capitalist economic society (Wonders and Michalowski, 2001; Limoncelli, 2009; Mojab and Carpenter, 2019). However, generally Marxist feminists tend to avoid taking an abolitionist stance, unlike Radical feminists. Instead, they claim that sex work should be a safe and feasible option for employment, given the reality of living in a material capitalist society (Beloso, 2012).

However, this perspective is not shared by all feminist researchers. Liberal feminism argues against the blanket idea that all sex work is intrinsically harmful to women, following the empowerment paradigm. Liberal feminists emphasise the right for people to choose to work in the sex industry. The idea that there is a free choice to participate in sex work is criticised by Harris (2008) who states there are likely thousands of women who work as webcam performers simply because there was no alternative for them. Liberal feminists declare that sex work can be a source of fun, empowerment, and liberation (Doezema, 2002; Chapkis, 2003). This liberal argument is supported by Sanders et al (2016) research into working conditions of online sex workers. They

found that only 15% of respondents believe their job is dehumanising with 14% believing it to be exploitative. When sex workers described their work, 91% of them described their work as ‘flexible’. This was followed by 66% of workers who described it as ‘fun;’ and 56% found their work ‘rewarding’ and ‘empowering’. Respondents most commonly cited financial rewards as an aspect they enjoyed from sex work. Overall, they state that sex workers revealed having a large amount of choice in their decisions. Sanders et al (2016) notes how this was unsurprising due to the type of participants who were likely to have access and respond to their survey, excluding voices from those working under exploitative conditions.

Webcamming challenges ideas surrounding the control and power associated with viewership. Feona Attwood (2011a) explores webcamming by examining women's sexual agency. She argues that webcamming has complicated the boundaries of who is considered an 'object' and who is considered a 'subject'. She argues that webcam performers demonstrate agency:

> “Camgirls present themselves as cultural producers, challenging the representation of women as technologically inept and as passive sexual objects. They take on the power relations of looking, defying objectification and experimenting with ways of refusing, commanding and controlling the spectators’ gaze” (Attwood, 2011: 212).

Many of the female performers were presented in sexually normative styles. White (2003) states how even if female performers are presented in objectified ways, it is the performers themselves who are making the choices regarding how they are presented to their viewers. They are in control of the way they are portrayed. For Rosalind Gill, there is a “deliberate re-sexualisation and re-commodification of bodies” (2003: 104). This re-sexualisation acknowledges the depiction of women as active, highlighting the change from “an external male judging gaze to a self-policing narcissistic gaze” (Gill, 2003: 104). Gill furthers this exploring how the post-feminist development is “organized around notions of choice, empowerment, self-surveillance, and sexual difference” (2007a: 271). Jane Scoular (2016) explains how the arguments regarding agency have been reduced to a dichotomy of choice or coercion. These simplistic explanations do little in explaining the complexities of sex work (Connelly, 2016). Jane Bailey and Ian Kerr (2007) claim that women broadcasting via webcam “reclaim the copyright of their own lives” (129). These women are

releasing themselves from patriarchal oppression. In reference to Michel Foucault's (1982) theoretical approach, webcam models are liberated from power exerted over them as the women themselves have granted permission to be viewed. For Foucault, visibility became a way to exercise power. Women have gone from being viewed without their permission, having no power over their visibility, to utilise this voyeuristic gaze, commodifying their own body. The power shift allows women to be in control of who is able to view their body. If a woman allows herself to be viewed, she is in control over the way she does this. Webcams allow performers to maintain and exploit the male gaze (Mulvey, 1975) and women are able to gain power and profit from this. This work provides a basis for starting to unpack the research question regarding the performance of sexuality informing the construction of space.

2.6.1 The gaze and gender performativity

John Berger (1972) explores how the act of seeing, and being seen, has become a key component to how we develop our identities in society. Subsequently, media images are constantly present in our everyday lives which has affected how we see ourselves as well as how we see others. These perceptions have a gendered aspect, male images are considered active compared to female images which are seen as passive. As a consequence, men view women as objects, while women view themselves, in addition to other women, through a male gaze. Through media images, there has become an established expectation ingrained in society regarding how women should look and behave, which only reinforces the women's subordination for a male audience. Mulvey (1975) furthers this stating:

> "the determining male gaze projects its fantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connate *to-be-looked-at-ness"* (ibid: 11, emphasis in original).

The image of the woman is transformed into an object: this object is possessed by the controlling male gaze. Mulvey explores how cinematic representations reflect the notion of man as the viewer and woman as the viewed. There is a voyeuristic gaze that objectifies bodies on screen. Expanding

on these works, Judith Butler (1999) explored the expectations of performativity in society, stating that gender is a role which men and women perform in accordance with the expectations of society. Hegemonic ideologies structure the societal norms which govern how men and women are expected to look and behave. Gender, therefore, is not a natural category in the world, but one that has to be learned and maintained through societal influences.

There is self-exposure to webcamming: the performers are making a choice to broadcast which blurs the notions of authenticity (Harris, 2004), as well as disturbing the public/private distinction (Dobson, 2007). Webcams endorse active agency for its users. The performer has control over what is presented as well as when it is broadcast. The means of production of the content, as well as the distribution, is decided by the user. The user however cannot control who is viewing these images. Webcams are considered liberating, whereas surveillance is considered objectifying. White (2003) states how 'cam girls' use online spaces as a way of representing themselves. They document their everyday lives through various means including live broadcasting, photo images, and blogs. This challenges notions of women as objects on a more formal level. White continues arguing how these women consider the idea of 'looked at ness' in an ambivalent way. The women engage with their position by controlling the ways in which they make themselves visible to others, but they also develop rules around the way in which they are viewed. White notes how many of the women reported feeling safe and comfortable whilst being watched and these women felt supported by fans against harassment. Experiences of the women suggest that within the controlled forms of visibility which are chosen by the women, they provide a more empowering position when compared to submitting to more traditional forms of the male gaze.

New configurations of online pornography may have shifted the "nature of the relationship between viewer and woman-as-spectacle (Patterson, 2004: 110). Furthermore, the distance is diminished between the object and the subject. Thomas Campanella (2004) describes webcams as liminal devices:

> "They [webcams] operate on the threshold of the physical and the cybernetic, like points of contact between reality and the virtual realm. The cameras grab data from the real world and translate it into machine-readable code. Those bits of digitized information may be no

> different from stored data on a hard drive; but because they are only briefly separated from the pulse and hue of life - for a time at least - they are infused with a touch of magic" (Campanella, 2004: 58).

The viewing experience goes beyond the traditional constructions of the voyeuristic gaze between the viewer and the performer. Andreas Kitzmann (2004) explains there is a collapse between the private and public realms which in turn brings the two realms, and subsequently the object and the subject, closer. As such Patterson explains how the internet is constructed as a "private space within a public environment' that 'opens out onto a larger space of the Internet, a space which is itself importantly both public and private" (2004: 120).

Gregory (2018) argues it is a political decision to operate a webcam. The user is making the choice to publicise their body, to make themselves visible and subsequently makes their body subject to judgement. Wendy Chun and Sarah Friedland (2015) state there is an initial level of censorship that occurs: there is a socio-political framing between the webcam and the relationship between the body and image. Chun and Friedland note how in the context of revenge porn, media attention is towards white women with little acknowledgement of the experiences of women of colour. This is supported by Osucha (2009) who argues that within the United States the right to privacy was defined in reference to white femininity. They argue that there is an understanding that this link as causing physical harm to those bodies who are non-white, non-heterosexual and non-male. Gregory more simply states how there is an intricate racialisation of this eroticism that the censorship reveals. There is a predictable online visualisation of non-white bodies being depicted as perverse and fetishized (Robinson and Vidal-Ortiz, 2013; Voon and Caras, 2008). Nash (2014) adds that the history of explicitly visible and erotised black bodies is simultaneously the history of their invisibility. This body of research forms the basis of my analysis of how power can be understood through visibility and surveillance which is developed in Chapter 5.

2.7 Webcamming through a pandemic

Whilst there are currently no reliable statistics for current webcam market size, there is information available regarding the growing webcam market. The pandemic has caused an unprecedented year

and webcamming has been impacted greatly by the COVID pandemic. Lilith Brouwers and Tess Herrmann (2020) explain how sex workers have been disproportionately affected by the COVID19 pandemic. They state that "sex workers are both highly likely to have their income strongly affected by COVID-19 and are less likely than most workers to be able to access government financial support" (Brouwers and Herrmann, 2020: 5). Many workers stopped offering in-person services during the time when infection rates were at their highest (Callander et al, 2020). Of the profiles who continued to advertise services, several referred to COVID and the strategies they were employing to keep themselves safe. These included requiring clients to provide a negative test, only providing services in the local area to avoid travel, while some temporarily moved their services completely online (Brouwers and Herrmann, 2020).

During the lockdown in the United Kingdom, Murphy and Hackett (2020) observe that some sex workers were able to transfer some of their services online, through phone or camming services, as well as selling content online. As a result, webcamming has become a way of offering services while keeping the worker and the client safe from exposure. Franki Cookney (2020) explains how there has been large growth in the user traffic to webcamming sites. Stripchat reported a growth in traffic of 25% in the US and 15% in the UK. Content subscription site, OnlyFans, reported more than 75% increase in new sign ups during March 2020. Stripchats Vice President of New Media, Max Bennet, explained this rise in traffic stating that "people want companionship as much as they want sexual fulfilment right now" (Cookney, 2020: N.P). This rise in traffic does not necessarily mean an increase in money spent on these websites. An OnlyFans model explained how her clients were more talkative and engaged with her, but they were not spending money (Cookney, 2020) This is likely a result of the amount of people out of work and do not have the additional money to spend. The market is saturated with models selling sexual services and explicit content.

Despite this saturation of the market, not all workers have the resources or do not want to potentially expose their identity by offering online sexual services. As a result, they had no choice but to maintain offering in-person services (Murphy and Hackett, 2020). By continuing to offer in-person services, workers were forced to put their own health, as well as their clients, at risk. The decrease of clients meant that workers would be under more pressure to participate in unsafe practices that they normally would avoid (NUM, 2020). Callander et al (2020) also stated how

many sex workers, who previously offered in-person services, had returned to offering these in-person services during May and August 2020, when the infection rate has reached a low level. Although not directly related to COVID, Jones (2020c) explains how webcam performers require certain high-quality devices including a camera, computer, internet connection and lighting. This can be a considerable amount of money and creates inequality within a global capitalist society, denying some the opportunity to work as a webcam model, or forcing them to work in exploitative conditions.

2.8 Moving the literature forward

Webcamming has seen exponential growth with technological advancements of devices and the internet. Webcamming constitutes a large part of the sex industry yet this growth is not reflected in either academic research or in UK legislation. By exploring how webcamming sites are constructed and operated, we can see how performers and viewers engage with these sites. Research on webcamming broadly falls into three main categories: feminist perspectives of webcam performers, the structure of the webcamming sites, and experiences of the performers themselves. The focus with this thesis is exclusively on the construction of the environments in which the performers are in. Ideas around the blurring of the physical and virtual spaces and research on domestic space on how the home is traditionally understood and represented are used to frame my discussion on webcamming environments. By unpacking the discussion on private spaces, I explain how webcamming can potentially disrupt the boundaries between private and public realms. Literature on the gaze and gender performativity are integral parts of my analysis. When looking at previous research across online sex work and domestic spaces, the gap in knowledge between these two fields of research becomes clear. Through this combination of previous literature, I constructed my research questions to bridge the gap that is evident within current literature.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction

This chapter establishes the theoretical approaches that have informed both the research design and analysis. The theoretical framework is formed of three main themes: The Cyborg and Actor Network Theory, the 'Reel' and the Real, and Private/Public distinctions. The notion of the cyborg and ANT help us in framing the relationship between performer, viewer, and technology. The discussion of 'Reel' and the 'Real' enables us to explore authenticity and its application to webcamming spaces. Private and public distinctions help frame how space is understood and how these provide a way of exploring how space becomes blurred through technology.

Starting with the notion of the cyborg and Actor Network Theory, I begin to explore how technology has drawn the virtual and physical together through Donna Haraways's (1991) notion of the cyborg highlighting the importance of technology to identity. The importance of human and non-human actors working together is then considered within Actor Network Theory (Law, 1999; Latour, 2005). Authenticity is explored through the context of the 'Reel' and the 'Real'. Goffman's (1978) theory of The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life provides a more critical stance of authenticity with the framing of interactions. The classic metaphor of frontstage and backstage works well when considering cam culture and will be utilised when analysing how individuals present themselves during webcam performances. Identity is then examined through the lens of authenticity within cam culture. Ozgun's (2015) notion of ontology is referenced in relation to what is real and truthful. This is considered through the liveness of television and how this can be translated onto a smaller scale. The webcam is considered as equal to the television with viewers accessing a sense of reality (Ozgun, 2015). This sense of reality can also be applied to webcams and how viewers perceive the 'truthfulness' of webcam performances.

This leads to discussions on pornography and the rise of 'real' sex in this genre. Linda Williams (1999) concept of cornucopias being realms of imagined realities is drawn together with authenticity in online sex. Post-pornography is then referenced as a framework in which to challenge prevalent beliefs about sex and sexuality, focusing on the effects of technology. Social

media cannot be overlooked when considering online identities and the virtual age in which we live. These networks overlap with cam culture in various ways and become a way of examining communication in the virtual. I focus particularly on vlogging and YouTube videos as a parallel to how webcam performers operate and maintain agency in their work. Finally, I explore the distinctions and blurring of public and private realms. This section examines the meaning of private and public and how these have become blurred through technology. The fractal is used to explore various levels of private and public in order to gain a deeper understanding of privacy. The distinction and connections between private and public are interrogated, concluding with my interpretation of a private/public continuum.

3.2 The Cyborg and Actor Network theory

3.2.1 The Cyborg and the virtual disconnect

Haraway's (1985/2000) seminal essay 'A Cyborg Manifesto' queries the world we live in and who we are. She conceives the concept of the cyborg. The cyborg is a rejection of solid boundaries, specifically those boundaries that separate human from animal and human from machine. Through scientific advancements in the 1960s (Clyne and Kline, 1960/1995), the term cyborg entered the lexicon. Parallel to these advancements, popular culture as seen through science fiction, film, and literature, utilised the image of the cyborg as an entity that was not human, animal or machine (Kafer, 2009). In 1995, Gray et al identified four types of cyborg technology in relation to the human body: restorative (restoring lost limbs or functions), reconfiguring (making new combinations of human and technology), normalising (re-establishing normal function) and enhancing (extending human capability). Now, over sixty years on, cyborgs have proliferated into multiple areas of everyday culture (Gray, 2002; Reeve, 2012). This rise of the cyborg is evident in the various ways people use technology in their everyday lives, including reliance on smartphones, constant interaction with media, and communication online through the internet. Digital technologies also include devices that can be worn on the body, such as smartwatches, eyewear, and wristbands that can record biometric data which can be processed and stored through additional technologies (Lupton, 2013). New digital health technologies are capable of all of the

four cyborg technologies identified by Gray et al in 1995, as well as performing others including surveillance, monitoring, and communication.

The concept of the cyborg is also used as a feminist critique aiming to move beyond traditional boundaries of gender, feminism, and politics. For Haraway, feminism is based on the assumptions of men are all understood in one way and women are understood in another way. The cyborg offers an opportunity to move beyond this view by exploring, and confusing, identities without a naturalist or essentialist perspective. The concept of the cyborg is used by Haraway as a way for feminism to engage with the fast-paced growth in science and technology. Cyborg behaviour is a reconstruction of identity: it changes the nature of what it is to be human. The human is intersected with technology creating a hybrid of human and machine, the cyborg is "a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction" (Haraway, 1985: 2000: 50). As a hybrid, boundary crossing entity, the cyborg presents a challenge to nature, posing that nature and technology are not concepts that are diametrically opposed. There is no 'pure' nature: it has all been touched in some way by technology. Haraway (cited in Kunzra, 1997) provides an example of how these hybrids can be seen in society. She explains how running in the Olympics has gone from solely running fast, to in the cyborg-era, being about a combination of training, medication, specialised diets, clothing, top-of-the-line equipment among several other elements (Kunzra, 1997). Technological advances have become intertwined and indistinguishable with the body in the cyborg-era. Thus, the cyborg can also be found in the transgression of physical and non-physical boundaries and borders, as reflected in sexual practices on the internet, including webcamming. This internet-based sexual practice, as explained by Chris Gray (2002) may or may not include a real, human partner. These encounters, albeit existing in the virtual, produce connections and friendships that are real, supporting Haraway's proclamation that "the virtual isn't immaterial. Anyone who thinks it is, is nuts" (Gane, 2006: 147).

The cyborg is both individual and whole, it represents "transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities" (Haraway, 1991a: 154). This hybrid figure of the cyborg blurs category distinctions like human and machine; human and animal; nature and culture. The cyborg allows for movement beyond these dualisms which contributes to a focus on those classified as Other. Cyborgs can disrupt existing boundaries, creating new ways of "resistance and recoupling"

(Haraway, 1991: 154), which comprise these dualisms. Allucquère Stone's (1996) analysis of the cyborg and cyberspace is also important to consider here. She describes the transition to virtual technologies and during this shift, virtual personas were recognised as real as physical personas. There is a two-way channel regarding technology and the self: technologies become part of ourselves when considering issues such as self-identity. Technology shapes us just as we shape technology. Stone uses various subjective frames in which to situate the self and technology, namely the multiple, the liminal, and gender. The multiple and the liminal draw on similar themes of representation of self. Stone claims that the representation of self online can be challenging due to the combination of identities that a person can possess simultaneously, and no person has one true persona. This is useful in the context of this research in its application to authenticity and how identity is understood by viewers. Rubén Campos adds how researchers have considered the cyborg as a "converging entity, the liminal point where all categories must be rebuilt and rethought" (2017:17). Whilst this theory is compelling for online virtual environments such as social networking and blogging, the validity may not be consistent when considering webcam models. Specifically, webcam models are not necessarily acting as their true persona, rather creating a separate identity that will be more financially beneficial (Bernstein, 2007; Jones, 2015b). Drawing on Haraway's work, Stone explains how individuals are dependent on technology for their personal representations therefore technology itself has become part of their identities: we are all cyborgs. To explain this, Stone eloquently uses the example of phone sex. The phone does not only transmit information about sexual acts and bodies but rather actually transmits sexual acts through the phone. The boundaries of the physical are pulled together by technology. I argue that this can also be said of webcam sex work, which transmits the body, albeit in a visual and virtual combination. Webcams create a new way of having sex.

The concept of partial identities also allows us to connect the notion of the cyborg with queer theory. Lara Cox (2018) takes this connection further claiming it is possible to claim that Haraway's "A Cyborg Manifesto" is a notably queer work. The "disturbance of fixed identity categories, ostensibly the divide between the human and the non-human or the technological" (Cox, 2018: 319) reveals space for queering gender, sexuality, and other features of identity. Heather Walton (2004) also links the cyborg and queer theories together stating how:

> "[l]ike cyborg politics, queer theory celebrates the destabilization of identity decentring the regulative norms of heterosexuality. Feminist, gay and lesbian identities thus become as amorphous as they were once perverse" (2004: 39).

The cyborg disturbs our understanding of what it means to be human by highlighting the close link with technology. The notion of the cyborg figure also provides opportunities for reconsidering queer identities. Cyborgs have been framed as posthuman creations that enable new prospects of capability, connectivity, and experience (Walton, 2004). They enable us to foresee a future where "limitations on love and other life-defining experiences that have been (and still are) placed on queer people can be transcended" (Andrews, 2020: 130).

Katherine Hayles (2006) calls into question the cyborg and its applications. She argues that technology is complex and as such the cyborg cannot signify an individual. Although Hayles makes a valid point in explaining how technology has become a complicated situation, I believe there are still merits to Haraway's work that should not be overlooked. In particular, Haraway's critique of traditional feminism is of note to this research. She claims how traditional feminism views men and women as separate beings, all men acting and behaving in a different manner than how all women act, whereas her cyborg theory does not assume that all individuals under a gender would operate in the same way. Haraway aims for a move beyond these dichotomous essentialist gender identities. Due to this, some feminist scholars have criticised Haraway for being anti-feminist as it denies any potential commonalities of female existence (Alaimo, 1994; Guertin, 2005). Despite this, I still argue that moving beyond essentialist gender identities is more important when considering the fluidity of sexual performance. Rather than constraining identity into rigid categories, I believe that taking a more fluid dynamic approach will be more beneficial when researching gender performativity.

Opposed to the combination of the visual and virtual being combined together as in the cyborg, Campanella argues how webcams are "points of contact between the virtual and the real, or the spatial anchors in a placeless sea. Webcams open digital windows onto real scenes within the far-flung geography of the Internet" (2001: 267). The webcam acts as a mediator between these two

spheres of reality and the virtual. Webcams expand the information available to the user: it is not just text, but it provides live visual information. Garnet Hertz (1996) considers how:

> “digital space was an active arena, it still remained generally "virtual". The user, sitting down at their computer "floats in digital space" once connected. Their physical body becomes unimportant -- being disembodied from their physical sense. This mind/body split produces what I will term as "a disembodied digital self". [...] interactions done on the computer stay within "computerspace"

When using the term virtual here, Hertz is referring to more rudimentary forms of internet communication which consisted of only text. He continues stating within a virtual realm, there is little reference to the physical reality. Interactions remain within the virtual. This, as Campanella suggests, highlights the split between the real and the virtual. Hertz adds how the physical body becomes insignificant, indicating a passive user. While I agree that there is a significant exchange of interactions within the virtual realm, I believe that with technological advances, the physical reality is more important. In this research, the physical body plays a large role - even in the virtual space. Firstly, there is the virtual projection of the sexualized body via the webcam. Secondly, the viewer's body is not necessarily passive, there is a connection between the mind and the body when considering sexual gratification. The interaction of both the webcam performers and the viewers has a reaction in the virtual and physical world. Although there may be a disconnect between the mind and the body in virtual space, the physical presence and physical body should not be disregarded. I argue that the physical body is just as important as the virtual self in webcamming. On a more practical level, the virtual self does not exist without the physical body logging in, typing, and being present. While I do believe there is a form of the disembodied digital self, I think it is important to consider the physical self and environment alongside this. There is value in exploring webcamming within the bodies of the cyborg and the internet, considering its relevance for erotic bodies in the disembodied virtual realm in the 21st Century.

3.2.2 Actor Network Theory

The several elements that constitute the environment, physical self, and virtual self of webcamming can be explored through Actor Network Theory. Actor Network Theory (ANT) is a sociological theory that was originally developed by Bruno Latour, Michel Callon and John Law (Law, 1999a; Callon; 1999; Latour, 1996; 2005). ANT was developed as part of a wider scientific movement within science and technology studies and has impacted this field greatly (Lagesen, 2012). Law (2009b) explains how ANT cannot be considered as a theory but as an approach. Theories attempt to explain why something happens, but ANT does not do this. It is descriptive rather than providing an explanation: instead "it tells stories about "how" relations assemble or don't" (Law, 2009b: 141). Law proposes that ANT is better understood as a toolkit for exploring and revealing connections.

ANT is unique in that it contains not only humans in the network but also non-humans, which are collectively cited as actors. The term non-human encapsulated a large range of entities from animals (Callon, 1986), natural phenomena (Law, 1987), tools and technical artifacts (Latour and Woolgar, 1986/1979), material structures (Latour and Hermant, 1998), transportation devices (Law and Callon, 1992), texts (Callon et al, 1986), and economic goods (Callon, 1999). More simply, non-human objects can be classified as "things, objects, [and] beasts" (Latour, 1993: 13). Emma Roe (2009) explains how ANT is particularly interested in breaking down distinctions between human and non-human actors and how these entities create a network of links. Generally, a relationship in an actor-network refers to two or more entities which affect, change, modify, define, or stabilise each element, either directly or via other elements (Vicsek et al, 2016). This highlights how within an ANT the focus is less on the relation between the elements but rather how these elements change and shape each other. ANT proposes that systems can be approached by examining each of its constituent parts, whether these parts are human, natural, or technological, they are all interactive and active members of the whole system. Each actor has a significant role to play in the system. Actors can be tangible or more abstract, large, or small: they provide us with material elements to follow their relationships in the network (Latour, 2005). David Wood (2016) adds how ANT is the most comprehensive effort to continue the development of post-Foucauldian understandings of power. He continues arguing ANT can show the complex network between humans and non-humans, which results in society.

Within this theory, the debate as discussed between the connection of the virtual mind to the physical body becomes slightly less important, as in ANT, both the mind and physical are connected within a larger system. Using the example of webcamming, there are several elements that create the network, some act in more subtle, unnoticed ways such as power grids, whereas others are more obvious such as a webcam. George Ritzer (2008) states how the style of ANT can be associated with post-structuralism through several concepts, one of which is relationality. Relationality refers to the properties and boundaries formed through their relations to other elements, rather than understood alone (Ritzer 2008).

The importance of the non-human elements is what makes this theory so important to me, given the significance of the non-human elements seen within webcamming and the domestic environments on display. ANT also claims that all parts of the system are equally important in a social network. These actors, which includes computer software, must work smoothly to form societal order. When certain actors are removed, order starts to fail. In the case of webcamming, there are several key elements to keep order. For example, if the internet were to fail, the system would be disturbed. All parts that create the webcamming network must work in harmony. The importance of this lies in seeing how these individual systems can be seen working whilst examining webcam performers, given that the performer tends to be at the forefront of discussions with viewers and physical spaces less talked about.

Notions of post-structuralism and constructivism are drawn upon in ANT, a trait also shared with some feminist perspectives, most notably Haraway (1985/2000). Feminist scholars of the 1990s and 2000s criticised ANT for its disregard of gender (Wajcman, 2000) and its power inequalities (Star, 1991). This criticism indicates that a feminist perspective and ANT are incompatible, however feminist research has used ANT to explore gender practices through networks (Hunter and Swan, 2007; Corrigan and Mills, 2012). Vivian Lagesen's (2012) research into gender and technology uses ANT as a means of viewing these concepts as diverse and workable objects. ANT within a feminist lens allows researchers to explore different means of relating to technology and the implications this may have on doing gender. This again, links back to Haraway's work and the concept of the cyborg, which she uses to subvert gendered binaries. The focus on associating human and non-human components links to both ANT and Haraway's perspectives. Law (1999)

states how ANT "has insisted on the performative character of relations and the objects constituted in those relations. It has insisted on the possibility, at least in principle, that they might be otherwise" (1999: 7). Kane Race (2020) notes how sexual bodies and identities have not been an explicit focus within science and technology, as a branch most associated with ANT. Race continues explaining how ANT has generally focused on material connections and relationships, whereas queer theory has tended to focus on overarching notions of ideological, normative, and disciplinary powers that 'other' the queer identity. Just like above with the cyborg, ANT's focus on relation between human and non-human actors can help take on "ideologies and institutions of intimacy" known as heteronormativity (Berlant & Warner, 1998: 551). Bryce Renninger (2018) adds how a contemporary queer group includes a number of both human and non-human actors and uses ANT to explore Grindr and other social-sexual media given the complex networks of technology and bodies.

ANT can be understood as a unique individualised theory that can be applied to various situations. Law argues that the world is multiple in that "different practices tend to produce not only different perspectives but also different realities" (2004: 13). Laur Kanger explains how there are multiple strands of ANT, and these "have some overlapping aspects and they may occur together in specific accounts: however, at least to some extent, they are logically incompatible, which makes it meaningful to speak of them as distinct positions" (2017: 437). This aspect of ANT has been criticised, with Kanger (2017) stating that advocates of ANT can switch between alternative readings meaning it can evade criticism. This is not the only criticism of ANT. Perhaps a larger criticism is that writers using ANT refer to non-human objects in human terms (Elder-Vass, 2008). Human beings are different from inanimate objects: humans can negotiate, while objects cannot. Sociologist Dave Elder-Vass explains how human and non-human actors need to be considered in different ways "we achieve symmetry in the treatment of human and non-human actors, not by treating them all in the same terms, but by treating each in the terms that are appropriate to its own particular structure and properties" (2008: 469). By not acknowledging the distinction between human and non-human actors, the capabilities of humans are misrepresented. Humans are able to interpret the world, can communicate through language and reflect on their circumstances, whereas non-human objects lack this ability. Whilst I do believe all objects have importance in the network, I subscribe more with Elder-Vass' notion of symmetry that treats each actor in the most appropriate

way. By treating humans and non-humans in relation to each other, rather than just all automatically given the same level of importance, creates a network where nuances of power can be better understood. ANT plays an underlying role in how I approached my thesis. As my research included a large focus on non-human elements, such as objects, colour, and technological devices which we will be returning to in chapter 7, I wanted to draw from ANT in its approach to combining human and non-human elements in the same network.

Human Geography scholar, Beth Greenhough, explains how ANT focuses on the relationship between actors in networks, which consequently means underlying social and economic structures and issues, such as capitalism, power, and inequality, are neglected (2009). Although ANT does not deny the existence of social and economic structures and issues, ANT usually downplays the role of these issues (Modell, 2019). As Ray Hudson states:

> "Actor-network analysts therefore may simply describe networks of inequality and gloss over the reasons for inequality. In capitalist societies, for instance, agents (human and nonhuman) possess differential capacities to shape relationships" (2001: 34).

Critics have emphasised the need for a strong focus on social structures as a way to theorise the constraints of liberation (Dy et al, 2018; O'Mahoney et al, 2017; Elder-Vass, 2017). To overcome this, I created a synthesis of theory to ensure that social structures and issues were not overlooked. By combining theory together, I was able to subdue specific issues. This synthesis becomes particularly evident when I explore how power operates on several different levels through an institutional level to an individual level, which is unpacked in greater detail in Chapter 5.

3.3 The 'Reel' and the 'Real'

3.3.1 Authenticity in webcamming

As we discussed earlier, the 'authentic self' is idealised within cam culture. Anita Harris notes how the "regulation of interiority" is an important aspect of 'cam girl' culture, through the display and confession (2004:125). Dobson (2007) makes the connection between success and self exposure,

particularly within popular culture and reality TV. Reality TV has influenced webcam culture through its message of display and exposure of the true self, parallel with the constructed narrative of fame, garnered by being authentic. In cam culture, honesty and authenticity are considered valuable resources. As such, Dobson (2007) notes that many cam performers make specific and direct discussions based on their personal authenticity, affirming that they are honest in their presentations of themselves.

Whilst some performers explicitly state that they are using their webcam sites as a means of gaining attention for celebrity status, others state their webcam site is for personal fulfilment and fun. The latter is particularly thought provoking: why would an individual choose to use these sites for their own pleasure? Harris (2004) attempts to answer this by explaining that "the normalization of the insertion of the public gaze into the private regulates young women by demanding a constant display of self. Young women become ever-available and ever-monitored" (2004: 125). The nature of visibility may be appealing to women as it is paralleled with the idea of celebrity in media technology, as seen by the rise of social media influencers. Visibility online creates micro celebrities (Khamis et al, 2017), also known as social media influencers. For those performers who are webcamming for fun and their own pleasure, it may be this reveals a more authentic self as an individual is choosing to share their own private life for fun, rather than financial gain (Mowlabocus, 2008). Angela Jones (2020c) adds how there is an appeal for viewers that perceive cam performers as real people who have invited the viewer into their real bedrooms and are genuinely enjoying themselves. While the majority of webcam performers appear to have a financial motivation, demonstrated through accumulating 'tip jars' and wish lists, this is not always the motivation for camming. Ozgun (2015) explains how webcam performers can state on their channel that they are not working, rather only there to socialise and have fun. Ozgun notes one female performer, who describes herself as a successful professional businesswoman who was not looking for money, rather for fun and erotic pleasure. Any tokens that she received she donated to an animal rescue charity. Although the framing of webcamming focuses on the financial reward, there are cases that are not based on a narcissistic idea of influencer, pursuing celebrity status, attention, and prestige (Marwick, 2013; Jones, 2016; Turner, 2016).

Webcam work involves a form of what Elizabeth Bernstein refers to as "bounded authenticity" (2007: 6). She uses this term to suggest that there is an authentic, but manufactured, connection, between a buyer and a seller. Bernstein refers to a sought after 'girlfriend experience' as an example of how these bounded authentic relationships can occur. In these temporary relationships, a manufactured authenticity is purchased with the aim to simulate a 'real' and reciprocated sexual connection. Both buyer and seller work together to generate what is culturally accepted as intimacy. As a result of this, it becomes more than just sex and can involve the seller fulfilling fantasies or acting in the role of a therapist.

Viewers of webcams are presented with what they potentially believe to be an authentic and intimate experience. Jones (2016) used the term 'embodied authenticity' to explain the online performative element of webcamming. The webcam has interactive components which allow performers to create unique and personalised content for every performance. This allows viewers to consider the experience as authentic and a real interaction. Jones adds how although this is considered authentic:

> "if a model performs fellatio on a dildo while a client watches and masturbates to climax, the client knows this is not "real"—meaning it is not the same feeling as if the woman had physically performed that act on the client" (Jones, 2016: 229).

We can explore this quote through ANT, as it highlights how non-human elements become an important part of the webcamming network as a visual sexual element. The dildo is a placeholder for the viewer, it is something they can use for sexual gratification, maintaining this manufactured, intimate connection. I argue that the non-human dildo becomes an element that is just as important as the performer themselves, as it allows for the viewer to construct their own reality. Bernstein's (2007) notion of 'bounded authenticity' and Jones' (2016) notion of embodied authenticity both explore the manufactured connections between humans, which will be expanded later in thesis will a focus on non-human elements. These non-human links explored through ANT and the notion of the cyborg becomes the basis of my later discussion on how webcamming has created a new way of having sex.

This exposure of the private, the performers showing their honest and true self, allows a sense of freedom and empowerment. There is a desire for authenticity: the "appeal of the real" governs the digital society (Poniewozik, 2000). There is an enjoyment for viewers of webcams as they offer access to mediums of truth or at least they appear to offer mediums of truth. Truth in this situation is not necessarily a full appreciation of the term. Authenticity is based on an irrationality of the audience: individuals choose to believe in authentic illusions that are created by content producers, which is what a webcam performer is. They create content which is marketable for financial reward. A suspension of belief is required for the authenticity contract to be fulfilled. Katherine Shonfield (2000) explains through the lens of film media, throughout the duration of a film, viewers are able to temporarily cease their personal scepticism and hold what they are viewing as true. This is all done whilst still holding the knowledge that the film is fictional. Gunn Enli (2015) adds that audiences tend to believe even when knowing it is just an illusion, it is a new way of having sex.

3.3.2 Goffman and The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life

The cloud of authenticity: real or perceived, that surrounds the webcam is reminiscent of Erving Goffman's (1978) research. In a social interaction, individuals act as if they are in a theatrical performance. When we apply this to webcamming, the models are creating and acting out a theatrical performance. In this metaphor, the actor (the individual) is on a stage in front of their audience, where they play a role: the positive elements of self as well as the desired impressions are emphasised. Correspondingly, there is a backstage: a space in which individuals can prepare for the role they will play. The frontstage features a performance in which the individual carries out a role. Their behaviour, appearance, dress all contributes to the role. The presentation of the self in these performances involves managing self impression for the other participants in the interaction. As a result, it is favourable for the individual to perform in ways that will create a good impression. Chris Brickell (2005) adds that the representation of the performer is constructed with agency yet is not a stable self that exists outside of the social online realm. In the frontstage, people are consciously performing for an audience whereas in the backstage there is no performance: it is a space where people can be authentic. Peter Donnelly and Kevin Young (1988) claim that a sign of authenticity is when the individual is not concerned about the general audience. Kathryn Fox

(1987) advances this stating that no longer performing for any audience at all was an indicator of authenticity.

Goffman notes how social interactions are guided by frames which affect the construction of definitions of certain situations and how the experience is organised. These frames are techniques used by individuals to give others a certain impression of themselves. Framing influences how individuals interpret and process information. Chris Brickell (2005) states that these frames are pre-existing: they are not subject to experimentation by individual subjects, rather are used within the situational constraints. The reality of an event depends on its framing and frames can help discern what is considered real (Rettie, 2004). Given the various arguments regarding agency, it could be argued that these predetermined frames are simply reproductions of the hegemonic male gaze. Although it is suggested by some feminist researchers (Bristow, 1997; Corsianos, 2007) that if women are trapped within these frames, then the ability to have free agency is restricted. Interactions and performances are governed by the Goffmanian frames. In his book Frame Analysis (1974), Goffman provides further commentary on the notion of frames. Frames are not social institutions but rather govern events. Frames affect the definitions of the situation within context. They sort subjective experiences by giving them meaning which in turn allows them to be interpreted in the social world. However, there is no free agency over these frames and individuals are not able to choose how they frame their experiences. Frames pre-exist within interactional environments which control and constrain meanings. The frontstage and backstage metaphors in Goffman's work provide a way of exploring human behaviour and authenticity and become a particularly important element to chapter 6 when explore the front and backstage of webcamming performance spaces.

3.4 From set to screen

3.4.1 *Mise-en-scène*

Mise-en-scène is a concept used to describe a film's visual elements that appear on camera and how they are arranged. There are various factors that can contribute to a film's *mise-en-scène*, including the physical setting, the decoration, lighting, costumes, depth of space, among many

others. David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson (2002) explain how *mise-en-scène* refers to everything that appears in shot and its arrangement. This includes the composition, sets, props as well as the actors themselves. *Mise-en-scène* can also be seen as a set of tools, used to direct the attention of the viewer and to help understand the space itself (Heath, 1976: Cooper, 2002: Bordwell and Thompson, 2002). Joanne Connell (2012) adds how the *mise-en-scène* contributes to how viewers respond to the film in terms of its credibility and authenticity, with Deldjoo et al stating that "although viewers may not consciously notice movie style, it still influences the viewer's experience of the movie" (2016: 1541). I argue this effect is similar in webcamming production with a similar influence on viewers. Film theorist, Laura Mulvey, adds how Hollywood "always restricted itself to a formal mise-en-scène reflecting the dominant ideological concept of the cinema" (1975: 8) and I am interested in seeing if the male gaze is something replicated through the *mise-en-scène* of webcamming.

3.4.2 Vlogging performances

Oya Aran et al (2014) explains how video bloggers, known as vloggers, record and share vlogs via social media. These vlogs contain a wide variety of diverse content including personal anecdotes and diaries, as well as commentary of everyday life. There are a range of vlogs created in a variety of means using different techniques. Aran et al note one of these styles, known as conversational vlogs, is a "monologue-like setting in which vloggers display themselves in front of the camera and talk" (Aran et al, 2014: 202). Although these vlogs are typically pre-recorded, it constructs a conversation between the vlogger and the viewer. Whilst Aran et al (2014) note the importance of verbal communication, they also highlight the non-verbal content and behaviour within the vlogs. The choices that the vlogger makes, both conscious and unconscious, convey various messages to the viewer. There are technical choices: the webcam, the video quality, the resolution. There are also choices the vlogger makes: the framing, the location, the background. It can be argued that the webcam performers act in similar ways to the vlogger. The webcam performer does not have to produce content in ways they do not want. Webcam content does not appear to be produced in the same way as other forms of online sexual activity such as pornography, with many webcam performers acting independently (Bleakley, 2014). The performer largely has control over the way

they produce content for their webcam rooms. These choices allow webcam models autonomy over creating content they want to; in ways they feel comfortable.

I argue that webcam performances can be likened to forms of YouTube vloggers. Patricia Lange uses the term "privately public" to describe the ways in which people make connections to others whilst maintaining a level of privacy by withholding identifiable information (2000: 361). She continues explaining how "[p]articipants in this category conceal certain aspects of their identity, while expanding their friend and subscriber base and making videos with widely accessible content" (ibid: 372). This is mirrored in the ways that webcam performers maintain relationships with customers while maintaining their privacy. As we explored earlier, manufactured identities are one way for a model to appear authentic to their viewers but conceal their true identity.

Aymar Christian (2009) explains how the meaning of reality in relation to new media has been debated, using the example of YouTube, adding how:

> "the performance is all that matters. The "bigger picture" is realization of the performance in everyday life, its constructed nature. This does not mean performers are lying. As long as a vlog or video manages to capture the imagination and relate emotionally, its actual truth may be irrelevant" (ibid, N.P).

Theories have focused on how new media questions ideas of reality and how digital media distorts perceptions of what is considered physical and real (Balsamo, 2000). Michele White (2006) researched women and webcams and claims that viewing a webcam is considered an intimate activity. She notes that "the spectator becomes wrapped up in the image rather than being able to grasp the whole representation...all Internet spectators become collapsed with the computer and may fail to distinguish where the subject ends and object begins" (White, 2006: 78). New technology provides people the opportunity to broadcast their personal lives. This, Christian states, promises "a human and real experience while disguising the constructed nature of the experience and the constructed nature of all experience" (2009: np). Christan concludes stating there is a constructed nature to the YouTube vlogs, the images capture imagination and emotion, the actual

truth to these performances become less relevant. One significant difference between vlogs and webcam performances is the timeliness, liveness and interactivity that occur with a live stream.

3.4.3 Liveness of the webcam

The webcam maintains the same liveness and immediacy of the television but on a smaller scale (Ozgun, 2015). The liveness of the television image provides a "unique potential for relating to the event it presents" (ibid: 230). Taking that into account, Ozgun states that television images have an 'ontic' condition. Martin Heidegger (1962) uses the term ontic in relation to the existential quality of things, beings, and events. The term ontic refers to something real or factual. The liveness of the television image shifts the ontic quality of events and things onto the screen in which they appear. The television screen therefore possesses a presence of the outside world that it shows. It is the apparent truth of the representations presented via television and viewers can question the images they are presented with.

> "We can always question how things and events are represented to us on the television screen; we can always associate particular instances of such representation with ideological constructions beyond epistemological questions; we can always remain doubtful about the 'truth value' of these representations and question what is really happening there; but we can never deny that what television shows us does exist somewhere at that very moment" (Ozgun, 2015: 230).

Ozgun states that the webcam image also has the same ontic quality as the television. The image is undeniable, regardless of any questioning of its truth or identity. The liveness of the image is reflected in the webcam's origins. Webcams were originally online cameras, located in geographical areas including Antarctica and Times Square in New York. These webcams were updated every few seconds, not producing a live stream but created low resolution images which captivated viewers with a type of temporal realism. Without sound or commentary, these webcam images showed viewers a glimpse into a different part of the world. Oliver Grau (2003) uses the notion of telepresence to explore the operation of the webcam: the viewer can be in various places simultaneously. The experience of place, via the webcam, is a substitute for being physically

present. The webcam presents a trace of realism: “a silhouette rather than a portrait” (Grau, 2003: 231). There is a temporal reference to webcam sex channels, they present life as it is at that moment, beyond the consideration of its representation. The webcam is instant and transmits images simultaneously. J Macgregor Wise argues that for webcam viewers there is an element of telepresence, which he defines as “the idea of being in two places at once – to be where you are, but to feel like you are someplace else” (2004: 428). Viewers are able to experience life outside of their geographic reach within the privacy of their own homes.

Craig Hight (2001) explains how webcam sites have a diverse range of contexts including pornographic websites, webcams set up within offices, houses that provide a view to a daily lifestyle, as well as surveillance camera websites. Each style of webcam site operates with various configurations of aesthetic, ethical and social considerations. Given the vast variations of how webcam sites operate, it is not possible to reduce the ways in which users engage with these websites to an oversimplified framework of voyeurism. Webcams, Hight claims, are a development of media technology which produces a more authentic portrayal of reality. He states that “[p]art of the attraction of these sites is in fact that they offer an apparent connection to the real within the virtual environment of hyperspace” (ibid: 85). The ‘real life’ that is displayed via webcams is considered unremarkable. Although the viewers may catch a glimpse of a life that they would otherwise not have access to, Hight notes that it is commonly a static and dull scene. However, it should be highlighted that this article is from 2001 and media technology, including webcams have evolved and developed vastly to the present day. Hight’s conclusions may not be as applicable given the technological advances that have affected both webcam viewers and performers, although it does give a comprehensive overview of the configurations of webcam sites as well as the authenticity within virtual environments.

Erotic webcam sites were constructed from the idea of creating an open space which other webcam sites had purposively excluded or censored (Ozgun, 2015). They contained nudity, obscenity, a thrill for exhibitionists and voyeurs alike. Within these websites, members can have their webcam publicly available to view, they can broadcast to viewers. The term broadcasting, Ozgun notes, is borrowed from television, which further likens webcams to television media. There is a realness embedded in the live aspect of the webcam. The liveness element to the webcam experience and

to the pleasure for viewers. Although it is possible to upload pre-recorded videos, these are unappealing to viewers and are considered to be like 'cheating the system'. Their liveness becomes an integral element of realness: to be anything other than live is considered fake. There is a temporal element to the authenticity perceived. Within the webcam realm, the liveness of the performance is constructed through the interactions between the performer and the viewers. The interaction is a level of communication sustained between the viewer and the performer that usually goes beyond passively responding to requests. This interaction can take several forms from simple greetings to in depth personal conversations features topics that do not include sex. These conversations establish a realness of the performer: it individualises them and makes them a desirable subject. The performer is autonomous: they do not just respond to viewers desires but have an identity. Although this identity may be constructed by the performer, the realness constructed still appears to feel authentic. Ozgun observes that:

> "it is possible to see female performers in these sites in heavy makeup, lying down naked in bed in front of Manhattan-skyline wallpaper, lit with pink and purple lamps, masturbating all day and just asking for tokens with a big forced smile on their face all the time" (2015: 234).

Ozgun argues that the audience are engaged with the performer as they appear to be authentic representations set in their home in more casual rather than staged environments. When considering webcam sex: the realness is the virtual composition of the subject through the webcam. A webcam "virtually constructs and affirms the 'desiring subject', purely within the temporality of that moment" (Ogzun, 1995: 236). Ruth Barcan (2002) reveals there has been a growing popularity of 'reality porn' within the adult entertainment industry. This genre of 'reality porn' highlights and reveres authenticity and rawness. Barcan explains how 'reality porn' acts as a response to mainstream commercialised porn, what she refers to as a "pornonormativity" (ibid: 204). "Realness" is therefore employed as a strategy by the performer. As much as their authenticity may be true, it could also be possible that the performer presents themselves in a meticulously constructed fantasy. These fantasies are presented in a believable manner and encompass the effect of reality.

3.4.4 Authenticity and hyperreal…?

Authenticity at its most basic level is concerned with what is real or fake (Andriotis, 2009). It is used to indicate the truth, reality, or genuineness of something (Kennick, 1985). Authenticity has also been described by Sociologist Gary Fine in relation to its sincerity, innocence, and originality (2003). Authenticity can therefore be described as being "real, reliable, trustworthy, original, firsthand, true in substance, and prototypical, as opposed to copied, reproduced or done the same way as an original" (Ram et al, 2016: 111).

In his renowned essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", Walter Benjamin states that "the presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity" (1935/1986: 220). Benjamin claims that the 'aura' of a performance is based on a spatial relationship of distance. This distance is specified by space and time of the performance (Savage, 2000). Individuals are attracted to this aura, according to Benjamin. As a result of this, people attempt to close the distance between the performer and the audience, giving the viewer a reproduction (or representation) of the original performance. This power of reproduction enables the viewer to reduce the distance, meaning it is no longer required to physically experience a performance. Consequently, according to Benjamin, these reproductions cannot maintain their distinction in space and time, losing their aura. Katrinka Somdahl-Sands and John Finn (2015) add that through this pursuit to be closer to the performance we end up further distancing ourselves from the authentic performance. With the advent and development of the digital revolution, increased reproductions have allowed more intimate experiences with a performance (Auslander, 1999). These digitally mediated performances no longer require a loss of aura (Somdahl-Sands and Finn, 2015). With Benjamin writing in the 1930's, a key challenge of live performance was film: film was disconnected from space and time, losing its aura. In the 21st Century, the performance is mediated: it is a re-enactment of itself. Most performances in the digital realm are recorded, edited, and shown through a digital medium, such as YouTube. Whilst the performance is past, the viewer experiences it in their now. This phenomenon is what feminist scholar refers to as ''pastpresents…in which pasts and presents very literally mutually construct each other" (King, 2011:12). These re-enactments of the past and the present are unable to be understood as separate entities in a modern era that combines the past and present into a simulacrum (Baudrillard, 1994).

The new re-enactments are compared to their imagined authenticity of their original image, yet simultaneously the original is compared to its new version. The viewers of these performances are able to compare the content produced ‘‘in ways that both remake and newly make them’’ (King, 2011: 17).

Hyperreality is defined by Jean Baudrillard as “the generation by models of a real without origin or reality” (1994: 1). In hyperreality, the original or true version of an object has no significance as it belongs in a different realm: this original object loses its reference. Ryszard Wolny makes an important distinction noting how this does not make the world unreal, rather “societies begin to bring reality together into one supposedly coherent picture, the more insecure and unstable it looks, and the more fearful societies become” (2017: 76). Hyperreality is “the meticulous reduplication of the real, preferably through another, reproductive medium, such as photography” (Baudrillard cited in Wolfreys et al, 2006: 52). In a contemporary consumer culture, the picture of an object is more significant than the original due to the context. It adds value to the original. Ryszard Wolny (2017) uses the example of an image of a celebrity to explore this: the value is added to the original through extensive advertising campaigns or through photoshopping imperfections.

Hyperreality is not grounded in reality, rather exists free of any reference. For Baudrillard (1983), there is a process of simulacra. There are successive phases of the image, starting with the image reflecting a basic reality. In the next stage, the image masks and perverts a basic reality, then it masks the absence of a basic reality. In the final phases the image “bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum” (Baudrillard, 1983: 11). The connections between the notion of hyperreality and ‘simulacra’ are evident. The world is composed of layers of representation that become layers of copies. The original is lost, no longer having a privileged position: “the so-called original itself becomes understood as yet another ‘sign’, constantly reproduced in its own image” (Buchmann et al, 2010: 231). Reality is replaced by simulacra: the world becomes signification rather than one filled with objects. Hyperreality can be understood as something more real than the real itself (Baudrillard, 1968/2005). To visualise this Jukka Jouhki describes how pornography can be considered as a “condensed reality” (2017: 85): it is better than regular sex becoming “sexier than sex itself” (Merkhofer, 2007: n.p). Baudrillard explains how the

disappearance of real sex has caused the simulation of sex in porn: sex is no longer natural, rather "sex is produced" (1977/2007: 37). He continues explaining how:

> "Everything is to be produced, everything is to be legible, everything is to become real, visible, accountable [...] everything is to be said, accumulated, indexed and recorded. This is sex as it exists in pornography" (ibid: 37).

The reality of the simulation has itself become the real and reality has faded. Hypersex is presented as ideal, real sex in pornography and the hyperreal becomes the ideal. Baudrillard continues in his book *Seduction* (1990/2001), stating how the addition of detail, vividness, and obscenity introduced in pornography, makes the sex more real than real. As Zaltash states "it is all too true, too near to be true" (2021: 3). Authenticity is a theme that runs through this thesis and the notion of authenticity and the hyperreal provide a way of exploring how these themes can be understood in the webcamming world.

3.5 Surveillance, visibility, and spatial theory

Surveillance is a term constructed of two etymological parts: 'sur' meaning from above and 'veillance' meaning to watch. Maša Galič et al (2017) explains how the term surveillance is initially associated with CCTV in urban spaces, yet the term was also used before the advent of electronic surveillance. The meaning of what surveillance is, and entails has shifted with the increase of digital technologies (Galič et al, 2017). Sociologist David Lyon describes surveillance as being both a tool for control and for caring (2006). The subject of surveillance is being watched for specific reasons, whether these be for control and discipline or potentially protecting them. Lyon notes how both of these conditions are not mutually exclusive. Surveillance theories are used to explore understandings of visibility and power in the webcamming realm.

3.5.1 Entering the Panopticon

The Panopticon is likely Jeremy Bentham's most widely known, and most controversial, idea (Schofield, 2009). It is commonly used as a metaphor for surveillance and has become virtually its

synonym (Galič et al, 2017). Sociologist Kevin Haggerty (2006) argues that the prevailing model within surveillance theories is that of the Panopticon. Michel Foucault describes how Bentham "invented a technology of power designed to solve the problems of surveillance" (1980: 148). The Panopticon model gained notoriety through Foucault's theory of panopticism. The concept of Foucault's panopticism is primarily based on Bentham's prison-Panopticon. This prison-Panopticon is described by Bentham as:

> "The Building circular – an iron cage, glazed – a glass lantern about the size of Ranelagh – The Prisoners in their Cells, occupying the Circumference – The Officers, the Centre. By Blinds, and other contrivances, the Inspectors concealed from the observation of the Prisoners: hence the sentiment of a sort of invisible omnipresence. – The whole circuit reviewable with little, or, if necessary, without any, change of place" (1787: 3).

The Panopticon is an architectural "strategy of space" that creates a "new mode of obtaining power of mind over mind in a quantity hitherto without example" (Bentham, 1802/1995: 31). Through the architectural construction of space, the illusion of continuous surveillance is also created. This continuous surveillance is an illusion: although the prisoners believe that they are being constantly watched, they are not. A significant effect of the prison-Panopticon was the reduction between visibility and perception, and between the temporal to the spatial, which Miran Božovič (2010) claims strengthened the disciplinary power of the panopticon. Within the prison-Panopticon model, surveillance occurs from one point. The person conducting the surveillance, the inspector, possesses power over the point. They are an invisible omnipresent figure, unseen by prisoners in "an utterly dark spot" (Božovič, 2010: 11). The prisoners are seen without knowing who sees them. This apparent omnipresent status is what creates and sustains the Panopticon: the prisoners cannot be exposed to the inspector as it would destroy the omnipresent status (Galič et al, 2017). This prison-Panopticon is consistent with Foucault's panopticism:

> "the panoptic principle—seeing everything, everyone, all the time—organizes a genetic polarity of time; it proceeds towards a centralized individualization the support and instrument of which is writing; and finally, it involves a punitive and continuous action on

potential behavior that, behind the body itself, projects something like a psyche" (Foucault, 1973/2006: 52).

Bentham's vision for the prison-Panopticon did not aim to create a controlled society, rather would perpetuate the notion of internalised discipline, eventually leading to the dissolution of the surveillance and the inspector. Constant surveillance was not desired by Bentham, nor did the prison-Panopticon actually have constant surveillance, it was just the illusion of such. Foucault took the concept and architectural design of Bentham's prison-Panopticon and projected it onto other areas of society as a way to analyse power and control (Foucault, 1977). Panopticism has become prevalent and active in multiple elements in Western society. Foucault explains how the invasion of panopticism largely goes unnoticed as it becomes part of everyday life. Individuals internalise control, values, and morals when under potentially constant surveillance generating discipline in society.

Hille Koskela (2003) explains how video surveillance operates in a similar manner to the prison-Panopticon: it is a technological resolution designed to deal with problems in urban space. In a panoptical model, individuals under surveillance are seen but do not know when they are being observed or by who. They are under a controlling power with no physical intervention necessary. The result of this video panopticism is "to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automate functioning of power" (Foucault, 1977: 201). The employment of disciplinary power "involves regulation through visibility" (Hannah, 1997: 171). As Caroline Ramazanoglu (1993) explains power is exercised through this disciplinary gaze. Complete visibility of individuals is justified by the assurance of security (Weibel, 2002). This network of CCTV the power of the Panopticon has been extended: urban spaces are transformed into vast Panopticons (Lyon, 1994; Fyfe and Bannister, 1998; Tabor, 2001).

3.5.2 Dismantling the Panopticon: the rise of the synopticon

The Panopticon is not always considered by many as the best way of theorising contemporary surveillance (Bauman, 2000; Lyon, 2001; Norris, 2002). Thomas Mathiesen (1997) considered how there has been a shift in society from the Panopticon model of the many seeing the few, to

modern surveillance, in which the few see the many. This is what Mathiesen calls the synopticon. The synopticon is not in opposition to the panopticon, rather is complementary: “they together, precisely together, serve decisive control functions in modern society” (Mathiesen, 1997: 219).

While Mathiesen states that Foucault makes an important contribution to our understanding of surveillance, he overlooked how quickly the development of mass media. Mathiesen focused his analysis on broadcast television as the medium in which the masses watch the few. Although Mathiesen does make reference to “the total system of the modern mass media” (1997: 219), the synopticon is generally equated with television media “modern television, synopticon, makes us silent” (1997: 231). The television brings together the many: millions of people watching and admiring the few. The idea of the ‘few’ highlights Mathiesen’s centred on top-down influences of the dominant roles of personalities, such as celebrities and journalists:

> “Media personalities and commentators...actively filter and shape the news ...all of this is performed within the context of a broader hidden agenda of political or economic interests, so to speak behind the media” (Mathiesen, 1997: 226).

Mathiesen continues arguing that the media significantly affects its audience as it “disciplines our consciousness’ (1997: 230). Attention is focused on the television rather than the internet is understandable as Mathiesen’s original article (1987) was written before the advent of the internet. Aaron Doyle (2011) notes how contemporary media has both intensified and dispersed with the advent of the internet. The internet created new opportunities for surveillance, both through the form of tracking consumers, as well as through users' own self disclosure on social media sites.

Paul de Laat (2008) argues how the synopticon as mediated through the internet can be interpreted in different ways. It could be considered as an erosion of privacy but also as a way to transform exhibitionism into an authentic, empowering force. De Laat calls this notion “empowering exhibitionism” which creates a sort of individual synopticon (2008: 62). The exhibitionist is in control over their own performances. The internet, however, is not a space free from “architectures of control” (Dupont, 2008: 265) with government and private businesses spending vast sums to design and implement surveillance systems to track users online (Lessig, 2006).

3.5.3 Looking through the webcam

Koskela states that webcams challenge aspects of theories of surveillance and undermine several connections that are essential elements of panoptical models (2004). It can therefore be argued that the webcam can be considered more synoptical in nature, given how the many are watching the few. Communication theorist James Carey states how “this is a modern panopticon, wherein the cell of privacy is open to an impersonal gaze, and the sense that someone is always watching, potentially at least, is part of the structure of feeling of modern life” (Carey as cited in Game, 1998: 129). Richard Ericson and Kevin Haggerty (2006) suggest that now the public spectacles of previously hidden private actions, in addition to the unrestrained scrutiny others exhibit, evidence that viewers enjoy watching. The synoptic principal, with active, eager viewers, provoked several personal webcam streaming websites that broadcasted everyday life known as 'lifecasting' websites (Maguire, 2018). Lifecasting websites operate in similar ways to modern webcamming sites. There are a wide range of specialised webcam sites that allow access into previously hidden private actions. The viewer is able to anonymously watch a performer alongside any number of other viewers.

The popularity of webcam sites tells us that there is a significant audience for this presentation of sex. Mark Hay (2020) explains how there has been a large growth in popularity for webcamming sites over the last decade, with Chris Morris stating that the webcamming industry was visited by 5% of all global web users daily (Morris, 2013). This number is expected to be higher now, particularly with how the market has grown during the COVID-19 pandemic. Franki Cookney (2020) adds how the biggest webcamming sites have reported up to a 75% increase in members during the pandemic. This generates discussions on how surveillance has become potentially desirable for individual with Hopkins noting how:

> “for this rising millennial generation, constant surveillance can be a dream come true - an affirmation of identity. ... cam girls make manifest the post-modern desire for omnipresence through communication technologies” (Hopkins, 2002:4).

Amy Dobson (2007) states how this has created a new discourse of power for women: it is a rejection of the traditional attitudes surrounding women through the commodification their bodies:

> "the materialist feminist struggle against gender stereotypes and objectification no longer seems relevant in this contemporary context. Instead, the concern expressed by the emergence of the cam girl scene seems to be how to make the concept of the female-body-as-commodity and the dominant images of femininity, with which we are constantly bombarded, materially and socially valuable to girls themselves" (Dobson, 2007: 125).

Visibility is something to be desired. It carries wealth, success, and power within society. The culture of 'cam girls' highlights this importance given to the value of constant visibility in society. Cam culture generates the idea that if someone is always watching, this is admirable. The person being watched is worthy of being watched. Brooke Knight (2000) explains how it is the motivation of the performer, the intentional exposure of the self, that contends with the surveillance theories. Koskela (2006) expands on this contention, explaining the several ways in which the webcam potentially challenges the pivotal ideas of the panoptic model. The webcam confronts the Foucauldian relationship between power and visibility. Those who can see are considered more powerful than those being observed. However, Koskela argues webcams do not appear to make those who are seen any less powerful, even though they have made themselves intentionally visible. Those presenting their lives via webcam refuse to conform to the rules of concealing the private realm. Power dynamics are confused: the lines of control become blurred. Webcams offer a visual representation of how power operates in public and private space.

J Macgregor Wise (2004) states how modern society is not solely based on being watched but also involves watching. He considers how previous research on surveillance focuses on why people watch and the notion of voyeurism (Calvert, 2004), but aims to shift the focus on what is being seen. He argues that webcams do not represent everyday life: it is not real. Webcams "can only present an attenuated version of everyday life" (Wise, 2004: 432). Views of the foreign or domestic are provided by webcams, including images of the home. Just as Aran Ozgun (2015) suggests, Wise too argues that webcams can be compared to reality television. The voyeurism of reality television, particularly domestic banality, supplies viewers with a break from their own domestic

banality. Henri Lefebvre adds that “[d]isplays of sexuality and nudity break with everyday life and provide the sense of a break which people look for in leisure: readings, shows [...]” (1991: 35). Lauren Langman (2004) illustrates how the viewer is hidden and is granted access to spaces that would otherwise be free from observation. The viewer’s gaze “intrudes into the private realms that would be otherwise hidden, safe from scrutiny were it not for the placement of the webcam, the “panopticon of cyberspace” that disciplines the observed, and perhaps the observer as well” (Langman, 2004: 197).

The webcam is a mode of communication which forms a new type of social space (Knight, 2000). The private is performed for the viewing public with interactions being established by the person who is being watched. Knight asserts that webcams are forms of artistic license, however, exhibit several issues of “surveillance, community, the cyborg, domestic space, intimacy, pornography, and self-image” (2000: 21). As such, webcams are creating a new form of theatre. Simon Firth (1998) adds that webcams have a captivating, yet troubling, hold on viewers. Webcams offer a new variety of performance, and of erotica. Firth argues that this performance via webcam could be seen as a publicly lived private life. Art historian, Marsha Meskimmon, explains how the domestic has often been considered a space for artistic expression: the inclusion of the domestic within the female self-portrait (1996). The home, Knight states, becomes transformed by the webcam. It becomes an area of seclusion that is the centre of projected desire. The internet gives individuals access to these more intimate private spaces.

The screen is both an object of visibility as well as itself monitoring, it blends notions of surveillance, spectacle, and its panoptic ideas, within a digital society. Nic Groombridge (2002) states how webcams generate a response in digital society, whether this be a concern over surveillance issues or as a positive way to increase their visibility in society. Privacy is intruded, surveillance is seen as an oppressive force: "we cannot simply reject [surveillance] as invasion when we seem to welcome invasion” (Groombridge, 2002: 44). The internet facilitates an omnipresent digital society. Society is “surrounded today, everywhere, all the time, by arrays of multiple, simultaneous, images” (Colomina, 2002: 197). The space that is occupied by the screen cannot be the only space for an individual (Grosz, 2001). The virtual space is itself in another space, it is housed. The screen operates on a virtual and physical level. Elizabeth Grosz continues

stating how “there can be no liberation from the body, or from space, or the real. They all have a nasty habit of recurring with great insistence, however much we may try to fantasize their disappearance” (2001:18). Wise (2004) reiterates how the individual looks at the screen creates the notion of the separation of virtual space and the body, it becomes a disembodied process. The act of watching the screen for Wise, separates the physical body to the virtual, seen on the screen. There is a boundary which when surpassed the body ceases to be a body. This point Grosz states is the limit of technology. The webcam acts as a means of awareness of the body in everyday life. Whilst this is a useful theory for regarding how we understand and inhabit space, I am more drawn towards Haraway and Stone’s theories that bring the body, self, and technology together rather than dividing them through the screen. The physical body is overlooked when considering the virtual which is understandable, but I believe there is worth in exploring how the physical is affected by the virtual. Online erotic spaces providing a way to unpack how the physical and virtual intertwine, given the importance of both elements to the webcamming network.

Online erotic performance can also be viewed as a means of resisting surveillance (Bell, 2009). Transgressive acts, particularly from those deviant subcultures, are hijacking the limits of what is considered acceptable in society. These acts confront the boundaries; asking questions on who is accountable for deciding what is morally, ethically, or legally acceptable. This eroticised surveillance positions itself as a means of resisting the mainstream narrative of mainstream, heteronormative sex, rather offering a more deviant opposition (Bell, 2009). Ozgun (2015) also considers webcamming as a transgressive act in two ways. It blurs the boundaries between work and desire, and it transgresses the banality of everyday life by presenting an erotic experience that enables escapism. While I agree with the notion that transgressive acts disrupt what is considered acceptable in society, I believe that online eroticism is not a way of resisting surveillance, rather surveillance is utilised in a different way for the performance of sexuality. Online eroticism does ask questions as to what is considered acceptable, but without surveillance, to whom are the questions being asked? Surveillance is a necessary way of causing change if that is indeed the goal of online eroticism. Ozgun also observes transgression in webcamming, and I am interested to see how the distinction between work and desire is understood by the performer and the viewer, and how that may impact presentations of authenticity. These theories on surveillance provide a helpful

framework in the thesis for unpacking the various layers of surveillance that operated with different levels of nuance on webcamming sites.

3.5.4 Private and public realms

Theorists have contended with the subtleties of the distinction between private and public spaces. Lange (2000) reveals that scholars who employ the public/private dichotomy often use one of two analytical metaphors (Weintraub, 1997). Jeff Weintraub defines this dichotomy as “what is hidden or withdrawn versus what is open, revealed, or accessible” (1997: 4-5). He further adds that private things are “things that we are able and/or entitled to keep hidden, sheltered, or withdrawn from others” (1997: 5). Communication scholar, Kim Sheeran, adds that “individuals have privacy to the extent that others have limited access to information about them, to the intimacies of their lives, to their thoughts or bodies” (2002: 22). This limited access includes preventing information from being accessed and understood from those outside the social group. The second approach is used to differentiate between the concerns of the public or private and “what is individual, or pertains only to an individual, versus what is collective, or affects the interests of a collectivity” (Weintraub, 1997, 4-5). Lange (2000) considers the private and public in relation to what is symbolically or physically visible as well as what is considered significant or socially relevant. She explains what it means for a video to be public through two elements: how much information a person reveals about their identity and how much of this information can be accessed and considered meaningful by a large number of people, as opposed to a selected few individual. This information provides cues as to the distribution of this information, people have certain expectations about what information can be collected and distributed. Will Luers notes how "[t]he spectacle of the everyday, the intimate view of private life, has always been a force in Hollywood spectatorship" (2007: np). He continues stating how some scholars have suggested that communication technology may be dissolving the boundaries between the 'public' and 'private' (Weintraub & Kumar, 1997). Many discussions on the public/private media do not consider the subtleties, either debates consider the visibility or relevance to discern public/private boundaries, rather than examining both lenses (Barnes, 2006). Furthermore, some studies fail to consider any additional contexts, other than the one being analysed, in order to expand how the public/private has supplementary elements (Al-Saggaf, 2006).

Anthropologist and linguist, Susan Gal, (2002) supplies a lens for probing the deterioration of public and private spheres. Public and private are both terms that Gal state are relative and shift depending on individual perspectives. Therefore, Lange indicates the private/public dichotomy is more adequately envisaged as a "fractal distinction" (2000: 365). Feder (1988) characterises a fractal as a shape that is composed of parts similar to the whole. Additionally, Gal expresses that "[w]hatever the local, historically specific content of the dichotomy, the distinction between public and private can be reproduced repeatedly by projecting it onto narrower contexts or broader ones" (2002: 81). Lange argues that spaces are fractal in that they are composed of various parts that change depending on the context. She provides the example of the home to manifest this fractal. The home is considered a private space to the community, yet within the home there are both public and private spaces. The content and perspective of the observer at the time shifts how the space is perceived.

Lange uses this fractal lens to reveal distinctions between the public and private that are produced on YouTube. On a high level, YouTube can be considered a public platform. This publicness is more apparent when contrasted with personal home videos. However, a fractalised division occurs within YouTube. Some video creators will greatly advertise their videos to connect with as many people as possible whilst others only tell close friends about their videos. This fractalised division is also seen within the content itself. Some content creators make videos personal to themselves whilst others create videos about issues such as the environment or racism, they are social issues intended for a larger audience. YouTube is also used by celebrity figures as a means of engaging with fans and encourages large participation. This can be likened to how some webcam performers utilise social media as a way of attracting larger audiences. Jones (2015b) notes how some webcam performers use their manufactured identities to create social media networks to engage with their fans. It may be that there is a fractalised division between the platforms that the performer uses, with some platforms aimed more for public advertising and some that contain more personal information. However, as there is such a wide variety of webcam performers who operate in different ways it would be impossible to suggest that a social media network is more personal than a webcam chat room. It is context dependent on a range of elements including the performer and the viewers.

Research into digital images and photo sharing on the internet demonstrate that sharing digital self-portraits can be likened to amateur pornography (Lasén and Gómez-Cruz, 2009). There is a blurring of the public and private realms of the home. Film Studies scholar, Linda Williams (2004) states where pornography and domesticity are mixed, and when pornography and gender boundaries are mixed, there is technological uncanny. Scott McQuire (2008) states that the technological uncanny is a conflict between public and private boundaries. The uncanny creates a sort of unease regarding how private and public realms can be understood. In this uncanny period, the boundaries between private and public space become unstable. McQuire notes that a reconfiguration of public and private realms is part of the "new ways of conceptualizing the space and time of social experience and agency in a context in which the older boundaries of both territory and media are in a flux" (2008: 20). There are visions within technology that bring into existence things that should have remained secret and hidden. This, McQuire argues, reveals many distressing elements of domesticity. The home has become an interactive locale due to the role the media has played. Online information passes through the home which in turn alters the dynamics between what is considered private and public.

New media technologies have produced spatial ambivalences which Lasén and Gómez-Cruz state are indications of political contradictions (2009). By this, they are referring to divides between the public sphere, including work and politics and the private sphere of the home. Lasén and Gómez-Cruz note that consideration has not been given to situations such as the privatisation of public spaces or private acts conducted in public realms. This is also supported by sociologist, Sarah Ford (2011) who states the private/public dichotomy is no longer useful and with the growing use of the internet should be seen more as a continuum. The continuum is anchored at each end by private and public. However, Ford notes that nothing can ever be considered truly private or truly public. Alan Wolfe (1997) suggests that on this continuum, on either end we have two well established anchor points of public space and private space, as well as categories that fall between these two ends. These categories on this continuum are fixed points such as 'semi-private' and 'semi-public'. Gal's description of the public/private divide states that there are in fact should be no categories in the continuum. The continuum should not have categories at all but rather be fluid as even with categories such as 'semi-private' and 'semi-public' it remains too static. Although I agree with

Gal's notion of fluidity on the private/public continuum, it is easier to maintain more static categories. I do not think these categories need to be neatly defined but having looser boundaries allows the reader to understand more efficiently where approximately information can be placed on the continuum.

3.5.5 Conclusion

By synthesizing this triad of theoretical approaches, I am able to pull elements out of each to apply to my research data and develop the understanding of erotic spaces. Cyborg and ANT provides a unique way of highlighting the importance of non-human elements in the webcamming network, which we will see in Chapter 7 in the discussion regarding use of objects, props, colour, and lighting. This combination of theory allows us to explore the relationship between performer, viewer, and technology. The notion of 'Reel' and the 'Real' is intertwined throughout the results chapters as it develops the understanding of authenticity, and the idea of a 'constructed authenticity'. Surveillance theory from Foucault and others is applied to the notion of visibility and surveillance of the webcam model which is unpacked further in Chapter 5.

4. Methodological framework

4.1 Introduction

To fully explore my research aims, I conducted a netnography, or online ethnography, to conduct observations of webcam performers workspaces. This observational data was then supplemented and corroborated with in-depth case study interviews and an online 'document' analysis, predominantly from forums and blogs. This chapter sets out the methodological approaches and ethical considerations of this thesis. Firstly, I explore visual criminology and its importance in criminology. I will then outline the ethnography approach in qualitative research and continue to explore how the ethnographic method has been applied to online environments. Then I will continue to explore netnographies in more detail including the justifications and limitations to using this approach. Here I will explain the use of covert observations in sensitive research, and how I approached researching erotic content and my research process. To complement my netnography, I used supplementary interviews which I discuss in the next section, leading onto discussions of positioning myself as a researcher. I conclude detailing the ethical considerations and regulations that I employed within this thesis.

4.2 The emergence of netnography

Criminology has faced a paradigm shift in the past decades resulting in the emergence of cultural criminology (O'Brien, 2005). There is a focus placed on crime and control in a cultural context, as cultural criminology sits on the margins of what is considered traditional criminology. Cultural criminology seeks to explore transgression and deviance, highlighting "forgotten spaces that the story of crime so often unfolds" (Hayward and Young, 2004: 271). Keith Hayward and Jonathan Ilan (2017) explain how a central element of cultural criminology is its approach to power and how it operates across levels of society. Rather than viewing power as a top-down institutional structure, cultural criminology seeks to explore power in more everyday experiences across society. Webcamming fits into this realm as a deviant culture that has gone largely unnoticed by criminology. Discussions of power are significant within this thesis and I have taken a cultural criminological approach in my discussion of micro displays of power. There has also been a growth

in visual criminology which has been influential to this research. Eamonn Carrabine states how "it is no longer possible to divorce crime and control from how they are visually represented" (2012: 463). In 2019, Michelle Brown and Eamonn Carrabine explain how "visual criminology, in this sense, is very much about the assemblage of imagistic sensory elements that give meanings to the pillars of critical criminology: crime and control and their relations to power, resistance, spectacle, and transgression" (2019: 193). This growth of visual criminology has also led to an increase of visual methodologies. Notably, Sarah Pink explores the importance of using visual ethnography as a way of researching and analysing visual materials and artefacts (2001/2021). Pink et al (2016) continue explaining how digital ethnographic methodologies are redefining ethnographic practices as a way of exploring visual images.

Alison Young (2010) explains how using 'criminological aesthetics' is key in visual criminological research in which both the images are analysed as well as the relationship between the viewer and the image. This research adopts this approach, not only exploring the performers spaces, but also exploring the relationship between the use of space revealing dynamics between the viewer, the performers' and the space. My research demonstrates the value of adopting a visual criminological approach to uncover and understanding relationships within the visual in a way that traditional methodologies would not be able to account for. The use of vignettes in this research has proven a successful way to account and analysis data from visual online sources and has applications within other online ethnographies in several disciplines, not solely criminology.

Although some criminologists, such as Mark Fleisher (1998) argue that ethnographies do not have a place in criminology, others including Martin O'Brien believe that ethnographies have the potential to produce insightful data about subcultures. For Ilan, an ethnographic approach in cultural criminology has connected "individual experience to group meanings and ultimately to social structures" (2019: 7). Jeff Ferrell (1999) adds that ethnographic research within criminology reflects a deep inquisition into the dynamics of criminal and deviant subcultures. This thesis aims to echo this statement, uncovering what is hidden and unknown.

As webcamming is completely conducted in the online realm, a traditional ethnography was not possible. Instead, I opted to conduct a netnography: an ethnography conducted online. The

ethnographic lens is increasingly being applied to groups that exist on digital technology (Baio, 2007; Baron, 2008; Juris, 2008; Malaby, 2009). Webcam performers are conducting an online show, so a netnography is an appropriate response to this. The technological advancement of the internet and ‘Web 2.0' has allowed users the opportunity to consume and produce content. Thula Koops et al (2018) show how despite the growing use and significance of the internet, and its increased use for erotic purposes, there has been limited research into sexual activity involving webcams. Although more researchers are using a netnography approach, there is still a limited number of researchers using this methodology, given the comparative innovation of the internet (Hallet and Barber, 2014). Of these netnographies, several focus on more static forms of content such as social media sites and blogs. Netnography has become a way of recognition for the social interactions that occur within the online domain. Sociologist, Christine Hine (2008) explores how early applications of online ethnography approaches highlighted the rich data that emerged from internet mediated interactions. Online ethnography has several advantages including that it can be more accessible, less obtrusive, and more convenient when compared to traditional field work (Kozinets, 2002).

Annette Markham (2004) remarks how researching online presents opportunities to explore and rethink what is considered 'real' and 'authentic' in an ethnography framework. The connection between embodiment and authenticity, Markham argues, is automatic, yet requires interrogation. As we saw in an earlier chapter, notions of authenticity are important and online-based researchers who interact with participants in anonymous environments potentially lose the benefits of conducting face-to-face research. She continues by explaining that authenticity can always be questioned, and it should not be presumed that physical interactions with a participant are always truthful and authentic. Likewise, if a person is communicating online this does not mean they are less authentic. David Silverman adds how authenticity is not revealed by a physical presence (2004).

Roser Beneito-Montagut (2011) argues there is no difference between offline and online communication as everyday life occurs on the internet. She states how it is essential to research everyday life on the internet as a means of communication as “the internet and its repercussions in society – in people’s everyday lives – is a complex issue that cannot be understood and explained

with any single indicator" (2011:731). The methodology used during an ethnography should be viewed as a process: it must be designed, then edited throughout to inform and gain reflection on the research process. A predetermined strategy may not provide the rich data required and the researcher needs to take time to situate themselves, the context of the research, and the object of analysis in order to consider methodological possibilities. As problems are encountered, the methodology may have to change to overcome these issues. Issues are not always obvious, and the research process must be able to adapt (Beneito-Montagut, 2011). Internet technologies have the potential to alter the ways researchers can approach their data collection and interpretation (Markham, 2005). Social structures are formed through interactions, and negotiations with others, in technological environments. Markham adds that:

> "[t]he extent to which information and communication technology can mediate one's identity and social relations should call us to epistemological attention [...] new communication technologies highlight the dialogic features of social reality, compelling scholars to re-examine traditional assumptions" (2005: 794).

Cyberspace allows users to navigate through a multi-layered world which does not imitate the 'real' world, which is accessible all the time (Nunes, 1997). Hine continues noting how: "[c]yberspace is not to be thought of as a space detached from any connections to 'real life' and face-to-face interaction" (2000: 64). There are rich and complex interactions that arise within online realms. As a result, researchers have to determine the extent online space can be treated in seclusion from the 'real life' equivalent.

This research adds to criminological research regarding the benefits of using this methodological approach, as demonstrated by the rich data I was able to produce. Despite debates regarding the legitimacy of ethnography in criminology, as seen above, this thesis provides evidence in defence of these approaches. By adopting an online ethnographic approach in this research I have been able to explore previously unknown spaces and unknown subcultures. Looking back at earlier work on deviant subcultures, Ferrell (1999) notes how ethnography reflects both a criminological and sociological enquiry on these subcultures. My research furthered this, interrogating what is

understood not just focusing on the individuals that make up this subculture but the spaces they occupied.

An important contribution this research has made from a methodological perspective, is forwarding early deviant research conducted largely by male researchers. Haley Zettler et al (2017) explains how female researchers are generally underrepresented in academic research. Their analysis revealed that of criminology papers published between 1974 - 2014, female researchers were significantly less likely to be named as first-authors and were more likely to publish with other female authors. Meda Chesney-Lind adds to this explain how with criminological research there has been a "devaluation of work done by women, particularly if the work is deemed feminist" (2020:407). She continues stating how there is a need in criminology to focus on gender, sexism and racism. This research contributes to the criminogenic understanding of these intersectional elements, which must continue to grow in future research.

4.3 Defining the field

Initially, netnographies appear to be a simple process given that the researchers do not need to leave their normal workspace, however this is not as straightforward a process as it may seem. There is no set space in which researchers can carry out their fieldwork which Jenna Burrell states leads to a process of defining the field (2009). Defining the field refers to the boundaries that the research will remain within, whether this be a specific geographical area or a certain website online. Howard Rheingold remarks how online communities are defined symbolically rather than with physical notions (1993). These online communities are imagined communities where the non-physical, symbolic rapport is more significant to the members rather than the geographical location (Anderson, 1983). Although members of the community may never see each other, they know they are present through online communication.

During a netnography, there is a lack of physical immersion in the field and the researcher is required to engage through mental immersion (Hine, 2000). Consequently, the process of defining the field can be problematic due to a lack of geographical borders: there is no clear field site for the research to be conducted. Online ethnographers have to define the location of their research

field, which can be achieved in several ways. One possible way to achieve this is by constricting the research field to one single site, drawing the boundary to a single domain. The use of a single site allows for boundaries to be easily drawn. Alternatively, multiple sites can be used, applying the same methodology throughout. This method is advantageous for comparison across multiple platforms that share similar context. Using multiple websites also allows for a larger sample of the community that extends beyond the boundaries of using a single site. Deniz Tunçalp and Patrick Lê (2014) consider research that solely focuses on online spaces using what they call a pure netnography approach dividing the online sphere from the offline space. In a pure netnography researchers only look at online phenomenon and do not supplement this with offline research such as interviews or surveys. There are dynamics that are worth researching separately from offline reality, evident in the large number of netnographies that use a pure netnography approach. They conclude stating how many netnographers view online space as a distinctly separate space and tend to favour bounded websites in their analysis. As a means of drawing boundaries, netnographers use digital separations, such as specific websites or registration pages.

Using multiple sites appeared most beneficial for this thesis for several reasons. Firstly, by using more than one website, I was able to access a larger mix of participants based across the globe. Also, one website I chose to use was exclusively for female performers, and it was important for me to observe male, trans and group performers within this research, as these groups have largely been ignored by online sex work research. As the aim of this research was to explore the representation of physical space within webcamming and I did not want to limit myself to only watching one group of individuals. To choose the websites, I explored the data for several webcamming sites, including the number of registered performers, the types of performers permitted, as well as monthly viewer statistics, which at the time were listed on a webcam review sites called topchats.com. I chose sites with a high number of performers registered to each site, allowing for exposure to a broader range of participants. I used three webcamming sites for this research:

- www.myfreecams.com
- www.chaturbate.com
- www.bongacams.com

Both Chaturbate and Bongacams hosts a wide variety of performers including female, male, trans and group performers, with a reported 50,000+ and 10,000+ registered performers respectively. Myfreecams is a webcam platform exclusively for female performers, and hosts approximately 20,000+ registered models (topchats.com, 2021). These websites are all listed as free to use, and anyone is able to watch the public streams without needing to pay. Throughout this research I only watched performances that were freely available and did not require payment, meaning I was unable to access private shows. Additionally, I did not tip any of the performers, nor did I engage in conversation with the performer or any viewers during the shows. This decision to not tip performers is explained in more detail in section 4.9.1. During my pilot study, which is explained further in section 4.3.1, I discovered that I appeared as a guest to both the performer and other viewers, whilst registered viewers had their screen names displayed as present in the room. Angela Jones notes in her 2015 research into race and webcamming, models were able to see if viewers had tokens available for tipping and would often mute guests if they did not possess tokens. However, I did not encounter any issues with being a guest throughout the duration of this research: I was able to hear all audio from the performer and view the conversation in the chat column without purchasing any tokens.

4.3.1 Pilot study

Before this advent of the research I had not had experience with webcamming sites. As such, I decided to conduct a pilot study to gain a better understanding of their layout and navigation and to familiarise myself with how webcam sites are operated. As explained in previous research, pilot studies can be a useful way to highlight any issues with the research design and modify any necessary elements (Kim, 2011; Ismail et al, 2018).

I used this pilot study as an opportunity to test different sampling methods, including random sampling and systematic sampling, to explore the benefits and drawbacks of each. I encountered some issues when using random sampling as I was unintentionally skewing my sample by choosing models of a similar appearance, as explained further in section 4.4. My pilot study was conducted wholly on www.myfreecams.com, a site only for female performers. I was able to gain

a good understanding of how this website operates, which I was able to apply across the other webcamming sites I explored.

Additionally, after selecting a room to observe, I watched performances for various time durations. Following previous research from Benjamin Weiss (2018) and Angela Jones (2015b), I observed some shows until they were completed and others for 10 minutes. I found watching a show until completion was often very time consuming, and 10 minutes was not quite enough time to immerse myself in the room. To ensure that I had enough time to fully immerse myself in each room, I decided that 15 minutes spent in each room was a suitable to gain the information required as a result of my pilot study.

4.4 Led by desire

During my pilot study, initially, I attempted a spontaneous method of selecting rooms to observe, choosing rooms from the main page. When choosing randomly from the main page, my choices were not random as desire had influenced my methodological interactions. As both webcamming and netnography approaches are both relatively new in their respective fields, little has been written regarding the embodied sensations felt by the researcher when engaging in observations of sexual activity on webcamming platforms. An explanation for this lack of research is that many sex researchers have had their motivations disputed, with claims of prurience and lewdness (Irvine, 2003; Troiden, 1987). Desire and sexual attraction in the field have long been considered as taboo and researchers are expected to remain objective (Malam, 2004; Kulick, 1995). Samantha Keene adds how research into sex work is considered "dirty work" despite being crucial research in academia (2021: 1). There is certainly an element of aversion about desire in the field. Consequently, this has led to many researchers to not explore these desires, rather highlighting a position of "quasi-neutrality" that "make irrelevant or at least incidental their own sexual desires" (Thomas and Williams, 2016: 84). For researchers, there is a safety in separating the personal and the professional, leading to such few accounts of experiences of desire in research. Initially, this was my approach, believing my role as a researcher would eclipse any potential desire when conducting my research and there was a separation between the personal and the professional. When reflexively looking back, it was clear this was not possible, nor should desire be an element

that is pushed beneath the surface and not explored by researchers. Jeremy Thomas and D J Williams (2016) recommend that researchers should explore their sexual desires and how they have impacted the research process, specifically focusing on how these desires sparked change in the research as a result. My desire became evident in the beginning of the data collection stage when confronted with webcam performers. During my pilot study (see section 4.3.1) it became apparent that my random selection of models was actually an unconscious desire leading me to select and view performers who were in line with my sexual preferences. This created an interesting yet skewed data set as the models I had viewed were conforming to a specific aesthetic, physical appearance. This also made me consider my own sexuality and the impact this may have going forward in this research. For me, keeping a reflexive cycle enabled me to challenge how my own positionality and sexuality has not only impacted the research but also how the research has had an impact on these elements. Consequently, my desire was "not only been inevitable and unavoidable, but actually a desirable part of the research process" (ibid: 93).

Samuel John Hanks (2020) provides a notable account of his experience of positioning his gender in research, highlighting examples of how his embodied masculinity influenced his experience of researching female dominated massage parlours. Whilst this research provides an insight into gender dynamics between research and participant, it did not reflect on my experiences as a female researcher. Both Katy Pilcher (2017) and Christian Groes (2019) offer their own reflections of ethnographic participant observations of the sex industry. Both scholars appreciate the value of the immersion of the research into the industry, particularly when the research will undoubtedly raise conflicting feelings and bodily responses. Pilcher adds how during her observations she was "both uncomfortable with and enjoyed it at the same time" (2017: 60). This was a feeling reflected in my own research: I became confronted with the difficulties of conducting research in a sexualised and gendered domain. In order to produce the data to answer my research questions, I had to consider the line between objectivity and desire. Rather than attempting to claim one identity over the other, to remain authentic as a researcher I acknowledged my desire. I used my desire to help me immerse myself within the webcamming field and navigate webcamming sites of which I was unfamiliar. In line with Audre Lorde (1993), my erotic power became a source of power and information. My own desire forced me to critically examine how I understand my own sexual desires, choices, and empowerment. There are many overlapping layers of identity that work in

tandem during the research process (Waling, 2018), and rather than remaining completely objective, I allowed my desire to help develop my methodological process and understanding.

Through this process, I determined that systematic sampling would be most appropriate to get a mix of participants without my own desire skewing the data. I chose every 15th thumbnail from the main page or on the gender specific main pages, depending on the website, to avoid spontaneous selections which had previously skewed my data. The rooms were chosen from various places depending on the layout of the website. For example, on myfreecams the sample was taken from the main page. The main page shows various models' rooms with a mix of popular and less popular rooms. Chaturbate and Bongacams both use category tabs on the main page notably 'featured', 'female', 'male', 'couple', and 'trans'. No information was provided as to why the performers are displayed in the order they are in their respective category.

4.5 Structure of observations

Webcam sites are constantly online, with performers and viewers from all over the world, available to access 24 hours a day. Subsequently, to fully engage and immerse myself within this online realm, I visited the websites I had chosen to analyse at various times: morning (7am - 12pm), afternoon (12pm - 5pm), evening (5pm - 9pm), night (9pm - 1am) and late night (1am - 5am). This enabled me to engage in the ever-changing content available, as well as help account for time zone differences, which provided a wider cohort of performers to observe. Webcam performers have full discretion as to when to start and stop broadcasting. As a result, I was not able to watch performers from the start of their broadcasts. However, I remained in each room for 15 minutes, in line with Jones (2015b) research, and the results of my pilot study.

When considering how many hours of performances I should observe, the concept of data saturation was important (Mason, 2010). Data saturation is the point at which the data is no longer offering any new information. Kathy Charmaz explains data saturation in a research project as the point "when gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights, nor reveals new properties of your core theoretical categories" (2006: 113). I researched papers with a similar research methodology and discovered Benjamin Weiss conducted 40 hours of online ethnographic

observations on webcam performers. He states how “40 hours of observation, which would yield a small amount of data in traditional ethnography, is substantial given the socially complex dynamics of webcam sex work” (2018: 736). The complex dynamics in webcamming also reflected in my experience in conducting the pilot study. After completing the 40 hours of research, I determined that I had successfully reached the point of saturation and had generated a wealth of data.

I watched approximately 40 webcam performers in the four categories: male, female, trans, group (see appendix 1 for a breakdown of the research schedule). Each performer was watched for 15 minutes, creating 40 hours of observational data. It was also not possible to view webcam performers from each category on each of the websites, as the websites catered for different audiences, with one website exclusively for female only performers. As a result, observations were conducted for female performers across all three sites, with male, trans, and group observations conducted on two websites.

There are notable differences to be taken into consideration when researching online rather than a physical locale. The physical world, Benjamin Weiss states, has “lulls in conversation and actors generally take turns interacting” (2018: 736). The online world does not follow the same unwritten rules that tend to occur in real world interactions. Interactions can occur between the performer and the viewers, as well as between multiple viewers, often with numerous interactions happening simultaneously. These interactions are a mixture of typed chat from viewers and both typed chat and verbal communication from the webcam performer. Each performer has different levels of communication: some exclusively use typed chat or verbal responses to communicate, others use a combination of both. This results in varied and complex data. The interactions during webcam broadcasts are live and fluid, unlike blog posts or static online data. Tools from traditional ethnography as detailed by Robert Emerson et al (2011), including observation and written descriptive field notes, were used to gather the data, which was subsequently coded and analysed. Due to the complex dynamics of interactions during webcam observations, 40 hours of observations yielded large amounts of data. Consequently, constant observation is not possible therefore a degree of time sampling should be attempted (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). Vicki

Smith adds how ethnography is “notorious for its time and labor intensiveness” (2007: 228), something I also found accurate.

4.5.1 Note-taking and Thick Description

For the note-taking process I used a thick description approach. This notion of thick description is defined by Clifford Geertz in his 1973 seminal essay “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture”. Thick description is a phrase that marks the features and processes of focusing on contextual details by observing and interpreting meaning. A thick description of a social action or event, accounts not just the immediate visible behaviours, but also the contextual understanding of these behaviours that make the action meaningful.

Geertz (1973) summarises four main elements necessary for a thick description in a cultural study. These are interpretative study, the subject of interpretation as the flow of social discourse, how interpretation deals with extroverted expressions, and ethnographic description as microscopic. Cultural analysis is an interpretative process that aims to uncover meaning. The collection of the raw data only does not equate to a thick description. This leads to the production of codes needed for decoding these social events to interpret the data. The data that is collected is then questioned by Geertz. The information collected is partially reliant on what individuals tell researchers. As such, data from extrovert expressions of culture make a thicker description. Ethnographic discoveries, Geertz states, perform as an ethnographic miniature. Geertz argues that ethnographers should provide minute details and descriptions that form a miniature version that reflects the society that it is part of. Specific and contextual events are viewed and constitute a thick description.

The ethnographer's role is to collect data that comprehends the social world. Thick description is a continuous process of interpretation which allows further insight into the complex nature of society. Both the amount of detail, as well as the insightfulness of such detail, is important in conducting a thick description. Thick description does not require a collection of every detail about everything: this would be meaningless and difficult to analyse as a researcher. Instead, detailed description alongside analysis balances research enabling the researcher to establish the significance of the events and behaviours of the participants observed. The aim of ethnography is

to reveal as much information that can be uncovered through observation and interaction with participants. The views of the participants are given voice, but this is balanced with an interpretation brought by the researcher.

Geertz's thick description is not free from criticism with challenges made against the lack of scientific rigor as well as its subjective nature (Roseberry, 1989; Keesing 1987). Although the nature of thick description is to account for the perceptions and experiences of its participants, these can often be partial and contradictory. It is also argued that these accounts also become inevitably intertwined with the active perceptions of the researcher. Geertz does provide measures on how to conduct a thick description, but there is no definite gauge of how 'thick' is thick enough. Given that various lenses can be used to interpret and analyse the narratives provided by the participants and the researcher interprets according to their own research agenda. However, this is not necessarily a drawback of thick description: thick description by its very nature has these inescapable characteristics interwoven within its process. The aim of thick description is to provide an interpretive approach to understanding the complexities of the social world: it is not an exact science. It does not give a definite account rather attempts to garner a range of suggestions and possibilities.

Thick description is not just a methodological process by which to take field notes but also as an intellectual attempt at shaping the ethnographic process. In order to successfully conduct a thick description in qualitative analysis, all aspects of the scene must be described. My notes consisted of the type of room, such as the bedroom, and the spatial arrangement of the physical room including which furniture and personal objects were visible. I also noted the technology that was visible, such as the keyboard, and other devices such as sex toys. The lighting of the room, through the use of lamps, coloured lights, and fairy lights was also noted. The presentation of the performer themselves was also noted including what they were wearing, their physical attributes, as well as their behaviour and actions while performing. The sounds audible in the performers space were noted, including the use of music, the performer talking, and from the platform itself through audible tips. While I did not note down the entire on-screen text from the chat box, I did take notes of anything significant that occurred within this chat box. There is a narrative process in thick description, notes are constructed to describe what is happening during the observation. As such, all of my observations were written down, initially as jottings. I attempted to describe the details

and characteristics of the scene in order to conduct a thick description of the context. After the show had finished, I used my jottings to write up extensive field notes which I then inputted into nVivo.

4.5.2 Coding with nVivo

I used nVivo software to input and analyse my observational notes. NVivo is a qualitative data analysis software developed by QSR International and provides a space to manage and analyse text, images, and other data types (Phillips and Lu, 2018). After importing my notes, I organised, classified, and coded the data into categories for further interpretation. I coded my data based on reoccurring themes that were evident from the notes. The key themes that were used included props, colour and lighting, technology and devices, domesticity, as well as codes for gender performativity: femininity and masculinity. The emergence of the themes created categories in which to further interrogate the data. Once the data was coded, I ensured that links were not missed between each theme by continuing to explore how these themes interacted and reinforced each other. As Johnny Saldaña (2016) adds the qualitative process is not linear. Coding requires more than simply naming themes but requires the researcher to connect the themes back to data, as well as connecting the data back to the themes. Electronic methods of data coding are utilised more in qualitative research as a way of obtaining rigor (Hilal and Alabri, 2013). By using computer-based software, it "ensures that the user is working more methodically, more thoroughly, more attentively" (Bazeley, 2007: 3). Additionally, nVivo reduces the number of manual tasks required, leaving more time for analysis (Wong, 2008). In addition to using the coding tools, I also used the word frequency query to identify common words across the observations. In this query, I included stemmed words and words with over three characters to avoid filler words.

4.5.3 Vignettes

Following from the notion that "thick description builds up a clear picture of the individuals and groups in the context of their culture and the setting in which they live" I decided to use vignettes as a way of contextualising the observations for the reader (Holloway, 1997: 154). Karen Skilling and Gabriel Stylianides describes vignettes as "descriptive episodes of specific situations that simulate real events or problems that are usually presented in written or visual formats" (2020:

544). The presentation of vignettes throughout the discussion chapters reveals the experiences of the researcher, allowing for the reader to get an insight into the visual data. The vignettes offer a unique way of disseminating the data that encapsulates the notion of 'thick description', allowing for the context of the performances to be better understood. Using the analysis of my 'thick description' notes, I included relevant information regarding the performance to build a visual image. Given the reliance on visual criminology within this thesis, it was important to highlight the significance of the visual performances observed and allow them to be fully explored within the discussion.

4.6 Covert or 'lurk'

> "Covert research should not simply hide away in the closets of criminology or be quietly handed over to journalists, undercover police or security personnel by drift or design; it should be celebrated and supported" (Calvey, 2013: 546).

Ethnographic approaches can appeal to covert research methodologies, particularly when examining sensitive topics. Martin Bulmer defines covert research as "research situations where the real identity of the observer as a social researcher remains secret and entirely unknown to those with whom he or she is in contact. The investigator purports to be a complete participant and is in fact something else" (1982: 252). The default status of a researcher conducting an online ethnography is covert, then a decision can be made to remain a lurker or announce their presence to the research group. Remaining a lurker has several benefits, including the removal of any potential researcher bias that can occur when conducting overt research (Tunçalp and Lê, 2014). However, Anne Beaulieu (2004) and Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson (1983) assert that remaining covert while conducting can adversely affect the data that is collected. Ethnographers, they claim, may miss out on data that can only be acquired through "living simultaneously in two worlds, that of participation and that of research" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983: 89). Covert research allows the researcher:

> "to experience first-hand the phenomena under study in the same way that the participants experience it. Individually and collectively, these benefits can generate new insights and

> capture rich data that would often be unobtainable to support novel theoretical contributions" (Roulet et al, 2017: 492).

David Calvey (2013) argues that covert ethnographic research is an innovative and valid methodology within criminology. Covert research has been partly suppressed due to its perceived ethical quandaries. However, covert research, Calvey assets, has more value than prescribed by the limited number of extreme examples that are commonly associated with covert research. Ethical considerations and safeguard can restrain more creative forms of ethnographies within criminology. He concludes noting that, although ethnography may inhabit a niche locale within criminology:

> "covert research should ultimately be part of the criminological imagination, despite the increasing policy-informed orientations of the discipline, and also be part of its standard methodological toolkit, despite the general adherence to forms of quantitative methodology" (Calvey, 2013: 542).

Allison Cavanaugh (2000) considers online spaces by referencing Goffman's (1963; 1971) theories that explore how it is accepted that lurkers listen into conversations, which Cavanaugh applies to online conversations. Shelley Correll (1995) cites a similar justification in her research into an online lesbian community, describing how she was able to lurk for some time before declaring her research interests. She was simply acting as any other website visitor, reading rather than contributing to any discussions, which a number of visitors to the site also did. John Stuart Mill (1998) claims that participants who are unaware of their observations cannot come to harm. I lurked within the performer's rooms, acting as another visitor. In line with Markham and Buchanan (2012) this environment is understood as a public space. It is a safe assumption that webcam performers are not overly sensitive about their performances being viewed (Talvitie-Lamberg, 2018). To broadcast a performance through a webcamming site can be considered an agreement that this show will be publicly watched (Raun, 2010). Within the publicly available performers room, I was able to see the same elements as another anonymous viewer could see. As Yu-Wei Lee et al explains "lurking is a valid way of accessing the community, and its effects are neutral" (2006: 404-405). My position was similar to David Rier who conducted online research

into HIV/AIDS Internet support groups (2007). He justified using covert research online as it did not intrude on the participants nor were any participants influenced by Rier's presence, which was also my experience. However, my research differs as I only observed public rooms, whereas Rier observed both open and closed access groups. Consistent with my theoretical approach, my 'lurking' became part of the surveillance network I was observing.

4.7 Supplementary data sources

4.7.1 'Document' analysis

I used a form of online document analysis as a way of corroborating my observational data. These online resources provided extra details regarding various elements of the webcamming process, allowing my data to be established and supported. Glenn Bowen (2009) notes how there has been an increase in academic research papers using a form of document analysis within their methodological process. Norman Denzin states how document analysis is often used alongside other qualitative methods, fusing "the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon" (1970: 291). Similar to other analytical methods, document analysis examines and interprets data to draw out meaning, gain a better understanding, and to develop empirical knowledge (Rapley, 2007; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Documents in their various forms can provide wide coverage of an area: they cover events over time, over many settings and situations (Yin, 1994). Documents, in this case refer to online webpages, contain both text and images that have been recorded without any researcher influence or intervention (Bowen, 2009). These 'documents' consisted of online forums for webcam performers, help and advice blogs for performers, as well as websites containing more statistical data. I did not take a systematic approach, as would be expected with a full document analysis, rather used data and material extracted from sources to supplement my observational data. Bowen makes an important distinction, explaining that documents cannot necessarily be treated as completely accurate or precise. These accounts should help establish the meaning and understanding of the document and how it can contribute to the issues being researched.

From an ethical perspective, Bowen states how many documents are available in the public domain. As Merriam wrote in 1988, finding records in the public domain is only limited by time

and intensiveness of work and the imagination of the researcher. Given the growth and access of digital technology, the ability to access public domain documents can surely only have increased. Violations of privacy can result when "extensive amounts of personally identifiable data are being collected and stored in databases'' (Smith et al, 1996: 172). Amy Bruckman (2002a) explains how most comments online are both semi-published and semi-public. In later research, James Hudson and Amy Bruckman claim this semi-public state creates a new aspect to online research ethics: "a new continuum between individuals on the Internet deserving credit for their work and needing anonymity for protection" (2004: 129). According to Bruckman (2002b), the confidentiality of individuals and groups range from no disguise through to complete disguise. In complete disguise, all identifiable information, such as names, usernames, places, and institutions, are either changed or given pseudonyms.

For the webcam performers forum, I employed a complete disguise approach to protect the identity of the users. Additionally, I only used publicly available forums that did not require registration to view in alignment with previous guidance and research (Eysenbach and Till, 2001; Balasooriya-Smeekens et al, 2016). Research has indicated that some users want to be credited for their information being used (Madge, 2007: Fiesler and Proferes, 2018). The AoIR Ethics Working Committee produced guidelines in relation to confidentiality, highlighting how these vary with the nature of the specific research. Generally, if internet users are considered as subjects, such as in chat rooms, then more care should be taken to their confidentiality. If the users are considered as authors, such as blogs and web pages, there is less obligation for confidentiality (Ess and AoIR Ethics Working Committee, 2002). Clare Madge (2007) adds how authors of web pages and blogs may want to be explicitly referenced and may not want confidentiality. As a result, users who share information online must be appropriately identified depending on their status (Barnes, 2004). For the remaining webpages, those offering advice and tips and providing statistics, I adopted a no disguise approach as these pages were produced to be shared and I referenced the authors to fully credit their work, following the research guidance above.

4.7.2 Interviews

Online ethnographic research highlights the importance of aiming to not simply rely on what is observable but combines observational data online with input from evidence from participants

(Androutsopoulos, 2008; Kozinets, 2010). To corroborate my observation data, I included case studies from webcam performers themselves, in the form of interviews. Keeping in line with pre-existing research, the focus was on the observational data. As such, I decided to focus on a small number of participants with the intention for this data to corroborate the findings from the observation data. It was a persistent difficulty throughout this research process to find participants that were willing to be interviewed. This was potentially hampered further by the lack of payment, something which I explore reflexive in more detail in section 4.9.1. This may also have been a product of the barriers that exist between the performer and viewer, making it more difficult to find willing participants.

Interviews were sourced from an existing contact as well as an advertisement posted on Support and Advice for Escorts (SAAFE) forum. I wrote a brief description of what the research was about and how potential participants could contact me, which is included in appendix 2. I found difficulty in writing this advertisement as the research was detached from research that had previously been conducted on webcam performers, as having a strong focus on performers opinions on their work. When writing the description for the research I was careful not to label or stereotype webcam performers, and avoided using emotive language, such as calling them a 'deviant' subculture. Despite this, it is possible the description was not as easily understandable by potential participants, due to its focus on performers' spaces, and they may have felt unable to contribute to the research.

In both cases I communicated with them via email, ensuring they were sent a copy of the participant information sheet and a consent form. Both interviews were conducted online via Zoom given both the online nature of this research and the ongoing pandemic situation. This also meant interviewee's maintained complete geographical anonymity. During the interviews, participants were reminded at points that they were not obligated to answer any questions, notably sensitive questions, but both participants were very open and willing to respond with their experiences.

I used semi-structured interviews for this research. In a semi-structured approach, "participants are free to respond to these open-ended questions as they wish, and the researcher may probe these responses" (McIntosh and Morse, 2015: 1). This flexibility is why I chose this approach as a way

of having space to respond to participant information. Joanne Horton et al (2004) explains how semi-structured interviews give flexibility for participants to explain their thoughts and experiences in relation to points of interest for them. Certain responses were then able to be questioned in more depth, leading to further points of discussion. By allowing participants the freedom semi-structured interviews provide, it led to unexpected elements I had not previously considered. My questions were based on my observation data, as well as some additional 'document' analysis with the aim that my interviews would corroborate my existing data. This worked well and my participants were not only able to corroborate elements I have found in my data, but also provide information beyond my data, allowing my data to be confirmed and expanded through personal accounts. The interviews provided both corroboration of the data I had already considered as well as introducing new avenues which I was able to take back to the main observation data set and explore. For example Marin talked about the use of technology and its visibility on screen. I was able to take this new insight and explore my observational data considering this information which allowed me to analyse the observations with this additional information. The recorded interviews lasted about 60 to 90 minutes which I then transcribed. As per Max van Manen's (1997) research guidelines, I read each transcript several times to generate an overall sense of their account. From this, I identified themes and examined how they related to the observational data.

While two participants may initially appear too few, Janice Morse states how "the quality of the data and the number of interviews per participant determine the amount of useable data obtained" (2000:4). In this research, the interviewees were both able to articulate their own experiences and provided a lot of data during the interviews. Beyond this, I had gathered 40 hours of observational data and the interviews were to corroborate this already rich data. The two interviews that were conducted allowed me to frame these as case studies to refer to and really go in-depth with these participants responses. Both interviews yielded a lot of rich data that provided additional evidence to support my observational data. Despite the interviews corroborating my observation data, If I had the opportunity to do this research again, I would have expanded the sample of interviews, focusing on gaining a wider range of webcam performers including male performers. This is also considered when exploring potential avenues for future work in chapter 8.

4.8 The positioned and reflexive researcher

Douglas Macbeth's notion of 'positional reflexivity' encourages researchers to involve themselves in referencing the self and how this shapes the research process. By knowing the researcher's motivations and positionality, it makes it easier to understand the research (Harding, 1987). It becomes as much about the researchers' story as that of the participants (Cunliffe, 2003). Kenneth Gergen and Mary Gergen (2000) therefore encourage researchers to demonstrate their various positions, beliefs, experiences, and investments to show the audience what they are bringing to the research. Ethnographers must immerse themselves in their research, and I am no different. I am a middle-class, cisgender, white woman in a relatively privileged position. It was important for me as a researcher to remember that I am not a "floating, disembodied subject or an isolated individual in front of a computer screen and recognise that the online research viewpoint is in fact a view from somewhere" (Morrow et al 2015: 534). As such, it was crucial to acknowledge how the multiple facets of my position affected the research process throughout. My own positionality, feelings and experiences became important to consider as my research was inherently biased by my own interpretations and understandings of the social world. My gender identity, as a female, may have influenced the way I understood my observations. As explained by Beverley Skeggs (2008), bodies, power, and privilege are all elements reproduced in academic research and were therefore elements that I needed to consider. These were a particular consideration for me as Eileen Galvez and Susanna Muñoz (2020) argue how researchers can replicate patriarchal and racial practices, which are often unintentional, when adhering to rigid academic codes of ethics. Jessica Simpson (2021) argues how often there are conflicting interests from the researcher, the university ethics boards, and the participants, however by addressing the differences in power, marginalised voices can be prioritised over institutional voices. This is something when reflectively looking back at my research process that was not completely achieved. At times it felt I was 'jumping through academic hoops' throughout the academic ethics process, forgetting the core of the research itself. As a result, as explained above, it led to me feeling uncomfortable with the payment elements, despite it being deemed ethically appropriate.

Additionally, I have never been a webcam performer myself, so my research does not come from a perspective of experience. As I am not a sex worker, this may have created a barrier to fully

understand the performer's experiences. However, my position as a researcher brought its own experiences and knowledge that has value in this research (Berger and Guidroz, 2014). Gergen and Gergen (1991) observed within research that there is no possibility in naturalistic research to remove the researcher. Ethnographic researchers are unable to remove their own knowledge and ideology of the world to obtain objectivity. Glynis Pellatt (2003) suggests including a reflexive account within the research to increase its rigour. There are several issues that arise when considering researchers' engagement with their research field and their degree of participation. Researchers must therefore decide on the extent they will participate in the field. Siwarit Pongsakornrungsilp and Jonathan Schroeder (2011) describe how researchers must compromise between refraining from observation bias and developing relationships with the research members.

One factor that was important for me to consider was the disclosure of my identity and presence. Researchers can choose to reveal or conceal their position to their research participants. One of the main advantages for online ethnography is the discreet and unobtrusive method, which in itself causes a predicament. Beaulieu asserts that "[t]he technologically mediated setting is one in which ethnographers can be, without revealing themselves as individuals" (2004:146). By remaining anonymous within the research field, researchers can analyse data that is publicly available. The participants do not need to be informed, assuming that the data has been anonymised and any sensitive information cannot be linked back to the participants. This leads to ethical issues regarding the boundaries between private and public data, which are not always clear. Katrina Pritchard and Rebecca Whiting (2012) explain that obtaining informed consent can be challenging when using online communities. Observational research does not interfere with the activities of the people being observed which enables ethnographies to research sensitive issues. It allows for the acquisition of rich and detailed knowledge of relatively unknown groups and subcultures which is why I decided to remain covert and not reveal my researcher identity.

Raymond Gold (1958) notes how the researchers need to have a level of temporal distance after exiting the ethnography to look back reflexively. Tunçalp and Lê (2014) state how ethnographers need to consider how they engage in their research and how they cross the boundaries which separate them from their participants. The idea of boundary crossing is reflected by Hammersley

and Atkinson (1983) who profess the ethnographer is an outsider entering the field. This boundary is crossed as a means of gaining an insider view of reality (Riemer, 2008).

4.9 Ethical considerations and regulations

4.9.1 Ethical experiences of non-payment

Payment for research participants is relatively common in research, yet remains ethically controversial (Largent and Lynch, 2017). Margaret Russell et al (2000) found that less than 45% of their respondents agreed with paying research participants. The respondents noted potential issues with paying such as pressure to participate, biases, and impact on the cost of research. Observational research into camming often excludes information regarding payment (Weiss, 2018; Wang, 2021). Emma Head (2009) reflects this finding more generally in qualitative research stating how it is often difficult to assess whether researchers have used payments in their work. She goes on to explain how there is a general lack of guidance from research associations when considering ethical practice. At the time of data collection, there was a lack of discourse regarding how researchers consider payment:

> "the use of payments in qualitative research projects should be reflexively considered by the social research community, and the use of payments in research projects should be moved out of the margins and be more fully discussed in research publications and in the ethical guidelines produced by social research associations" (Head, 2009: 336).

With the ethnographic observations, I followed Jones' 2015 research which featured observations of webcam performers. In her research, she registered as a user and purchased tokens, to avoid being muted by models, but never tipped any of the performers. During my pilot study I did not purchase any tokens and was not muted or banned in any of the performer's rooms. The performers in the observations were, as Bleakley states, "passive observation of camgirl work" (2014: 896). As I was not directly taking the performers' time away from earning money or using their direct expertise - all frequently cited as reasons to pay participants (Ritter et al, 2003; Sullivan and Cain, 2004), I followed Jones's research and did not pay or tip models during my observations. My role was a passive observer and to tip models would cross an ethical boundary. By using more

generalised ethical guidelines and using the limited specific information from Jones (2015), I deemed it ethically appropriate to not tip the webcam performers in my observations to remain a passive observer. If I were to tip, my role as 'lurker' would have changed more to a consumer-research. By this, I mean my main reason for being in the performers rooms was to conduct research, yet if I paid them, I then also become a consumer. As the performer was unaware of my presence, it was important for me to keep my identity concealed.

For my interviews, I also did not pay my participants which led to internal conflict. When reflexively looking back at my research, this is a decision that I no longer agreed with. If I were able to change an aspect of this study, I would ensure that interviewees as well as the performers, were paid for their time and expertise that they gave me. Huysamen and Sanders (2021) explain how a co-production of ethical protocols, working with sex worker communities, can be a helpful way to set out expectations and manage the conditions in which research is conducted with these groups.

I faced difficulty as during the time period in which I conducted my data collection, there was little research precedent to follow, given the lack of transparency in research ethics and payment. However, within the past year, there has been research that more explicitly targets the precedent of paying participants and the ethical dilemmas it brings. Monique Huysamen and Teela Sanders explain how "As sex work researchers, we engage in research about 'non-normative' sexual practices that are stigmatised and understood as socially deviant, and as 'dirty work' (2021: 946). Following this, Ryan Conrad and Emma McKenna (2022) produced a comprehensive set of questions to consider when conducting research with sex workers. They explain how it is important for sex work researchers to be advocates of sex workers' rights, which is visible through the research design and implementation. Included in the ten questions to consider is 'How are you compensating sex workers for their time?' to ensure that participants are fairly compensated for their time and experience. Roanna Lobo et al adds how "suitable payment of sex workers undertaking peer researcher or study participant roles should reflect the value they provide and is a necessity when designing sex work research" (2021: 1447). Looking back reflexively at my research process, I would change my approach to paying participants, and as a result would have paid all participants in this research regardless of their role. Going forward, this new literature will guide my ethical considerations and ensure all participants are fairly compensated for their work.

4.9.2 Ethical guidelines and approaches

The nature of webcamming lends itself to a netnography approach, as the only field method that allows researchers to observe what people do in "real life" contexts. Calvey (2008) states that covert research has been often viewed as ethically inferior, however argues that covert research plays an important and creative role in research. Ethnographic participant observation can supply detailed, authentic information unattainable by any other research method (Homan, 1980; Humphreys, 1970; Gans, 1999). Roger Homan explains how ethnography can potentially provide more authentic information than other methods. The researcher is an observer of the scene, not interrupting or biasing the participant with their research aims. There is no opportunity for the Hawthorne effect as the researcher's presence is unannounced. Sharon Schembri and Maree Boyle (2013) add that the aim of an ethnography is to provide a deep credible understanding that other approaches cannot achieve. If the credibility is threatened, the authenticity of the research is also weakened. Ethnography needs to capture the authenticity of human behaviour. Hammersley and Atkinson state other methodologies, such as experiments, and surveys are artificial, unable to express the dynamics of human activities. Anita Lavorgna and Lisa Sugiura (2022) explain how online ethnographies face ethical difficulties as the standards and guidelines are underdevelopment and require more refinement going forward. It was therefore of significant importance to consider all of the ethical dilemmas that may arise in this research through the use of my chosen methodology and aim to minimise any potential harm as much as possible.

Due to the covert nature of this research, and how it deals with sensitive issues, ethical considerations were of high importance. As stated in Section 4.1 in the British Society of Criminology Statement of Ethics, researchers' responsibilities towards research participants must be considered. There is a responsibility to "minimise personal harm to research participants by ensuring that the potential physical, psychological, discomfort or stress to individuals participating in research is minimised by participation in the research" (2015: 5). This research did involve the handling of sensitive information which could result in injury to participants through a breach of confidentiality. These breaches may result in embarrassment within a participant's social group or

potentially loss of employment. Aras Ozgun (2015) states how the anonymity of the webcam has several benefits, one of which is the creation of a space to express and engage in less common forms of sexual desire which may not be considered acceptable or mainstream in society. This notion is true for the performer who does not need to go into another geographical location out of fear of being recognised, they can conduct their shows from their own homes. The risks were minimized to the fullest extent possible through several precautions, so this research did not cause social, legal, or economic risks to participants. Risks included "psychological harms: including feelings of worthlessness, distress, guilt, anger or fear-related, for example, the disclosure of sensitive or embarrassing information" and "devaluation of personal worth: including being humiliated, manipulated or in other ways treated disrespectfully or unjustly" which could have arisen from this research if suitable measures were not taken (British Society of Criminology Statement of Ethics, 2015: 5).

The "maintenance of the dignity of participants" as described in section 3.1.6 of the University of Greenwich Research Ethics Policy (2019) was also considered. There were appropriate safeguards in place to minimize the risk to participants, including protecting confidentiality by using coded data. The data was collected anonymously, ensuring there was no identifiable connection between the participant and their data. Screen names and any other identifiable data were not collected at any time during this research, ensuring the participants continuously remain anonymous throughout the duration, and beyond, of this research. Additionally, data re-identification is not a possibility given the absence of identifiable information being collected which further strengthens the continuous anonymity of participants. This also ensured "that the dignity and autonomy of research participants is protected and respected at all times" (British Society of Criminology Statement of Ethics, 2015: 5). I maintained the anonymity of my observations by not noting screen names, rather the only details I noted were the performers gender, the website, and the time of performance. I also took minimal screen grabs, used in Chapter 5, as a way for the reader to be able to visualise the webcam viewers perspective. To continue the anonymity, I blurred all identifiable information, as well as blurring the image itself to ensure the individual could not be identified.

This research involved the observation of webcam performers via online websites. Section 4.13 of the British Society of Criminology Statement of Ethics explains how researchers:

> "when conducting research via the Internet or via new e-technologies, be aware of the particular ethical dilemmas that may arise when engaging in these mediums. Information provided in e-social science, e-mails, web pages, social media sites, cyber-forums and various forms of 'instant messaging' that are intentionally public may be 'in the public domain', but the public nature of any communication or information on the Internet should always be critically examined and the identity of individuals protected unless it is a salient aspect of the research" (ibid: 8).

As per Ingeborg Grønning's research (2015) my silent observations will not affect anyone while the research is ongoing. Furthermore, Section 4.13 of the British Society of Criminology Statement of Ethics states "when conducting Internet research, the researcher should be aware of the boundaries between public and private domains" (8-9). Chris Mann (2003) defined private space as a space where individuals can reasonably expect that observations are not taking place. This is further mirrored in The Code of Human Research Ethics produced by the British Psychological Society note that "observational research is only acceptable in public situations where those observed would expect to be observed by strangers" (2014:25). This is why I chose to only observe rooms that were free to view as they remained in the public domain, available for any internet user to anonymously observe. Additionally, I refrained from paying for any private show to maintain the status of the rooms being publicly available.

Guidance was also taken from the Joint Academic Network (JANET), particularly on matters involving managing research data and audio-visual research data. Effective data management was carried out throughout the course of this research from creation to dissemination. By managing the data efficiently, it reduced the risk of losing any data. This was achieved through the use of "robust and appropriate data storage facilities" (JANET, 2019: para 28). Digital audio-visual material was the main observational element of my netnography; however, aside from limited screen grabs, no audio-visual material was collected within the course of this research. This research also adhered to the rules of conduct of my Internet Service Provider, as well as any rules of conduct of the websites I visited.

No personal data was collected during the observation part of this research. Models have the option to complete online profiles with certain information such as race, location, and age, however, none of this information was collected. Additionally, webcam models can also choose to use manufactured identities as a way of shielding their actual identity for a variety of reasons. As explained earlier, no screen names were collected, nor were any identifiable details. Additionally, for the interviews, all personal data collected was processed lawfully and was fully anonymised from the point of initial collection. As per Article 6 of the General Data Protection Regulation, all interviews require informed consent through the signing of consent forms. However, in order to further protect my interviewee's identity, consent was given audibly rather than their name or signatures being collected. Information was given to participants detailing what the research involves, explaining that they can withdraw at any time, and a code word they chose would enable them to withdraw their data. One of my interviewee's provided personal information in their interview, such as their home location, which at the point of transcribing I omitted this and changed this information in my data. All audio recordings and subsequent transcripts were kept in a secure password-protected folder only accessible by me. The data from this research will be destroyed after the publication of this research.

5. Surveillance, power and the 'real'

5.1 Introduction

> "There is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints. Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorising to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself. A superb formula: power exercised continuously and for what turns out to be a minimal cost" (Foucault, 1980: 155).

Drawing on the data from both my observations and my interviews, this chapter contributes to an understanding of public and private realms and how they can be blurred through webcamming. By using theory from Michel Foucault and Thomas Mathiesen, I explore how all actors involved in webcamming are under a surveillant gaze, however I argue within this chapter that there are several, more nuanced layers, to this surveillant gaze. We begin at the gaze, understanding who is watching who, and I begin to unpack the multiple layers of surveillance that occur. The commodification of this surveillant gaze is then explored, highlighting why performers choose to broadcast their private space. This private space is then examined to gain a better understanding of the private and public realms, and how webcamming acts as a way of blurring these. The importance of the home and private space is crucial to gain an understanding of how these spaces are broadcast by performers and consumed by viewers. This chapter concludes with the exploration of these private spaces and here I argue how these spaces are presented as 'real' and potentially hyperreal to viewers. Within this chapter, I also introduce the concept of 'constructed authenticity' to explore the interplay between real and performative spaces, arguing that performers spaces often demonstrate a level of 'constructed authenticity' to their viewers.

In this chapter, and the subsequent chapters, I will present my own observations of webcam performances in the style of vignettes, as well as including interview segments from my interviewees Marin and Olivia. Marin and Olivia give us a supplementary voice to understand how these spaces are curated. Marin is a transgender individual who chooses not to use pronouns. I will refer to them by this name or as 'they' to make it easier to comprehend. Marin no longer does

webcam performing but when they did it, it was with a partner. Marin's role consisted of setting up the space, sorting out the equipment, and replying to messages on a keyboard out of shot. The partner was primarily in front of the camera. This experience of webcam performing only lasted for a relatively brief period of time. In terms of broadcasting, the pair chose two more mainstream webcam performing sites both based in countries outside of their own residence. Olivia is a female webcam performer who performed for around 10 years, as well as being involved in various areas of the sex industry. She worked from her own home, usually alone. Similarly to Marin, she used mainstream websites to broadcast her performances.

5.2 Presentation and operation of webcamming sites

5.2.1 Layout of webcamming sites

On the home page of most webcamming sites, the user is presented with an array of thumbnails of webcammers who are currently broadcasting. When the mouse is hovered over one of these photos, a small window appears showing a preview of the live broadcast. Users are able to search the site for specific tags, for example “natural” and “toys”, as well as the type of performer, for example, female and trans. Each specific performer broadcast is hosted on an individual page, referred to as a room. Some webcamming sites, including Myfreecams, also offer users the ability to view the most popular rooms and trending rooms. In a performer’s room, usually around a quarter to half of the left-hand side of the screen is filled by the performer's video broadcast. Directly adjacent to this live image is the chat room: a space where the users can tip, write messages, and communicate with the performer. The performer is also able to use this chat to communicate with viewers. Bots[4] are also used by performers which automatically post important information to the viewers, such as services offered, how much a service is, as well as external promotion of content, such as photo albums to purchase.

[4] Bots are able to post automated notifications in the chat, such as welcoming and thanking tippers, sending tip menus, warning users against prohibited words, with some bots able to auto-silence viewers who ignore the rules. Performers are able to choose multiple bots they want within their chatroom.

On myfreecams, below the performer's stream, different performers' rooms are shown, whilst on Chaturbate the performer's profile is visible under the stream. Bongacams has a smaller performer biography available, and alternative rooms are placed under this. Additionally, myfreecams has a list of the current users in a room shown in a column on the right-hand side, on Chaturbate and Bongacams users can toggle between the chat and the viewers present. These sites are structured with private and public rooms, which are available depending on the premium paid (Jones, 2016). Screenshots from two webcamming sites are provided as examples:

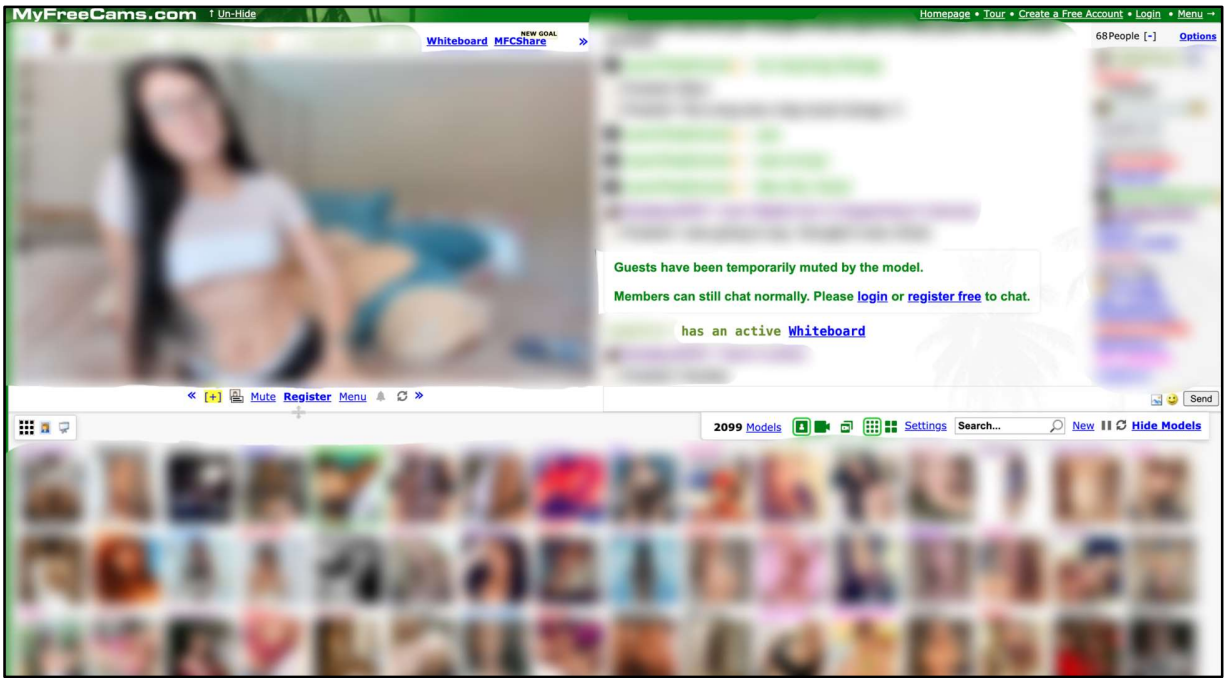

Figure 1: A female performers room on myfreecams as viewed by a user.

,

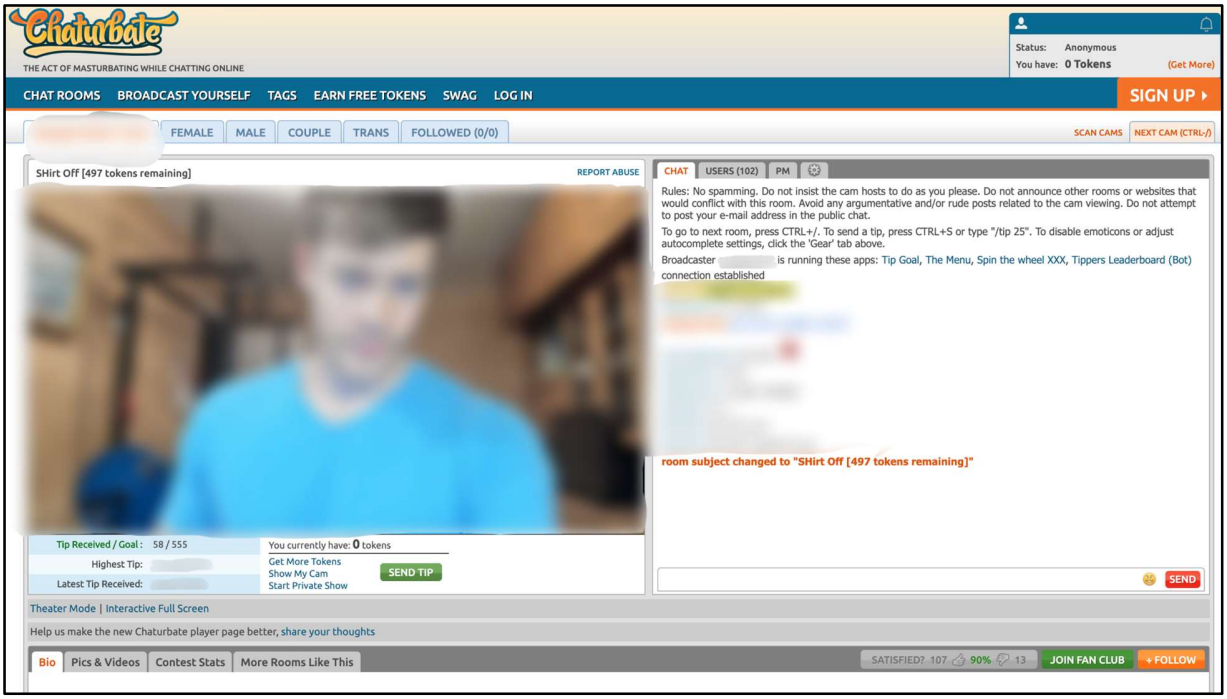

Figure 2: A male performers room on Chaturbate as viewed by a user.

Niels Van Doorn and Olav Velthuis (2018) explain how popular webcamming websites use a ranking algorithm to sort and rank the performers. This ranking system creates competition between the models, as being within the top rankings is crucial for gaining more revenue. Webcam models are given 'camscores', based on an algorithm, that influencers their visibility and popularity on the site. Being placed high within this algorithm means the model's thumbnail is more likely to feature on the first page of the website which in turn, is likely to result in more viewers noticing them. As the ranking system employed on high traffic webcamming sites that are seemingly imperative to a model's success. Webcamming sites only offer some basic information regarding the how the 'camscores' are calculated. On BongaModels, the performers facing websites for BongasCams, models are informed that their 'camscore' is calculated based on a variety of different factors, including how many tokens they earn and how much time they spend online (bongamodels.com, 2020). They do not provide any more details regarding the other factors involved, or how these two factors of tokens and time are combined. Similarly, MyFreeCams explain how the 'camscore' is calculated based on the performers earnings over "some period of time". There are no details provided regarding how long this time period is and how often a 'camscore' might update (Myfreecams wiki, 2022). This lack of transparency regarding the

algorithms used and how ‘camscores’ are calculated are echoed in webcam forums where performers frequently discuss the issues surrounding this. Performers explain how they have “figured out” parts of the algorithm, such as earnings being compared to other models, which they use to help generate a higher ‘camscore’ (AmberCutie.com, 2022).

As a result of this lack of transparency, there is a distinct uncertainty created by these webcamming sites. Models are left with no real idea of what it takes to achieve high rankings, only getting ideas from what they have read on various forums. It is a widely held assumption across webcam forums that being ranked highly on these ranking systems will lead to a higher success rate for webcam models. (Van Doorn and Velthuis, 2018). Velthuis and Van Doorn further explain how these algorithms create “strong winner-take-all dynamics” (2020: 169). It positions those who are already earning well to an ever-better position of visibility and gives them the ability to earn even more. As a result, webcam performers contest the use of algorithms as “they produce inequality among performers, create deep uncertainty, generate anxiety and are widely seen as unfair” (Velthuis and Van Doorn, 2020: 170). This ranking algorithm also begins to show the internal force that is managing and controlling bodies.

5.2.2 Guidelines and rules

All visitors to the webcamming sites used for my observations have to confirm they are over 18 years old, as well as agree to certain terms before gaining access to the site. As the sites were not based in the UK, their rules were more specific to the US. On Chaturbate they state that the user must be the “Age of Majority in my jurisdiction”, which means they must be at the threshold of adulthood as recognized in law, which generally is 18 years old but can be older depending on the jurisdiction. This message was also shown on Bongacams, despite being based in the Netherlands. There is a focus within these terms that the material on the site is for adults only, contains no minors, and should not be shared with minors. Myfreecams differs from the two sites above, providing a very brief pop-up message to be confirmed by users which only states: “MyFreeCams is an adult webcam community. It contains adult-oriented, age-restricted content. You must be at least 18 years old to enter”. Regardless, all three webcamming sites required the user to confirm they were legally allowed to view adult content. Age is not only a consideration of the users, but

also of the performers themselves. Performers must verify they are over 18 years old by submitting a clear photo/scan of a valid government-issued identification (Chaturbate Support, N.Da).

Webcamming sites also prohibits several acts, either actual or implied, and breaking these rules will result in the performer being permanently banned. There are various acts included across the sites, but all forbid anything illegal, violence and injury, drugs, and excessive alcohol, discussing sex with children, and discussing in person meetings. There is also a prohibition of what can be considered extreme such as fisting, penetration of the vagina or anus with items not meant for sexual stimulation, with a general rule against actions that may be deemed obscene (Myfreecams wiki, 2018a). The notions of the extreme/obscene will be discussed later, in referencing to the appearance of underage performers. As a female only performer site, Myfreecams also has some rules regarding the visibility of men. Men cannot be seen on camera for any reason and should not even be in the same room as the performer. Sexual relations with men, even off-camera is also listed as a prohibited act (Myfreecams wiki, 2018). Violation of these rules will result in the performer being banned immediately. There is a focus on the performers' space being a female only space, yet they do not provide an explanation as to why these rules exist. This leads to discussion about how these spaces are revealed and displayed to the audience, as well as how bodies are policed through surveillance. This policing can be seen before the performer has even begun broadcasting. Olivia explained how she applied to be on various webcamming sites who refused to host her:

> *"So, there were a few websites that I applied to work on, and they wouldn't let me work on them because I was too alternative. Which is like completely fine you know when you work as a sex worker, you cannot be offended when someone judges you on your body. I would say that I was not a mainstream girl... and I know it's what the industry is like. I don't have fake tits, I've got body hair, I've got quite a few tattoos, like that is enough to be alternative. So when websites didn't want to host me because I was too alternative, that's fine. I actually did okay on the mainstream sites"*

For Olivia, the policing of bodies began before the point of broadcasting. There is a layer of unseen surveillance and policing regarding who is permitted to broadcast themselves. This surveillance is

kept hidden from the viewer. There are several layers to webcam surveillance which we will go on to explore through the panopticon and synopticon.

5.3 Surveillant gaze

Michel Foucault's (1977) panopticon concept is a theorisation of how bodies are under a constant surveillant gaze. As stated by Foucault, Jeremy Bentham, the original creator of the panopticon design, "invented a technology of power designed to solve the problems of surveillance" (Foucault, 1980: 148). Video surveillance is largely similar to this: it is a technological solution formulated to solve the problems that are situated in public space. Just as in the panopticon, people are under surveillance, unaware of when they might be seen or by who. Given the panoptical principle: that the few are watching the many, it would seem on the surface that the panopticon model is incompatible with the webcamming realm. Yet the body continues to be monitored through disciplinary power in the webcamming realm. The exercise of this disciplinary power 'involves regulation through visibility' (Hannah, 1997: 171). With the rise of technological devices and the internet, surveillance has become more nuanced and more intense. Surveillance is no longer necessarily associated with threat but rather "as a chance to display oneself under the gaze of the camera" (Ernst, 2002: 461). This panoptic principle has shifted into a "pleasure principle" (Weibel, 2002: 218). The prevalence and popularity of webcams exhibits this. Models performing at any given time easily reach into the thousands. However, as Thomas Mathiesen (1997) argues, within a digital society both the panopticon and the syntopicon coexist. Synopticism has steered this digital society to surpass the "Big Brother" style gaze to a more decentralized idea of surveillance "consisting of multiple glances from different agents, often operating informally" (Green, 1999:38). These multiple glances exponentially grow when we look at the glances that webcamming performers receive. Chaturbate, one of the most popular webcamming sites, has approximately 435 million monthly visitors compared to around 350,000 registered performers (Morris, 2020). While the synopticon seems a more appropriate framework in which to discuss webcamming, Foucault brings fundamental considerations regarding power and surveillance which will go to further explore how these concepts are perceived on webcamming sites.

It is important to establish who is doing the performing and who is watching the performances. Sex work in general is populated by female cisgender workers (Ditmore, 2011: Nadal et al, 2014: Jones, 2020a). There is a gendered dynamic in both the performers and viewers of webcamming sites. There is an assumption in research that women constitute the vast majority of workers and men are the majority of consumers (Geist, 2016; Harris et al, 2011). This is an assumption stated by Pierre Brassuer and Jean Finez (2020) who also add that the webcamming industry is a heteronormative economy: men are watching women. There is a huge disparity between the number of female and male performers, shown through the number of female performer profiles compared to males. This is despite a reported rise in popularity for online services such as webcamming (Drolet, 2020: Lorenz, 2020). My observations echoed Madeline Henry and Pantea Farvid's (2017) research which explains that there is a gender disparity in online sex work which mirrors the gendered dynamic that is visible in the sex industry more broadly. This dynamic is understood as men mostly buying sex and women as the ones who sell it. Sarah Kingston and Nicola Smith (2020) take a closer examination as to who is advertising sexual services and to what audience. They found that in the UK there is a greater disparity within the gender identity and sexual orientation of advertisements. They examined advertisements of escorts that were posted online. Although most sex worker advertisements were listed by women, it was not the vast majority as we might assume. Of these, almost all cis female profiles advertised to men, with nearly half also advertising to women, and two thirds to couples (Kingston and Smith, 2020). When examining cis male profiles, they identified that men mainly advertised to women and couples, with just under a third advertising to men. Generally, both transmasculine and transfeminine profiles both advertised to men, but also were seen advertising to women and couples. It is important to remember that men are not the only consumers of online sex work, and this will be explored further later during this chapter.

The public spectacles of previously hidden private actions are watched and enjoyed by viewers (Ericson and Haggerty, 2006). The viewer's gaze is an intrusion into the private realm, which without the camera would otherwise be hidden from view (Langman, 2004).

> *Laura is lying on her bed, naked and masturbating. Soft fairy lights twinkle in the background of her bed frame, with white and pink sheets on her perfectly made bed.*

Music is quietly playing in the background, the only other sounds audible are her moans, the vibrations, and the automated tipping noise when she receives a tip. Viewers are engaged, despite Laura not responding or replying to messages, almost as if the viewers are incidental for her.

The viewer of the webcam performer is able to watch these previously unseeable actions anonymously alongside others, their unobserved gaze now able to creep into the domestic private space. The surveillant gaze is an integral element for the construction of webcamming sites. There are top-down dynamics that control what an individual is allowed to do. Sandra Lee Bartky describes how Foucault explored patriarchal power:

> "In contemporary patriarchal culture, a panoptical male connoisseur resides within the consciousness of most women: they stand perpetually before his gaze and, under his judgment" (1997:101).

Given how important power is when considering surveillance, here I want to explore how the power dynamic is less defined, becoming a more fluid interchange between performer and viewer. Of course, Radical feminists would dismiss this on the basis that for them, all sex work is a form of violence against women: a systematic demonstration of male domination and control over the female body (Dobash and Dobash, 1979). With power and control as pervasive, women are left as powerless. Female power becomes "a contradiction in terms, socially speaking" (MacKinnon, 1987: 53). In response to this radical stance, Olivia expresses how she believe this approach is hateful:

> "when you say that all porn is violence you are kind of like removing the ability of people in the porn industry to access their own choices. Like some people do porn because of the money and some people do porn because you know it speaks to that queer identity. You know, I know loads of people in Berlin and that's why they porn and they're all just queer and that's completely fine. But I do think that the radical feminist outlook kind of makes an issue with gender when really, it's an issue of economics and it's an issue of capitalism. I just find it so literal"

Gayle Rubin argues how sexuality is political; it is "organized into systems of power, which reward and encourage some individuals and activities, while punishing and suppressing others" (1984: 126). Thus, the dominant group within culture creates sexual stereotypes which portray strong, vigorous men and pure women as the 'us' compared to 'them': the sexually depraved men and promiscuous women (Nagel, 2003). This maintains the construction and organisation of power that rewards or punishes. Yet when we explore webcamming, the concept of power, or the lack of power, becomes far too intricate to simply say that women do not, and cannot, possess it. Sociologist Rosalind Gill argues that webcamming offers a strong and empowering position for women through the display of their bodies (2003). This strength comes from the ability to control the form of visibility in which the female body is portrayed through. Developing this, Paul Bleakley adds how webcamming changes the burden of approval. Unlike a more traditional model where women perform for the approval of men, within webcamming there is a responsibility for the male audience to "conduct themselves in a way that will earn a performer's approval" (2014: 902). This shift allows for power over sexuality to return to the performer which results in an "enhance the dominance of women" (Bleakley, 2014: 902). Webcamming also presents itself as a way for women to reclaim their own identity (White, 2003). The relationship between the audience and the performer highlights the dominance of the female performer and their role in the webcamming industry. Female performers are respected by men: they "take on the power relations of looking, defying objectification and experimenting with ways of refusing, commanding and controlling the spectators' gaze" (Attwood, 2011a: 214). Following Foucault's theoretical framework as set out in *"The Subject and Power"* (1982), female performers are liberated from power being exerted over them through their consent to be seen, however this does not mean performers are liberated from all and any power. There is a restructuring through the medium of webcams that spotlights the relationship between the viewer and the performer. New configurations of online pornography, particularly the webcam, may have altered the "nature of the relationship between viewer and woman-as-spectacle" (Patterson, 2004: 110).

Those who are being watched can set the conditions in which they are viewed. Webcams are able to subvert the traditional associations of being watched. Dahlia Schweitzer's (2000) work on sex work becomes pertinent in this discussion, arguing how stripping is transgressive. Within stripping

there is a reversal of the roles traditionally held, with women gaining power over men. “With men the suckers, and women pocketing the cash, the striptease becomes a reversal of society’s conventional male/female roles” (2000: 71). Female performers are able to reclaim power, with stripping able to “disrupt years of patriarchal hegemony” (Schweitzer: 2000: 72). I argue a similar phenomenon is visible in the webcamming realm.

> *Serena is sitting down with her legs crossed in front of the white sofa, her legs just out of the frame. Fairy lights illuminate the background. She is wearing a strappy silver vest top that sparkles every time it catches the light. Music is playing softly, and you can hear the clack of her keyboard every time she responds to a message. Just like her body, her voice remains a mystery, replying only via text, never speaking out loud. Messages in the chat compliment her beauty, seemingly regardless of her choice to remain clothed.*

Here I argue that Serena demonstrates a level of power evidenced by her choice to remain clothed during her performance. The majority of the female performers I observed were wearing minimal clothing, usually lingerie or were nude. However, some of the performers chose to perform fully clothed. The choice to appear fully clothed does not necessarily have a negative impact on the performer's financial rewards, and this is something that will be explored in more depth in Chapter 7. Women, like Serena, potentially are able to maintain a level of control in their representations and power through the way they are made visible. By remaining clothed, she holds a level of control over her own representation and identity outside of the normative expectations of webcamming.

John Berger (1972) adds how the act of a man buying is synonymous to feeling in control. If we apply this to webcamming, he feels powerful because the model is performing for him, or at least appears to be. However, this is an illusion: he is paying for, and controlling, a fantasy. In my search for appropriate webcamming sites to examine, I discovered a website which had some text promoting webcam sites:

> “Watching sex on webcam can easily become of your favorite things to do. You get to interact with the girls and control the action. In many cases, you can even control the

> vibrations of their sex toy! This literally puts you in the director's chair as you decide when she feels pleasure, how she feels pleasure and what positions she should take." (Topchats.com, 2020).

Considering how webcamming sites generally promote authenticity and genuine, real performers, this comes as an antithesis (Brasseur and Finez, 2020). The viewer is labelled as the director of the scene. Users of webcamming sites are able to be both the producer and consumer of sexually explicit content: an option that is unattainable in the real world (Kibby & Costello, 2001). It becomes a hyperreal experience. This also has an implication of the 'reel', something I will unpack in more detail later. The role of a director, which in itself is associated with power and masculinity, is to achieve a scene that is, by definition, scripted and inauthentic. The viewer can request for the performer to do what they want to see: to create their own visual fantasy. There is an unwritten, unspoken understanding between the performer and the viewer that what they are watching is not authentic, it is not a reflection of truth, rather an individual performing their role while the audience watches on, paying for the privilege. Additionally, despite not specifically searching for female only sites, the site is constructed for the male consumer. This is highlighted by this quote which refers to performers as 'girls'. Not only does this infantilise women, but it also highlights the power imbalance between men as viewers and girls as objects to control. As Vicki Funari, a peep show worker, astutely asked:

> "Why are men willing to put money down for what is so clearly faked? The only answer that seems to work is that the men aren't interested in the truth of the women's experiences. The porn customer's truth is one of paying for services; that's the only power he can claim in this interaction. But is that what gets him hard? His buying power? Why then are we advertised as seductresses and paid to simulate our own desire? [...] He feels in control of this fictional loss of control because he himself has paid for it" (Funari, 1997: 26).

Schweitzer adds that "the stripper's success comes from her ability to perform this illusion, to become and encourage this fantasy. She must appear to expose her (sexual) self, reflecting both crafted femininity and spontaneous eroticism" (2000: 67). This also appears to be true of the webcam performer.

Jemma giggles to the camera, responding to multiple viewers asking her a barrage of questions and requests. She is wearing lingerie, sitting on a chair in front of her camming set up. She portrays the 'girl next door', not talking explicitly about sex rather hinting at eroticism. Light soft lights illuminated her glowing skin. This illusion is broken when we see her adjust her set up, the giggles and small talk abruptly stops as she adjusts her camera with a stoic expression. This is quickly replaced by a large fake smile as she positions herself back on the chair, ready to continue the illusion.

Jemma is able to perform the illusion of the 'girl next door' that allows for her to portray her manufactured identity. A small break in this persona gives a glimpse of reality: something that is quickly covered up and replaced with the fake smile. This leads into discussions regarding how the power of the performer and the viewer can be understood through webcamming. The exposure of an individual confuses our understanding of the power of those watching and the privilege of vision (Jimroglou, 1999). Rather, Bleakley (2014) asserts that female performers are actively destabilising traditional notions of sexuality. She argues that the decision of how a performer conducts their show, and how explicit this show is, is that of the performer themselves claiming that this decision makes it harder for anti-pornography feminists to claim that webcam performers are being oppressed and manipulated in a patriarchal society. These women take back control from men: the female performers are able to remove their services away from the predominantly male audiences. But it is far too simplistic to say the performer has the ultimate decision, and if a performer is not comfortable with something that they will not do it (Cruz and Sajo, 2015). Here we can consider the notion of 'choiceless choices' (Langer, 1980). This idea of 'choiceless choices' can be seen in two ways: one considers the 'contract' of webcam performers and the other concerns how the webcamming sites are constructed, both question the power balance. LiveJasmin, a popular webcamming site, has specific rules regarding customer requests set out in their refund policy.

> "Models in Hot Flirt[5] category are free to choose the rate of erotic content in private shows. However they are not allowed to make fake promises, which they will not fulfil in the end. Models of this category are not required to provide erotic content, but during private show they are allowed if they agree on it" (LiveJasmin 2020: Section 5.15).

Performers have to fulfil everything they have agreed to, even if it was before going into a private show. Any money paid for these requests is refunded back to the viewer if this clause is broken. It leaves performers under pressure to make sure they are only agreeing to acts they will be willing to do, or they can be reported, speaking to notions of controlling the female body. This again highlights the internalised surveillant gaze, as well as the commodification of the body. The performer's body is at the scrutiny of the viewer. The viewer is able to request certain acts, which if agreed upon by the performer, have to occur.

This contract confuses the power dynamic between performer and viewer: who really has the power in this situation? If these rules are broken, customers are able to complain to the website for a refund. The organization of the website itself is positioned as an instrument of patriarchy, with the power ultimately being in the hands of men rather than the performer. As we have seen in the section above, these websites are an internal force that are managing and controlling bodies.

It could, however, be argued that the performer should not agree to acts they may not want to do. Here, the notion of 'choiceless choices' can be seen on a slightly wider level regarding webcamming sites. Niels Van Doorn and Olav Velthuis (2018) explain that webcamming sites are highly competitive. Consequently, some performers have seen their rates decline as webcamming sites have gained popularity and there is more competition for the performers. As a result, some performers feel forced into doing more or showing more for fewer tokens: what Teela Sanders and Kate Hardy refer to as the race to the bottom (2012). The bottom here is referring to how visible the performer is to potential viewers. Several webcamming sites use an algorithm to place webcam

[5] Hot Flirt is a category of female models on LiveJasmin. Performers are described as the "girl-next-door' type, who is having a good time. Outfits are to be worn, with the performer to avoid exposing themselves in a sexually provocative way. LiveJasmin states that performers should wear outfits that are "neat, flirty but stylish effect. Short skirts and cleavages are accepted, but lingerie, laces and directly sexual, provocative clothing or posing is not allowed" as well as stating that "It is important that the environment must be organized and clean" (LiveJasmin, 2021).

performers into a ranking system - the higher the ranking, the higher a performer is positioned on the main landing page for the webcamming site. The higher the performer is, the more visibility they receive by potential viewers. The ranking algorithm used by webcamming sites does not disclose information regarding how this algorithm operates. It is a deliberate decision to not disclose how the ranking algorithm works. If performers are aware of how to rise to the top of the algorithm, to increase their own visibility online, it would lead to manipulation of the system (Faraj et al, 2018). Velthuis and Van Doorn state that:

> "The rankings operate as ordering rather than judgment devices: they have little to do with judging quality, but are designed to make sure that popular performers are automatically rendered more visible. Rankings create strong winner-take-all dynamics, positioning those who are already earning well to earn even more" (2020: 169).

As Andrea Brighenti (2007) states there is an intimate relationship between power and knowledge. By making something visible, it creates the possibility for control and the opportunity to exert power. Power is intertwined with visibility. The top performers are able to remain visible to potential viewers, the rest left to fight for a higher position, as more visibility to potential viewers means more potential for financial gain. The reclamation of power as noted by Schweitzer (2000) is challenged by this fight for visibility. Female performers appropriate a technological approach to exploit notions of traditional femininity for their own gain, rather than for the fulfilment of the male gaze. Yet the performers on webcamming sites are required to compete with one another, to gain a higher position, ultimately to be desirable through the male gaze, or perhaps rather to monetise this desirability.

5.3.1 Aesthetics and the visibility of the female body

Customer's consumption of online sex work is affected by discourses of race and racialised bodies. This is problematic as Jones (2015) notes how webcam models are involved in a form of aesthetic labour in that webcam models used their attractiveness as a means of enhancing their revenue. Olivia explains how there is a certain aesthetic that is prominent in webcamming which permeates across the sex industry.

"Long straight blonde hair. Massive fake boobs. And that's the aesthetic in strip clubs as well right. My friend is a sex worker coming up almost thirty years and she has like any plastic surgery you wanna name she got it done right and she will even say it doesn't even make me prettier, but she's like she feels has to do it when she is working. Like and I think she believes that men want a certain aesthetic"

The majority of the top models were all Caucasian, just as in my observations. As a way for black women to gain a higher position, Jones' suggested that black webcam models were assuming stereotypical 'white, feminine' aesthetic and subsequently gaining higher cam scores. She notes how "lower erotic capital is conditioned by racist discourses about ''look,'' and lower erotic capital results in a lower cam score on this website. A lower cam score means a lower position on the website—and a lower position on the website means decreased visibility" (ibid: 794). So, visibility is crucial for a webcam performer. However, there are still overarching societal biases that invade the webcamming realm, affecting virtual space just as it affects public space.

There is, of course, debate regarding the degree to which women actually obtain and maintain control and power, especially when we can see how societal biases occupy this virtual space. The visibility of women online is considered by many not as the empowering position of control, rather one that objectifies women. Feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey (1989) argues that female performers are subject to the male gaze. This is supported by Patrice Oppliger (2008) who states that women who are broadcasting themselves online, reproduce images that objectify women. It could be argued that certain webcamming sites control how the body is portrayed. For example, on popular webcamming site myfreecams, men are not permitted to physically be present in the same room when a performer is broadcasting. These performer spaces are exclusive for a display of female sexuality and the imagination that the performance for is just for the viewer: there are no men in the picture. Only the female body is allowed to be displayed which can impart support the view of women being the object of the gaze. If we refer back to Michel Foucault's (1982) ideology, women have granted permission to be viewed through their choice to perform online. They are therefore liberated from power over them as it was their choice. These women are no longer being viewed without permission, rather are commodifying their body, shifting the power to control who is able to view their body.

5.3.2 Male(s under the) gaze

> *Tom is lying on his bed, talking to his viewers using the chat box. Occasionally he talks but the space is filled with quiet music. An array of questions and requests for certain acts are filling the chat box, with the tipping noise being heard periodically. Viewers compliment Tom on his body, in particular his muscular physique which he shows off by wearing a small pair of boxer shorts only.*

For male performers, it becomes more challenging to determine how the gaze can be understood. Who is watching Tom - is it men, women, trans, or nonbinary viewers, and perhaps more importantly why? The gaze is largely constructed on the notion of a male gaze: the male is viewing the female body. Eva-Maria Jacobsson states the gaze is flipped with "a male character as an erotic object" and the "female character as the gaze" (1999:5). This in turn "becomes difficult due to connotations and codification into the language of the dominant patriarchal order" (Jacobsson, 1999:25). This voyeuristic gaze objectifies bodies that are seen on screen, yet as we have seen in the literature review, this gaze has focused on the objectification of the female body through the male viewer. This leads to an underlying assumption that men and watching women, so we must now consider how male webcam performers experience the gaze. In order to achieve this, we need to consider who is 'gazing' at the men. Determining the audience of male performers was difficult, but important to understand who the viewers are and how it may affect the model's performance and behaviour. One way of identifying the audience was to look at the usernames of the individuals in the chatroom. For example, in Tom's room there were several viewers with names who appeared male and others that appeared female. There were a number of usernames that it was unable to identify who the person may be. As well as this, it is not possible to know the sexual orientation of the viewers in each room. Obviously, this is not an infallible solution as only registered users have usernames, and guests, including myself, remained anonymous. However, many registered profiles used phrases and words not indicative of gender in their names, examples of this style include words such as 'blowfish', 'teddybear', and 'citron'. However, some did give a general indication. In male performers' rooms, names included words such as 'milf' and 'mistress': both with feminine associations. Additionally, in male rooms, viewers who had traditionally male names such as 'jack' and 'steve' were present. It appears in the rooms I observed that there were

more users who used ‘male names’ compared to those that used ‘female names’. Of course, the user is able to choose whichever name they would like, and it would be impossible to know the gender identity of the entire audience, but it does give us an indication as to who might be watching.

There is limited literature that explores male audiences within the sex industry. Weitzer (2009) notes that there are a small number of female customers in the sex industry, however, there is evidence suggesting that women are using males for sexual services more frequently (Lister, 2018). A limited body of literature begins to understand women’s sexuality and engagement in soliciting sexual services (Kingston et al, 2020: Neville, 2018). Beth Montemurro et al (2003) explore the types of customers in a male strip club, focusing on gendered differences. Based on 30 hours of participant observation in a male strip club, they highlight three main motivations for women attending male strip clubs. The most common reason for attending was for a specific occasion, like a bachelorette party. Other reasons included attending for the novelty experience or on the rarer occasion that these women were regulars. The experience for women was an “opportunity for social interaction and bonding with friends”, with the voyeuristic experience as a secondary focus. This is opposite to men's reasons for visiting a female strip club which David Erickson and Richard Tewksbury (2000) state is for a sexual experience, rather than for friendship bonding. Juline Koken et al (2004) adds that male prostitutes are less stigmatised within the gay community, however, face more stigmatisation in wider society due to the combination of prostitution and homosexuality (Weitzer, 2009).

However, the reasons for female customers in the stripping industry are more toward a homosocial purpose, rather than for sexual gratification. As such, there is limited use in applying this to the female customers of webcam performers. Based on purely anecdotal evidence, blogger Camille, states, perhaps rather simplistically that:

> *“Sex for women is not a straightforward as it is for men. Men are visual creatures and for them it is much easier to be turned on by simply watching a video or live webcam of a hot girl. However for women it is a little more complicated than that. Women still want cyber*

sex, but online chatting is an important part of it as well. Women are turned on mentally and online chatting is the best way for them to get there" (2017: n.p)

There is an insufficient understanding as to why female customers choose to engage and view male broadcasts. Research needs to address how and why women consume this type of content, as it is clearly not aligned with the rationale for female consumers in strip clubs. This is crucial in exploring more deeply how power can be understood through the visibility of male sexuality. The performativity of male sexuality is explored in greater detail in Chapter 6.

Male webcammers confuse how the gaze is traditionally understood. The power dynamic of the male gaze is grounded on the notion that men objectify the female body; however we can see this is no longer applicable as it is the male body that is being displayed. Therefore, a greater level of fluidity is needed to see how the gaze can be understood when regarding male webcammers as the subject. There are "many gazes and many pleasures: supervising, controlling, malefic, investigative, destructive, self-protective, clinical, erotic, indifferent, self-constructive" (Denzin 1995: 49). Lucy Neville argues in her research on women watching male/male pornography how women were dissatisfied with heterosexual pornography as a result of the male gaze dynamic (2015). Her participants argued that heterosexual pornography is designed for the male viewer however male/male pornography allowed these women to gaze at the male figure. I argue that this notion may also be applicable to women watching male webcammers. Male webcammers, such as the example of Tom we read earlier, challenge Mulvey's (1975:11) statement that "the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification" as we can see how the gaze is no longer something possessed by men, and men are becoming the object of this gaze. Surveillance and the gaze, and how these can be understood in each performance, is therefore a key concept to consider when exploring webcamming spaces.

5.3.3 Resurgence of the panopticon?

As we can see from the above, the gaze cannot just be understood by examining the relationship between one woman and one man when regarding webcamming. From my data I argue that there

are several more subtle layers of surveillant gaze that creates a panopticon-like ethos. Across the webcamming sites I observed, all state that webcamming broadcasts are subject to moderation.

> *Jenny is talking to her viewers, responding to comments out loud. Her voice echoes around her bedroom, accompanied by the sound of quiet music, and the occasional ding notifying a tip. Her chat is busy, with several viewers commenting, asking questions and making requests. One viewer makes several requests, all unaccompanied by a tip. They are warned by an automatic bot that request need a tip. The viewer stops commenting, deciding not to tip.*

This moderation, as we have seen in Jenny's room, is an element seen throughout my data. Moderation by webcam sites ensures performers and viewers are abiding by the rules of the site. The moderation conducted by these sites is vague, and during my research process I found no real information available as to how they operate this moderation. Myfreecams (2018b) states the chat logs of users are monitored but provides no information as to the moderation of video stream, rather state that "models are monitored to ensure that their participation is healthy and enjoyable". They also add that performers are also under the scrutiny of their viewers and fellow performers, stating how:

> "many of our models and members share our passion for a safe and friendly community and therefore if there is ever a violation of our policies, we receive hundreds of reports instantly, and deal with the issue immediately" (ibid: N.P).

There is no information provided as to when this moderation may take place, which I argue highlights the Foucault's panoptic principle which leaves performers in doubt as to if, and when, they may be being watched. The performer is not only subjected to the surveillant gaze of the webcamming site, but the quote above also suggests that they are subject to the gaze of viewers who may report them. The surveillance and moderation do not only apply to the performers. Viewers themselves are under a level of surveillance through the use of chat moderators. Moderators protect the chat from disruptions, spam, silencing specific users, and blocking users

for promoting their own rooms (Hernández, 2019). Chaturbate helps explain the role of moderators:

> "A good moderator will engage with the viewers in your room and introduce your show and rules, encourage viewers to tip in order to reach a goal, and take care of unwanted comments so you can focus on your show. Please note that moderators are not part of the Chaturbate team, they are just other community members you select" (Chaturbate Support, N.Db).

Moderators are not employed by the webcamming site, usually they are fans of the performer, regulating the chat in an unpaid position. In lieu of monetary compensation, some moderators are given content from the performer such as photo albums or private shows with some receiving "extra attention from the performers through social media or text messages" (Hernández, 2019: 4). The moderator can also encourage viewers in the chat room to tip. This is helpful for the performer so as not to portray themselves as a "token whore" (Cam Model Plaza, 2020, N.P). With the moderators help, disruption can be avoided and help maintain "live streams as functioning social and communicative spaces" (Taylor, 2018: 95). These moderators are another actor in the network and play a distinct role as a fan, yet not just a viewer. T. L Taylor (2018) states how being a moderator is considered an honourable role in gaming platforms and this remains true for webcamming sites. There is a level of power awarded to the moderator by the performer as recognition of their commitment which also minimises the distance between them and the performer. The moderator's role in the chat room is particularly noteworthy as they are usually a dedicated fan, yet their role in the room is not to observe the performer but rather scrutinize the other viewers. There is an additional wrinkle to the synopticon acting as an intermediary layer of surveillance.

Buttler (2016) refers to a "White Knight Roid Rage"[6] phenomenon to describe some moderators that use their power to silence other viewers who may say something negative (ibid: n.p). This

[6] White knight is a term used to describe men who defend women on the Internet. The white knight is a hero who protects the vulnerable princess, yet the term is used more sarcastically to describe

power given to moderators is discussed in webcamming forums, with some users stating that moderators can have ‘power trips’, acting like they are in charge of the room, rather than the performer. The viewers are under surveillance by the moderator, as well as being monitored by the performer themselves and automatic bots that can moderate chat rooms. It is not as straightforward as the viewer watching the performer: there are more fields of vision that occur more covertly. There is a tangled web of vision: who or what is surveilled? Who is doing the observing? As Brighenti remarks, “secrecy is technically and technologically managed, and increasingly so” (2010: 66). The surveillant gaze is not visible as the prison warden to the prisoners: there are levels of unrevealed scrutiny that monitor the performer and the viewer.

Some performers choose to eliminate the human moderators in favour of using bots. Bots within webcamming sites are open-source software that can be enabled by performers to extend functionality and capacity of the rooms and are seen in almost every performers' chat room, including those with human moderators. Bots would frequently post in the chat with various messages and reminders. These included reminders for viewers to follow the specific performer, thank tippers for their tip, post the tip goal and how many tips are needed to reach it, post messages when the tip goal had been reached, and highlight private one-on-one shows. Messages that are produced by bots are presented in a similar way to chat messages written by humans. These bots regulate the interaction between machine and human, acting as digital guardians. There is no clear distinction between the bots and the humans: some even have ‘human’ style names. They act just as a moderator would, only they are not human. They make decisions based on what the performer programs to do: the moderators make decisions based on what the performer tells them to do.

Whether through viewer-turned-moderator, bots, or webcam sanctioned moderation, there is an element of surveillant gaze similar to that of what Senft calls “social media architecture” (2013: 347). This social media architecture encourages users to monitor other users' activity. This surveillance between users, Ben Parr adds “make(s) it so you know your friends better than you ever thought you could’’ (2011: n.p). This constant surveillance from various actors is a way of

men who insert themselves into situations to make themselves look good. There is also an assumption these men are seeking a romantic reward in return.

"guiding and monitoring human conduct" (Bauman 1988:10). We see the frontstage, as Erving Goffman describes, played out onto webcamming sites. Everyone's behaviour is monitored in various ways, they must all behave as if placed on a public stage. We are under surveillance, yet we also monitor ourselves as well as others in a "surveillant imaginary" (Andrejevic, 2015: IX). In line with this, a successful webcammer not only maintains a space on the front space through their conduct, but they also manage themselves with "the sort of care and consistency normally exhibited by those who have historically believed themselves to be their own product" (Senft, 2013: 347). There is a presumption that at any point while broadcasting is under the gaze of the viewer, the moderator, or the website themselves. The panopticon appears to be operating within the webcamming network, yet with an added element of surveillance not only being a threat but as desirable.

5.2.3 Commodification of the gaze

> *Sasha is chatting to her viewers, sat on an office chair next to a spin wheel. On the wheel there is a variety of 'rewards' including flashing for various time periods, a personalised picture, and the use of toys to name a few. Sasha is encouraging tips, incentivising her viewers to tip her more. The tipping noise dominated the audio and Sasha smiles and thanks each viewer as she edges closer to her tip goal.*

Here I want to explore more of the desire element to the gaze and how performers have turned visibility into a commodity. It is important to consider why performers choose to broadcast their private lives and spaces and be under the scrutiny of being under surveillance. For Sasha, her primary motivation appeared to be financial remuneration, and is a good place to start this discussion. In order to earn more rewards from broadcasting their private space, one participant Marin explains how understanding the culture around webcamming, having knowledge of webcam culture, and what would be successful was crucial for them:

> *"I think that in that world you've got to understand the sex and you've got to understand the culture and you've either got to do a bit of research yourself if you are not familiar with*

it urm or just go all in, I mean everything was for money so the whole idea was to do this for money urm you know but make sure you are maximising urm the financial aspect of it"

Financial gain was the primary motivator for them wanting to ensure the maximum amount of money was made from their performances. For them, the financial gain was worth having viewers invade the privacy of their domestic space. Marin bought several items that were specifically to be used for the webcamming broadcasts, as well as using some items they already owned. Given this combination of new and previous items, Marin was asked whether the performances were more constructed for the two of them or the audience. They answered without hesitation that these performances were for the audience.

"we allowed the audience in and it was a construction for them, the whole purpose of the exercise was to see if we could make some money on it [...] and you know and how lucrative it would be so we invited the other participant into our arena if you will, into our space and urm it had an additional benefit for us as a couple you know"

Their own desire or pleasure was not a consideration for them, rather these personal preferences were at least partially set aside to ensure their performances were profitable. Here we can see the 'constructed authenticity' in action. The performance was created for the audience by Marin and their partner, using props bought specially for these shows. Despite there being benefits for the couple, the primary objective was to gain financial reward. The monetary gain available to them through webcamming was worth the choice to make their personal private space visible. Another way in which performers commodify their own visibility is through the use of wish lists. Wish list's are used by performers to appeal to their fans, in which viewers are able to send performers gifts, distinct from tips. There is a subversion of the traditional payment system internal to webcamming sites that allows fans to send gifts directly to a performer (Bocij, 2004).

However, financial reasons are not the only motivators for webcam performers. Emotional and interactional elements are reported by Jones (2016) as additional benefits. Affectual relationships are also noted by male online escorts. Kevin Walby states that "internet escorts deal with a clientele that more or less represents the transnational capitalist class, a clientele that often seeks

camaraderie and temporary companionship" (2012: 169). Webcamming sites are producing ways for digital intimacy to be understood (Cover, 2016). But there is something that may be more compelling for performers: attention from others. As Mark Freuenfelder states "the truth is most cam girls are as interested in garnering attention as they are in gathering Wish List merchandise or PayPal 'donations'" (2002, N.P, cited in Bocij, 2004). While a majority of the performers will only have a scattering of viewers, some performers have become extremely popular through their camming. Take Caylin for example: a performer on Chaturbate who currently has 1,357,497 followers on Chaturbate, with a further 256,900 followers on Twitter (Chaturbate, 2021: Caylin, 2021). There is a micro-celebrity status created for these popular performers (Senft, 2008). Alice Marwick and Danah Boyd explore this through social media and state that the celebrity is conceptualised as a performative practice which involves "ongoing maintenance of a fan base, performed intimacy, authenticity and access, and construction of a consumable persona" (2011: 140). This appetite for attention by performers also aligns with Garnet Hopkins who adds that:

> "for this rising millennial generation, constant surveillance can be a dream come true - an affirmation of identity. Today, it seems you're nobody if you're not on camera… cam girls make manifest the post-modern desire for omnipresence through communication technologies. If you have a life that is constantly recorded, you are culturally inscribed as important - someone worth watching" (Hopkins, 2002: 4).

This visibility into the private realm, granted by the performer for a multitude of potential reasons, has disrupted the how the private can be understood. The visibility and surveillance into the private space itself needs further interrogation.

5.4 Disrupting the private

Brighenti (2010) theorises visibility as a definable space between social elements and movement that focuses on a population. Surveillance is an example of this as it is concerned with the management of populations, just like how the panopticon operates. Public space is traditionally associated with visibility compared to private space which is more commonly associated with invisibility. However, there is the potential for invisibility in the public spaces. Tim Cresswell

(2004) states how a space is constructed by exclusion. This exclusion allows a space to have boundaries: there is a distinction as to what is inside and outside of a certain space. This construction of a space allows for the potential for transgression of boundaries. Lynne Walker (2002) describes how space reveals to individuals where they are permitted and prohibited to go. She states how this "...cultural power, linked to the design of spaces both domestic and public, is the most valued, most jealously guarded activity of architects..." (ibid: 830). This distinction to what is considered private space, and what is considered public space, is challenged by the webcamming industry. The computer has been established as a private space displayed in the public realm: it "opens out onto a larger space of the Internet, a space which is itself importantly both public and private" (Patterson, 2004: 120). The internet is a postmodern space that has been created by technological developments, a space populated by intangible, disembodied individuals who exist in a virtual space (Adler and Adler, 2008). These virtual spaces are freed from by time, space, and societal restraints (Durkin, Forsyth, and Quinn, 2006). This realm is "a new form of space both 'out there' and 'in here'; it is simultaneously public and social, while remaining private and solitary" (Adler and Adler, 2008: 33). Keith Hayward (2012) in his development of five spaces of cultural criminology, explores virtual/networked spaces that have evolved through the digital revolution. Concepts such as 'virtuality', 'telepresence' and 'convergence' have developed from thinking about online space and digital culture. Here, I want to highlight the notion of telepresence that is used by Hayward to describe the "immersive experience associated with certain aspects of digital culture" (2012: 456). Online communication technologies can potentially alter how we experience a sense of being present in an environment, with Miller adding how:

> "we gain the ability to simultaneously exist in two different environments at the same time: the physical environment in which our body is located and the conceptual or interactional 'space' we are presented with through the use of the medium. (Miller 2011: 31).

Webcamming demonstrates this notion of 'telepresence' being an immersive experience. Both the viewer and the performer are existing in two environments: the physical and the virtual. This further builds on Donna Haraway's notion of the cyborg which posits how the human is intersected with technology creating a hybrid of human and machine. We are in a cyborg-era that allows us to explore the virtual realm that represents the transgressed boundaries of space. However, when

considering webcam performers spaces we needed to consider how these privates spaces are impacted by the domestic.

5.4.1 Private as understood through the home

In this section I explore some physical and virtual elements of the home and how privacy is understood within this realm. This is important to explore here, given the domestic presentation of the majority of webcam performers spaces. The physical elements of the home can illustrate the importance of the boundaries of the home (Cieraad, 1999). Windows are the focus for Irene Cieraad, particularly how throughout history they have represented the border between inside and outside. They are transparent borders of the home and provide a view into the home without the boundary of the home to be crossed. Thomas Campanella argues how webcams are “points of contact between the virtual and the real, or the spatial anchors in a placeless sea. Webcams open digital windows onto real scenes within the far-flung geography of the Internet” (2001:27). I continue this argument here, using Cieraad’s notions of the boundaries. The video screen as broadcasted by the performer becomes the window. Users are given a view into the performer’s space without transgressing physical borders. There is, however, transgression of virtual borders. The domestic is transformed into a public space when broadcasted. But there are conditions to this visibility. Firstly, the performer is in control of the position of the visibility, highlighted by the positioning of the camera lens as stated earlier. The user sees what the performer includes in the frame. Secondly, the performer decides on how long this visibility is supplied. The show must begin and end: the visibility is allowed for a certain time limit. I continue this metaphor when regarding the solidification of the window border between the inside and the outside. For windows, when it is night-time the shutters of the window get shut and the curtains get drawn, covering the transparency between to the outside realm. The closed curtains create the impression of an impenetrable barrier of security. The curtains of the webcamming are turning off the camera, shutting down the screen, and logging off the internet. The curtains are drawn at the end of the performance. The visibility into the domestic is suspended.

Henri Lefebvre states how "the space thus produced also serves as a tool of thought and of action; that in addition to being a means of production it is also a means of control, and hence of

domination, of power" (1991b: 26). Although Lefebvre here is explaining how social space becomes a means of control for hegemonic classes, it can also be applied to the more micro level domestic space. The home is under the control of the home's inhabitants: they are in a position of power. Jacques Derrida (2000) furthers this stating that the power of the inhabitants means they control the threshold to this space. When considering webcamming, we need to explore where the boundaries lie. The performer is inviting viewers virtually into their domestic space. My participant Marin confirms the viewer transgressing the boundaries of the domestic space stating:

> *"we allowed the audience in [...] we invited the other participant into our arena if you will, into our space"*

Marin commented on how it must be worthwhile for them as they were inviting them into their own space. Michele Rapoport (2012) explains how the home has long been perceived as a space for privacy: free from surveillance technologies that are prolific within public spaces. There was recognition that there would be a visual intrusion into traditionally private realms, namely their bedroom. They added that it had to have another benefit for them: they were not doing it for fun or pleasure in the first instance, rather than financial gain. This contrasts with what Jones (2016) found in her qualitative research on a forum for webcam performers. Female webcam performers often said that pleasure was a primary benefit of their work. A major pleasure of adult webcamming is sexual. For models in Jones' research, the benefits of webcamming cannot be understood in only economic terms. However, Marin's comments are more in line with Sanders (2005) research. Although this research was conducted with street-based sex workers, she notes that "although there were some exceptions, most women did not receive sexual pleasure from their clients, but instead faked their arousal and physical stimulation" (ibid: 328). Whilst they may or may not have faked their enjoyment - this was not the concern of the webcam performances. However, this is only the case for my participants, and there is a possibility within camming for more mutual pleasure between client and worker. Webcamming affords these workers an opportunity for rewards other than a potentially high wage, like the potential for becoming a micro-celebrity discussed above.

Through the process of broadcasting via webcam, this interaction is deemed public. Tim Gregory (2018) explains how the live streaming of spaces traditionally associated with domestic sexual activity has created the dissolution of image and the body. In this research, Gregory bases their results on Dirtyroulette, a webcamming site in which two random parties are connected - both with video streams visible to each other. Webcamming in the case of my observations, unless in a private cam to cam room, only the performer is visible. The viewer can only be seen through their text communication. The field of vision is one sided - the viewer can see the performer's space, yet the performer is not able to see the viewers. This creates an interesting dynamic. Both the viewer and the performer are occupying physical space, although only the performers are seen. These spaces are transformed into what Gregory refers to as "post-pornographic spaces" (2018: 669). Post-pornography can be defined through three elements "the denaturalising of sex, the de-centring of the spectator and the recognition of media and technology as inseparable from sex" (Gregory and Lorange, 2018: 137). It rejects the notion that authentic sex is represented by porn. However, are webcamming sites any more authentic in their representations of authenticity? I explore this idea of authenticity and realness further in the next section.

Webcamming is made up of domestic spaces that have been reconstructed into places to participate in and watch sexual acts. The performers in my observations had to occupy physical space through their webcam, which most commonly was a bedroom. These spaces used for webcamming are transformed from the private hidden to the visible public. Questions of the public and private realms are established with the transformation of domestic space. Gregory explains how these spaces, through their visibility over webcam, are transformed "into post-pornographic spaces—spaces to fuck, to be watched fucking and to watch fucking" (ibid: 669).

> *Morgan is a trans performer, who is sitting on a grey sofa bed with a red blanket thrown over the corner. A light blue wall provides the background which has flashing snowflake lights carefully hung on the wall to match the camera framing. Morgan presents themselves as transfeminine, with long black hair pulled back with a cat ear headband, complimenting a full face of makeup and perfectly manicured nails. Music is playing in the background, while Morgan is masturbating while using a Lovense.*

A great deal of my observations did not feature physical sex, rather there was simulations of sex with teledildonics[7]. Morgan here is solo performer, unable to show physical sex rather focuses on masturbating and providing sexual gratification through their own visibility. Only group performances are able to feature 'real' physical sex. Additionally, in Gregory's research he is referring to Dirtyroulette, a platform in which only two individuals are connected, both with webcams turned on. However, I argue that webcamming still does create a form of post-pornography space. As Gregory describes post-porn space as "spaces to fuck, to be watched fucking and to watch fucking", we can see how in Morgan's example there is no actual sex, rather sexual acts. Despite this, webcams create a new way of having sex and these spaces are transformed into post-porn spaces. Private sex is made public through its broadcast, yet as Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner (1998) would argue, this now public sex does not challenge heteronormative sex. Across my observations, several female performers rooms, particularly more popular rooms, were homogeneous. They all observed the traditional beauty standards, abiding to feminine heteronormative behaviour, sat in studio like spaces. In Jones' work, in her discussion of transmasculine performers that "customers incessantly policed and scrutinized their bodies and harassed them for failing to achieve US-centric gendered, raced, and classed notions of attractiveness" (2020a: 9), highlighting the cisgendered surveillant gaze. Here we go back to the ideas of the synopticon being played out: the viewers can watch the performer without having to reveal anything of themselves. The performer is under constant surveillance within their domestic space from viewers. The constant surveillance from the viewer is important to remember when exploring how they are viewing the models performance, and whether they consider this as authentic or 'real'.

5.5 'Real' and 'reel'...

> "We are seduced by the idea that what we see is 'real' – perhaps more real than our own everyday lives" (Koskela, 2004: 200).

[7] Teledildonics are computer-controlled sex devices that allow for remote sex between users. Users are able to connect devices via Bluetooth with other users able to operate these devices from across the globe. The concept of teledildonics will be explored in much greater depth in Chapter 7.

The “appeal of the real” governs digital society (Poniewozik, 2000:2). As stated by Guy Debord, the spectacle “philosophizes reality, and turns the material life of everyone into a universe of speculation” (1967: 17). Webcam performers are able to use surveillance to produce spectacular images. The desire for authentic ‘real’ performances is increasingly popular as an alternative to the artificial commercial style pornography (Patterson, 2004; Russo, 2007). Webcamming is offered in opposition to the large budget pornography productions (Attwood, 2007). There is a realness in amateur sex featuring real bodies of “people who could be your neighbour” (Van Doorn, 2010: 414). Shaka McGlotten (2014) states how professional pornography is unrealistic, repetitive, and only created for profit. Amateur pornography was the top searched for term on PornHub in 2019, highlighting this desire for ‘realness’. This was closely followed by point-of-view (POV) as the third most searched for term. Dr. Laurie Betito, of PornHub’s Sexual Wellness Center, explains that there has been a considerable rise of people wanting to access more realistic depictions of sex:

> “‘real’ people vs. actors seems to be the draw. It is interesting that an increased amount of people are putting themselves out there as amateurs. Sex has become so much less taboo that those who get a kick out of exhibitionism can do so with very little experience or equipment” (Pornhub, 2019. N.P).

Webcamming positions itself within the amateur realm, with a focus on ‘real’ performers. It contrasts with staged pornography, or at least at face value, it appears to be in contrast. Caroline Picart and Cecil Greek (2003) use the terms 'reel' and 'real' to explain how film has the potential to be entangled with reality. Katherine Shonfield’s (2000) film research is also worth considering here. She explains how when audiences watch a film, they can temporarily pause their personal scepticism and allow themselves to believe everything they watch as truthful. This temporary state is possible while still in the knowledge that the film itself is a work of fiction. However, research by Picart and Greek (2003) would suggest that it goes beyond a temporarily suspended view.

> *Jessica is chatting with her viewers: this broadcast does not present itself as a buying and selling of sexual services, rather more an opportunity for*

communication and interaction between Jessica and her viewers. She laughs at the comments, explaining why she supports a certain sports team to her viewers. Conversation turns to television and she talks about what she has been binging on Netflix. Comments ping up suggesting different shows, sharing their own opinions, engaging in conversation as if they were friends.

Here it appears that Jessica is talking with authenticity, divulging her own opinions freely. She engages with her viewers and it is clear that several users are repeat viewers, asking her about elements of her life that have not been discussed. Jessica also greets users, recognising names as they come into her room. It appears as if she is presenting herself as real. Yet it is possible that this is a 'constructed authenticity': carefully designed to cater to her viewers' want of authenticity. I coined the term 'constructed authenticity' as a development on Bernstein's (2007) notion of 'bounded authenticity'. While Bernstein explores the manufactured emotional connection between the buyer and seller, as a means to create a form of intimacy, here I apply a similar idea of manufactured elements as a way for performers to create an authentic experience. My use of this term 'constructed authenticity' is however focused on the use of non-human elements, environments, and atmospheres and how that creates a manufactured yet perceivably authentic space, more so than the relationship between the buyer and seller. This perceivably authentic space creates a blurring between the 'reel' and the 'real'.

As Picart and Greek explain, the 'reel' and the 'real' are connected: "intertwined in complex ways" (2003: 40). This complex intertwining is reflected in my observations. The line dividing what is 'real' and authentic and what is 'reel' and constructed is fluid and ever-changing during webcam performances. During Marin and their partners' experience with webcamming, they discovered what worked and what did not work in terms of earning more money. One of the key elements for success was the appearance of authenticity:

"I think that's what we found out there was the actual talking and experiences being more authentic and being a real human being and not urm being something that you're not we found that in our beneficial for the project"

Audiences had a desire for authenticity. This want for authenticity was also reflected in the language that Marin and their partner used. Speaking in a certain way and using specific language made a significant impact on their viewers.

> *"language as well was very important in the part of the set up [...] its communication by text keyboard initially urm to entice in someone to come in and actually spend some money so the language and how it was you know if, it were too slutty urm if i can use that word, if it were too slutty, the financial reward wasn't as great as intelligence and having a conversation and actually making the person on the other side urm feel like they are engaged in intelligent conversation so weren't being belittled themselves"*

Communication is an essential part of webcam performing. The notion that having an intelligent conversation was sought after demonstrates how webcamming becomes more than digital sex. This also highlights why authenticity may be of importance to viewers. They are seeking something 'real'. This leads to Goffman's theory of the presentation of the self. Clearly, the presentation of a performer is pivotal. The presentation of the self in the performances involves managing self-impression to the other participants in the interaction. As a result, it is favourable for the individual to perform in ways that will create a good impression, especially as a good impression will lead to a better chance of higher financial rewards. With this in mind, is it possible that a performer can act as their true self when this is a salient component of making money. Chris Brickell (2005) also adds that the representation of the performer is constructed with agency yet is not a stable self that exists outside of the social online realm. Marin explained that this desire for an authentic presentation came as a surprise to them as they assumed this would not be the case.

> *"when we first went on, we assumed that we would need to take on an identity [...] we assumed we would need to be some sort of urm identity but in fact the identity that was on screen login, the actual identity was far more important urm than to engage in with the other side"*

They had assumed a manufactured identity would be more desired however during their experience found that being more faithful to their own identity was actually more beneficial in terms of

financial reward. They initially believed that creating a new persona for webcamming would be more beneficial. However, their viewers were seeking out authenticity. Marin also goes on to explain how they catered for specific audiences. They broadcasted at certain times in order to get the maximum number of viewers.

> *"one of the things that we did do was my ex was an American with a strong American accent and so urm we focused on the activities on American time zones as it was far more lucrative then"*

Marin found that of the two websites they were using to broadcast, they had more success with one based outside of America compared to an American based site. The viewers in their case were looking at international webcam sites. On the non-American based website, they found viewers to be surprised but happy to see an American woman performing. Although they didn't change who they were, the American accent was exploited as a way of getting more viewers and more money. I will explore authenticity in more detail, but this is a notable detail as they sought out a specific audience to gain more money, but they still maintained their 'real' American identity. This, however, is not authentic in its fullest extent. While Marin's partner was doing the on-screen performance, Marin was off screen, hidden to the viewers, and was replying to the chat comments. However, they maintained the appearance that it was the partner replying. To the viewer, the chat appeared as an authentic communication, however this was only an illusion. This is something I will go into more detail in Chapter 7, but it makes for an example of how authenticity is presented and accepted by the viewer, all while the true nature of the performance remains hidden in the backstage. This illusion brings into question how 'real' or 'reel' viewers perceive the performance and whether these spaces have the potential to be considered hyperreal.

5.6 ...hyperreal?

The performance, and performer, are presented as real and authentic, but we know this not to be accurate. Instead, there is a level of realness perceived by the viewer, creating what Jean Baudrillard (1983) refers to as hyperreality. Webcamming shows a plethora of simulacra in each performer's broadcast. Webcamming sites represent places where everything is superior and more entertaining than in everyday life. Performances can be described using Umberto Eco's

terminology as authentically fake (1975/1987). Every facet of the webcam arena has been reconfigured for the viewers' gaze. Performers create simulations by using new technologies. These simulations entertain and seduce, having been carefully designed to present the best elements of the sexual experience. The spaces in which performers are in did not exist in their current construction prior to webcamming. Constructions create the hyperreal, which calls into question authenticity once again. Since the webcam performers' role is to sell, rather than to portray the reality of their lives, they present a hyperreal representation of sexuality.

These performances offer both richness and flexibility that may not be available in the 'real' social world. Virtual others as constructed by webcam models create an atmosphere of the hyperreal. This hyperreal status is maintained through webcamming as it provides an experience that is more visually rich and appealing than real life. There is an abundance of experiences that can be tailored and personalised to any preference that are available on demand. At any time of the day, in any location, webcamming offers a fictitious partner to satisfy the viewers desires.

5.6 Conclusion

Private realms can no longer be considered as they may have once been. The idea of privacy is almost unknowable given how technological devices have invaded our most private spaces. Performers are able to exploit this invasion into the private, commodifying their private spaces, and bodies, to use visibility as a way for financial gain. Webcamming highlights the potential rebalance of power in a patriarchal society, handing back control to women over their own visibility and sexuality. Yet, as we have explored it is too simplistic to confirm that this power is completely reclaimable, given the notion of choiceless choices and the male gaze as a prominent element of the webcamming realm. Perhaps webcamming cannot be fully understood by the theories of panopticon or synopticon due to the multiple layers of surveillant gaze that are occurring simultaneously. Baudrillard tells us that "we are witnessing the end of perspective and panoptic space (which remains a moral hypothesis bound up with every classical analysis of the "objective" essence of power), and hence the very abolition of the spectacular." (1983: 54) There is also a desire for authentic 'real' performances but what can be considered real? Do we accept the reality we are presented with? Performers make a significant effort in presenting themselves

as authentic, yet every element of the webcam arena has been reconfigured for the viewers' gaze. Now that we have explored how visibility and the gaze can be understood more theoretically on a macro level, we need to enter the home, and examine the performer's private domestic space more closely.

6. The Domestic

6.1 Introduction

Webcamming work is often performed in the performer's own private residence (Bleakley, 2014). Alora Mulvey (2019) adds that webcam performers were early embracers of technological advancements to live stream on devices from their own homes. Several key research articles into webcamming, in a variety of forms, have commented on webcam models being situated in their own homes (Bell, 2009; Mathews, 2017; Brasseur and Finez, 2020). As Olivia states:

> *"when I started, I was very much just me in my bedroom doing it…I never worked anywhere other than like domestic spaces".*

However, it is important to note that not all webcam performances are conducted within the domestic space. A large pornography company, Kink.com, stated how there had been a shift away from pre-recorded pornography, with the market leaning towards live forms of sex work (Ritchel, 2013)[8]. Pornography companies had to adapt to meet this growing model to maintain their businesses in the future. Kink.com did this by transforming some space within their headquarters into studios in which webcam performers could rent out for shows. However, the consequence of using a rented space such as a studio, is the cost that comes with this. Additionally, these studio

[8] The decline of the pornographic movie business has been well documented, and it started before the emergence of camming. The internet allowed users to access pornographic content more easily, which led to widespread piracy. Camming is then considered the next disruptive influence to the porn industry. Douglas Ritcher is an executive level consultant for one of the largest camming companies, LiveJasmin. He estimates the annual industry wide revenue of camming to be more than $1 billion, with the pornography business as a whole estimated at around $5 billion. Steven Hirsch, the co-chairman of a large pornographic movie studio stated that while there is still a market for pre-recorded movies, there has been a significant rise in the market for interactive entertaining through the form of webcamming. Internet traffic figures further highlight the popularity of camming. According to Alexa, a site that measures Internet traffic, LiveJasmin ranks as 80th most popular site in the United States, and 103rd most popular worldwide. Compete.com reported that LiveJasmin has approximately 25 million unique visitors from the United States per month. While these numbers are still relatively small in comparison to more traditional pornographic sites, with Pornhub ranking at 56th most popular in the United States, the clips on their site are free. Pornhub recognises the market for camming and has its own live camming section to increase site revenue from visitors. Alex Helmy, publisher of sex trade industry journal Xbiz, concludes stating that camming has become the most prominent part of the porn industry and is the driving force of behind the adult entertainment business.

spaces largely resemble domestic spaces (Pressly, 2017). Webcam studios can take around 40 - 50% of a model's earning, this is not including the cut that the webcamming site also takes (Aria, 2018; Barrett-Ibarria, 2020). This could potentially be why a majority of webcam performers chose to work from their own domestic spaces. In all my observations, every performer was in a space that appeared to be a domestic space. Although a space may have been constructed to appear as if it were an authentic bedroom, for example in a webcamming studio, I am going to frame the observations as if they were all in a domestic space. Even if some were not, which I would not be aware of, in the way they are constructed much of the discussion is still applicable to these constructed rooms.

In this chapter I unpack the domestic space and how individuals occupy and display this space to their viewers. This chapter develops the notion of visibility from the previous chapter, focusing more specifically on the domestic space. Here I begin by framing the domestic and its position within the webcamming realm in the frontstage: the scene as seen by viewers. I explore more micro elements of the bedroom space, such as the bed and its importance within the webcam environments. Too often the bed is forgotten by researchers, yet it is immensely important, and I discovered it is usually the largest and most significant component within webcamming set ups. Then I explore the backstage: the unseen changing of the domestic. I examine the traditional role of the bedroom space and how it is understood becomes changed for the webcam performer: the space is no longer serving its purpose as a bedroom, rather is transformed into a performance stage. The performer is exploiting the implied intimacy and traditional associations of the bedroom space. This transformation of space is explored through the repurposing of the domestic space as well as domestic objects, concluding with how the domestic space remains transformed after the performance. The viewers themselves are considered as to how they invade the domestic space through tipping. By examining physical and virtual immersion of high tippers within the domestic space, I unpack the implications on the performer's space, as well as the competitiveness that is driven by this invasion. Within this chapter, I argue that webcamming highlights the importance of the domestic space. I further this to argue how webcammers potentially interrupt and exploit traditional associations of the bedroom space.

The performer's position in the domestic space is then considered. Firstly, I explore the gendered dynamic of the occupation of bedroom space and how the domestic space has been traditionally assigned to women. With a focus on how female performers, I then unpack whether this bedroom culture is still culturally relevant when confronted with webcamming. Considering Henri Lefebvre's (1991) argument that social space is a social product, the bedroom space is created and maintained by gendered power relationships, patriarchy, and capitalism. Webcam performing becomes synonymous with the blurring of the private and the public realms, combining the extreme private and the extreme public together. Male spaces are then considered, in reference to their masculinity and gender performativity, within a domestic space, as space which is not traditionally associated with males. I unpack the sexual fluidity more evident in male performances, playing around the edges of what masculine heterosexuality can mean within the webcamming realm.

6.2 Frontstage

6.2.1 The bedroom

> "The stage becomes a reflection of the postmodern premise that we are all composites of various identities which we perform based on the specific reality of the moment" (Schweitzer, 2000: 68).

I begin this discussion with the frontstage of webcam performances, focusing on the presentation of domestic spaces that are seen by the viewer, most notably the bedroom. The bedroom is a space closely associated with activities relating to sex, sleeping, and getting dressed and undressed (Choe et al, 2011). Eleanor Hancock adds that "the bedroom is a private sphere where diversity, fluidity and expression can play out away from private eyes or judgmental concern" (2020: 439). Michel Foucault's (1976/1998) analysis of western sexuality also examines the foundations of the bedroom space. Foucault refers to the "repressive hypothesis" that governed the 18th century, which he refutes. This hypothesis states that since the heightening of the bourgeoisie, activities that were only for pleasure became disapproved of. Consequently, sex became treated as a private matter, usually between a husband and wife, positioned in the private domain as a way of managing

and regulating sex within society. Sex outside of these confines is not only prohibited, but also repressed. The 'repressive hypothesis' is not necessarily considered with ignoring sex, or silencing sex, rather it is about control and regulation (Foucault, 1976/1998). Foucault questions this discourse of sex: people say they are repressed yet talk a great deal about how much they cannot talk about sex. He goes on to link this discourse to knowledge and the relation to power. There is a power and knowledge connection: those who control knowledge have more power and regulate what is known and how we think about ourselves. Alp Biricik (2008) continues this line of thought, stating that the bedroom space has transformed into a space that maintains heteronormative power that controls the moral boundaries of sexuality. The concept of 'proper' sex is maintained in this bedroom space. Foucault explains how there are two outlets where 'improper' thoughts of sexual feelings outside of the confines can be released. These outlets were sex work and psychiatry. It can be argued that webcamming positions itself as an outlet for sexual feelings, a space where you can be safely inside your own home. The performer remains in the bedroom space, a space for 'proper' sex, only transgressing by broadcasting themselves.

> *Jamie is sitting on their bed, surrounded by other traditional bedroom furniture including a bedside table on their right and the edge of a cupboard visible in the left-hand corner of the shot. The keyboard is placed on the bed, the sound of keys typing filling the room alongside quiet music. The bed fills the majority of the frame, the camera carefully positioned to show Jamie's bed as the stage.*

The bedroom is made into the "scene of action" by performers, just as we can see with Jamie (Mirzoeff, 2002:13). The etymology of the term 'camera' is derived from the Latin word for room. David Bell (2009) adds that webcamming sites often maintain a domestic everyday aesthetic. Broadcasting from home is pivotal to amateurism and performers branding (Brasseur and Finez, 2020). By displaying the 'natural' domestic environment, whether this be a bedroom, living room or other room, establishes a 'girl next door' illusion (Mowlabocus, 2008). Furthermore, webcamming sites promote that on their sites the models are not professionals, rather perform for fun, from their own homes with their free time. This allows the viewer to assume the performers are as invested in the relationship and sexual performance, without the influence of money. However, as stated by Pierre Brassuer and Jean Finez (2020) this is rarely the case, and the women

they interviewed said that they worked full time broadcasting and camming was usually their main source of income.

The home is a focal point of the environments in which many webcam performers work. Current technological advances mould user interactions regarding sexual services in the online realm. There is an infrastructure of intimacy (Paasonen, 2018). This infrastructure can be seen within the domestic environment and amateur presentation. Performers were often seen sitting in their bedrooms, in chairs or on beds, occasionally in other rooms within the house. There is a 'real' feeling created by the performer by choosing this environment, when compared to the studio made pornography shoots. The work production happens within a domestic setting. This develops into what Kristina Hofer refers to as "pornographic domesticity" (2014: 335). This pornographic domesticity is a dynamic fluctuation "between work and the home, labour and pleasure, public and private spheres, rather than from a separation of these domains from one another" (ibid: 335).

When asked about the physical location of their performances, Marin stated that the performances would always be shot within their home. This caused some mixed feelings:

> *"it was quite weird because we both decided we wanted it to be viable, so I expected it originally to feel weird... because you know watching and and and putting it all together. I didn't particularly enjoy it but it wasn't a problem either so I was quite surprised by that reaction"*

Marin went into the experience initially thinking it would feel strange because they would be broadcasting from their own home. This reaction may stem from the overarching idea that the home is considered a private realm: it is not a space usually visible to the public. As Tim Putnam (cited in Morley, 2000) states a majority of research regarding the meaning of the home commonly exhibited themes including security, intimacy, comfort, and control. Witlod Rybczynski (1986) confirms this, stating that the notion of security and safety is most frequently associated with the domestic. These associations feed into the idea of keeping the domestic a private and protected space. Webcamming cannot occur without challenging these associations.

Olivia did not share the same feelings as Marin, only facing more pragmatic problems of having a shared space with a roommate:

> *"I mean a lot of sex workers get quite protective over their domestic spaces and a lot of them won't work from home for that reason, which I totally get. It never actually bothered me. I was happy to work in my bedroom. The only time it became an issue was I used to have a lodger"*

As a result, the location of her webcam performing space changed over the years she broadcast, however all remained within the domestic realm. Olivia's bedroom space was unable to be used for the performances, so she had to use another space:

> *"I couldn't webcam from my bedroom because my bedroom is very dark, like my walls are painted like a dark purple, I just couldn't work from there. So, I would work in the living room which is weird because then [her roommate] couldn't use the living room when I was working and that wasn't ideal. And then she moved out and I just went to camming in the now spare room"*

Olivia was happy to work within her domestic space. Unlike Marin who expressed a form of unease over the broadcasting of their private space, Olivia was less concerned about broadcasting her domestic space. Her issues were mostly based around practical issues, such as having to share her space with a roommate, and her bedroom not being an appropriate room to broadcast from.

In all of my observations, the models presented themselves and their environments as if they were inside their home. It is possible some of these may have been constructed rooms, such as in professional webcam studies, but all rooms appeared as if they were in a house. Jones (2015b) explains how webcam models, and their rooms in which they broadcast from, are performative. The rooms, even if staged in a specific way, often have the appearance of a real bedroom. This was the case of the majority of female performers in my observations: the performance was almost always broadcast from a bedroom-like space, with the performer sitting on the bed or on a chair with the bed visible in the background.

Given the predominance of the bedroom space, the majority of the analysis is focused on the bedroom. This supports previous research which also notes the proliferation of performers in bedroom spaces (Mathews, 2017; Hernández, 2019; Jones, 2020c). As explore above, the bedroom is a space traditionally associated with sex, however there are few reasons provided as to why the bedroom is the main space for webcamming. Webcamming forum, Camming Pro (2020) explain how performers can use their bedroom, highlighting the importance of a bed as it "works best for camming because it provides enough space for you to move around in". Forum users on AmberCutie also indicated they used their bedroom as a space for camming more than other domestic spaces (Ambercutie.com, 2019a). However, there were a few exceptions to the portrayal of the bedroom scene, however Katherine, a female performer, broke this mould:

> *Katherine is dancing along to the latest songs, the music blaring through speakers positioned near her camera. Wearing white knickers, a tank top, and a pair of socks, she shuffles her feet around in circles, swaying to the pop music she has chosen to play. Her long blonde hair is down, moving with her body as she dances. She has positioned herself in a kitchen, with cabinets and worktops seen behind her. There is an LED strip flashing different coloured lights attached to the kitchen worktops, creating an atmosphere of a dance floor in a club. She mouths along to the lyrics, occasionally stopping to check her phone placed on the kitchen side. She smiles and giggles, not talking very frequently to her viewers but keeps them engaged through her movement.*

Although Katherine is not in a bedroom, she is still broadcasting from a domestic setting. There are various reasons why she may have chosen to broadcast from the kitchen, but the kitchen was her backdrop. The viewers did not question her environment, nor did she address it in the time I was watching her performance. The kitchen provides a mundane domestic setting in which to perform and links back to our earlier discussion on literature concerning gendered visibility in space. Katherine is remaining in the space traditionally assigned to women (McRobbie, 1991). The kitchen environment adds another layer to the domesticity being a space traditionally dominated by women (de Lemus et al, 2014). The scene, whether a purposeful decision by the performer or not, allowed the woman to stand out amongst the other performers. Despite the background setting being the kitchen, rather than the bedroom, the content of the performance during the time I

observed it was not significantly different to bedroom-based performances. Performers would dance in bedroom settings and behaviour in a similar manner to that of Katherine. As there were only very limited performances that were conducted in spaces outside of the bedroom, more observation and analysis would be required to make a significant conclusion as to whether the content and performances of these shows are impacted by the room.

Although the bedroom setting is clearly favourable to performers, evident by the number of performers in these spaces, those few who performed outside of this space had a different atmosphere to their performances. Katherines' choice to perform in the kitchen meant she was not able to sit on the bed, nor on an office chair as was commonly seen, instead she used the space to dance. The dancing became the pivotal point for her viewers. She used the kitchen space to create a scene in which to do her personal performance. I argue that webcamming, regardless of which room in the domestic the performer is situated, remains constrained to personal and private spaces that are traditionally associated with women's territory. Despite this use of other domestic spaces, the bedroom remains the most predominant space used for webcam performances. Given the significance of this space, I continue my analysis of this space in more detail, focusing on the bed.

6.2.2 The bed

> *Elle is lying on her bed, her wireless keyboard positioned next to her. Her camera is positioned to frame the bed as the main element in the room, with the edges of the bed filling the view. Elle is wearing a red lingerie set that is peeking through her matching silk red gown. Music is audible however Elle's voice fills the room, chatting along with her viewers. She uses the bed as her stage, moving and positioning herself on the bed.*

The bed is not only a main component of a bedroom, but also a central element within all of the webcam performances observed, as we can see with Elle. The bed is often referenced as a passing comment in webcamming research and is little consideration paid to the bed, which is odd, given the prominent role the bed appears to play within webcamming. Here I explore why the bed plays such a predominant role within webcamming performances. Within my observations, the bed is a frequent element in webcamming environments. In my observation notes, I found that my NVivo

word frequency chart[9] showed that across all four groups (female, male, trans, group), the term bed was the most frequently occurring word within the observation notes. Given the prominence of the bed, it is an obvious consideration for the performer. During the observations, I found that if the performer was not sitting on the bed, the bed was often in the background, remaining visible to the viewer. The importance of the bed is confirmed by my interview participant Marin. They describe the bed as a 'major prop' in the performance. Marin describes the bed as a prop: a word reserved from describing objects used in theatre and film. The bed makes up a significant part of the frontstage: it is a crucial element to the webcamming environment. Within my data I argue how the bed is the focal point, and the staging of the room accentuates this. Victor Burgin notes how the bed has aspects of tease, there is an "eroticism of absence" (2002: 229). By this, he is referring to the various roles the bed plays. There is also an implied vulnerability to a bed. The bed is the place where people retreat at night to sleep. Sleep, and the bed, is juxtaposed between a source of pleasure, comfort and sanctuary to a potential danger and vulnerability (Williams, 2007). Simon Williams adds how sleep is tied to emotions, trust and ontological (in)security, conditions needed to feel safe in bed, otherwise it makes us vulnerable through the loss of control and consciousness (2007). In almost all of the observations, the bed was made, sheets were flat and the duvet and pillow were neat, all appearing cleanly laundered. Additionally, both Marin and Olivia both had a bed visible as a main part of their webcam set up. The consideration of the bed is noted by Jane Ridley's (2019) summary of the life of a cam performer, Isa Mazzei. In preparation for her first broadcast Ridley states how:

> "[Isa Mazzei] had just finished watching a YouTube tutorial showing her how to make her bed look crisp and perfect, like a hotel room's. She rearranged the sequined throw pillows she'd bought for the occasion" (2019, para 1).

[9] I used the Word Frequency query on NVivo to list the most frequently occurring words in my observation data set. I excluded words under two characters. I included stemmed words which group words (such as talk, talking) together. The word bed was identified 88 times, with a weighted percentage of 2.82%. For reference, the next two words were performer (and performance) with 2.47% and music with 2.31%.

The bed's appearance was significant. The performer is proving that the bed is important through these actions. Here I parallel the constant presentation of the clean, clutter free, made bed to an art exhibition by Tracey Emin. *My Bed* is perhaps the most notable of Emin's work:

> *"My Bed* consists of the artist's real, wooden bed – with wrinkled sheets, pillows and twisted blankets, but also with tangled nylon stockings and crumpled towels. Strewn around the bed is a clutter of personal effects: empty vodka bottles, slippers and underwear, crushed cigarette packs, a snuffed out candle, condoms and contraceptives, a cuddly toy and several Polaroid self-portraits." (van de Walle, 2017: N.P).

Emin's work shows the reality of her life: she presented her bedroom after a personal crisis as artwork. There was mixed opinion in the art world alternating between seeing the work as raw and authentic and as pretentious (Jones, 2015). Jakob Zaaiman describes Emin's work as "diary entries made concrete", these works "are just presenting us with imaginal avenues with which we are already acquainted" (Zaaiman, N.D, N.P). Whether you consider it art of merit or not, Emin ensured that there is no form of false construction in her work, resulting in an "autobiographical, but performative" piece shown to the viewer (Lake Smith as cited in Cohen, 2018, N.P). Darren Pih continues this stating "what's interesting is that the bed is a stage for birth, depressive isolation, and death" (cited in Cohen, 2018, N.P). The bed has an autobiographical presence. Alison Donnell (1999) explains how the bed can be viewed as a woman's autobiography. The bed in its unmade, restless state, as seen in Emin's work, is a dishevelled pile of sheets and blankets is discursive. Its dishevelled nature contains the hint of the previous occupant, it is a space for secrets, fun, desire to be shown. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson add how "Emin's insistent, excessive self-referentiality troubles the "rules" of social decorum about the appropriate location of the materials, activities, and behaviors of a young woman's quotidian life" (2001: 5). Smith and Watson do not seem to question the authenticity of the piece, rather interrogate its position in the art world. They add that through Emin presenting photos, diaries, and other artifacts of her own existence, she is inviting the viewer to reconstruct her past in the present. There is a collaboration of the artist's authenticity seen in these autobiographical artifacts and the viewer who constructs their own interpretive narrative of the piece. *My Bed* reflects Emin's lived experience at a certain point in her life and is presented as a self-portrait. Balasz Takac describes how the work is often perceived

as “a powerful manifestation of vulnerability” (2019, para 4). The bed is a metaphor for self-presentation. The bed as the centrepiece of the work becomes a symbol of a usually hidden reality. The suffering and struggle that would normally be concealed in private becomes displayed publicly.

So what can be said about the webcammers presentation of the bed? If Emin was praised for her stark presentation of authenticity (Jackson, 2018), with her life in objects surrounding an unmade stained bed, then the clean well-presented bed of the webcammer comes at a direct contrast. Here is another representation of a ‘constructed authenticity’. The reality of the bed cannot be seen to viewers, for various reasons, but all performers create a bed that is ‘presentable’. I argue how it reflects how the performer wants to be viewed by their customers: as clean, presentable, and most importantly, as hiding the reality of ‘real life’. This hidden element leads us to the exploration of the backstage, where the viewers visibility is ceased.

6.3 Backstage

We have seen that the bedroom is the focal basis of webcam environments but only as it is presented to the viewer. Now, we step behind the camera, and examine the backstage, exploring how domestic spaces are restructured for the broadcasts and how this has implications on the role of the bedroom.

On a popular forum for webcam performers, AmberCutie Forum, users often ask each other questions regarding their performances. On a forum thread, one user asked performers how long they spent preparing for their broadcast before they went live. The majority of the answers came from female performers, which was expected, given the proliferation of women in the webcamming industry. The answers estimated the time spent, and what the performer spent this time on. Generally, answers focused on how the performers prepared themselves and how time was spent putting on makeup, styling hair, as well as choosing clothing and getting dressed. One performer stated that they were new to webcamming and were still learning the technology, and as a result they spend a lot of offline time managing their set up of devices. Of the answers that mentioned the room itself, one performer stated that their set up only involved moving a pile of

laundry from her chair to the bed. There was little preparation required, the room was already performance ready. A further performer stated that she just never unplugs her lighting, it just stays set up. Incidentally, the only male user to comment stated it only took him a couple of minutes (Ambercutie.com, 2019b)

Also, another female performer said that she dreamed of having a larger house where she was not having to set up her lighting and table every time she wanted to broadcast. While she notes that she has made this setting up and resetting process as streamlined as possible, it was still an annoyance to her that she did not have the space to leave her performance arena constantly ready to go. Olivia also shared this same desire of having a separate space to broadcast stating:

> *"I used to speak to my friends and discuss if we could create an ideal workspace what would that be? I would always like to have been able to go somewhere to work and then come home. The fact that I was at home was good because if I wanted to eat or go shopping or take a break I could very easily, and also the fact that I was at home and was alone for a long time. But then again it was really lonely, it was a really desperately lonely way of working because I couldn't be with anybody at all. I hated that. I think what really pushed me to leave was like the mental health I could not take the isolation anymore. It was too much for me urm but I was quite happy with my space but I guess"*

For her, the ideal space helped overcome some of the issues she faced in working in a domestic environment:

> *"I guess anything that would make it better would be if I knew that I could work with friends and be totally legal. So like basically a brothel really, my ideal brothel would have a little kinda staff room where the girls could go, and we would have a cat and it would just be really nice. I would like to be able to work with my friends, I wouldn't have been so lonely working. But like that would be my ideal way of working".*

Her ideal space was removed from the domestic: a workspace that would operate like an office. Although Olivia was unable leave her home for her performances, she was able to use a separate room in her house to create a separate workspace in her home:

> *"I actually just converted the spare room to be my workroom and I saw escort clients in that room. So the walls were white, I had a bed in there and I literally did just have like racks and racks of toys. But I had the toys that I would use on cam, I would have in my immediate, like, I had a bedside table next to the bed and the toys that I would use most often I would put in there"*

Marin, however, broadcasted performances from the bedroom. They noted how there was a transformation of the bedroom space, not only in the setting up of the space but also in the dismantling and resetting. Marin stated that after a performance was completed the room stayed as it was set up:

> *"the preparation side of things was putting it back to normal again urm well it didn't even go back to normal again it kinda stayed in the performance arena always conscious of you know the next recordings"*

The 'normal' that Marin is referring to is the transformation of the bedroom space. The 'normal' is a time before the setting up of the space to be broadcast, their natural state of the bedroom. This is significant as the room no longer served as a bedroom, rather it became a stage for performances, even when they were not broadcasting. The bedroom's role had changed for this purpose. This change became normalised quickly for Marin, and soon the bedroom was viewed as a performance arena rather than a bedroom serving its traditional role. The 'normal' space is no longer accessible: the space has been changed. This transformation of space affected Marin and their partner beyond their broadcasts. As a response to the bedroom space changing roles, the actions and behaviours usually performed in the bedroom by Marin and their partner had to be displaced. The sex that would normally be conducted in the bedroom space moved to another room in the home. This led to an exploration into their own sexual relationship.

"We experimented with more sort of exhibitionist stuff, that way which was more of an exploration for both of us at that time".

From a psychoanalytical perspective, voyeurism and exhibitionism are both categorised as deviant sexual practices. A Voyeuristic Disorder, as defined in The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, as:

> "recurrent and intense sexual arousal from observing an unsuspecting person who is naked, in the process of disrobing, or engaging in sexual activity, as manifested by fantasies, urges, or behaviors" (American Psychiatric Association, 2013: 687).

Despite voyeurism still being classified as a mental disorder, Johnathan Metzl (2010) explains how very few psychiatric research papers are concerned with this as a mental illness. Rather, voyeurism has now become intertwined with popular culture, with webcamming in particular using notions of voyeurism to attract customers. Voyeurism is grounded in "the desire to look upon something that is forbidden" (Lisle, 2004: 16). Hille Koskela states there is a "voyeuristic fascination in looking, but, reciprocally, some exhibitionist fascination in being seen" (2004: 203). Sexual sites on the internet allow for a safe, consenting exhibition of the body. The webcam allows viewers to an uninhibited glimpse into the 'real' sexual behaviour. David Kreps adds how the internet has provided a more socially acceptable outlet: "somehow the mediation of the computer screen, the distance implied in the telecommunications link, allows us to feel easier about exposing pictures and videos of ourselves for strangers to look at" (2010: 211). Users accessing these sites give their consent to satisfy their voyeuristic and/or their exhibitionist desires. There is a voyeuristic fascination that the webcam opens up for viewers, as well as webcamming being a platform for the exhibitionist thrill for performers. This exhibitionist appeal was also seen on a group performance, consisting of a male and female couple.

> *A couple are on the bed, on top of the light beige sheets. They are having sex, and do not talk or engage with the viewers who are watching them. The camera is focused on them, showing only the bed in their shot. Only moaning, and the occasional tip noise, can be heard.*

For this couple, there was more of a focus on the interaction with each other compared to the interaction with the viewer, which is more commonly seen in solo performers' rooms who are aiming to increase their profits. They were allowing tips, which as Henry and Farvid (2017) states is not always the case with exhibitionist performers, as some performers turn off the ability for viewers to tip: the motivation for these performers is a purely exhibitionist appeal. The surveillant gaze is an element that can be exploited by these exhibitionist performers.

For Marin and their partner, their webcamming did not replace an exhibitionist desire, rather create a new opportunity to explore sexual preferences in a way that is separate from the extreme visual surveillance of webcamming. As their bedroom became a public performance arena, they had to reclaim a level of privacy away from the webcam's gaze. However, this was not privacy in its fullest form, rather a more private form of public sexual deviancy.

> *"so interestingly though the urm sort of marital sex if you will stopped during that period [...] in the bedroom it moved downstairs urm and in a more exhibitionist way I suppose as we opened the front windows and things and sort of experimented in that way without the camera".*

In many cultures it is 'normal' behaviour for individuals to obscure elements of their private lives: "you close the curtains when it's dark outside and light inside. You don't appear publicly if naked or in underwear. You don't allow anyone to see your sex life…" (Koskela, 2004: 206). The transformation of Marin and their partners' bedroom space altered their normal sexual behaviour. As the bedroom has become a public space, its traditional role as private space has changed through the visibility and surveillance of the webcam. Even when they were not webcamming, this space did not transform back into a private bedroom. The sex moved into another room, transforming that space's purpose within the home. The bedroom as a place for marital sex ceased to exist after the webcam performing began. This shift demonstrates a level of 'constructed authenticity'. As mentioned previously, this 'constructed authenticity' is a way of showing an audience what is perceived to be an authentic space. As stated by Walter Benjamin we can see how individuals are attracted to this aura. However, this space has been constructed in a specific way to only appear

authentic, it is not a natural authentic space. The viewers are seeing a bedroom, which although was the couple's actual bedroom, was no longer serving its usual purpose. From my data, I argue that the bedroom became nothing more than a set in which to perform and was reset after the performance was completed but still not to its usual role.

Victor Burgin adds that “there is something of striptease in the way the space is revealed" (2002: 233). There is something exposed, but some secrets remain hidden. Peter Weibel adds to this noting that regardless of how much of the space is revealed “there is still something invisible in the visible” (2002: 209). The invisible in this case is how the room is constructed. The viewer is unaware of what the performer has done to the space before broadcast. The viewer is only seeing what the performer chooses. There is also a temporal dimension to the appeal of the unseen. Even with regular fan viewers of a certain performer, there is the possibility of acts going unseen in the past as well as a fear of potentially missing future performances. This also draws into consideration the authenticity of the performer and how the viewer understands this. The performer has altered their broadcasting space before the performance begins, this is something unseen by the viewer. The viewer is presented with a visual image they can either accept or reject as authentic. But, as the space is created outside of the viewer's gaze, perhaps they can more easily consider the space they are seeing as the natural authentic space. This unseen backstage forms the basis of the frontstage. There are divides between what is seen and unseen, and what remains visible and invisible. While the backstage remains invisible, the frontstage is visible and is a space that the viewer can invade. Referring back to Andrea Brighenti’s (2007) work in the previous chapter, we can see how there is an association between visibility and power. Within the frontstage, there is an opportunity for power and control for the performer through their own visibility. However, it is not only the performer who can gain power through visibility, the viewer can also gain some control through their tipping.

6.4 Invasion of the King Tipper

A way in which the viewer can invade this domestic space is through the use of tips. Tips are the central element to how performers make money. In this section I explore the material manifestation of tips rather than the financial gain. Viewers can tip however much they would like in the form

of tokens, yet the performer usually sets out a chart correlating various tip amounts and what they will do for them. Viewers who tip are important for a performer as they generate their income. As such, performers are usually thankful to them. This gratitude took various forms during the observations, such as saying or typing thanks, or doing small requests for them. However, I am going to focus on some of the highest tippers and how they physically and virtually invade the performers' domestic space.

In two female chat rooms, the viewer who had tipped the most was labelled as ‘king tipper’. Already there is a gendered dynamic with the use of king being a predominantly male term. Additionally, the term king assumes a level of power and control within the room. The ‘king tipper’ was permanently displayed on the top corner of the performers video screen for everyone to see.

> *Emma is broadcasting from her bedroom, sitting on her office chair using her Lovense. She is nude and her brown hair has been curled. She has a high tippers chart embedded into her room, taking up a corner of the video frame. Under this, there is a list of all of the incoming tips, showing the name of the tipper alongside the tip amount and how that will affect the Lovense. The sound of her moaning is cut with the sound of the coin noise, heard by Emma and all of the other viewers.*

The performer will have had to use software for the highest tipper to be automatically identified and their screen name to be embedded into the performer's video screen. This is significant as it suggests it is important for the performer to be able to have this element displayed within their shows. The tipper's name has a virtual presence in the performer's virtual space. In another female chat room, the performer had a physical white board in which she would write the top three highest tippers. This whiteboard was propped up on the wall behind her, with fairy lights hung around the frame. As the top highest tippers changed, she would adjust the white board by writing the new screen name of the highest tipper. This was particularly notable as it was a very low-tech way of displaying the highest tipper. It comes at a direct contrast to the amount of technology utilised by performers. There are, as demonstrated above, ways for the performer to use technological software to display the same information: as well as it being updated automatically, so for the performer to choose this method is significant. Additionally, there is significance given by the

performer to this whiteboard, given the limited physical space available within their webcamming environment to display the name(s) of the highest tippers. This low-tech alternative to automatic bots highlights the importance of the highest tipper's visibility not only to the performer, but also to the other viewers. These low-tech alternatives then become part of the performance. They are non-human elements in the webcamming network that enable a physical presence with the performance for a virtual viewer. The viewer is then part of the performance, their status as a high tipper awarding them space to be 'physically' present. In a blog post for webcammers dated 2016, Holly explains how low-tech options can be useful within rooms. They state that "having a poster, neon dry erase board, or chalkboard in the background is a great idea. It encourages engagement and sometimes competitiveness! You could have a list of your top tippers for the month. That will encourage your fans to compete for the number one spot on that list" (Holly, 2016: N.P). The purpose of the board is for viewer engagement, which ultimately will help the performer reach their financial goals.

This physical (or virtual) presence of the viewer in the performer's domestic space also created an element of competitiveness within the viewers. The competitiveness was an element observed in rooms that had both physical tangible high tippers boards and automatically generated tipper boards created and posted by bots. Viewers were occasionally seen partaking in 'tipping wars' during a performer's show. Usually, a few viewers would try and out tip each other, by upping their tips each time, to try and gain the top tipper position, and increase their own visibility to the performer and other viewers. This competitiveness created an almost gaming-like atmosphere (Martins, 2019). The viewers are acting in competitive behaviour with each other in order to maintain the performer's awareness of them: being a high tipper becomes a way of gaining recognition from the performer. The development of this gaming atmosphere, which Eduardo Martins observed on camming site Chaturbate, is a relaxed but compulsory atmosphere. This is comparable to Natasha Schüll's (2015) research into gambling machine addition in Las Vegas. They explore the feeling of absorption and suspended belief that players undergo when gambling. Schüll explains how these machines are designed in certain ways to attract users and make it difficult to stop using them, ensuring users spend time and money on the machines. This is comparable to how webcamming sites operate. The aesthetic and technological functions, including the sound, broadcasting, and networking functions, are carefully constructed to appeal

to viewers. These sites, and the performers in them, are grabbing the viewers' attention, making them spend both time and money in performers' rooms. Tips are accompanied by a coin noise, furthering the gaming atmosphere. If a relationship with the performer is what the viewer desires, then tipping regularly, and being the highest tipper is a way for them to be acknowledged.

Financial gain is a central motivation for many webcam performers, which could provide the rationale for having the highest tipper always visible. If all the viewers can see who has tipped the performer the most, they may want to beat this number, as demonstrated in the observations. The reason could potentially lead back to the relationships, perceived or real, that keep webcam viewers watching the same performers. These relationships may have different meanings for both parties. For the performer, not always but often, the motivation is money (Vlase and Preoteasa, 2021). Olivia also stated that financial gain was the only motivation for her to start camming:

> *"It was entirely money, if I wasn't getting paid, I wouldn't do it. It wasn't like I was on Chatroulette and then someone said you can earn money doing this like it was"*

Therefore, by appealing to what viewers want can lead to more money in the form of tips. For the viewer, there are more ambiguous reasons as to why they watch certain webcam performers. Olivia notes how she had very loyal performers but was unaware as to why they kept watching over numerous years:

> *"I always ask my clients why they stuck around because I used to think like I was the world's laziest sex worker. And all my clients have said the same thing, which was you're really eccentric and you're just quite fun to be around and that's what they all said to me because I am. Like this one guy that's stuck around for years, I went through like three boyfriends, two cats and three flat moves and he's still here watching me"*

The visibility of the highest tippers confuses the power relationship and ownership of physical and virtual space. There are several things to consider when regarding the performer who kept a whiteboard visible on screen.

Penny is chatting to her viewers, encouraging them to tip. The highest tippers are handwritten on a whiteboard, positioned in the left hand of the frame. Viewers are tipping frequently, with Penny's chat box being dominated with yellow highlighted text indicating each tip. There is an automatic counter and soon Penny rubs off a name on the board, to replace it with another viewer who has claimed their spot on the board.

Penny made the decision to have some of the video frame partially filled with this whiteboard. This is significant as the space the performer has to perform is limited, suggesting this is an important element within their performances. By having the video frame partially taken up by their highest tipping screen names is a show of gratitude from the performer but also becomes an invasion of space by the viewer. The private space is now invaded in two ways: through the camera and through the viewer's presence. This invasion of space creates a confusion in power and control between the viewer and the performer, especially with their king label. By having their screen name visible for all to see creates a sense of importance for this individual. The performer must relinquish full control over what is presented on screen - it is dictated by the viewers who tip the most. When the viewer's screen name is visible to all, it goes beyond acknowledgement. The viewer is occupying space - whether physical space, such as the screen names written on the whiteboard, or in virtual space, with the screen name embedded into the video itself. In either scenario, the space where the screen name is displayed is taking up some of the performer's space. The broadcast space goes from being solely the performers, to having the viewer now occupying some of this space. The occupation of space is a key element to webcamming, therefore the traditional understandings of how domestic space is occupied must be investigated.

6.5 A woman's place is in the home

Here, I unpack the role of the bedroom space, considering the gendered traditional understanding of domestic space in relation to women. I explore how 'girl culture' positions women in the domestic space and how camming can be understood within this framework. The gendered role of the bedroom is an important consideration given the gender performativity observed within domestic spaces. When Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber first created the term 'bedroom

culture' in 1976, they were seeking to explore the cultural perceptions of gender, specifically girls. Research at this time generally focused on boys' culture within public spaces, ignoring girls. As such, McRobbie and Garber focused on girls' cultural practices located in the bedroom space. McRobbie and Garber (1976) note that the typical working class British girl, during the 1940/1950s "remained more focused on home" (213). As a result of this domestication, these girls developed what McRobbie and Garber refer to as the culture of the bedroom.

Kandy James (2001) conducted research with girls, with an average age of 16 years old, exploring how they perceive their bedrooms. She explains how girls considered their bedroom a space of privacy: "It's a room where I can go, where I know that people won't be following me and looking at everything I do and watching me" (77). She continues saying how girls spent time within their bedrooms because of the physical security that these spaces provided. The girls also noted how they had control over their bedrooms. They have the power over who has access to their space. While the girls in this research did find the bedroom to be a space of security and privacy, this is not always applicable. Mary Kearney (2007) suggests that not all girls will have a private bedroom space where they feel this privacy and safety that the other girls describe. Although in this circumstance it is more likely that the girls are living within a family home, this level of control and feeling of security in the bedroom still appears to remain true when considering a domestic space separate from a family home.

If we consider Henri Lefebvre's (1991b) argument that social space is a social product, the bedroom cannot be considered as a naturally private space, rather it is created and maintained by gendered power relationships, patriarchy, and capitalism. Sydelle Rubin (2001) states that the private space of the bedroom is identifiable as a female space, it is domesticated and associated as feminine. Additionally, Krissi Jimroglou adds how "the image of a woman in a bedroom is, in many ways, a cultural norm. What is unusual in this instance is that it is not only the woman in front of the camera, but it is the woman behind it too. [...] she occupies the hybrid position of both object and subject; she is composer and is composed" (1999: 443). The traditionally understood associations of women and girls come at direct contradiction to 'cam girl' culture. These traditional associations understand women as private, hidden, and invisible. This comes in contrast to 'cam girl' culture which is characterised by extreme visibility. The female performer becomes

synonymous to the blurring of the private and the public realms, combining the extremities of private and public together. The visibility of 'cam girl' culture acts as a means of reinforcing presumptions made about girls belonging in the domestic space. Individuals publicly display their private space and private lives, all whilst being safely in their own private space. The female performer remains in the space traditionally assigned to her.

Amy Dobson (2007) states in her research with webcam performances that there were often private activities carried out within the public realm. The viewer is offered access to the private lives of the performer that is usually inaccessible to them. The female performers in my observations also demonstrated some of the findings Dobson notes. Traditionally private activities included singing and dancing along to music and talking about personal matters.

> *Naomi is sitting in front of her bed, chatting to her viewers. She rarely types, rather chats out loud responding to their comments and questions. Naomi and some of her viewers are discussing what they have been watching on television recently, with viewers suggesting different programmes for her to watch. The conversation flows between multiple viewers and Naomi with viewers talking to each other as well as directly to her. She is fully clothed, and the performance appears more like a catch up between friends.*

Discussion of personal matters included talking about moving home, the television programmes she was currently watching, and more generally about what was going on in their lives. In Naomi's case, nothing sexual was referenced, rather the performance was more framed as a conversation between friends. This discussion was well received with the viewers who would engage in conversation - asking in more details about the issues the performers would talk about. Also, as expected, a large number of performers were carrying out sexual acts of varying degrees. This comes as no surprise given how Eduardo Martins comments how "much of Internet use nowadays relies on the development of sexual activities" (2019: 1). Stripping, masturbation, and the use of sexual toys were just some of the acts seen through the observations. This was seen within all the observations, female, male, group, and trans performers all carried out several forms of sexual acts. Traditionally hidden sexual acts are being commodified and displayed in the public realm.

Through a capitalist lens, sex is just another commodity that can be bought and sold (Brent and Sanders, 2010). Sex, or more commonly sexual acts, are commodified by the performer and sold at a price for the viewer to buy and consume. Gender sociologist Jessica Ringrose argues that "masculinity is epitomized in buying the consumer goods (i.e. cars and shoes) with which to gain access to the sexually commodified female body" (2011: 104). In the case of webcamming, I argue that this core value remains true only when consumer goods are changed to money. The female performer's body is commodified, and money is given to the performer as a means of accessing this body. Here the performer directly financially benefits from this commodification. Panoptic notions of online surveillance create the opportunity for commodification and consumption. The nexus of commodification and privacy in webcam culture confuses power structures that are associated with surveillance. The person being viewed can now gain economic benefits from being under the surveillant gaze.

However, the visibility of 'cam girl' culture acts as a means of reinforcing presumptions made about girls belonging in the domestic space. Female performers' use of the online realm for these broadcasts do not necessarily signify any change to traditional girl culture but rather illuminates spaces that were previously invisible. Here I want to refer back to the idea of Ellen Gordon-Bouvier (2019) and the notion that 'women's work' is more likely to be concealed by the facade of the domestic home. Webcamming highlights the visibility of women's work within the domestic space.

We need to consider if webcamming alters the way that traditional associations of women are understood. The domestication described by McRobbie and Garber (1976) is that of girls from the 1940/1950s. Society and technology has changed considerably, and girls' lives and private spaces have also changed alongside this. Technological devices have evolved substantially within the last 70 years. Research has shown a considerable rise in digital technology being used by children and adolescents within the domestic space (Hadlington et al, 2019). The spaces in the home are infiltrated with technology. Noah Apthorpe et al (2019) state that the rise of smart home technology has its own challenges and concerns when considering preserving privacy within the domestic space. The bedroom space is not free from technological infiltration. Research confirms this with Matthias Böhmer et al (2011) stating that communication technology has materialised into all areas

of life. They continue noting how it is difficult to find a context in which smart phones, social media, or other forms of interactive media are not seen. Tarja Salmela et al (2019) continues this discussion, focusing on the use of devices, specifically mobiles phones and tablets, used in bed by couples. They found that the presence and use of smartphones was considered a normal part of everyday life in the home. Their participants had contradictory meanings on the bed and the bedroom space. These meanings range from viewing the bedroom as a space of sanctuary, for work, a space for excessive technology use, and a space for entertainment. The widespread use of the internet and social media platforms in bed, which is facilitated by smartphones, may assist in what Salmela et al refer to as the "re-construction of the bed" (Salmela et al, 2019: 9). The bedroom has transformed into a site of entertainment. The introduction of smartphones into the domestic space has not completely eroded the sanctuary space, couples in this research were able to set boundaries, and the bedroom still functioned in its primary role. Most of the participants stated that their sex lives were unaffected by the use of technology, however some did mention that there was a decline in sex due to technology. Mobile devices were used for watching pornography, while other rejected this use in the bedroom. This leads to the question: does the decision to broadcast in the bedroom space have the same implications given how technology has altered the state of privacy in the domestic space.

Discussions of women and technology suggest that women remain in the privacy of their bedrooms, creating a liminal space to 'try out' media representations of femininity, as a means of achieving cultural goals of transitioning into young women (Bailey and Steeves, 2015). Erika Pearson (2009) uses a metaphor of the 'glass bedroom' to describe online social media profiles, as both private and public space. Girls are accessing agency over communications technologies and the ways in which they produce content, however public spaces remain inaccessible to girls. The connected bedroom space is a hybrid of private and public space: it enhances the "emancipatory potential of resistive identities" (Bailey and Steeves, 2015: 10). The line between the traditional privacy of the bedroom and the publicity of online performativity has been blurred. Michele White (2003) stated that these liminal spaces will allow girls more control over their visibility. Most importantly are that these spaces are under the control of the girls themselves (Reid-Walsh and Mitchell, 2004). The female webcam models perform their own kind of feminism (Pomerantz et al, 2004). This is achieved through the commandeering of predominantly male public spaces.

Webcam performers used their “feminine image as a tool to be used towards the goals of economic and social success, power and self-actualization” (Dobson, 2007: 125). Dobson continues explaining that several female webcam performers stated that their sites were not created for an audience, rather a desire for the individual's own fulfilment. However, while this certainly might be the case for some of the performers, in my observations the majority of female performers framed their broadcasts towards earning money. However, my research not only explores female performers, but also male performers who we will explore now and their presence within the domestic.

6.6 The performance of masculinity

It is also important to consider how men occupy the bedroom space, and perform their own sexuality in their space, given how as we have explored above how the domestic has a feminine association. In my observations I was curious to see how men performed within their space, as well as how they created their webcamming environments. The male body has been re-coded in its ‘looked-at-ness’ (Mulvey, 1975). This disrupts the traditional patterns in which “men look at women and women watch themselves being looked at" (Berger, 1972: 47). The male body becomes an object of the gaze, it is no longer just the one who looks. Men's bodies are increasingly taking their place alongside women's bodies in advertising and magazines. It is not just as simple as an increase of male bodies; however, they are depicted in an idealised and erotised way. This representation of the male body allows them to be looked at and desired (Moore, 1988; Simpson, 1994). This idea is reflected in the current literature around webcamming and online mediated sex work. There is little research that considers the male role in webcamming. Jenifer Lee-Gonyea et al (2009) states how male advertisements to male clients were more sexually graphic in nature compared to male escorts seeking female clients. Sociologist Voon Phua (2002) supports this adding how personal advertisements from gay males are more likely to be sexually explicit in comparison to those placed by straight men. In general, male escort advertisements were more sexually graphic than advertisements placed by female escorts (Koken et al, 2010). Michele White explains how:

"Men webcam operators advertise with images of nude torsos, muscles chests, bulging briefs, and in some cases full visible penises and asses, which repeat some of the advertising conventions of gay male erotica" (2006:82).

> *Joe is naked, sitting up against his bed frame. His keyboard is strewn across his lap, the mouse lying next to him. He occasionally responds to one of his viewers comments, but generally remains quiet with faint music that fills this silence. The camera is focused on the bed, inviting the viewer into his space. His muscles are visible through the low-lit bedroom, and his viewers comment on how good his body looks.*

Joe does not question who his viewers are, rather responds to their comments, and potentially more importantly, accepts their tips regardless of their gender. There is a tendency for these male operated webcams to visually address the gay male viewer which leads to more limited conceptions of how female viewers look at bodies. This is also associated with stereotypical claims that women are less stimulated by visual images in the same way men are (White, 2006). However, it is reasonable to consider how images of young fit male bodies appeal to women: literature has certainly moved on from the belief that women were not aroused by any pornography (Carter, 1977:75). Tom Waugh (1985) in his analysis of gay male pornography argues how a Mulvey-esque position of viewer spectorship, and the power of the male gaze, are not applicable to gay male porn. The viewer's "indemnificatory entry into the narrative is not predetermined by gender divisions" and the "mise-en-scène does not privilege individual roles, top or bottom, inserter or insertee, in any systematic way" (1985: 32). Male webcam performers contest Mulvey's affirmation that "the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification" (1975:11). But does this lead to a distinction between the gay male gaze and the female gaze? According to Kenneth Mackinnon, although gay men and women have different experiences, it is possible that "popular culture...deems women's and gay male erotic gazing as pretty well the same thing" (1997: 154). Suzanne Moore adds how the "codification of men via gay male discourse enables a female erotic gaze" (1988: 53). The male performer becomes an object of the gaze, for all types of gaze.

There is a masculine association with public space which can inform understandings of sex work (Scott, 2003). These understandings have broadly categorised male prostitutes working in public spaces as masculine, compared to males working in private spaces having been represented as feminine and homosexual. The sexualisation and masculinisation of male prostitution allows for categorisation of male sex workers into types "according to their degree of departure from idealised norms of masculinity" (ibid: 196). When males sell sexual services, their identity and masculinity is questioned. Eric Anderson (2008) states how there is a desire in modern heteronormative society for men to appear and act masculine within a culture that equates privilege to gender and sexuality (Connell 1987; Lorber 1994). Masculinity is upheld by the male body not being penetrated or visually enjoyed by other men. Rob Cover (2018) explains how online webcamming is producing new forms of intimacy that counters the masculine heterosexual identity alongside sexual practices and pleasure that has been associated with homosexuality. He explores this explaining that:

> "straight identities doing queer things as a normative online practice, upsetting the hegemony of masculine straightness that had been constructed on a foundation of disapproval and disavowal of intimate same-sex coded erotics, gazes, acts, thoughts, and practices" (Cover, 2018: 114).

Online technologies have helped reveal some of the ways masculine heterosexuality is distinct from heteronormativity. Males, positioned in the private domestic space, perform sexual services for other men, including gay men (Cover, 2018). Heterosexuality is performed for gay voyeurism. Cover (2015) states how in these domestic spaces, heterosexual men perform acts traditionally associated with gay men, such as anal penetration, yet the performers are able to maintain a level of heterosexuality explaining how "online camming performers may undertake acts coded as queer, yet maintain an attachment to heterosexuality as authentic, if not necessarily normative" (2015: 161). These male performers are able to solidify their heterosexual status by commenting on their profiles how they are straight yet welcome anyone to watch them, regardless of the viewer's gender. There is sexual fluidity introduced and permitted on webcamming sites for male performers. This fluidity is not a complete dissolution of all boundaries and identities, rather there is an element of playing around the edges of what masculine heterosexuality can mean. There are

nuances with heterosexual intimacy that can be seen in the online realm, publicly visible to all viewers.

This is also reflected in my observations. Male performers who have labelled themselves as straight perform for gay males. The sexuality of the viewer in this case is understood by the text they send in the chat, as well as sometimes having distinct usernames. The performer can maintain their own sexual identity while still performing traditionally gay sexual acts to their audience. As Scott Kiesling has noted, heterosexuality is linked to hegemonic masculinity stating that "to be a man is to be powerful, and to be powerful in the current gender order is, in part, to be heterosexual" (2005: 696). Within one of the male performers' rooms, they had noted in the chat that they welcome anyone to view their stream, while stating their own sexuality. The performer declares their own masculine heterosexuality, but also engages in inviting and taking pleasure from homosexual viewers. As Susanne Paasonen et al adds in their discussion on social media website Tumblr, displays of male sexuality "were not necessarily coded as either straight or gay, or fixed as catering to people of any specific gender identification" (2019: 5). I believe a similar process is happening with male webcam performances.

The audience of the male webcam performer is however still a topic of discussion with several webcamming guides available online aimed at male performers. One guide asks if 'camboys' have to be gay, to which they answer no, performers can be straight or gay. However, they state that a lot of the performer's viewers will be gay "while you don't have to do gay things, you will be catering to a gay audience" (Webcam Startup, 2020: N.P). Blogger, NorCalBounce, confirms in an online guide for straight male webcam performers, that "the overwhelming majority of live cam show customers are male, which means that you will be performing for gay/bi men far more often than not" (2012: N.P). Jordyn Taylor (2014) interviewed a male webcam performer who explained that his audience was a mix of women and men, as well as couples watching. Jones adds how "performers must strategically consider what audiences they want to reach and how to intersectionality brand themselves in ways that increase both their income and enjoyment of their work" (2019: 284).

Andrew is standing up, leaning over to type on the keyboard just positioned out of frame, replying to the viewers comments and requests. He takes a step back, revealing his muscular physique with a pair of boxer shorts being the only clothing he is wearing. Andrew continues his performance. Bright lights shine onto his performance set up, a room which has been transformed into a fitness like space. Gym equipment makes up Andrew's space, equipment that he is using to show his muscles off for his viewers. Flexing like a bodybuilder might, he then makes sure to tuck his boxers in before he does some pull ups, showing off his body once more.

Andrew conducted what Benjamin Weiss (2018) refers to as a dynamic show. A dynamic show is defined by Weiss as "one in which the broadcaster moves about their physical environment, shifts their orientation to the camera often, and engages with multiple props or object" (ibid: 741). This dynamic element is exhibited in various ways, including dancing, and exercising. The performer is doing something energetic with their body. In this case, the man exercising with gym equipment not only shows his dynamism but also his masculinity. This masculinity is performed in the domestic: a space as we have explored above is traditionally assigned to women. The domestic becomes a space in which Andrew is able to perform his own configurations of masculinity. This configuration, however, is an embodied hegemonic version of masculinity, focusing on power and strength (Ricciardelli et al, 2010). Anthony Giddens (1991) states that the reflexivity of the self is extended to the body, resulting in a narcissistic pursuit of the self. This narcissism goes beyond just self-admiration: the engrossment of the self prevents boundaries being constructed between the self and the world. There is a continuous search for self-identity, in which webcamming may be a channel of this discovery. The internet has allowed the unparalleled freedom for individuals to create, share and gain access to a wide variety and representation of sex and sexual practices which have not been available prior to development of the internet (Attwood, 2011a). This space can be used by male performers to explore elements they may not feel comfortable doing in their "real" lives. Rhiannon Bury and Lee Easton refer to "pornographic self-representation" (2020:1) as a way of describing how masculinity is presented. This can refer to the type of shows they are willing to do, as well as how they describe themselves on profiles and bios. Masculinity and sexuality are challenged through male webcam performers. They contest how we consider the

gaze, as well as how we can consider sexuality as a more fluid, playful thing, rather than remaining a rigid, unchanging category.

6.7 Conclusion

The domestic space is a significant consideration of the webcam performers. Performers transform their performance space which is carefully constructed and curated for their viewers. As a result, a 'constructed authenticity' is presented, and the bedroom space is transformed to a performance arena. These spaces become post-pornographic spaces (Gregory, 2018). This bedroom space is broadcast, and viewers can virtually and sometimes physically invade this space by tipping. The performer is giving up some of their own space as a way of rewarding the highest tippers. Observations show the female performing remaining in traditional female spaces yet using the visibility into these private spaces to commodify voyeurism.

7. Constructing the performance arena

"Cinema is a matter of what's in the frame and what's out" (Scorsese, 2013).

7.1 Introduction

Now we need to take a closer look at domestic space. In the previous chapter, I explored the importance of the domestic, highlighting the traditional role of the bedroom space and how this is interrupted by webcamming. Within the following chapter, I am going to explore all of the elements that work together to construct the performance arena. To do this, I am employing a concept taken from film studies: *mise-en-scène*. By using the concept of *mise-en-scène*, I explore how performers create and maintain their working environments, through examining visible and hidden objects, technological devices, and how spaces are constructed in certain ways. I break *mise-en-scène* into four key components: setting the scene, props and costume, colour and lighting, and technological device. Each of these components is explored through acts. Although traditionally a three-act play is seen in theatre, here I use a four-act structure, complete with an encore section. The first three components have roots in what is historically regarded as *mise-en-scène* elements (Martin, 2014: Deldjoo et al, 2016). The fourth, however, is a unique addition to encapsulate how technological devices are used and seen within webcam performances. Technological devices are a significant consideration when dealing with something that would not be able to happen should such devices not exist, and I wanted this to be reflected with my analysis at this stage. Within these components, there are of course overlaps, such as props being described in colour, however my discussion has been constructed to highlight what I consider the most significant aspects of a particular scene, behaviour, or object. Within this chapter, I argue how these four key components of *mise-en-scène* highlight the 'constructed authenticity' of these spaces. Throughout this chapter, my data will reveal how performers construct their spaces with various props, colours, lights, among other elements, to create a carefully considered illusion shown to their viewers.

7.2 Act 1: Setting the scene

The space a performer displays to their audience is of significant importance. Several key decisions made by the performer play a pivotal role in how they are portrayed to an audience. As Richard Barsam and Dave Monahan (2010) explain, the production designer is responsible for the look and aesthetic quality of the film, including leading the departments for set design, props, locations among various others. Film producer, Peter Ettedgui writes how "we can define the role of the production designer as being the architect of the illusions depicted on the screen" (1999: 10). In the case of webcamming, the performer themselves takes on the role as production designer to construct their scene, creating their own illusions.

> *Ginny is sat in a cream office chair, her bed frame visible in the background. The bed was made with clean sheets laid flat, with no other clutter or objects visible. Around the bed, a string of fairy lights was wound around the frame. The lights are dimmed, and there is a soft glow illuminating Ginny. She is wearing a pink lingerie set, complete with white stocking that are only visible when she stands up by viewer request to show off her body.*

One way of creating these illusions is through the organisation and presentation of a webcam model's performance space. As we can see with Ginny, there is a deliberate attempt to construct a specific atmosphere within the space. On several websites offering 'top tips' for webcam performers, cleanliness of the space often appears. Under the first tip by online site Cam Codes, performers are advised to consider their background:

> "you want it to look nice, make sure it's clean and tidy but not so much that there is nothing there, throw some personality in there, make it look like inviting and atmospheric, make it feel personal for them: candles, fairy-lights, books etc" (2018, N.P).

These are all traditionally feminine attributes, something also reflected in Ginny's room. Both candles and fairy lights offer soft forms of lighting, while retaining a distinctly feminine, almost childlike, aesthetic, which is an element that I will go into more detail in Act 3. This advice is echoed by a webcam model recruitment site, Off The Record Management (2018), who state that mess can be "a huge turn off for customers" advising performers to ensure the background does

not “distract from the performance”. The emphasis placed on the background in this quote indicates the importance of the background looking personal for them. This reflects the performativity of these scenes: they are constructed in specific ways to appear personal and inviting to each viewer. The spaces which are broadcast have been carefully considered and constructed, they are not the authentic spaces in which they may appear to the viewer. This is reflected by my interview participant Marin. They explain that a requirement of being able to broadcast from their bedroom space would be keeping it cleaned, organised, and maintained.

> *“we would do it [the performances] in the bedroom: it had the webcam and everything in front of the bed. It was important, for you know, the space to be clear of clutter, clean, organised”*

The bedroom space had to be rearranged and cleaned for the space to be ready to be broadcast. To them, having a clean and clutter free space was an important part of being able to broadcast. They continue, noting how the cleanliness of the room was not the norm for them:

> *“where the bedroom was generally other than the made bed was a mess [laughs] - clothes scattered everywhere and you know er she would have like make up stuff on the side and all of that”*

The cleanliness of space was not considered unwelcome as Marin happily noted how this was the cleanest the room had ever been. This is something reflected in the observations as the majority of the female and trans performers' spaces were also clean and had very little furniture or clutter visible. However, although this was welcome, it demonstrates how they had to adjust their own natural behaviour, as well as the natural state of the bedroom space. It highlights the ‘constructed authenticity’: the performer changes their own bedroom space, transforming it into a space in which they deem appropriate to present to an audience. However this clean room is not a real, authentic reflection of the performer or their natural space: it is a calculated and deliberate construction for their viewers. Nic Groombridge states how visual images are filled with “the promise of reality” (2002: 38). This supports Aras Ozgun’s (2015) work we explored within the theoretical framework that liveness suggests realness. Webcam performers present their space to

encompass the illusion of reality. The viewers choose to believe, to an extent, in authentic illusions that are created by these producers. However, many of the rooms observed were far from authentic. Rather, a majority of rooms, particularly the female performers, presented a 'constructed authenticity'.

As reflected in Marin's quote above, their room had to be altered to be compatible with webcam performance. Personal objects, such as clothes and make-up, were set outside the frame of the camera: there was a desire for these items not to be viewed as it detracted from the clean and professional style of environment they were hoping to achieve. This cleanliness is visible to the viewer: this does not necessarily mean that the whole space the performer occupies is clean. It is only important for the performance area to be clean for a more appealing background. This is something that was confirmed by Marin who only made the space that was visible to the audience free from clutter. There was a displacement of the mess for the aesthetic appeal of the audience.

The organisation of furniture, props, and other items in the background gave the webcamming spaces a more professional feel. Here, a professional look is not one of an office or similar workspaces, rather is a construction that reflects the professional style of webcamming studios (Pressly, 2017). There is a fine line of keeping the room clean and organised, while ensuring it has atmosphere and personality. Erving Goffman's (1978) Presentation of Self in Everyday Life is pertinent here. The model is performing positive elements to create the desired impressions for the audience. The broadcast is a theatrical performance. The private space has to be changed in order to be presentable to their viewers. The backstage is the space before the broadcast and the physical space that is not presented to the viewer. It is only the frontstage that has been carefully constructed that is shown, then the webcam model can perform their role. For Marin, they had to adapt significantly in order to create an appropriate webcam environment.

> *"you need to reorganise and reset up your entire situation and we found that I mean we found we had to improvise quite a lot in order to meet the standards and specifications"*

Of the working environments seen during the observations, a large majority of rooms appeared to be organised. By organised, I am referring to how spaces were constructed in specific ways most

beneficial for webcamming. Here I highlight Anna, a female performer who had organised the space to give her the room to move on her chair.

> *Anna is sitting in a gaming style chair, with her camera framed just to show the chair and some minimal background. White walls enclosed the space, and no clutter was seen anywhere, including the floor. Music echoed around the room, giving the viewer a sense of space that was hidden to them. Anna occasionally moved the chair, rolling slightly backwards to show her audience more of her body.*

Female-occupied spaces tended to be more curated than male spaces. In a large majority of female observations, the performer sat near to the camera, with a light background. Few, if any, objects were visible to the viewer, with the exception of the performer's mobile phone. Minimal furniture was seen in the space, and the space was very clean. Male spaces usually had more visible furniture and the background was less uniform across the observations.

7.2.1 Resetting the scene

It is important to remember that the performers are content creators: they create their environments in certain ways for their audiences. Many of the spaces that performers chose to broadcast from presented themselves as similar to sets from a film. They are a complete fabrication constructed as an authentic background. Webcam performers' rooms are constructed in specific ways to appear like bedrooms yet many of them lacked the personal elements that make them authentic, highlighting the 'constructed authenticity' of these spaces. The setting up of the webcamming spaces is widely discussed in cam performing tips and forum websites, but the resetting of the room is something rarely discussed. By resetting, I am referring to putting a room back into its previous configuration before it was altered for webcamming. Even if a room is not physically re-organised by a performer, props in the form of lighting are still required, which changes the room's role. This, again, calls into consideration the authenticity performed through these spaces. The individual's lived space is changed: it takes time and effort to create their environments, especially if they reset this after every broadcast. If the space is not reset, the individual's lived space is permanently altered.

Marin expressed that the time it took to set up the space was important to keep profits to a maximum. Any props that were required for the performance were sorted and organised during this initial set up period, as well as any camera and lighting positioning. This demand for it being less time consuming also feeds into why the bedroom was left as a performance set. Less effort required to set up the scene allowed for more time to be allocated to the broadcast, resulting in more time spent earning money whilst broadcasting. They had an aim to create a more 'date' like scene for their performance. At the beginning of their attempts to start webcamming Marin explains how they experimented a lot:

> *"we experimented quite a bit at the beginning in terms of urm you know how to do this as quickly as possible because obviously the faster you do it the more money you make [...] so there was a lot of sort of experimenting around that and beginning it was a shift and it was taking too long so we had to work it out, so you know take 5 minutes rather than 10"*

Setting the scene in a timely manner was crucial: the more time spent setting up, the less time they were able to spend broadcasting. The setup is something completed prior to the start of the broadcast. Audiences seeking authenticity do not want to see the construction of the set. Not only would this disrupt the illusion of reality, it also would likely lose viewers' interest fairly quickly. One female webcam performer, on a popular camming forum AmberCutie's Forum stated that she had been going live and then putting on her makeup while streaming. She states how this makes her do it quickly, compared to doing her makeup prior to starting. She did not report any loss of interest but did note how it attracted some 'white knights' arguing that she did not need makeup (AmberCutie.com, 2019b). For the vast majority, setting the scene, including getting ready, is something that happened backstage, unseen by viewers. Part of setting the scene requires selecting specific props and costumes that the performer want to use in their performances, which will be explored further.

7.3 Act 2: Props and costumes

There were varying aesthetic atmospheres portrayed across the webcamming rooms, enhanced by props and costumes. Within some rooms that were set in the bedroom, the bed or a chair were the only visible objects, which was more commonly seen in female rooms. Other rooms featured more objects, whether as purposeful props, or just within the background, which included potted plants, bedroom furniture, cushions, and lamps. Occasionally closed curtains were seen at the edge of the framing. Pictures, or prints, of any kind were rarely seen on the walls. Of the pictures that were visible during the female performances, some were floral in nature, both photographic and artistic paintings. One female performer had a stylized painting of a female figure which was a compelling choice of art, given how prominent the female figure is in webcamming. The art mirrors the female body performing, both are for looking at, consideration, and celebration of the female form. In the group performances, one had a large skyline poster behind the bed, as well as another performance group showing a poster with a quote "do what you love". This quote is notable, given how debated webcamming as a potentially enjoyable experience is. In Angela Jones' (2016) research, webcam performers stated that they would never do a show that they would not enjoy, and enjoyment and pleasure was a large motivator of their shows. "Do what you love" is a common motivational phrase, albeit misleading. Whilst there are certainly several elements enjoyed by webcam performers, such as potentially high financial rewards, and sexual pleasure, it also is marred with negative aspects, such as high emotional labour, and fear of stigmatisation. No posters and pictures were seen during male or trans performances.

> *Mandy in sitting on the edge of her bed typing on a keyboard just out of shot. Behind her is some fluffy pink- and cream-coloured cushions, highlighted by the soft light glow provided by her lights. There are no personal objects visible in her framing, and very limited furniture in the shot. Mandy has chosen to focus her camera on the bed, as the main stage for her broadcasts.*

Like Mandy, very few of the female performers' rooms showed any personal items. This could be for several reasons including personal security or risk of identification. Teela Sanders and Rosie Campbell (2007) argue that an indoor environment can provide a potential to introduce safety measures to try and reduce violence and insecurity. While they refer to a range of sex work that can be carried out in an inside setting, it is still applicable to webcamming. Social researcher, Jane

Pitcher (2014) confirms these findings, stating in her research with female, male and transgender sex workers who worked in indoor situations reported several practices to manage their security, aiming to create a safe environment to work, whether this be independently or under management, such as found in brothels and massage parlours. The tip to not include personal photographs is also listed in a help article for cam performers (Vega, 2017). This is supported by blogger Jasmine Ramer (2020), who advises cam performers to remove any objects that may reveal their identity or location. This includes putting up blinds or obstructing the view outside of the room as this may reveal the physical location of the performer. This physical obstruction also helps the performer prevent doxxing attempts, leading to a dichotomy between revealing the private but keeping the private space unknown.

The lack of personal items creates an environment that is antithetical to authenticity. Within webcam culture, honesty and authenticity are considered valuable. Amy Dobson (2007) notes how several cam girls make direct discussion based on their personal authenticity, affirming that they are honest in their presentations of themselves. When considering the observations, the 'real' authenticity can be questioned. The performers frame their environments to be viewed in a certain way, with the majority choosing to exclude personal objects. How authentic can these rooms be considered to be when actions have been taken to hide the personality of a space? Although it may have no effect on the performer, who may believe they are being their authentic self, the act of exclusion confuses the idea of truth.

The scarcity of objects comes in direct contrast with research conducted into bedroom spaces. Spaces that are presented to the viewer are carefully constructed to exclude the personal objects that are key to the real identity of the performer. Kandy James' (2001) research shows that teenage girls keep all of their favourite memorabilia in their bedrooms. There is a distinct lack of personal items and memorabilia in webcam performers rooms, suggesting that the bedroom is taking on a different role during the performances. In research exploring the effects of burglary, Tony Kearon and Rebecca Leach (2000) state that individuals have an emotional investment in certain objects. More unique items were associated with personal, sentimental, and emotional memories. The loss of these objects was far more important in burglaries, as it evoked more feelings of an invasion of privacy. Burglary challenges individuals to consider their relationship more deeply with domestic

space, and the objects which are used to fill this space. As they note “familiar objects are conceived of and lived as extensions of the body” (ibid: 467). If objects can be extensions of self, what can be said about the lack of objects visible within performers rooms? Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton (1981) further this, exploring how home decorating has a long-term association with self-expression of the residents. This distinct absence of personal objects, and objects more generally, leads to a lack of this self-expression being visible to the audience. This is particularly significant, as Ozgun (2015) argues that audiences are engaged by performers who appear to be presenting themselves as they are: in the home in casual environments, rather than staged. As a result, realness becomes something that can be exploited by performers, it becomes a strategy to use. Here again, we see how the notion of ‘constructed authenticity’ becomes relevant again. The lack of personal objects indicates a curation of the broadcast space by the performer to only show objects that have been consciously.

Given how personal items are often excluded, I argue how we need to consider what is visible within performers broadcasts. Lack of objects, generally speaking, was something not as frequently observed within male spaces. There were more rooms which had a lot more visible furniture when compared to the female rooms. Furniture and objects visible in these male spaces included bookcases, computers, shelves with items on, as well as others. Whilst there were few objects visible, of the objects that were visible in male spaces, some were notable. In particular, notable objects that were visible to viewers included a motorcycle helmet, gym weights, and a dog tag necklace worn by a male performer. All of these objects have a distinctly masculine quality to them. One male performer had a gym type section in the background of the video with a fitness mat, kettlebell, and weights visible. Also, we are reminded of performer Andrew who had a large amount of gym equipment in his stream. Rather than the gym equipment just being part of the background, it became part of the performance. He would pull poses showing off his muscles, pulling down his underwear to show off his glutes. Additionally, he would use the gym equipment in the same half-dressed state to show off his muscles to his viewers. Even objects that were seemingly just in the background, and the performers do not interact or reference them during their performance, is still a deliberate choice of the performer to include this as their background. Sociologist, Thomas Johansson (1996) states how weights are generally considered as more masculine gym equipment, explaining how: “there seems to be a close relation between hegemonic

masculinity and weights; the space where the weights are situated are therefore still almost exclusively used by men" (ibid: 35). The gym equipment, even if it were left in the background, is still a visual display of hypermasculinity. Here we can see how masculinity is performed on a more micro level. The objects displayed by these performers, even if unconsciously, play a role in setting the scene and how the performer is portrayed to their audience. Several of the elements seen within the female performer's environments seemed to also be applicable to the trans performers rooms. There was a distinct lack of personal objects, with spaces usually not showing much furniture or pictures. However, this trend did not seem to apply very often to male performers, and male performers' rooms rarely appeared in the same aesthetically driven way.

Additionally, the majority of trans performers in my observations presented themselves with more feminine elements. By this I am referring to the outfits, styling, and aesthetic qualities of their rooms. Angela Jones (2020a) work is reflected here, noting how there is a very small amount of transmasculine webcam performers. In my observations I did not observe any transmasculine performers, all trans performers presented themselves as transfeminine. Jones continues noting how sex workers have left the camming industry as a result of the "cissexism, transmisogyny, and racism that plague the market" (2020a: 6). Several camming sites are solely available for female performers, whereas others highlight female and male performers. Chaturbate, one of the sites I used for my observations, does have a transgender category, however as Jones (2020b) states that the transgender label used in camming, and the porn industry as a whole, is used to refer to performers who are transfeminine. This may provide one explanation as to my observations and why a vast majority of performers I saw were transfeminine and presented more feminine qualities in their environments.

> *Jo is wearing a maid costume, complete with white stockings, and arm length gloves. They are leaning back on their bed, which is covered in a fluffy red blanket and cushions in the background. They are wearing a full face of make-up, framed by long straight black hair. They are not talking out loud, rather communicating to their viewers via typed messages. No music is playing, the only noise heard is occasional moans from Jo, as a result of a Lovense device.*

Most of the trans performers in my observations wore lingerie, applied make up, and had long styled hair. The most common form of lingerie worn was matching bra and knicker sets, sometimes paired with suspenders. This was also true of female performers. Also, by having multiple items of lingerie or clothing on, it can be used as part of tip-based goals. Performers can take off an item at a time once enough tokens are given. Socialist feminist, Heather Berg (2016) adds how lingerie can also be used as another way performers can make money. Cam performers can use their webcamming platform to cross promote other websites and social media. There is a market for viewers wanting to purchase used underwear from webcam performers and is another way for performers to financially benefit. Costumes and props are a considerable element for webcam performers to consider. Aesthetics becomes a significant part of the webcam construction.

7.3.1 Mise-en-scene and the pornographic aesthetic

The connection between aesthetic beauty and popularity on the internet has been well established (Duffy, 2017). Jenna Drenten et al (2020) conducted research exploring the performances of sexual labour on social media. They examined female influencers on Instagram, reviewing visual content, to investigate different forms of work with the changing technologies in modern society. They identified a "porn chic" aesthetic, demonstrating a pornographic nature of content by female influencers (ibid: 42). This aesthetic is something that was also seen during my observations. There is a "fragmenting and blurring of pornographic imagery" (ibid: 42); the body is presented and viewed with a pornographic lens. This pornographic lens is widely applied to online environments and demonstrates how women are viewed. While Denten et al (2020) says there is no clear cut and singular way that the "porn chic' aesthetic reveals itself in culture, there is an element of making women "fuckable" to an assumed male audience (Dines, 2015).

Olivia explained how a sex worker friend of hers maintained this porn chic aesthetic throughout her career in the sex industry:

> *"She has been a sex worker for almost thirty years, and she's had every type of plastic surgery you could think of. She will even say it doesn't even make me prettier, but she feels like she has to do it when she is working. She believes that men want a certain aesthetic".*

Webcamming becomes a manifestation of this "fuckable" aesthetic. Performers integrated several pornographic elements, and a visual aesthetic, to create an erotic experience through their broadcasts. Olivia adds how despite her alternative aesthetic demonstrated through her tattoos and body hair; she still became popular. She adopted a goth style aesthetic:

> "*My aesthetic was very vampy, like hot goth, so I wore satin, black heels, red lips, dark hair. whereas all the other girls were like clear heels, blonde hair"*

Although she did not share the same aesthetic qualities of the more popular webcam performers, such as blonde hair and large breasts, Olivia was still able to gain a large audience:

> *"It's weird because I was very popular because I was almost like against it [the popular aesthetic]. Not against it, but you know, I get Botox and stuff, but my boobs are real, I have body hair … I understand that it's easy to look at women like me in the sex industry and think that I existed in antithesis to it, but really, I go to the gym just as much. I pay my injector just as much money. I go to the hair salon just as much. Men liked me because I was like I was like attractive enough, but also alternative"*

Although Olivia's aesthetic initially appears to reject traditional beauty standards, in fact Olivia conformed in different ways to be successful in webcamming. Certain elements were also considered by Marin as being important for the success of the webcam performances, and the creation of this "fuckable" aesthetic. These included setting up the performance room, as described above, as well as buying additional props:

> *"so setting up the scene and bringing and buying any additional costume wear if you will, lingerie and things like that you know have vital importance to the success that we were hoping to achieve"*

The props mainly consisted of lingerie and sex toys: with the former being some of which were already owned by the Marin and their partner and some of which were specifically purchased for

the webcam performances. This mix of bought and preowned items is notable as it indicates that to be more successful at webcamming, they had to buy additional items.

> *"well we used a lot of lingerie some really nice expensive lingerie [...] and then the props were very much around er my exs preferences they were home toys rather than purchased specifically it was the lingerie that was purchased specifically but the home toys were used as her preference"*

These props and costumes helped not only the performances but also the marriage. Although the bedroom was no longer a space for sex - this did not mean that sex as result stopped it simply moved and it does not appear to have had an impact on the marital sex. Costumes also formed part of Olivia's broadcasts, and were something that were used within her personal life:

> *"I used to have a lot of like latex, and a lot of like rubber clothes as well and they wanted to see me in. I was constantly spending money always investing in you know like software, equipment, or tech or interesting like sex toys and like dildos and outfits and stuff, I spent a lot of money on my work. But I would use the outfits I bought in my personal life because latex is quite expensive"*

Jones (2015b) adds how in her observations, female performers often wore lingerie and more provocative clothing which is something that was reflected in my own observations. While lingerie was commonly seen in performances, it was not always the case. Some women chose to wear more clothing, with some even being fully clothed, as if they were "in clothes that they might wear to the grocery store" (Jones, 2015b: 787). This may seem strange, given the assumptions surrounding webcamming and its role as a provider of sexual services. However, Aella (2018) who was a very successful former camgirl, stated that at one point during her five years of webcamming, the highest earning performer was a non-nude model, earning over $1,000,000 in a year. Non-nude performers can at first appear oxymoronic: how can a such a performer succeed in a site so heavily reliant of sex and nudity. Literary theorist Roland Barthes explains how:

> "the intermittence of skin flashing between two articles of clothing (trousers and sweater), between two edges (the open-necked shirt, the glove and the sleeve); it is this flash itself which seduces, or rather: the staging of appearance-as-disappearance" (1975: 10).

This is developed by Dahlia Schweitzer who explains how "clothing becomes an integral part of this process. Sexy clothing, which implies nudity, becomes more erotic than nudity itself" (2000: 68). There is an element of tease in these non-nude performances. It provokes the desire to see what is hidden and the play is left to the imagination of the viewer. Kenneth Clark (1956/1993) makes a distinction between the nude and the naked. There is a "distinction between bodies deprived of clothes 'huddled and defenceless', and the body 'clothed' in art" (Clark, 1956: cited in Nead, 1992: 14). Michel Foucault (1976/1998) states how the obscenity occurs through the voyeuristic gaze on the naked body that is usually kept secret and private. The female body is not kept secret, rather becomes exposed and put on display for the benefit of the male gaze.

> *Christina is sitting on her living room floor, adjusting the strap of her silver camisole top. She switches her attention between the camera, to her keyboard, then her phone. There is soft music audible in the background, which she occasionally sways along to. Only her top half is visible, a table blocks the view of her bottom half from the viewer. Light fills the room, glistening on the wine glass sat on the table.*

There is an appeal for some viewers being presented with a fully clothed performer. The viewers in the chat were not trying to get Christina to undress, but rather engaged her in conversation about her day and her life in general. She did receive tips in the time I was watching, but these did not come with any specific requests, which many tips often do. Although one viewer did ask about a private room performance, generally the viewers were just chatting to her about her everyday life. This conversation between Christina and her viewers appeared authentic through my observations. She was chatting about the shows that she was currently watching on Netflix, as if she were having a conversation with a friend. The language she used appeared natural and unscripted, as if she was genuinely expressing her own opinions. It may be easier to be more authentic when discussing more banal things such as the shows they are watching. It both engages the viewers in conversation

building the relationship, as well as being a fairly safe, non-identifiable, easy topic to discuss. Non-nude performers structured their performances differently to nude models. In the time spent in Christina's room, she did not have any indication of sexual acts that would or could in the future occur, such as through tip countdowns towards a certain sexual act. With non-nude models, they do not have the ability to play countdown to nudity or for the majority of sexual acts, so other elements are highlighted. These included more tease related shows, as well as more performative acts such as dancing and singing. The element of tease was shown in different ways, including using strategic camera angles to avoid exposure. Roland Barthes (1972) explains how there is a contradiction in strip tease: something which is mirrored in webcamming performances of non-nude models.

> "Woman is desexualized at the very moment when she is stripped naked .... It is only the time taken in shedding clothes which makes voyeurs of the public … The end of the striptease is then no longer to drag into the light a hidden depth, but to signify, through the shedding of an incongruous and artificial clothing, nakedness as a natural vesture of woman, which amounts in the end to regaining a perfectly chaste state of the flesh" (1972: 84 - 85).

The strip tease therefore implies what is already known by both performer and viewer - it will never come to exposure. The stripper, Murray Davis adds, teases her audience (1983). There is an unspoken promise of more to come, which never occurs. There is something enticing with non-nude models, given the proliferation of nudity on webcamming sites. The presentation of the model, whether nude or clothed, is important to signify their identity as a performer, as well as how they want to be perceived by their viewers.

7.3.2 Teddy bears and angel wings

Due to the lack of objects visible in a lot of performers' rooms, the ones that are visible and used by the performer are of significant importance. Here I explore two static objects: teddy bears and angel wings, in reference to how they are used by performers to portray a certain identity and sexuality. Plush teddy bears were seen in various rooms, notably female and trans rooms. Teddy

bears have a child-like quality and this speaks to how the females choose to represent themselves during performances. These teddy bears act as a way of advertising the performers' youth. Matt Briggs (2007) explains how the image of the teddy bear was appropriated by the toy industry, creating the teddy bear plushies we recognise today. Teddy bears are associated with childhood. Plush teddies have come to show a discourse of emotional innocence: they are "a powerful symbol of childhood affection embodied in toy form" (Kline, 1993: 150).

> *Mia is dancing around her bedroom; pop music is loud blaring from her speakers. She is wearing a crop top and knickers and her hair is pulled back in pigtails. She had bright neon lights hang over her bed frame, with plush toys seen on the bed. Giggling and talking to viewers, she speaks softly, responding to frequent compliments.*

Mia gives off a child-like atmosphere within her broadcasts, complemented by her outfit and aesthetic appearance as well as through the construction of her space with its bright lights and plush teddies. This set up alone is enough for Mia to face a potential ban from broadcasting. There is a fine line on the portrayal of youth and its acceptability on webcam sites. Age verifications checks are executed on all legal webcamming sites, and all performers must submit documentation to prove they are over 18 years old. Webcam sites cannot be seen to host any performer who appears as if they are too young. Teddy bears are cited as one way a performer can attempt to appear younger. Whilst there are no explicit rules that I discovered, if they appear too young, or as if they were masquerading as a child, this can lead to a ban as explained by a Chaturbate administrator's post, shared on a webcamming forum. They state in an email extract:

> "Please refrain from the use of clothing or props that could give the suggestion that you may be underage. For example, some ways to avoid this impression is to ensure that you are not wearing clothing or accessories that resembles children's clothing or accessories, not wearing pigtails or ribbon in your hair, and avoiding having children's associated items visible on cam (such as teddy bears or stuffed animals)" (Ambercutie.com, 2020).

Given these potential risks, why would a performer want to give the impression of youth? The appearance of youth is just one of the beauty expectations placed on women (Phakdeephasook, 2009). On a biological level, Tadinac explains how "men regardless of their own age always prefer young women because they have higher reproductive value" (2010: 503). But I believe here that it goes further than a biological drive. With youth in historical art, there is an inherent naivety and innocence. This also indulges viewers' fantasies: the women are exhibiting themselves as subservient. This leads back to wider discussions from the previous chapters regarding the women's choice to present themselves in certain ways. Following Michele White's (2003) notion that although these women may be presented in objectified and sexually normative ways, they are the people making the decisions on how they are portrayed, this portrayal of innocence and youth is just an extension of this. However, scholars such as Patrice Opplinger (2008) argue this only further reproduces imagery that objectifies the female body for the benefit of the male gaze which raises discussions on how performers choose to represent themselves online. How women construct their online identity becomes a way of attracting certain audiences[10]

This innocence and desire for youth is also reflected in object choices made by some female performers, including the use of angel wings. In one observation, we see a young woman dressed in white and pink lingerie, with a pair of angel wings on her back. She is dancing and singing along to the music, chatting, and responding to her viewers. Angels are historically linked to faith,

[10] I want to make reference to Pixie, a 24-year-old female webcam model, as seen on Channel 4 documentary, Adventures in Futureland. She works out of a Las Vegas based camming studio in a bright blue and silver bedroom. Pixie states how she often gets requests for role play scenarios, with a great deal focusing on incest, such as big brother or daddy/father related, as a result of her looking very youthful. She recalled one male client who wanted to call Pixie by his own daughter's name. Despite feeling uncomfortable in fulfilling some of these requests, she does so, so the client has a healthy safe outlet for their fantasy, with someone of legal age who is consenting. She states, "I'd rather have a paedophile coming on here to see me because I look younger than I am" (ibid: 2019, 21:28). Additionally, Pixie adds how she knows that if she does not take the request, there are thousands of other women camming who might do: someone else will fulfil the request so she may as well financially benefit, in spite of her unease.

innocence and purity. The colour of the clothing and the wings, as mentioned above, reflect light colour hues that are warm and comforting (Shamsul et al, 2013). However, angels are also associated with major lingerie brand Victoria Secret. Over three million people tuned in to watch the final Victoria Secrets 2018 Fashion Show, which was broadcast 2nd December 2018. Victoria Secret's top models are referred to as Angels (Silver-Greenberg et al, 2020). The article, albeit an exposé into misogyny within the company, states how "the brand's supermodels — known as "Angels" and bestowed with enormous, feathery wings" (ibid: n.p). In the 2010 Victoria's Secret Fashion Show, eight 'Angel' models were featured. These women were aged between 19 to 29, with the majority being under 25 years old. Youthful women represented the top models, highlighting the youthful beauty ideals. There were six segments, one of which was called Heavenly Bodies. In this show, Chanel Iman, aged 19, received her first set of angel wings. In a 'behind the scenes' style YouTube video posted by Iman, after receiving her wings she exclaimed how this was a "total dream come true – a fantasy." (Chanel Iman, 2011: 2:03). Her status as a desirable sex symbol was established through her angel wings.

The Victoria Secret Angels are symbols of sexual fantasy, just as seen within the observations. The wings represented a dichotomous smash of innocence and a desirable sexual body. This dichotomy is mirrored by the woman in my observations: her wings show her purity while her lingerie reflects her sexual tease. This is an example of what Meenakshi Durham (2009) states is the widespread cultural shift that involves the sexualisation of young girls. She goes on to explain how because a sexualised girl is culturally taboo, they "deliberately provoke sexual thoughts" (ibid: 25). These women are depicting themselves as innocent, as good girls; they are angels that are waiting to be corrupted. As with the performer mentioned above in pink lingerie and white wings, the colour white reflects light colour hues that are warm and comforting (Shamsul et al, 2013). Colour and lighting are an important consideration for webcam performers which I will go on to explore in more depth.

7.4 Act 3: Colour and lighting

> "Color is not simply a choice a filmmaker makes at the level of film stock; rather, having selected color (as most filmmakers today are so inclined) color becomes a constructive

element of mise-en-scene, one that works alongside lighting, sound, performance, camera movement, framing, and editing. Color is thus no incidental characteristic of film stock; it is an element, carefully considered by set designers, cinematographers, and directors, all of whom must remain sensitive to the way in which color can create meaning, mood, sensation, or perceptual cues." (Price, 2006: 2).

Research on colour and psychological responses has a long history dating back over a century. In original colour theory research, five key elements were generated: arousal, physical strength, preference, time perception, and attention. Research has evolved over time, through more detailed analysis. For a long time, colour has been used to express ideas (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2002)[11]. Von Goethe states how "experience teaches us that particular colors excite particular states of feeling" (1810/1967: 305). Colour association is concerned with cognitive links based on a colour's pre-determined meanings (Kauppinen-Räisänen and Jauffret, 2018). More broadly, colour meaning conveys customers associations from specific colours, the content, the significance, or the interpretation of colours.

Colour theory is heavily featured within marketing (Hynes, 2009; Funk and Ndubisi, 2006) and communication research (Koller, 2008; Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2002). Here I will explore research from both fields, due to the consumerist nature of webcamming, as well as its function as a platform for communication. Webcamming is a form of communication in which what is visible is of prominent significance. Colour is an important consideration in both how performers choose and display colour within their environments as well as how consumers understand and interpret these colours. Brian Price (2006) highlights the importance of colour in communicating meaning to audiences. Colour has been used heavily in marketing, and as a way to create a brand. Anthony

[11] Colour has long been a way for artists to convey emotion. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2002) state how in Medieval colour symbolism, black represented penance, white for innocence, red for pentecostal fire etc. When Europeans first encountered Native American people, they called them Red Indians, because of their practice of painting their bodies with red clay (Finlay, 2002). Humans have long used colour as a means of expression and communication. During the early 20th Century, abstract artists returned to this use of symbolic colour for expressing ideas. Colour has been, and still is, used to convey interpersonal meanings and associations. Colour can be used to do things to, or for, people, for example painting hazards in bright orange to warn people of their presence.

Grimes and Isobel Doole state how "colour is found to be a useful and powerful tool in the creation of international brand identity and awareness" (1998: 799). Anthropologist, Sophie Pezzutto (2019) explains the need for webcam performers to stand out on online platforms has led to an increase of marketing known as self-branding. Performers work on creating a brand for their camming. Self branding involves a performer making an organised online identity which targets a specific audience, enabling the performer to build a loyal following (Whitmer, 2019). Branding is crucial for success within the sex industry. Jones (2015a) explains how webcam models, compared to more traditional sex workers, have less restrictions on them, giving them more agency to develop their brands, and colour is an important part of this branding process.

> *Tammy is dancing around her bedroom, using the space between her bed and her office table. An office chair is visible, pushed to the side of the frame. Her bed is neatly made with white and pink check sheets, with some pink cushions visible on the bed. The office chair is draped with a pink nightrobe, a possible prop from earlier in the performance. Fairy lights are twinkling, wrapped around the bedframe glowing softy in the background.*

We begin our journey into colour with pink. Tammy is one of many performers, predominantly female performers, in which the colour pink was a key visible element in their performance spaces. As the quintessentially feminine colour in Western culture, pink has associations with other implicitly gendered concepts as well. Pink is a colour traditionally associated as feminine since the 1920s (Paoletti, 1987). As pink is a cultural code of femininity, it is a colour conventionally avoided by males (Kane, 2006; Pomerleau et al, 1990). During the second wave of feminism, around the 1960s/1970s, Carmel Vaisman (2018) explains how women rejected pink along with the patriarchal stereotypes attached to it. The association of the colour pink transgressed into a sign of homosexuality, due to its association with femininity. However, there are earlier indicators of pink being associated with homosexuality. Linguist, Veronika Koller (2008) explains how there was a heterosexual norm connected to gender, for example, gay men were assumed to be more feminine. She goes on to explain how gay male prisoners kept in Nazi concentration camps were forced to wear pink triangles are visible symbols of their homosexual status. The gay liberation seen after 1969 reclaimed this pink symbol as a way of self reference, which has since been

overshadowed by the rainbow flag. Within contemporary third-wave feminism, several women reclaimed pink to mark their femininity from an equal and independent position. New meanings were created for pink, it became a colour of fun, liberated sexuality, and feminine independence.

Pink is not a well-favoured colour with only just over 7% of participants rating it as their favourite colour, compared to over 10% of participants stating pink was their least favourite colour (Koller, 2008). Gender may be the reason for this data: no men stated pink as their favourite colour, however one in every five male participants placed pink as their least favourite colour (Koller, 2008). These findings were confirmed in a 2019 study by Domicele Jonauskaite et al, who studied colour appreciation in both children and adults. In children, they found that girls chose pink and purple as their favourite colour more often than boys, with the most favoured colour reported by girls and boys as blue. In adults, both women and men almost never chose pink as their favourite colour, rather blue again was the most common favourite colour. Koller (2008) explains how "it is logical that colour should also play a part in social semiotics, i.e. the study of the ideological function of signs in social formations" (2008: 398). Pink is a semiotic source, drawing from complex discourses and models of femininity[12].

Pink is a colour frequently seen during female broadcasts. Colour, whether consciously or unconsciously, is used by performers to convey emotion, atmosphere, and personality. While colour may seem like an insignificant element, it has significance in the scenes created. Pink was seen in several elements including lingerie, additional clothing, such as tops and shorts, as well as clothing accessories, such as tights, suspenders, and shoes. Clothing is noted as one of the most prominent markers of gender identity (Barnes and Eicher, 1992). Colour has an essential role in clothing's function in social code. Michel Pastoureau (2004) explains how this social code enables taxonomies for grouping individuals, positioning them in society. When considering gender, Pastoureau notes how the taxonomy is a binary one, classifying individuals into either male or

[12] Barthes (1972) theorised the process of reading signs and how they were interpreted by different societies and cultures. The signs have both a signifier, the physical form of the sign as it is perceived by the audience, and the signified, the meaning that has been interpreted. Within Barthes' visual semiotics, there are layers of meaning. The first layer is denotation: what or who is being depicted. The second layer is connotation: what ideas and representations are being expressed and how they are being represented (Van Leeuwen, 2001).

female. The volume of pink seen in clothing and lingerie demonstrates a visual marker of femininity.

There are historical meanings both in art and design concerning the colour pink. Barbara Nemitz (2018) explains how there are various shades of pink, all of which have different meanings. There is powdery pastel baby pink, which is associated with childhood, and girly cuteness, and deep shocking pink which is more associated with feistiness and liveliness (Nemitz, 2006). Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen (2006) also note how bright pink was not only perceived as exuberant and positive, it also was seen as vulgar and gaudy. Conversely, pinks with lower saturations, lighter pinks, were perceived as more subtle and soft.

The appeal of 'cuteness' is explained by media anthropologist Gabriella Lukacs' research on net idols based in Japan during the 1990's and early 2000's. Net idols refer to people who have become famous online (Limkangvanmongkol and Abidin, 2018). Lukacs explains their role more in depth:

> "net idols should pursue the kinds of beauty and cuteness that men, not women, appreciate [...] a young woman is not recognised as a net icon unless her site attracts at least a thousand page-views per day, and she appears in magazines and printed photo albums. If women wish to become net idols, they should master the art of cute and develop unique skills of entertainment indispensable for attracting followers" (Lukacs, 2015: 495).

She explores how women performed 'cute' as a way of pleasing their male dominated audiences and increased the financial rewards (2015). Sharon Kinsella (1995/2013) describes cute culture as a combination of escapism and resistance of adult society. Lukacs furthers this stating how: "the net idols reveal that the digital economy extracts value from cute by creating a digital infrastructure within which the production of cute requires young women to perform emotional labor." (ibid: 496). Observations of female performers reflected this, despite being targeted at a Western audience. They are using their own physical appearance, constructed in specific ways including use of the colour pink, to appear cute to their viewers. Here we can see how, much like in the discussion regarding angel wings and teddies, innocence being portrayed by female webcam performers. This association of innocence is also reflected in the shade of pink used. Lighter pinks,

often seen in collaboration with white and pastel colours, portrayed a form of innocence and youth. Additionally, just over 40% of Koller's participants associated pink with childhood. When asking participants for an open category of associations some changed the nouns in the pre-existing list into adjectives (delicate and soft) and some added negative judgements to their associations (childish, false femininity). Kate Gleeson and Hannah Frith (2004) adds how pink does not represent femininity as a whole, it represents a certain kind of femininity. This kind of femininity is passive, innocent, 'girly'.

In a study by Nurlelawati Jalil et al, they identified that pink is highly associated with love by both females and males (2013). Koller (2008) found that different shades of pink had different associations. The pattern within her research seems to show an increase in brightness and saturation fosters sexual links, as well as negative connotations of artificialness and cheapness. Increasing the level of white in the pink shade highlights associations of innocence, which correspondingly is linked to a lack of guilt but also linked to desire. Additionally, most participants associated the colour pink with femininity, romance, sweetness, softness and love (73%, 55.6%, 52.1%, 50.9%, 50.3% of participant association respectively). Semantic fields in this research contradicted each other, such as lust and innocence.

The overabundance of pink, within the female performers space, may be due to how women perceive the colour pink. Koller (2008) shows that women were more likely to attribute pink to certain traits when compared to men. Friendliness, confidence, and being likeable were far more associated with pink by women than men (24.8% v 8%, 16.2% v 4%, 23.9% v 10% respectively). Women associated a greater number of positive emotions to the colour pink when compared to men. No gender difference in colour-emotion associations was observed with the other colours, namely blue and red, in the research (Jonauskaite et al, 2019). Colour choices and preferences can be one of various ways of reinforcing an individual's gender identity (Halim et al, 2014). Penny Sparke suggests that "pinkness reinforced the idea that femininity was a fixed category in the lives of women from childhood onwards and by surrounding themselves with it women could constantly reaffirm their unambiguously gendered selves" (1995:198). As pink was a colour heavily seen in the female performers compared to the male or group performers, perhaps this still holds true to an extent.

The idea of false femininity and its association with pink was of notable value for this research. Koller (2008) notes how the colour pink evoked feelings of unnaturalness and artificiality: a falsehood revealed by use of pink. Through the excessive use of pink, usually bright 'garish' pink, created an embodiment of the notion of false femininity.

> *Holly is leaning back on her bed, white sheets underneath her and pink fluffy pillows behind her. She has a full face of makeup on, completed with bubblegum pink lipstick. Singing along to the music playing in the background, she replies to viewers speaking aloud, gigging frequently. Her blonde hair is pulled into pigtails and she is wearing pink lingerie, finished with a pink choker around her neck, on it dangles a metal heart cut out.*

Holly evokes a sense of sweetness through her use of the colour pink; however the sheer abundance of pink creates a sense of artificiality. There is a sweetness that does not seem genuine: a carefully constructed persona displayed to her viewers. She also creates a level of childlike girliness through her setup and performance, and this is something that will be discussed in more detail later on. It is difficult to tell if the viewers are also sharing in my observations. Perhaps my status as researcher allows me the distance to notice this level of false femininity being performed; perhaps the viewers rather choose to accept the reality as it is presented to them.

Group performances, that consisted of female performers, also utilised pink and other feminine qualities in their performances.

> *Three women are laughing and chatting to each other, kneeling on a bed. They are all wearing matching pale pink crop tops, paired with black knickers. Behind them shine fairy lights trailing around the bed frame, with fluffy pink pillows visible on the bed. The sound of a new tip fills the room, followed by the women thanking the tipper.*

Through the information shared on the chat, it was clear these women all had solo performer rooms, and this group session acted almost like an advertisement for them to promote their individual rooms. The group performance here adheres to the aesthetics and curation of female performers' rooms, which may also be reflected on their own personal rooms. The colour pink again is used to reinforce the femininity displayed during this group performance.

Pink is not the only notable colour seen in the observations. White was also visible in several rooms, most commonly seen in largely used by female performers. Marketing scholar, Mubeen Aslam (2006) states how historically, white has denoted chastity and purity. This however is only true of post-industrial countries of the so-called global north countries, with so-called global south countries such as China, Japan, and Korea associate white with death and mourning. Two of the webcam sites I examined were based in the USA, with the third based in the Netherlands. Although webcam performers could be based in any country, content was catered to a Western market, so the Western associations of white are more applicable for this research. Alexa.com, a website traffic analyst site, confirms this western market for camming site, Chaturbate, with the major markets being the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany in May 2021 (Alexa.com, 2021).

White was seen in various ways, most often seen in the backgrounds for the performers, such as plain white walls, or white curtains. White was commonly seen as the choice for bedding and pillows. White was also seen in some lingerie worn by female performers. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2002) note that white is linked to innocence and transparency. Additionally, Christina Probert (1984) highlights how the symbolic meaning for the colour white reflects the purity and the innocence of girls gained significance within western society. The performer needs to be desirable to their audience, in order to be successful. The choice to use white heavily within the aesthetics forms part of the performer's identity as pure, and innocent. The colour white is also associated with the innocence and goodness of youth, which is explored through historical paintings. In one painting, “Madonna and Child with Saints Catherine and Thomas (sacra conversazione)” by Lorenzo Lotto, an angel is seen watching over an infant: the angel is wearing white, which is both a symbol of the angel itself, as well as the baby being pure (see appendix 3). In another painting, a woman is pictured in a white nightgown, indicating she is young and pure (Google Arts and

Culture, N.D). Youth, femininity, and innocence are also associated with girls. Emma Maguire (2018) states how young women are often viewed as objects of desire, who can be voyeuristically consumed. Youth as a category of sexual desire is popular, with Sociologist and anti-porn activist Gail Dines (2010) stating that teen porn is a well searched pornography category. PornHub (2019) showed in their 2019 year in review statistics that 'teen' was their 12th most searched for term. There is a desire for youth in the sex industry which can provide one explanation as to why some female performers chose to portray themselves in youthful, innocent, and pure colours.

White is also associated with cleanliness. The idea that dirt and impurity is not only associated with black and darkness, it is also opposed to white and is something that can contaminate the purity of the white (Adams & Osgood, 1973; Williams & Roberson, 1967). Mary Douglas articulates this thinking in her book Purity and Danger, in which she writes how "pollution is a source of danger altogether in a different class" (1966: 123). She argues that all modern cultures have concepts of what is considered pure and impure. Dirt is considered out of place and must be eradicated. White must remain unstained and unblemished to stay pure. Gary Sherman and Gerald Clore (2009) demonstrate how this association can be seen in society by the widespread practice of brides wearing white. This is a manifestation of a bride's purity. They add that "sin is not just dirty, it is black" (2009: 1024). By performers' use of the colour white, they are representing themselves as pure: they are not sinful in their presentations, despite the 'deviance' in their potential sexual actions.

Pink and white were colours commonly seen in female performers' rooms, but less so in male rooms: very few male rooms used the colour pink in any form. This may be due to the feminine association ascribed to the colour pink, as explored above. Pink was seen in male rooms but very infrequently, rather a larger array of colours were shown in male spaces. Dafflon Novelle (2010) states how male colour choices did not include pink. This may be related to the development of gender identity causing boys to avoid the colour pink as a means of dissociating from the female stereotype (2010: cited in Jonauskaite et al, 2019).

Green, red, blue, and purple instead were more visible colours in male spaces, seen in various elements including bed sheets, pillows, and backgrounds. Colours in male rooms varied

considerably more than in female rooms. However, when considering male rooms with a more professional style, colour was utilised to create atmospheres. Here, professional style rooms are referring to rooms which followed certain criteria such as little visible furniture and personal objects, high quality lighting and camera streams, as well as the more structured style of the broadcast itself. These more professional style rooms tended to have a darker hue in terms of lighting, and more complementary colours were used together (e.g., blues and purples). Koller (2008) notes that male consumers are presented with a range of black and blue colours. Generally, there was less harmonisation between backgrounds, objects, and outfits when comparing male rooms and those seen in female rooms. So why is this colour palette so varied across male rooms? Colour, in general, seems like less of a consideration for the male performers. This, however, may be more down to there being a much greater number of female performers, which consequently have a higher rate of professional webcammers. Additionally, there are more easily accessible resources available for female performers, due to the larger audience base.

This colour palette is also complimented by lighting. Lighting creates an ambience: an atmosphere of intimacy. Lighting as a feature of webcamming was almost always included in 'tips and tricks' and 'help' webpages for webcam performers (Aella, 2018). Cinematographer Philip Cowan adds how "creating a naturalistic, or realistic, image does not mean using only available or 'natural' light. Often a naturalistic look needs to be artificially created" (2015: 143). All of the rooms observed displayed some form of lighting. This ranged from using just the ceiling light, to more professional lighting kits. Male rooms tended to show less professional lighting rigs, favouring ceiling lights and lamp shades as the light source. There were some exceptions to this majority, however.

> *Dominic, a male webcam performer, is sitting on a sofa, leaning back into the grey cushions. Not much else is visible, and he has positioned the camera at the sofa which fills most of the frame. Music plays in the background, but it is the only sound audible. Dominic does not speak, rather chats using the keyboard which he keeps out of the shot of the camera, occasionally smirking as a response. He is faintly illuminated under green neon lighting, the tubes attached to the wall above the sofa.*

No other lights appeared to be used, rather only a green glow of neon, and a faint glow from his computer screen.

The green glow adds a dimension to an otherwise basic webcam set up. By transgressing the more traditional lighting set up for webcam performers, Dominic is able to create a sense of mystery for the viewer. This appeared to be a successful operation for Dominic: no viewers complained about the lighting, rather were drawn into this mystifying figure. Just like the non-nude models I spoke of earlier, not all was immediately visible to the viewer. Eroticism is drawn out of the neon lights; he is something to be discovered by the viewer.

The lighting is an important part of the webcamming environment: the viewer has to be able to see the person broadcasting. Lights can be used in various ways to create atmospheres and show personality. The lighting and reflections need to be considered to give the viewer the best experience. Here I refer back to a quote by Marin referring to how they adapted to lighting their set up:

"using a desk and an ironing board to do some lights and the camera from the side so there was less of a reflection on the face that kinda stuff so yeah it was interesting"

They had to improvise by repurposing everyday household items into part of the webcam environment to make the lighting better. The lighting was considered important to this set up and adaptations were needed to create the right look and atmosphere with the materials they had. As technological devices have become cheaper and more accessible, the quality of equipment is greater. Sarah Ashton et al (2019) note how improvements in cameras, as well as cheaper, wider lenses, allow for higher resolution content. This means performers can be less reliant on studio lighting. Olivia was less reliant in using studio lighting during her broadcasts, but stated if she wanted to be successful in the industry now, she would have to update her equipment:

"I didn't have any special lighting, but I had like one of those lamps and I had like one of those things you have on photoshoots, you know like a light reflector. I didn't have a ring

light or anything which again if I had to to work now I would probably need all of that stuff"

The larger availability and accessibility of lighting sources for the performer was also seen in more low-tech options such as fairy lights. Fairy lights were often seen in rooms, used less so as a lighting source, but more as an aesthetic addition to the rooms. On a webcamming performers help site, fairy lights are aimed towards female performers as an addition to their rooms. Fairy lights were described as "so soft and girly and give a very sweet look to your room on cam. [...] They give you that sought after girl-next-door look" (CamgirlMFC, 2015). Fairy lights were commonly seen in female rooms but were also observed in one male performer and one trans performer's room. The male performer had fairy lights trailed on the bed, which complemented the purple bedding and floral cushions. The trans performer had fairy lights dangled on the floral wallpaper behind them. These lights, even when not used by female performers, evoke a feeling of soft comfort; the lights add an element of appealing sweetness. As a result, the environments that have fairy lights in them convey the performers in a certain way: they are warm and feminine. Here we have a culmination of the presentation of 'girly' sexuality. The warm fairy lights, the plush teddies, the white innocence and the pink feminine all create a presentation of sexuality that is desirable for viewers. There is a fine line between acting too feminine and being branded artificial, to acting too childlike and risk facing a ban. The performer presents themselves as innocent waiting to be corrupted, a perfect mix of the virgin whore. They hover between portraying the "good girls" who preserve their virginity to the morally corrupt "cheap, bad girls" (Mulya, 2018).

7.5 Act 4: Technological devices

Technological devices are not traditionally highlighted in mise-en-scene examinations yet are a major part of webcamming. This section is a unique addition to encapsulate how technological devices are used and seen within webcam performances. Technological devices are a significant consideration when dealing with something that would not be able to happen, should such devices not exist, and I wanted this to be reflected with my analysis of webcamming environments.

7.5.1 The keyboard

Across all groups, there were a large number of performances who made attempts to 'hide' certain technological elements. The keyboard in particular was often kept just out of shot range: the viewer knew the performer was typing, as this was either audible or because chat from them was visible, however the decision was made by the performer to keep the keyboard out of shot. Whilst the performer may unconsciously do this, a large number of performers do this, meaning there is some importance to this action. Barry Smith (2005) states how "the audience is content to suspend disbelief". By keeping the keyboard out of shot, it keeps the viewers in a suspended reality. The technology used partially to allow this interaction is hidden, allowing for the viewer to maintain a deeper immersion. This is a phenomenon supported by research in virtual technology environments. Alia Kronqvist et al explains how "the level of perceived authenticity can be ascertained by measuring the levels of immersion people experience in their [virtual environment] interactions" (2016: 1). I argue that the same principle is applicable here. The viewer's immersion is maintained by the performers hiding objects that highlight the separation between the viewer and the performer. One less actor in the network is visible allowing for the collapse between virtual and geographical bounds.

Arne Dekker et al (2020) uses experimental design research to explore evidence which suggests that Virtual Reality (VR) pornography creates feelings of intimacy and the illusion of interaction with the performers. By comparing traditional 2D pornography films and VR pornography, they confirmed the anecdotal evidence stating that "participants felt more desired, more flirted with, more looked into the eyes in the VR condition. They were also more likely to feel connected with the actors and more likely to feel the urge to interact with them" (ibid: 3). VR pornography is able to elicit the illusion of intimate sexual experiences. Although both of their conditions were pre-recorded, I argue there is a similar effect happening here. By removing the keyboard, the viewer is more immersed into the scene, strengthening this illusion of an intimate sexual experience. During Marin's and their partners' experience of webcamming, the concealment of the keyboard highlighted the 'constructed authenticity' of their performances. As we recall from Chapter 5, whilst Marin's partner was doing the on camera performing, Marin was off screen replying to the chat comments, whilst both maintained the appearance that it was the partner replying.

"I was on the chair in a position was being able to see the text comments, I would answer the text but it would look like my ex was actually answering the texting [...] so we put the camera in angles to look like she was typing but I was actually typing"

The viewer believes they are talking to the performer so their illusion of the real remains unblemished. In this scenario, Marin and their partner were attempting to be authentic to an extent but the pretence of authenticity was more important for them as their goal was financially motivated. The performer was presenting themselves in a constructed fantasy. These fantasies are presented in a believable way as there are authentic elements intertwined with concealed falsehoods.

7.5.2 The camera

The presentation of the performer is also largely informed by what the viewer sees. The performer choosing what the viewer sees was also evident during the performances. Performers made framing decisions, adjusting what was visible to the viewer. In films, *mise-en-scène* is intended to guide the viewer's eye through each scene, a similar effect is seen in webcam performances. The camera framing and angles are strategically used to keep the viewers' attention on the performer. Cameras were moved during the performance to show what the performer deemed important. This was done in various ways including manually moving it or by using technology enabled devices. These devices allowed the performer to use a small remote control to tilt, move and zoom the camera without having to move from their position. The framing of the camera was not a fixed decision rather a constantly evolving thought process for the duration of a performance. Performers were very aware of how they were being portrayed through the framing of the camera and as such moved the camera when necessary to get the best angle. Models who were more dynamic tended to move their cameras more to ensure they were framed in the way they felt most appropriate.

Performers are also taking on the role of 'director' through their framing decisions. Choices were made by the performer that were occasionally informed by what the viewer was requesting to see, on what the camera was focused on. The viewer's preferences only had an impact on the performers' framing decisions when tips were given. Requests that were not accompanied by tips are not welcomed by most webcam performers, with Angela Jones (2015b) stating some

performers ban viewers for not tipping. Furthermore, several webcam performers state on their profiles that there are no free requests. If a viewer wants a certain view, this almost always will be occupied by a tip for the performer to consider it. This further exemplifies the interplay between the money in capitalist society and sexual services and technological devices: they cannot be separated.

> *Maria is standing up in her bedroom, the bed visible behind her. She is wearing just a pair of white knickers at this point during her performance. A small remote is seen in her hand which is controlling her camera. Often occupied by tips and requests from her viewers, she would use the remote to make the camera focus and zoom in on certain areas of her body. One viewer requested to show the bottom half of her body which she did, turning around, positioning her body to get a better angle.*

Technological devices such as remotes help to facilitate shows easier for the performer. Also more simple technological actions such as muting also were seen in shows. The performer is able to mute their side of the performance as well as being able to mute viewers from text communication. In one instance, a performer received a phone call during her show and muted the video so she was able to take the call without the viewers hearing it. A certain level of technical control is only available to the performer and they have the final decision on how they present themselves on a technical level. This control was also necessary to meet the specifications and requirements required by webcamming platforms.

7.5.3 Specifications and requirements

For a performer to even get to the broadcasting stage, performers need to meet technological specifications. Jones (2020c) explains how although the camming industry is a billion-dollar industry, which has contributed to significant growth and economic commerce, it still remains inaccessible to some. She states that for a model to begin camming they require not only a physical location in which to cam from, they also need certain technological devices - a camera, a computer, and lighting; as well as having access to decent internet, which can cost a considerable amount of money. Inequality is generated through a global capitalist society, denying some the opportunity

to work as a cam model. The resources that are essential to start webcamming can provide a possible explanation as to why some people are forced into working under exploitative conditions.

Technical specifications were something highlighted by my interviewee Marin, even before gaining access to a site to begin broadcasting:

> *"I think a lot of people have to do that urm in order to meet the requirements of a specific website. We found that when we were looking at the websites even the sign up and send photographs they had to be you know of professional standard urm or you know certain dimensions"*

Even just to be allowed access onto the site, performers had to demonstrate they could meet the requirements. These requirements were less alluded to on the webcamming websites, rather highlighting the ease of the registration process. On myfreecams for example, an individual needs to register to become a model, only after this application is approved is the model is provided with specific information regarding payments, the rules, and everything else required to get started (Myfreecams, N.D). Although Marin does not state why the webcam sites require these elements, it is presumably a result of the website wanting to uphold a certain level of broadcast quality. This corresponds to what Marin says about higher status websites being more meticulous over the performers and the spaces to be broadcast.

> *"It was quite specific before it would give you a login urm so I think a lot of websites urm especially ones that you pay more for urm a quite specific and pre- scripted of the staging"*

As explored earlier, there is a panoptic gaze from the webcamming site themselves, with little information provided as to how this moderation takes place and how frequently. The performers are unaware of the forms of potential surveillance, with the webcamming sites wanting to ensure that no rules are being broken, just as a prison panopticon model is performed. High quality technology was crucial. For Marin and their partner, they were not able to simply turn on a laptop and get started. It required going to buy additional equipment in order to meet the specification of the website. For mainstream sites at least, there are many more elements needed to start broadcasting.

"we definitely found that you know even the quality of the video you can't just use your camera or you know your laptop webcam you had to actually go and physically go and buy a high definition one"

The Verge, a technology news website, crowned the webcam as the gadget of 2020 (Byford, 2020). Sam Byford notes how "2020 was a year in which bedrooms turned into boardrooms, with millions of people learning to work from home for the first time" (Byford, 2020: N.P). What is most notable is the webcam is not a new technological device, nor has the basis for it changed within the last 10 years: "Webcams have been around forever, but for many people unexpectedly thrown into the reality of working from home, it took the events of 2020 to highlight how inadequate and inert their recent development has been" (Byford, 2020: N.P). The lack of quality in standard webcams means performers are unable to use them and get the best visual results. As stated by Marin, the standard webcam, although accessible for many, simply does not provide the high-definition image quality needed to be successful in webcamming. As well as requiring high-definition cameras, the websites also used software's which were only compatible with certain cameras.

"yeah, we went to buy a couple [of cameras] actually, even then the high definition the software wouldn't support the upload to these websites they had their own software obviously collecting all the uploads so you know a lot of cameras wouldn't support so there is quite specific and we had to spend quite a bit of money on the camera"

Olivia also continually bought and updated her technological devices for webcamming:

"I bought this massive gaming laptop so I can run multiple streaming sites and see all of my porn which cost me like £2000. My webcam, which I had to buy, was top quality and cost about £400 as well as buying a separate mic. I was constantly spending money always investing in you know like software, equipment or tech"

Additionally, Chaturbate Support (N.Dc) has a list of technical specifications aimed at new users. This is a detailed list of information, some of which is fairly technical. They recommended an

'Upload Bandwidth' speed, with a Chaturbate specific speed test website to test internet speeds on Chaturbate before broadcasting by using Chaturbate's servers. They also list information regarding In-Browser Broadcaster systems to start broadcasting and Open Broadcaster Software which gives users more customisation options. They continue to list information regarding controlling the room with privacy settings. Understanding this mass of information requires a decent level of technological knowledge. This is another facet of the inequality to resources that Jones' (2020c) talks about. It is not necessarily a financial pitfall, rather an intellectual resource required to set up and broadcast. There are several technical and aesthetic suggestions that webcam sites give to their performers. Marin stated how:

> *"there is a whole list of suggestions like putting the webcam so many centimetres away from the edge of the bed and urm if you're going to use a computer chair the chair needs to be on wheels so you can spin it away from the view of the camera quickly"*

These are issues unseen by the viewer and are happening in the background. Here I refer back to Erving Goffman, in that all of this setup is performed backstage. The performer chooses and uses specific software that is most beneficial for them and their rooms, and the viewer only sees the product of this. Work is done backstage which goes unseen by the viewer. Only once the performer has been granted access onto a website, ensuring all of the specifications and aesthetic qualities are met, can they then begin to broadcast. Helda Sadowski states that webcam performers must have a "technological inventiveness" in order to successfully navigate the demands (2020: 3). This "technological inventiveness" is a consideration of feminist scholar, Susanna Paasonen (2005) who explores the gendered role of labour within the online realm. The work of women in online spaces is generally presumed as technically unskilled: there is more of a focus on making a connection with the audience. Amateur performances have an intimate feel as "their authors are not assumed to be skilled enough to manufacture the things they depict but are assumed to merely record things with the available technology" (ibid: 93). Consequently, Paasonen states how amateur performances are often generalised as feminine, due to the lack of visible technological skill and a focus on forming relationships.

Although technology has advanced to make webcamming more accessible and easier to do, it still requires a level of understanding that is overlooked by the audience, due to its general occurrence in the backstage. The viewers are in a unique position in that they are not aware of the setting up and staging of the performance. The audience only sees the 'finished product', once the cameras, lighting, computer, and devices have been set up. Here we can see how commodity fetishism, as coined by Karl Marx (1867/1990), is occurring. Once a product is produced and enters the market, the value ascribed to the product separates from the production process. In the context of webcamming, the production is the setup which is separated from the product: the broadcasts. The value of the product is based on the finished product. The hidden set up of technology allows the viewer to believe in the amateur nature of webcamming. It enables the notion of the 'girl next door' illusion (Mowlabocus, 2008) to hold true within their beliefs. The artificiality of the constructed scene is something that remains unseen to the viewer, further perpetuating the notion of 'constructed authenticity' which flows through these broadcasts. Marin was asked about the production of webcam environments and why they believe several of the rooms were presented in a similar way. Marin believed this had more to do with what the websites were asking performers to do to meet the requirements:

> *"they have their own quality control measures and it's their reputation, they are making money you are only making about 40% of what you take if you're lucky and the first week you work for free and so you know you have to make, and you have to meet those strict in order to what to put on that websites and within those confides"*

Here I argue how there is a clash between how the webcamming site advertises their performers and what they actually expect from performers themselves. Again, there is a 'girl next door' illusion created by webcamming sites to their customers (Mowlabocus, 2008), full of promises the performers on their site are just doing it for fun, for their own enjoyment, in their free time. However, as explained by Marin, there are several technological elements that a performer must comply with in order to broadcast. This is also mentioned on top webcamming site, Bongacams, who state that "[a] model with a poor Internet connection will never be listed at the top of our models list no matter how many tokens she earns or how much time she spends online" (bongamodels.com, 2020). High tech devices are crucial for visibility, meaning those who cannot

access or afford these expensive devices are at a disadvantage. Performers with more professional, higher tech devices are able to remain visible to potential viewers.

This constructed performance arena, as demonstrated through the various uses of mise-en-scene, comes at direct opposition to authenticity. On the surface, the construction, and broadcasts of webcamming appears to be similar to the filmmaking movement of No Move Cinema. This style of film emerged in the late 1970s out of New York City, which largely featured performance art, responses to social issues, as well as New York as a subject (Yokobosksy, 2006) and films were usually made with technically unsophisticated equipment (Goddard, 2013).

> "Apart from the engagement with the New York punk and No Wave scenes, there are thematics of role playing, the exploration of remote and disreputable corners of the city, often associated with the porn industry or hustling, and the exploration of power relations and sexuality, frequently in combination" (Goddard, 2013: 9).

While some webcam broadcasts certainly could be classed as similar to this process, the popular mainstream websites are not, despite having this façade. Some notable No Move Cinema films include notions of "instinctual self-exploitation", as well as blurring of private and public power relationships (Goddard, 2013: 10). These mainstream sites are carefully designed to appear authentic yet these performers are constrained by specifications which breaks down this authenticity. Explorations of power and sexuality are explored through webcamming, the former being more subtle, yet under the guise of truth. It poses the consideration that this makes webcamming sites more inauthentic than traditional porn sites due to this constructed facade of authenticity. Performers are rarely the 'girl-next-door' rather portray themselves as such and perform a kind of sexuality to construct a successful persona. This construction as we have examined is carefully considered through the manufacturing of the scene, props, and costumes, through the colour and lighting, as well as the technological elements.

7.6 Encore: Hardware

This section explores teledildonics seen during webcam performances. Continuing from our previous discussion, I unpack how teledildonics are established and how they can be understood in relation to spatial dynamics and power relations. The concept of teledildonics has been established by Lina Fuller (2003); David Levy (2007) and Regina Lynn (2004) and there have been several definitions for the term. These definitions unify the idea of sexual interaction that is united through remote controlled devices: "computer-controlled sex devices" (Levy, 2007: 263) and "computer-mediated remote control of sex toys that simulate the penis, mouth, or vagina" (Döring, 2000: 864). I have decided to use the definition offered by Leighton Evans, describing teledildonics as "technology for remote sex or remote masturbation where tactile sensations are communicated via a data link between participants" (2020:2). Technology moves quickly and other definitions do not encapsulate the technological possibilities with such devices, therefore it is important to keep updating the definition as required.

Commonly seen on webcamming streams are Lush devices, quickly identifiable with their bright pink appearance. The Lush 2[13] is a teledildonics device, a remote-control vibrator which is controlled by Bluetooth, that is a bright pink depiction of lust (Lovense, 2021). A large majority of users of all categories used a Lush device in their webcam streams. Pink is the sole colour of the Lovense Lush 2, a device used by performers that can be virtually operated by viewers. Viewers are able to operate this device via internet controls, which are set up by the performer to be associated with certain tip amounts.

There is also a gendered dynamic to the Lovense devices. The webpage for the Lush 2, the device which the majority of webcam performers use, is overtly gendered on the webpage (Lovense, 2021). The webpage for the Lovense used for webcamming is clearly targeted towards female customers, with the images demonstrating the device showing stylised female consumers, all of which are suggestive of thin, young, able-bodied bodies with Eurocentric features, being 'controlled' by male figures (see figure X). The webpage browser reads "Let him control you..."

[13] The Lovense Lush 2 model has since been replaced with the Lovense Lush 3 model, and the website now only shows the Lush 3 as available to purchase. Visually, not much has changed, bar a small magnet charging port on the device, the colour and main shape remains the same as the Lush 2.

visible in the internet tab. This reflects the cis-heteronormative society. This also reinforces Maria Faustino's (2018) notion of coital imperative. Sex is idealised as a cis man penetrating a cis woman, despite the advances in new technologies which goes beyond this, allowing for much more diversity and possibilities within sex. This echoes Berland and Warner's (1998) argument that heteronormative sex is supported through institutions, which here I argue includes Lovense. By framing this through Gayle Rubin's (1984) charmed circle of normative and deviant sexual practices, the Lush device can be seen as reinforcing rather than challenging this hierarchy. As Faustino states there is "a strong resonance of the reproductive model" (2018: 256), which remains directed at penetration between man and woman. Other sexual practices are largely considered as optional or as a step towards the goal of penetrative sex. The Lush device therefore appears to be contributing to the reinforcement of heteronormativity in sexual practice, suggesting despite the technology revolution and development of the thinking around sex, Rubin's sex hierarchy remains relevant to understanding norms of online sexual practice.

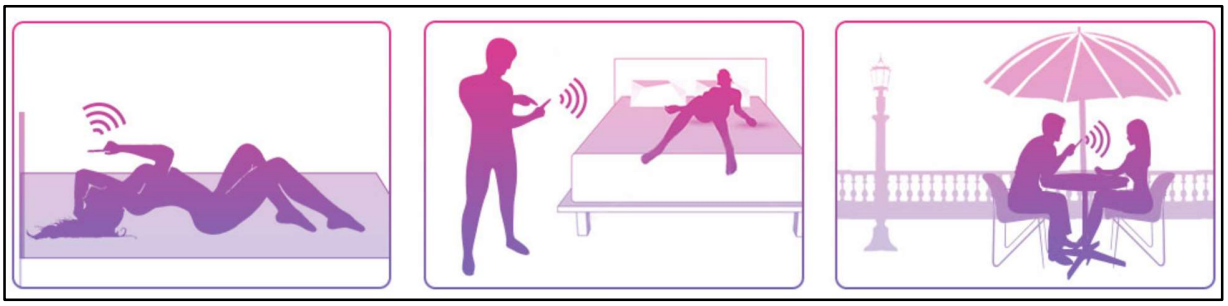

Figure 3: A series of images on the Lovense website depicting a female figure using the Lush 3 in various ways (Lovense, 2021).

The Lush 2, and now the Lush 3, is branded in one colour - bright pink. As Konstantinos Michos (2019) explains, pink has become synonymous with femininity. Sandra Lee Bartky explains how "femininity as spectacle is something in which virtually every woman is required to participate" (1997: 101). Femininity is enacted through the use of the hot pink vibrator. The Lovense being only available in pink demonstrates how the product has been designed for female consumers. This is reflected in feminised erotic boutiques, who profit from its feminine colour design, featuring "soft pink décor and natural light" (Crewe and Martin, 2017: 588). An atmosphere of intimacy is employed within physical erotic boutiques aimed at female consumers, which is mirrored by the Lovense website. Sexual media scholar, Clarissa Smith (2007) adds that some sex toys design have

a perfect finish, hinting at pleasure, which are described as sparkling and polished. There is an artificial perfection to the designs with curves and colours that are designed to be feminine. She adds that clear, pink, and lavender are the bestselling colours. The female designs reflect the evocativeness of female sexuality as sensual and curvy when compared to male designs. There was a consensus in research focusing on male sex toys that there was less of a concern to appeal to male tastes or needs "since men will buy anything that gets the job done." (Ronen, 2020: 13)

Despite a clear audience being targeted by Lovense of the bright pink Lush device; they were commonly seen across all performers in my observations. Olivia explains how teledildonic devices were gaining traction towards the end of her camming career:

> *"they were getting popular just as I was leaving, it was one of those things like I cannot be assed, like absolutely not no. I just could not do it so I knew it was my time to bow out"*

Given how easily the Lovense device can be integrated into various webcamming platforms, the connectivity and incorporation of the Lovense is a significant factor in its usage across genders, regardless of the target market. The female targeted advertising of these devices may be more due to the fact that the webcamming arena is largely dominated by female performers, thus they are going to want to maximise profits by focusing their advertising efforts. The Lovense brand does offer other products that can be integrated into webcamming platforms but the status of the Lush 2 seems to be the go-to teledildonic device for most performers.

The Lush 2 device is described as being patented vibrators that respond to tips from viewers. The technology allows for the performer to set their own tip limits, connect multiple toys, and give live control to the viewers (Lovense, 2020). Maria Faustino (2018) explains how by joining sexual interaction to the audio-visual dimension, a different dynamic is created when considering webcam facilitated cybersex. This visual framework exposes the body, it creates the possibility of being seen as well as seeing. What was once obscured, elements such as gender, ethnicity, appearance, is now visible. As such webcam "has everything to do with bodies—namely, seeing and being seen as sex objects" (Waskul, 2007: 284). Nicola Döring (2000) adds how this highlights both exhibitionism and voyeurism. Faustino concludes noting how teledildonics is a new stage in

cybersex research: its features and its "disrupting potential" require scrutiny and further examination (2018: 245).

Although the performer is in charge of setting the lengths and intensity of vibrations on their teledildonic device, the viewers are in charge of functioning the device. It goes from one single person having control to potentially thousands of individuals being able to control the device: the performer is disposed to the tippers' requests. This was occasionally reflected in a Lovense tip queue which shows when multiple tips have been given in relation to a teledildonic device, a queue of these tips, alongside viewers usernames are listed. The performer gives up a level of bodily autonomy: the control of the teledildonics is given to the viewer. The viewer can dictate what is done to the performer, how and when to interact via sex toys, and have command over level of pleasure. At any given time and place, every viewer who tips the desired amount is able to control the sensations felt by the performer. However, it is not quite as simple as the power being transferred to the viewer, leaving the performer powerless. The performer is the one who gives this control over, which is a powerful act itself. They are not powerless rather provide the viewers with a sense of power, whilst also controlling their own power. Foucault's (1982) discussion on power and sexuality becomes relevant again here. Women are liberated from power being exerted over them as they themselves have granted permission for their devices to be operated by paying customers. I argue that the women using teledildonics are commodifying their own bodies yet are perceived to be giving up control over their body to the customer.

Teledildonics play a role in organising and reviving financial activity on the webcamming sites, which may explain why they are such a popular technological device. Through the incentivisation, there is a process of objectification: it turns sexual services into items in a tip menu (Callon and Muniesa, 2005). There is a reframing of sexual services to make them marketable (Muniesa et al, 2007). Van Doorn and Velthuis (2018) conclude noting that through experimenting with various software and functionality, performers are pursuing means of expanding their financial gain within a competitive market.

Teledildonics emerge from the expanding interaction between sex and technology. As explored by Eduardo Martins (2019) tip operated vibrators bring the viewers and the performers together.

There is a collapse in space: people are bought together regardless of geographical location. Referencing back to Haraway's (1985/2000) notion of the cyborg, teledildonic devices act as cyborg. They are a rejection of the boundaries that separate human from machine. Zygmunt Bauman (1998) states how sex is a natural, not cultural, product, shared across non-human species. Given how teledildonics are boundary crossing entities, the notion of cyborg here presents a challenge to this natural product. Yet as Haraway explains, there is no 'pure' nature: it has all been infiltrated by technology. Sex is no different. The cyborg notion of the teledildonics do not change the naturalness of sex, rather enhances the human capability, to use Gray et al (1995) term. The viewer's tip has a real time effect on the performer despite the distance. The performer is within their own space collapsing the boundary between the viewer and the performer. The Lovense acts as a mediator, bringing together multiple parties through technology. This bringing together creates and unifies a collective of bodies into a large connected sexual network. This, Feona Attwood argues, has converted society into "sexual cyborgs" (2009: xiv). Machines control the sexual experience and deepens the intensity generated. This network, created of blurred boundaries, becomes confused further. The natural, human experiences which are produced, including sexual relations and responses, are being conveyed through technology. The division between human and machine becomes more indistinct. Wearable technologies, including teledildonics, enable the wearer to have technology working collaboratively with their body (Thomas, 2012). Teledildonics can therefore be positioned within the cyborg imagination (Haraway, 1991), highlighting the transgression of physical and non-physical boundaries and borders. The boundaries of identity are volatile. The body is transformed, reconfigured, and established in different ways through the use of these devices, which adds to the unstable boundaries. The sexual cyborg becomes a way of restructuring how boundaries of sex and sexual identities can be understood. After all, "why should our bodies end at the skin, or include at best other beings encapsulated by skin?" (Haraway, 1991: 178).

8. Conclusion

The overall aim of this thesis was to gain a better understanding of how models curate their webcam performance space and to explore the relationship between domestic space and sexual performance. In order to achieve this aim there were three key research questions:

1. How do webcam models curate their physical space for webcamming?
2. How does the performance of sexuality inform the construction of space?
3. How is the subculture of 'deviant' sex workers represented within their domestic space?

This thesis has made an original contribution to the criminological understanding of erotic spaces of webcam performers and how these spaces can be linked to gender performativity. Research has previously overlooked online sex work, particularly the spaces and settings of this type of work. This research has unpacked how online erotic spaces can be explored through the notions of surveillance and visibility. I have addressed how models create, structure, and perform in their workspaces, not only considering female performers, who are dominant in literature, but also explored how male and transgender performers create and use their work environments to portray their sexual identity, who has been previously overlooked in research.

I developed Bernstein's (2007) 'bounded authenticity' further exploring notions of manufactured authenticity to non-human elements, environments, and atmospheres. I refer to this new conceptualisation as 'constructed authenticity'. I argue that performers create spaces to appear as authentic yet are comparable to theatre sets. The notion of 'constructed authenticity' is applicable to a range of disciplines with multiple applications for further research. Within my research I have contributed a more developed understanding of how performers construct their webcamming environments and how this informs the performativity of gender and sexuality. Throughout this research, I argue that webcamming challenges theories of surveillance and visibility.

8.1 Research aims and findings

This thesis set out to explore webcamming environments that have been overlooked within the current literature. Despite webcamming being a relatively new phenomenon within sex work, the spaces the performers tended to be taken for granted with little exploration in scholarly research. Research has mainly focused on the feminist perspectives of webcam performers, the structure of the webcamming sites, and experiences of the performers themselves, leaving the more spatial aspects of webcamming not investigated.

Drawing on a triad of theory from Actor Network Theory, the 'real' and authenticity, and surveillance, visibility and spatial theory, this thesis develops a unique theoretical perspective to develop an understanding of erotic spaces. By applying this theoretical framework throughout, it has revealed associations between intersecting areas, such as authenticity seen within space and performance. This conclusion outlines how the three research questions have been addressed in this thesis below.

1. How do webcam models curate their physical space for webcamming?

Throughout my data collection, I have found that webcam models curate their physical spaces in specific ways during their performances. I discovered that male, female, and trans performers curated their rooms in significantly different ways.

Female models largely curated their rooms in line with gendered expectations, using props, colour, lighting, and costume, to highlight their own femininity, and at times over emphasising this femininity. These workspaces were curated to appear authentic to the viewer. From my observations, I argue that webcam performers can perform a level of authenticity that, importantly, is perceived as authentic by viewers, however the performers themselves are able to maintain and conceal their own identities. There is an interplay between the 'reel' and the 'real' that at times can be difficult to distinguish between. Female performers often played between these elements, leaving an air of ambiguity over authenticity. This research has shown how when looking at performer's rooms, specifically female performers, rooms are void of personal elements. I have found that performers rooms are constructed in very specific ways to generate a level of

authenticity, but the performer is able to maintain their own privacy and security within their domestic space.

As a result of my data, I introduce the notion of 'constructed authenticity' within webcamming, furthering Elizabeth Bernstein's (2007) work on 'bounded authenticity'. Building on Bernstein's work, which focuses on manufactured authentic connections between a buyer and seller, I have extended this idea to non-human elements, environments, and atmospheres. This new conceptualisation has allowed the importance of material objects to be fully considered and understood regarding their importance of building a perceivable authentic experience for the viewer. Through my data collection, I argue that performers create spaces to appear as authentic yet are comparable to theatre sets: an illusion for the viewer to consume as if it were reality. The concept of 'constructed authenticity' is applicable to a variety of areas in criminology, particularly within visual criminology research.

Of the trans performers rooms that I observed, they all conformed to transfeminine identities. As a result, their rooms reflected similar construction and curation of female rooms. There were similar exploits of colour, lighting, costume, and props, to create a feminine atmosphere within these rooms. These spaces followed the notion of 'constructed authenticity', presented as authentic yet were carefully constructed by the performer. The illusion for the viewer, as seen in female rooms, was replicated with the majority of trans performers rooms.

Male performers' rooms also had a lot less homogeneity both on the same websites and also across multiple websites. As we have explored above, female rooms largely followed similar patterns of construction and curation. Male rooms tended not to follow these patterns. Within the male rooms, there were more visible items, including personal items, and it appeared as if male performers had generally made less of an attempt to remove lots of items from the webcamming environment. There was also less of an attempt to create an atmosphere through colour and lighting, that was a pervasive element to female performers' rooms. Colour, and its associations to traditional gender norms, was a salient element used by female performers, whether doing so consciously or unconsciously. This did not arise in male performers' rooms, and the use of colour was widely varied. This variation in colour and non-professional lighting setups used may be a result of the

greater number of female performers, which consequently have a higher rate of professional webcammers. However, these elements created a less professional feel, which as a result, make the rooms appear more authentic in their appearance. The notion of 'constructed authenticity' that arose within several female performers' rooms was less applicable to male performers' rooms due to them being presented as genuinely authentic rooms that had not been specifically curated for webcamming.

Regardless of gender, we have seen how important non-human elements are to the construction and curation of webcam spaces. Actor Network Theory was crucial throughout this research in keeping the focus on elements that were important for webcam performers. The importance of human and non-human actors working together is an integral part of webcamming, particular when focusing on both online and physical spaces. ANT is an encapsulating theory that needs more utilisation within criminological research.

2. How does the performance of sexuality inform the construction of space?

The performance of sexuality informed the construction of the model's space in various ways. The curation of model's rooms was closely related to how they demonstrated their own sexuality. As explained above, female performers rooms often conformed to gendered expectations that promoted their femininity. Many of the female performers in my observations were also presented in sexually normative styles. Various elements such as colour, lighting, and props were carefully considered by some female and trans performers to ensure viewers perceived them as feminine. Colours such as white and pink, alongside soft lighting became a reoccurring theme in several performers rooms as a way in which to perform their brand of sexuality.

As Jones (2020b) states that the transgender label used in camming, and the porn industry as a whole, is used to refer to performers who are transfeminine. There is "cissexism, transmisogyny, and racism that plague the market" (2020a: 6). In reference to these points, it can potentially begin to explain why of the trans performers I observed they presented more feminine qualities in their environments. Having not encountered any transmasculine performers, it is difficult to compare how trans performers use gender performativity in different ways. Focusing on trans performers,

notably transmasculine identities, would be a way to highlight trans performers experiences of online sex work in research, and is part of future research I propose in section 8.3.

Within some male performer's rooms, at times they had a hypermasculine appearance through the use of props including weights and home gyms, that demonstrate a certain type of masculinity. For some male performances, this type of gender performativity was a large part of the identity the performer portrayed, as well as being a focal point for the viewers. The performance of sexuality had a large impact on the construction of performers space across
all genders. However, in my research it has a greater impact on female and transfeminine performers.

We have also seen the blurring of identity through technology. Building on work by Haraway, this research has shown how the physical body is reconfigured and transformed through online technology. Webcams create a new way of having sex through the unique combination and blurring of physical and virtual spaces. Teledildonics not only further dissolve the private and public boundaries, but they also dissolve spatial boundaries, bringing people together despite geographical distance. The sexual cyborg is revealed through the webcam, and it is transforming identities.

3. How is the subculture of 'deviant' sex workers represented within their domestic space?

Despite this, even if female performers are presented in objectified ways, it is the performers themselves who are making the choices regarding how they are presented to their viewers. In line with Gill, there is a "deliberate re-sexualisation and re-commodification of bodies" (2003: 104). This re-sexualisation acknowledges the depiction of women as active, which is highlighted by the decision to operate a webcam. The arguments of agency, and the oppression/empowerment paradigm, that often arise in feminist research, too often are reduced to a dichotomy of choice or coercion. It is hard to say that female performers are completely subverting traditional notions of visibility when, as this research has shown, that largely female models are performing for the male gaze. Surveillance theories posited by Foucault, particularly that of the Synopticon, are useful in considering how surveillance operates, but I have found that they struggle to account for the

nuances in webcamming and how there are several layers to surveillance that work in complex ways. This also further complicated how we understand power dynamics in webcamming. As Andrea Brighenti (2007) states there is an intimate relationship between power and knowledge. Power is intertwined with visibility. We have seen through the observations and interviews, there is a potential for power rebalance. Webcam performers are able to commodify the surveillant gaze through the performance of sexuality, but there are still questions regarding how this relates to a redistribution of power. As stated by Kate Hardy and Camille Barbagallo (2021) research regarding online sex work still needs insights into how power and control can be understood in these platforms.

We have seen how female performers subvert traditional notions of visibility; however this is only to a certain extent. All of the female performers were based in domestic spaces, or at least had the appearance as if they were in the home. Here we must remember the pervasiveness in societal opinions of women and their associations with domestic spaces. Ellen Gordon-Bouvier (2019) argues how the ideology of domesticity is based on "women being considered temperamentally suited to the domestic private realm, where their work is materially and metaphorically concealed" (2019: 481). So how far can we say that webcamming does subvert the traditional notions of women and their associations to belonging in domestic space? In some ways this research has shown it can, mainly through women's power over their own visibility. However, many elements of the observations are in line with Gordon-Bouvier's argument of women being situated in the domestic private realm. The female webcam performer remains in the space traditionally assigned to her.

We have also seen how the domestic space is affected in the webcamming realm. The domestic space is understood as private space, it is the separation between the dual spheres (Heidegger, 1971). Webcamming blurs the line between private and public space. The home cannot be understood as a naturally private space when the performer's space is invaded by the viewer. It is not only the idea of home that is changed but also specific elements of the home, notably the bedroom that is altered through webcamming. When considering the bedroom, this research has shown how the bedroom space of the performer is transformed during the webcamming broadcast. The bedroom, whilst maintaining its traditional associations as a place for sex, becomes a stage

for the performance. Sometimes this change is temporary, only holding true during the live performance before the set is dismantled, or sometimes, like with Marin, the bedroom is changed more permanently, with the traditional bedroom activities moving to another space. This strengthens Kristina Hofer notion of a "pornographic domesticity" (2014: 335). There is no longer a separation "between work and the home, labour and pleasure, public and private spheres" (Hofer, 2014: 335) and this research has highlighted how webcamming further increases this blurring between these elements and understanding of private and public space. However, this research has shown how these spaces are transformed into what Tim Gregory refers to as post-pornographic spaces. These webcam spaces become "spaces to fuck, to be watched fucking and to watch fucking" (Gregory, 2018: 669).

8.2 Methodological innovations and limitations

A contribution of this thesis is the methodology itself. In addition to the unique fusion of theoretical approaches, this thesis has also provided an opportunity to explore contemporary methodological approaches in criminology. This thesis adopted a netnography approach: a methodological approach that has not been fully utilised in criminology. This thesis is a step towards proposing a model of digital ethnographic methodologies, highlighting their important contribution to criminological issues. As stated in my methodology, Mark Fleisher (1998) argues that ethnographies do not have a place in criminology, to that I disagree. This type of innovative methodology is what criminology needs to continue pushing forward as a discipline, and this thesis has shown how this type of online ethnography can be a very useful approach in researching online based cultures and has a place within criminology.

This methodology also addresses some of the gaps present in the literature on netnography by exploring online erotic spaces. By taking a multi-website approach, I was able to immerse myself into a community while remaining anonymous to avoid researcher presence bias. These methodological innovations are intended to facilitate the research of online erotic spaces. Covert methodologies in criminology are traditionally not always favoured, due to the ethical issues that can potentially arise. However, this thesis demonstrates how effective covert methodologies can be when exploring sensitive topics online, and why criminology needs to embrace these covert

methodologies. Additionally, due to the growing numbers of individuals engaging with online technologies and the growth of corresponding virtual communities; multi-faceted, temporally fluid, netnographic methodological approaches will become increasingly important in research.

Questions regarding ethical approaches to researching online sex work have also arisen in the thesis. Future research needs to be more open regarding their ethical considerations of paying participants. These discussions are important as it is a consideration that all researchers need to explore, yet it has gone unrecognised in published work. Ethical implications are crucial when researching potentially vulnerable and sensitive topics yet finding relevant information on the area of online sex work is often gone unspoken. In order to move the online based research forwards, research is needed that very specifically focuses on ethical considerations. From this, I believe that it would be beneficial for research to make their ethical considerations clearer, rather than occasionally adding a sentence in the methodology. There is a large debate around ethical considerations, notably the decision to pay participants. If we are unaware of how online sex work researchers are applying their own ethical guidelines to their studies, we cannot challenge or follow another's research.

As with all ethnographies, there is a level of bias. I am a white, middle class, cis-gendered woman who has never been a sex worker. I bring my own observational bias that is unavoidable with an ethnographic study. Given my relative position of privilege, I tried to remain largely impartial, particularly when encountering feminist perspectives on sex work. I did not feel it appropriate to use this thesis as a platform for my dynamic, yet mainly liberal, feminist ideology. To say that this research is completely devoid of my own bias however would be untrue. In my interviews, particularly with Olivia, she shared her very strong left leaning feminist approach, having a very strong opinion about radical feminist views. In this discussion, I was at times unable to remain impartial when she was sharing these views, which although was not my aim, it did help to build rapport with Olivia.

8.3 Looking to the future

More in-depth qualitative interviews need to be conducted with webcam performers, to continue developing the understanding of how these individuals curate their spaces for webcamming. As this research focused on two detailed qualitative interviews, further development is needed in hearing webcammers understanding and perceptions of their own space. A larger sample size, with a greater number of types of participant, would be useful to gain a wider understanding of these research findings. Given the disparity between female and male spaces, it would be useful to conduct interviews with male performers and see how they understand and consider their physical space while webcamming.

Initially when planning this research, I wanted to also interview viewers of webcams to gain an understanding of why they visit certain webcam rooms over others, and what they look for in performers' physical space as well as the models gender performativity. This would also be useful in gaining insights as to the audiences of webcam models. As explored in this research, it can be difficult to identify the gender of the viewers in a room, aside from more anecdotal elements such as usernames, which are not usually helpful. By speaking directly to viewers would allow for a greater understanding of why some performers are preferred to others. I think authenticity is likely to be a big factor in that conversation and it would be useful to reveal how the viewers themselves understand authenticity in regard to the webcammers they are watching.

Angela Jones has conducted some research on transgender webcammers (2020a; 2020b), but this needs much further exploration and detailed analysis in future. Again, we also need to consider trans individuals perspectives and opinions by interviewing them directly to gain some insight into how more generally transgender people experience webcamming online. Further work would on how transgender individuals take on traditional constructions of feminine or masculine presentations would also be an avenue for further development.

Within this research I looked at mainstream webcamming sites, as they have a large amount and variety of webcammers. As such my results show how mainstream performers curate their physical space for webcamming and how their performance of sexuality informs the construction of their physical spaces. I would be interested in looking at similar research questions rather focusing on less mainstream, more fetish based webcamming sites. I would be particularly interested in looking

at female performers, given how this research has shown on mainstream sites, female performers' spaces are constructed in specific ways to conform to gender norms and generally perform in line with traditional expectations for the male gaze. There are several different avenues for development of this research in the future but for now it is time to log off, close the laptop, and enjoy the privacy of my domestic space.

Time flickered on and my Saturday night in Amsterdam soon turned into the early hours of Sunday morning. The streets were just as busy with tourists, despite the cold winter air wrapping around us. The red glow from the windows and the neon flashing lights reflected in the still water of the canal. Rowdy groups of men leered into the windows, before shortly being moved on by security. Moving through the main street, I ventured into the dark alleyways, still greeted by women posing through their windows. Some curtains were drawn, an indication of occupied room, and an occupied woman. I felt drawn into this world, wanting to continue exploring further and deeper into these darkened spaces. On that Sunday evening, as I sat in Amsterdam airport, waiting for my flight back to London, I was filled with a new passion for research, and was a little less hopeless than before.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Research observations schedule

Female room observations

Date	Session	Website
16th May 2020	Night - 9.49pm	myfreecams.com
16th May 2020	Night - 10.17pm	myfreecams.com
16th May 2020	Night - 11.20pm	myfreecams.com
25th May 2020	Night - 10.20pm	myfreecams.com
26th May 2020	Morning - 11.20am	myfreecams.com
26th May 2020	Morning - 11.45am	myfreecams.com
26th May 2020	Afternoon - 12.15pm	bongacams.com
26th May 2020	Afternoon - 12.34pm	bongacams.com
26th May 2020	Afternoon - 12.48pm	bongacams.com
26th May 2020	Afternoon - 1.07pm	bongacams.com
28th May 2020	Late night - 1.15am	myfreecams.com
28th May 2020	Late night - 1.40am	chaturbate.com
28th May 2020	Late night - 1.57am	chaturbate.com
28th May 2020	Late night - 2.05am	chaturbate.com
28th May 2020	Late night - 2.24am	chaturbate.com
5th June 2020	Morning - 9.25am	chaturbate.com
5th June 2020	Morning - 9.43am	chaturbate.com
5th June 2020	Morning - 9.43am	chaturbate.com
5th June 2020	Morning - 10.03am	chaturbate.com
5th June 2020	Morning - 10.20am	chaturbate.com
5th June 2020	Morning - 10.38am	chaturbate.com
7th June 2020	Evening - 6.15pm	bongacams.com

7th June 2020	Evening - 6.33pm	bongacams.com
7th June 2020	Evening - 6.50pm	bongacams.com
7th June 2020	Evening - 7.09pm	bongacams.com
7th June 2020	Evening - 7.28pm	bongacams.com
3rd August 2020	Afternoon - 3.15pm	myfreecams.com
3rd August 2020	Afternoon - 3.34pm	myfreecams.com
3rd August 2020	Afternoon - 3.52pm	myfreecams.com
3rd August 2020	Afternoon - 4.13pm	myfreecams.com
3rd August 2020	Night - 11.16pm	bongacams.com
3rd August 2020	Night - 11.32pm	bongacams.com
3rd August 2020	Night - 11.49pm	bongacams.com
3rd August 2020	Night - 12.08am	bongacams.com
5th August 2020	Evening - 8.05pm	myfreecams.com
5th August 2020	Evening - 8.22pm	myfreecams.com
5th August 2020	Evening - 8.39pm	myfreecams.com
6th August 2020	Late night - 3.15am	chaturbate.com
6th August 2020	Late night - 3.33am	chaturbate.com
6th August 2020	Late night - 3.50am	chaturbate.com

Male room observations

Date	**Session**	**Website**
17th May 2020	Morning - 11.15am	bongacams.com
17th May 2020	Morning - 11.33am	bongacams.com
17th May 2020	Morning - 11.50am	bongacams.com
17th May 2020	Afternoon - 12.08am	bongacams.com

17th May 2020	Afternoon - 12.25am	bongacams.com
25th May 2020	Night - 10.45pm	bongacams.com
25th May 2020	Night - 11.02pm	bongacams.com
25th May 2020	Night - 11.19pm	bongacams.com
25th May 2020	Night - 11.38pm	bongacams.com
3rd June 2020	Late night - 1.45am	chaturbate.com
3rd June 2020	Late night - 2.03am	chaturbate.com
3rd June 2020	Late night - 2.20am	chaturbate.com
3rd June 2020	Late night - 2.37am	chaturbate.com
3rd June 2020	Late night - 2.51am	chaturbate.com
6th June 2020	Morning - 10.03am	chaturbate.com
6th June 2020	Morning - 10.20am	chaturbate.com
6th June 2020	Morning - 10.37am	chaturbate.com
6th June 2020	Morning - 10.50am	chaturbate.com
6th June 2020	Morning - 11.08am	chaturbate.com
6th June 2020	Afternoon - 12.05pm	chaturbate.com
6th June 2020	Afternoon - 12.22pm	chaturbate.com
6th June 2020	Afternoon - 12.41pm	chaturbate.com
7th June 2020	Evening - 5.05pm	bongacams.com
7th June 2020	Evening - 5.22pm	bongacams.com
7th June 2020	Evening - 5.39pm	bongacams.com
7th June 2020	Evening - 5.57pm	bongacams.com
4th August 2020	Afternoon - 3.45pm	chaturbate.com
4th August 2020	Afternoon - 4.02pm	chaturbate.com
4th August 2020	Afternoon - 4.19pm	chaturbate.com
4th August 2020	Evening - 5.25pm	bongacams.com

4th August 2020	Evening - 5.42pm	bongacams.com
4th August 2020	Evening - 6.00pm	bongacams.com
4th August 2020	Evening - 6.18pm	bongacams.com
8th August 2020	Late night - 2.13am	bongacams.com
8th August 2020	Late night - 2.30am	bongacams.com
8th August 2020	Late night - 2.47am	bongacams.com
8th August 2020	Late night - 3.05am	bongacams.com
9th August 2020	Night - 10.45pm	chaturbate.com
9th August 2020	Night - 11.04pm	chaturbate.com
9th August 2020	Night - 11.21pm	chaturbate.com
9th August 2020	Night - 11.39pm	chaturbate.com

Trans rooms observations

Date	**Session**	**Website**
29th May 2020	Evening - 6.46pm	chaturbate.com
29th May 2020	Evening - 7.05pm	chaturbate.com
29th May 2020	Evening - 7.22pm	chaturbate.com
29th May 2020	Evening - 7.41pm	chaturbate.com
29th May 2020	Evening - 7.59pm	chaturbate.com
8th June 2020	Morning - 11.25am	bongacams.com
8th June 2020	Morning - 11.43am	bongacams.com
8th June 2020	Afternoon - 12.01pm	bongacams.com
8th June 2020	Afternoon - 12.18pm	bongacams.com
8th June 2020	Afternoon - 12.35pm	bongacams.com
8th June 2020	Afternoon - 12.53pm	bongacams.com
3rd August 2020	Morning - 7.53am	bongacams.com

3rd August 2020	Morning - 8.12am	bongacams.com
3rd August 2020	Morning - 8.30am	bongacams.com
3rd August 2020	Morning - 8.47am	bongacams.com
3rd August 2020	Morning - 9.05am	bongacams.com
3rd August 2020	Morning - 9.23am	bongacams.com
11th August 2020	Night - 10.23pm	chaturbate.com
11th August 2020	Night - 10.40pm	chaturbate.com
11th August 2020	Night - 10.57pm	chaturbate.com
11th August 2020	Night - 11.20pm	chaturbate.com
11th August 2020	Night - 11.38pm	chaturbate.com
12th August 2020	Late night - 1.07am	chaturbate.com
12th August 2020	Late night - 1.25am	chaturbate.com
12th August 2020	Late night - 1.43am	chaturbate.com
12th August 2020	Late night - 2.01am	chaturbate.com
14th August 2020	Afternoon - 12.07pm	bongacams.com
14th August 2020	Afternoon - 12.25pm	bongacams.com
14th August 2020	Afternoon - 12.43pm	bongacams.com
14th August 2020	Afternoon - 1.02pm	bongacams.com
15th August 2020	Late night - 1.13am	bongacams.com
15th August 2020	Late night - 1.30am	bongacams.com
15th August 2020	Late night - 1.47am	bongacams.com
15th August 2020	Late night - 2.04am	bongacams.com
17th August 2020	Evening - 6.07pm	chaturbate.com
17th August 2020	Evening - 6.23pm	chaturbate.com
17th August 2020	Evening - 6.40pm	chaturbate.com
17th August 2020	Evening - 6.58pm	chaturbate.com

18th August 2020	Night - 10.35pm	chaturbate.com
18th August 2020	Night - 10.52pm	chaturbate.com
18th August 2020	Night - 11.10pm	chaturbate.com

Group rooms observations

Date	Session	Website
3rd June 2020	Evening - 6.10pm	bongacams.com
3rd June 2020	Evening - 6.38pm	bongacams.com
3rd June 2020	Evening - 6.55pm	bongacams.com
3rd June 2020	Evening - 7.13pm	bongacams.com
5th June 2020	Afternoon - 1.34pm	bongacams.com
5th June 2020	Afternoon - 1.53pm	bongacams.com
5th June 2020	Afternoon - 2.11pm	bongacams.com
5th June 2020	Afternoon - 2.30pm	bongacams.com
5th June 2020	Afternoon - 2.48pm	bongacams.com
5th August 2020	Night - 9.05pm	chaturbate.com
5th August 2020	Night - 9.23pm	chaturbate.com
5th August 2020	Night - 9.42pm	chaturbate.com
5th August 2020	Night - 9.59pm	chaturbate.com
5th August 2020	Night - 10.17pm	chaturbate.com
16th August 2020	Afternoon - 3.45pm	chaturbate.com
16th August 2020	Afternoon - 4.03pm	chaturbate.com
16th August 2020	Afternoon - 4.20pm	chaturbate.com
16th August 2020	Afternoon - 4.38pm	chaturbate.com
17th August 2020	Morning - 9.35am	bongacams.com
17th August 2020	Morning - 9.53am	bongacams.com

17th August 2020	Morning - 10.10am	bongacams.com
17th August 2020	Morning - 10.27am	bongacams.com
17th August 2020	Morning - 10.44am	bongacams.com
18th August 2020	Night - 9.38pm	chaturbate.com
18th August 2020	Night - 9.53pm	chaturbate.com
18th August 2020	Night - 10.10pm	chaturbate.com
19th August 2020	Morning - 11.02am	chaturbate.com
19th August 2020	Morning - 11.20am	chaturbate.com
19th August 2020	Morning - 11.37am	chaturbate.com
20th August 2020	Late night - 2.45am	bongacams.com
20th August 2020	Late night - 3.03am	bongacams.com
20th August 2020	Late night - 3.20am	bongacams.com
20th August 2020	Late night - 3.37am	bongacams.com
22nd August 2020	Evening - 7.54pm	chaturbate.com
22nd August 2020	Evening - 8.12pm	chaturbate.com
22nd August 2020	Evening - 8.30pm	chaturbate.com
22nd August 2020	Evening - 8.47pm	chaturbate.com
24th August 2020	Late night - 1.14am	chaturbate.com
24th August 2020	Late night - 1.33am	chaturbate.com
24th August 2020	Late night - 1.50am	chaturbate.com
24th August 2020	Late night - 2.08am	chaturbate.com

Appendix 2 – advertisement for participants

My name is Francesca and I am a PhD student at the University of Greenwich. I am looking for webcam performers to take part in my PhD research. I am conducting research about the space that webcam models perform in. More specifically, I am interested in the ways webcam models create their physical space for webcamming, through use of objects, backgrounds, furniture etc. I am also looking at how, if at all, webcam performers are influenced and affected by doing shows in their own homes.

This is a genuine request and here is a link confirming my research student status: https://www.gre.ac.uk/ach/research/centres/lcrg/research. This research has been reviewed by the University of Greenwich Research Ethics Committee and was granted full ethical approval.

I would love to interview you if you are able to spare 30 mins, or as long as you are willing. The interview can take place at a time and in a style that is convenient to you - on the phone, email, skype, zoom audio, etc.

I will treat everything you say to me with strict confidentiality and you will remain completely anonymous throughout. Your participation will be very valuable to my research. You can choose to use an alias throughout the research process and I do not ask for any personal identifiable information.

Thank you for reading and please do let me know if you have any questions.

Francesca

Appendix 3 - Madonna and Child with Saints Catherine and Thomas painting

Title: Madonna and Child with Saints Catherine and Thomas (sacra conversazione)

Creator: Lorenzo Lotto

Date Created: 1527/1533

Style: Italian Mannerism

From the collection of: Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien.

Available at: https://artsandculture.google.com/usergallery/the-use-of-the-color-white-in-art/RwLy9L3aSr6qIQ