

JOURNAL OF POSITIVE SEXUALITY

Volume 3, March 2017

Published by Center for Positive Sexuality Non-Profit Organization

THE JOURNAL OF POSITIVE SEXUALITY is a multidisciplinary journal focusing on all aspects of positive sexuality as described in the Center for Positive Sexuality purpose statement. It is designed to be accessible and beneficial to a large and diverse readership, including academics, policymakers, clinicians, educators, and students.

FOUNDING CO-EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

D.J. Williams, Social Work and Criminology, Idaho State University (U.S.)

Emily E. Prior, Sociology, Center for Positive Sexuality (U.S.)

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Jeremy M. Thomas, Sociology, Idaho State University (U.S.)

Brad Sagarin, Northern Illinois University (U.S.)

PRODUCTION EDITORS

Karen Sabbah, California State University, Northridge (U.S.)

James R. Fleckenstein, Sexuality Researcher and Educator in private practice, Virginia (U.S.)

EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBERS

Audrey R. Giles, Anthropology and Leisure
Science, University of Ottawa (Canada)

M. Candace Christensen, Social Work,
University of Texas at San Antonio
(U.S.)

Dave Holmes, Forensic Nursing, University of
Ottawa (Canada)

Jennifer A. Vencill, Counseling Psychology,
University of Minnesota (U.S.)

John Edgar Browning, Literature, Media and
Communication, Georgia Institute of
Technology (U.S.)

D. Joyce Swan, Psychology, Woodbury
University (U.S.)

Katherine Frank, Social Sciences, American
University (U.S.)

Kevin Aho, Philosophy, Florida Gulf Coast
University (U.S.)

Moshoula Capous-Desyllas, Sociology,
California State University, Northridge
(U.S.)

Richard Sprott, Executive Director for the
Community-Academic Consortium for
Research on Alternative Sexualities
(CARAS) (U.S.)

Staci Newmahr, Sociology, Buffalo State
College (U.S.)

R. Todd Hartle, Biology and Education, Irvine,
CA (U.S.)

Wendy Walters, Business Administration,
Central Washington University (U.S.)

William B. Strean, Leadership and Physical
Education University of Alberta
(Canada)

SPECIALIZED CONSULTANTS

Deneen L. Hernandez, FBI National Forensics Laboratory

Jay Wiseman, Author and Educator

MANUSCRIPT SUBMISSION

Please see **SUBMISSION GUIDELINES** on the inside back cover for specific guidelines regarding manuscript submissions. Manuscripts should be submitted as an email attachment in Microsoft Word to submissions@journalofpositivesexuality.org.

Any questions or correspondence may be sent to the co-editors at info@journalofpositivesexuality.org



JOURNAL OF POSITIVE SEXUALITY

Volume 3, March 2017

The semi-annual Journal of Center for Positive Sexuality, a 501c3 non-profit organization.

Table of Contents

“You’re Doing God’s Work”: Reflections on Sex Ed	4
Appendix A: Sex Ed Transcript	9
Social Work Practice with Clients that Enjoy Participation in Consensual BDSM:	12
Anal Sexual Practices among Undergraduate Students	21
Appendix A: Survey on Anal Sex Practices among Undergraduate Students	29
Submission Guidelines	37

“You’re Doing God’s Work”: Reflections on *Sex Ed*

Mary Rachel Gould¹
Department of Communication
Saint Louis University

Daniel Makagon
College of Communication
DePaul University

Editor’s Note: This article is meant to be read along with an audio file that is available on the *Journal’s* website. If you cannot access the link, or cannot listen to an audio file, a transcript of the file has been made available in the Appendix of this issue.

Introduction: The Internet of Kink

In the past five years there has been a rapidly growing interest in sex-themed podcasts and video blogs (vlogs). Dan Savage’s advice-focused *Savage Lovecast* (2006-present), one of the longest running and best-known podcasts in the US, has been joined by a variety of other programs that release on a regular schedule and have large followings (given iTunes rankings and SoundCloud plays). These podcasts often rely on round-table discussion formats and hosts with an every-person approach to advice-giving and personal narrative (e.g., *Guys We Fucked: The Anti Slut-Shaming Podcast*, featuring two stand-up comedians, Krystyna Hutchinson and Corinne Fisher, and *New York Magazine’s Sex Lives*, hosted by sex writer Maureen O’Connor). And YouTube has been flooded with advice-focused sex education channels, many by young cis and trans women, that garner an impressive quantity of views and have received mainstream media attention (Hess, 2016). These podcasts and vlogs vary in quality, differ in their incorporation of research studies and reliance on traditionally defined experts, and tend to target different age demographics. Taken together, these media projects have helped facilitate a cultural shift toward a more open environment for everyday people to ask questions about a range of seemingly ordinary to more kinky sexual practices.

The general structure of this new media content seems to be similar within each medium. Podcasts use informal interview conversations and vlogs rely on heavily edited monologues. Both types of media feature mostly humorous personal experiences to speak to not only sexual relationships in the current climate of new media dating apps but also an expansion of public discourses about sex. In short, the medium is the message (McLuhan, 1964). The advice-giving sexpert and their kinky (and/or vanilla) callers and guests were made for free-flowing blogs and vlogs compared with the more restrictive standards of commercial and/or public media. While the Internet offers the freedom to produce a show (whether podcasts or vlogs) that can represent the varied experiences of callers/guests, a significant public is missing – the type of public radio

¹ This is one of many projects that we have coauthored or coproduced. We rotate first author because all of our research and productions are created and developed through equal participation and contributions. We thank Emily Prior and the three anonymous reviewers for their helpful feedback.

listener who tunes in to hear stories (on occasion outside of the mainstream) that are reported in a narrative and/or documentary style. We contend that the gap between sex-advice/education vlog and blog projects versus the documentary reporting and storytelling approach one would hear on public radio is worth our attention. Our goal has been to fill this gap by producing sex positive research-focused documentary stories that mirror the reporting one would hear on National Public Radio (NPR) while making use of the global reach of web-based platforms. In short, we are researchers who work with audio documentary to reach a public audience that is intellectually curious about a range of social, cultural, and political shifts in contemporary US culture, including sex-positive culture. This essay maintains a dual focus. First, we contend that audio documentary, as a research-based methodology to study everyday life, is an ideal medium for studies of sex positive culture, or other practices, behaviors or beliefs that might be deemed outside of mainstream culture. We argue that the audio documentary format creates a space for an audience to suspend judgment and engage the storyteller, and, by extension the subject(s), in a one-on-one listening experience. Second, we specifically discuss the ways that *Sex Ed*, a six and a half minute audio documentary that weaves together the experiences of three sex positive educators living and working in Chicago, models sex positive documentary storytelling. The three women featured in this piece promote healthy sexuality through educational outreach focused on individual practices and challenging social norms.

Sex Positive Research and the Intimacy of Sound

Of course, documentary-focused sex-positive stories have appeared on television networks, such as HBO's *Real Sex* or Showtime's *Sex with Sunny Megatron*, but these programs and others have not found an equivalent in the radio marketplace. In part, this is because public radio's two most popular programs broadcast during peak all-ages listening times (NPR's *Morning Edition* during morning commute hours and *All Things Considered* during the afternoon commute). The topics might seem too explicit for younger listeners so producers may avoid this type of content, whereas HBO and Showtime air "adult programming" later at night. Additionally, the variations in regulatory oversight for cable and satellite television versus broadcast radio are significant enough to limit the sex-related content of a radio show. The dearth of sex positive documentary reporting on public radio is important to highlight because of the audience size that could be reached (36.6 million per week), and, by extension, educated, through such sex-positive stories. (NPR sees large, 2016). At the very heart of the argument we present here is that the mission of public broadcasting is exactly the type of directive that guides our work: education. Following public broadcasting historians John Witherspoon and Roselle Kovitz, we believe that education "has never meant just instruction" (Witherspoon & Kovitz, 1987, p. 1). The founding interests of public broadcasting stations were much more populist, first emerging on college campuses across the United States. And "public broadcasting's programming mission traditionally has centered on alternative programming," where even stations that "carry little or no formal instruction are seen as educational, just as museums, libraries or theater groups often are considered broadly as educational community resources" (Witherspoon & Kovitz, 1987, p. 1). Given the broadly defined educational mission of public broadcasting, grounded in an ethos of democratic participation, it could be a platform prime for any research-based narrative non-fiction reporting—even broadcasting sex-positive stories. Similarly, because this medium has influenced a type of intellectually engaging storytelling, it is exciting when these types of documentary stories extend out to new media outlets.

We work with audio because it offers a unique way to tell stories and to connect with an audience. As *This American Life* producer Nancy Updike notes in her transom.org manifesto about writing for radio, there is an “intimacy of radio—that feeling that someone is talking directly to you” (Updike, 2006). As opposed to television, radio is a 1:1 medium where the narrator and the listener, in theory, are engaged in an intimate conversation. People starting out in radio and/or documentary storytelling are taught, when speaking, to imagine a single audience member sitting opposite them at the table. Audio documentary’s intimate form is mirrored in the content of *Sex Ed*. Participants discuss how sexual identities and desires can and should be explored in the safe spaces in which the participants teach or advocate for in the health care community.² For example, this sentiment is expressed when Dana, a sex educator in Chicago, describes one recurring theme in her workshops: “The most challenging thing is the fact that the women frequently talk about how much he [their current partner] notices, like, how like floppy their boobs are or how fat they, or, stuff like that,” she tells us. “It’s like, I just have to reassure them that you’re having sex with someone, you’re judging yourself, sex is not really a place for judgment.” In Dana’s voice we hear the burden of having to debunk myths of perfect bodies or having the sexiest sex that prevents her clients from enjoying the pleasure of healthy sexual experiences.

Working with audio also allows us to develop deeper connections with participants, which is another layer of intimacy and ultimately adds to the depth of connection with the listener. Terry Gross, the host of *Fresh Air*, notes in a *New York Times Magazine* feature that “there’s an intimacy in the interview” when interviewers and interviewees are able to open up and reflect on issues in ways that might not happen in their everyday lives (Burton, 2015). Of course, interviews are very different than informal conversations people have with one another in everyday contexts. “In casual conversations, people take more or less balanced turns, and there is no sense that somehow the discussion has to stay on track or follow some theme” (Bernard, 1995, p. 211). Knowing that any kind of research project can create an unnatural conversational environment, we seek to reduce reactivity by working with a less invasive medium. As producers of audio we don’t need to subject participants to the bright lighting required for video production or demand that participants remain within a shot. Instead, we use small professional quality digital audio recorders, short shotgun mics (much smaller and thinner than the boom mics used in film), and headphones. Because we work as a team, one person can record room sounds or focus on mic placement related to questions asked while the other person is responsible for making sure the participant is “on mic.” When making *Sex Ed* we interviewed one participant at a dining room table in their home, another recording happened while we sat on a couch in a studio/workspace, and the third was recorded as we walked around the participant’s dungeon. Each of these scenarios would have been much more difficult if we were working with a small film crew. With that said, we must always balance a need for mic placement and background noise reduction (i.e., trying to maximize optimal recording qualities) with gaining trust among participants through thoughtful interview questions and explicit representations of our ethical approach to the topics at hand. When we recorded interviews for *Sex Ed* we were invited into people’s homes, places where they work, and sites where the two blend, and we take this level of trust and generosity very seriously.

² Any identifying information provided by the participants was done so with their consent and knowledge that the information would become public.

It is also important to add that the audio recorder can represent a less sensationalistic medium for representing people's stories, especially stories focused on sexual practices and desires, or a combination of both, compared to the video camera, which has tended to be a tool for capturing more action-oriented footage. For example, the casting call for *Sex with Sunny Megatron* notes that "Most spots require nudity, and/or play with your partner– the specifics of that are negotiable based on what you feel comfortable consenting to (your enthusiastic consent regarding what you're doing and how you're doing it on camera is the #1 priority here!)" (Uzarski, 2014). Thus, we can critically engage the issues addressed in the stories we tell, but we can do so while retaining and modeling ethical fieldwork that facilitates comfort among our participants. We often hear a palpable sigh of relief and change in tone when we explain to a potential interview participant that we will *only* be using an audio recorder during an interview. And while there is still some lag time between the start of an interview and when the interviewee "forgets" about the microphone and the interaction becomes more of a dialogue, this transition happens much faster than in an interview with a video camera. This focus on intimate sound and ethical documentary research and production, where we treat documentary work as an extension of our qualitative fieldwork toolkit (see Makagon & Neumann, 2009; Gould, 2013; Makagon & Gould, 2015), frames how we approached the production of *Sex Ed* and why we work with audio.

Conclusion: Transformative Storytelling

Although there has been a rapid rise in media content that helps individuals reflect on their sexual desires, practices, and relationships, mass communication content is, by its very nature, directed at a mass audience. While multiple listeners might learn about ways to be safe with ass play, for example, such learning occurs at a distance, often mediated by film, television and the Internet, and isn't personalized to individual desires, fears, or body histories. The women we interviewed for this documentary work with individuals, couples, and small groups in a variety of sex education contexts. These sex educators help couples identify BDSM desires and boundaries, work with women to link sexual practices with body confidence, and coordinate with health care providers and sex workers to foster positive doctor-patient relationships. In some cases, our participants were the only connection that their students, clients, and/or advocacy partners had to someone who provided access to reliable, non-judgmental, and confidential support for their sexual curiosity, desires, or practices. As Mistress Sophia describes in a sweet, heartbreaking, and hilarious moment, a client once proclaimed, "you're doing God's work" after she provided just the service for which the client had been searching. All of these actions taken by the sex educators with whom we worked, as well as others who serve a similar role, blend a focus on holistic public forms of sex positivity with specific individual sex-positive education. In this sense, our own documentary serves as another example of mass communication reaching a diverse audience with varied experiences and interests. Through documentary work focused on sex positive topics, such as the work in the story *Sex Ed*, we hope that the content helps those audience members, as individuals, in multiple ways. First, we hope listeners think about an expanded sense of sex education beyond the physical education teacher's awkward middle school or high school lessons. Second, we want the audience to consider the myriad ways that one can learn more about one's own sexual health, interests, and relationships. Third, we want listeners to understand sexuality and sexual desires along a spectrum within the broader social

context. Finally, we hope that people who hear our story will gain more self-acceptance as well as less outward-directed judgment of others' sexual practices. Through the stories we produce we extend into the realm of public broadcasting the transformative work of education in a one-on-one context.

The rise of sex-focused podcasts and vlogs means that more information is shared in the public sphere, which can be a good thing. But because many of these media projects lack a connection to sex research, there is the potential for misinformation to be shared. Both of us have been making audio documentaries for nearly two decades, but we started co-producing sex positive documentaries about five years ago. We wanted to blend careful reporting, collaboration with community-based experts, and storytelling with the intimacy of sound recordings that could also reflect our own interests in public scholarship. *Sex Ed* is the latest in a series of projects that represents that goal.

References

- Bernard, H. R. (1995). *Research methods in anthropology*. Walnut, CA: Alta Mira Press, pg. 211.
- Burton, S. (2015). Terry Gross and the Art of Opening Up. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/25/magazine/terry-gross-and-the-art-of-opening-up.html>
- Gould, M. R. (2013). Sonic city: Digital storytelling and the study of popular culture. *Transformations: The Journal of Inclusive Scholarship and Pedagogy*, 25(1&2), 85–100.
- Hess, A. (2016, September 30). The sex-ed queens of YouTube don't need a PhD. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/01/arts/the-sex-ed-queens-of-youtube-dont-need-a-phd.html>.
- Makagon, D., & Neumann, M. (2009). *Recording culture: Audio documentary and the ethnographic experience*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Makagon, D., & Gould, M. R. (2015). Learning the city through stories: Audio documentary as urban communication pedagogy, *International Journal of Communication*, 9, 1-14.
- McLuhan, M. (1994). *Understanding media: The extensions of man*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- NPR sees large. (2016, October 18). NPR sees large ratings increase. *National Public Radio: St. Louis Public Radio*. Retrieved from <http://www.npr.org/2016/10/18/498390457/npr-sees-large-ratings-increase>
- Witherspoon, J. and Kovitz, R. (1987). *The history of public broadcasting*. J. J. Yore and R. Barbieri (Eds.). Washington DC: Current Press.
- Updike, N. (2015). *Nancy Updike - Transom* (S. Lewis, Ed.). Retrieved from <http://transom.org/2006/nancy-updike/>.
- Uzarski, R. (2014). Casting call for alternative sex program on Showtime network. *Great Lakes Den*. Retrieved from <http://www.greatlakesden.net/casting-call-alternative-sex-program-showtime-network/>

Appendix A: Sex Ed Transcript

Mary Rachel Gould³
 Department of Communication
 Saint Louis University

Daniel Makagon
 College of Communication
 DePaul University

Interview Participants: Mistress Sophia, Dana and Serpant Libertine

Mistress Sophia: I teach a Kink 101, or, I teach one that's called "Dominance for Nervous Beginners". I teach another class that all about mummification with plastic wrap and suspension.

Dana: I teach oral sex, anal sex, couples sex, pasty design.

Serpant Libertine: We always do, like, this tax money management workshop, we've done know your rights workshops. We're going to be doing legal workshops.

Daniel Narration: Mistress Sophia owns Chicago Dungeon Rentals, Dana co-founded Chicago Museum of Sex, and Serpant Libertine is an outreach coordinator for Sex Worker Outreach Project, it's also known as SWOP. And are all three are sex educators in Chicago.

Mary Narration: We all remember the sex education lessons offered in school. The physical education or health teacher presented a series of slides or videos to a sheepish or wincing audience.

Sometime between middle school and high school, formal approaches to sex education dwindled. From then on we were left to our own devices. Some of us look to friends for advice. Others to the Internet for anonymous aggregated resources.

Daniel Narration: Sophia, Dana, and Serpant help fill an information vacuum and provide adults with opportunities to ask questions, learn techniques, and make sense of their own sexual interests. Each teaches sex positive classes on a variety of topics.

Dana: It's set up in a room and there's three sheets of paper and everyone has a dildo, and there's a pen, and there's a couple of condoms and there's lubrication, and it starts off with, like, a sex positive talk and then we talk about anatomy, we go into biology, and then intertwined with all of that is a little bit of, uh, Eastern philosophy.

³ This is one of many projects that we have coauthored or coproduced. We rotate first author because all of our research and productions are created and developed through equal participation and contributions. We thank Emily Prior and the three anonymous reviewers for their helpful feedback.

Mary Narration: There is an interplay between the politics of sex education and the personal discovery that becomes part of each class or workshop.

Serpant Libertine: It's usually kind of a Sex Worker 101, who is a sex worker, what are the needs of the community, and then, you know, one thing I always stress is, the difference between, you know, choice, coercion, and circumstance, um, because we do recognize that there are different motivations for individuals to get involved, in the, uh, sex trade.

Daniel Narration: You know, there's an interesting thing that happens with sex education where the teacher never knows in advance who will come into the classroom and what fantasies or desires motivate a student or a client.

Mary Narration: One of the things that all three women say is that debunking myths is one of the most important parts of the education process, which isn't a surprise given how little formal education we have about sex in our culture.

Daniel Narration: And, for Sofia this happens at an individual level.

Mistress Sophia: Ther ...there's always a certain amount of burning questions people always wondered, well, is this really the truth. One myth that comes up again and again in the S&M classes that I teach is that there is only this one right way to be dominant. You have to have authority in all the situation, nobody can question you, you have to be absolutely certain of what you're doing at all times, and, that's just not true. There are just so many ways to be an effective, fun, safe dominant person.

Mary Narration: Sometimes Dana's finds that her free spirited approach to teaching comes into conflict with her students' struggles with their own body shaming.

Dana: The most challenging thing is the fact that the women frequently talk about how much he notices, like, how like floppy their boobs are or how fat they, or, stuff like that. It's like, I just have to reassure them that you're have sex with someone, you're judging yourself, sex is not really a place for judgement.

Daniel Narration: Our inability to talk openly about sex is reflected in antiquated notions about gender and sexual identity.

Serpant Libertine: So, it's actually been challenging cause we're not really up against people with conservative viewpoints, we're up against these liberals who are promoting, what I feel is, a really conservative viewpoint, in that it's promoting this idea that women are always victims and they don't have agency.

Mary Narration: Either in the setting of a classroom or through individualized experiences with sex workers, people are looking for something that will change *their* sense of self or *their* relationships with others.

Mistress Sophia: I'm just fascinated by kink, by fetish, by people's sexuality, because it's so broad I'm always seeing new things. You know, any time you think you have seen *everything*

there's always going to be somebody who brings in something new and you go "oh, okay, well, let's look into that".

Daniel Narration: These sex educators seek to inspire their students or clients to be open to a range of fetishes, kinks, or seemingly vanilla desires.

Dana: They just, like, want, like, someone who talks about it and verbalizes what they want to explore, so then they can say, "oh, this is normal and okay, I can try this and this and this".

Mary Narration: Other times the sex educator addresses *society's inability* to embrace sexual diversity, which is often seen as deviance.

Mistress Sophia: And there's a lot of questions you have to answer to get the person the right thing for them. And, I've had, at least, on three occasions, somebody who was so relieved after we figured what they were looking for, they got it, they were feeling good and they said, "you know, you're doing God's work" [laughter] which I thought oh, you know, that's so sweet.

Dana: I think everybody needs to understand just how to accept themselves and all the weirdness that they possess [laughter].

Serpant Libertine: Most sex workers that I know have had a negative experience with some sort of service provides, whether it be a therapist, a doctor, social workers, where they came out, they admitted what they did, and th...the rescue effort was put out, "you need to stop doing what you are doing".

Daniel Narration: Here the task is to influence public policies and the practitioners on the ground who use policies to define social norms.

Serpant Libertine: One things SWOP did, we launched last year, something called the Pro's Network Chicago, so we've got quite a few agencies and organizations as well as individual provides, they have all signed a contract to provide nonjudgmental services to individuals in the sex trade.

Mary Narration: Perhaps, it's that healthy sex education involves rethinking how we understand *our* public and private lives. We can all start with efforts to push through the discomforts of our middle school selves that might lead to inaction, misinformation or relying on secret Internet searches.

Mistress Sophia: I wish it was just understood by our culture that there are a million different ways to have sex and to be happy and be fulfilled. As soon as folks are starting to look at what *they* want and not what other people are telling them what they want, I think that changes the world.

Social Work Practice with Clients that Enjoy Participation in Consensual BDSM: Identifying and Applying Strengths

D J Williams, PhD
Idaho State University
Center for Positive Sexuality, Van Nuys, CA

Jeremy N. Thomas, PhD
Idaho State University
Center for Positive Sexuality, Van Nuys, CA

Emily E. Prior, MA
Center for Positive Sexuality, Van Nuys, CA
College of the Canyons

Christina Amezquita, MA
Arizona State University
Center for Positive Sexuality, Van Nuys, CA

Dominee Hall, MA
Idaho State University

Introduction

Recently, scholars have discussed the need for helping professionals to become more educated about, and sensitive toward, people with a variety of alternative sexual identities and relationship styles (i.e., Brandon, 2011; Graham, 2014; Kleinplatz & Moser, 2004; Kolmes & Witherspoon, 2012; Scherrer, 2013). The need in social work, specifically, for awareness and research-informed training about BDSM and alternative relationship styles has also been reported (Williams & Prior, 2015a). Although many social work academic journals currently are not willing to publishing scholarly papers on BDSM (Williams, 2015), it has been estimated that 10 percent of the population engages in BDSM activities (Kleinplatz & Moser, 2006). Thus, it is highly likely that social workers, as well as other helping professionals, unknowingly encounter clients who participate, at least occasionally, in BDSM activities. However, recent research suggests that the field of social work lacks adequate training and clinical competence regarding positive sexuality and a broad range of acceptable sexual diversity (Prior, Williams, Zavala, & Milford, 2016; Williams, 2016).

Of course, people who engage in BDSM practices from time to time or even those who prefer structured BDSM relationships, wherein BDSM identities and relationship dynamics are salient within the relationship for extended periods of time, may seek professional help for a range of possible issues common to human experience. These issues often may be completely unrelated to BDSM, such as experiencing high stress, common grief or loss, various life transitions, or navigating other specific mental health issues. Social workers should not assume

that the presenting problem is caused by, or even necessarily related to, BDSM (Kleinplatz & Moser, 2004).

In this paper, we briefly summarize the scholarly literature on the mental health of BDSM practitioners, along with citing studies on issues that clients in BDSM relationships often face within clinical contexts. We then draw from both recent scholarship and our combined decades of experience working with BDSM practitioners and communities to propose that there are several valuable strengths that clients in BDSM relationships possess. These strengths can be recognized by insightful social workers to help clients in BDSM relationships, who may be seeking therapy for any number of reasons, to apply such strengths in other contexts to then resolve problems that precipitate therapy. Unfortunately, social workers who are uninformed about BDSM may unknowingly direct microaggressions to BDSM practitioners, and/or workers may inappropriately target BDSM practices or relationships as the cause of problems that led to BDSM-identified clients seeking treatment in the first place (Kleinplatz & Moser, 2004; Kolmes & Witherspoon, 2012).

Research on BDSM and Psychological Health

Several reviews of existing research consistently show that BDSM is not associated with psychopathology, including theories that prior childhood sexual abuse accounts for adult BDSM participation (i.e., Baumeister, 1991; Kleinplatz & Moser, 2006; Langdridge & Barker, 2007; Pows & Davies, 2012; Sandnabba, Santilla, Alison, & Nordling, 2002; Weinberg, 2006; Williams, 2006, 2013). Such research signals a strong need for a shift in how BDSM is conceptualized among professionals and lay people.

A national study in Australia ($N = 19,307$) found that BDSM participation was not associated with sexual difficulties, anxiety, or unhappiness (Richters, de Visser, Rissel, Grulich, & Smith, 2008). Curiously, Richters and colleagues found that BDSM participation among men was statistically associated with lower psychological distress.

Canadian researchers Cross and Matheson (2006) discussed how perspectives of BDSM are often rooted in: (a) a medical/psychoanalytic model, which flows from longstanding assumptions mentioned earlier; or (b) explanations that frame BDSM motivation according to either radical feminism or a need to escape the burden of the everyday self. Cross and Matheson found nothing to support perspectives that BDSM fit a medical/psychoanalytic model, a need to escape temporarily from the self, or a radical feminist perspective. Cross and Matheson did find that individuals who practice BDSM often vary in their preferred practices and behaviors.

More recently in the Netherlands, Wismeijer and van Assen (2013) compared the mental health of BDSM practitioners ($n=902$) to a matched control group ($n=434$). They found that, overall, people who practiced BDSM were psychologically healthier than those who did not. They commented that BDSM should be understood in terms of recreational leisure rather than psychopathology.

Findings from other studies (Richters, et al., 2008; Taylor & Ussher, 2001) also point to the possibility that BDSM may be legitimate leisure experience for those who participate. Taylor

and Ussher (2001) conducted a qualitative study in which they asked participants to describe and define their experiences of BDSM. Participants in the study described BDSM experiences in a variety of ways, including transcendence, escapism from the ordinariness of life, pleasure, playful and fun, and as having a spiritual quality. These characteristics are consistent with legitimate leisure experience.

BDSM as Leisure: An Emerging Perspective

Recently, scholars have begun to explore how BDSM may fit a leisure framework (Newmahr, 2010; Prior & Williams, 2015; Williams & Prior, 2015b; Williams, Prior, Alvarado, Thomas, & Christensen, 2016). Although a precise definition of leisure remains elusive, scholars agree that leisure experience may be understood as activity, time, or setting; it is freely chosen and intrinsically motivated; and it is associated with physical and psychological benefits (Kleiber, Walker, & Mannell, 2011). Potential leisure activities are diverse but enjoyable for those who choose to participate. Because BDSM seems to be freely chosen, intrinsically motivated, and produces benefits and positive emotions for those who regularly participate, it seems to qualify as legitimate leisure experience. Although BDSM is often understood as an alternative sexual identity, a leisure framework includes sexually-motivated behavior but also accounts for BDSM experiences that are not particularly motivated by sexuality. In other words, it accounts for a broader range of potential BDSM practices and motivations than interpretations from sexuality discourses (Newmahr, 2010; Williams et al., 2016). Interestingly, BDSM participation is commonly called “play,” and play, generally, is a common form of leisure. Williams and colleagues (2016), as an exploratory follow-up investigation to the study by van Assen and Wismiejer (2013), found that BDSM experiences reflect multiple dimensions of leisure experience among very high percentages of BDSM participants (N=935).

Working with BDSM-Identified Clients: Applying a Strengths Perspective

The strengths perspective has been popular in social work for over two decades, and it can be applied at all levels of social work practice (Saleebey, 1996; 2009) as well as other therapeutic settings. This perspective may also be capable of helping disadvantaged people in navigating issues of structural power that promote injustice (Guo & Tsui, 2010). Thus, an advantage of a strengths perspective is its flexibility in complementing multiple epistemological and methodological approaches.

This perspective operates from the assumption that individuals already have the assets and skills needed to grow and change. Strengths perspective operates under the basic assumptions that all individuals have the capacity for resilience; they also have knowledge of their situations and contexts; and they have inherent capacity for growth and change (Rangan Aarit, 2006).

Shifting from a problem based to a strengths perspective has several advantages for both individuals and clinicians, especially when working with clients who practice BDSM. First, the mental health field historically has been built on the medical model. The medical model encourages both the clinician and the individual to label a problem, seek an “expert”, and identify a prescription to resolve the problem. Second, clients may have more success when they

are highly empowered in the therapeutic process; and third, clients may enjoy sustained change from the ability to customize interventions for clients based on their unique combinations of strengths (Hammond, 2010).

Significant Strengths Frequently Associated with BDSM

To date, there has been very little scholarly attention given to potential strengths associated with BDSM participation. We draw from two recent papers, along with our combined several decades of academic and professional experience with BDSM, to identify and summarize several key strengths associated with these practices.

A recent study by Moebus (2013) uncovered the following strengths associated with one local BDSM community: (a) the diversity of volunteers and participants; (b) the variety of knowledge bases within the community; (c) the approachability of the community; (d) dedication of the community to events and goals; and (e) acceptance, inclusion and support of community members.

At the mezzo level, Kleinplatz (2006) suggested several “lessons” that can be learned from happy, fulfilled BDSM couples who regularly “play on the edge.” By exploring the practices of these couples, it appears that a number of strengths may be derived, including an ability to plan and focus on details; patience and the ability to delay gratification; communication, negotiation and an ability to trust; an ability to seek adventure and “aliveness”; an ability to strive to reach one’s potential; and an ability to take risks.

In the remainder of this paper, we further discuss several key strengths that may be useful for social workers that are working with clients who practice BDSM in their intimate relationships.

Communication, Negotiation, and Development of Trust

Communication and negotiation, which then promote trust, are cornerstones of BDSM interactions (Ortmann & Sprott, 2013). Clear, explicit communication about needs, wants, limits, and safe-words is essential for enjoyable and successful BDSM experiences and relationships. BDSM communities frequently remind participants of the need to discuss thoroughly “safe, sane, and consensual” (SSC) activities prior to engaging in BDSM experiences. Sometimes, the phrase “risk aware consensual kink” (RACK) is used in place of SSC to guide communication and negotiation of potential BDSM activities. More recently, scholars have discussed the advantages of a framework focusing on “communication, consent, caring, and caution” (4Cs) to structure communication and negotiation among BDSM participants (Williams, Thomas, Prior, & Christensen, 2014).

BDSM participation requires excellent communication and negotiation pertaining to potential activities, respecting personal limits of what may occur, keeping participants physically and psychologically safe, and promoting an enjoyable, fulfilling experience for all participants. BDSM participants often have excellent skills in communicating their needs, preferences, possibilities and boundaries with respect to participation in desired BDSM activities.

Clinicians working with clients who practice BDSM should be aware that these clients likely have effective communication and negotiation skills in BDSM contexts. Indeed, social workers commonly recognize that effective communication and negotiation skills, especially pertaining to needs and setting boundaries, are excellent strengths that can be utilized across a wide range of contexts to help resolve various issues. These strengths may be applied to help resolve various forms of interpersonal conflict, including relationship difficulties and disputes with coworkers, friends, or family members.

Ability to Take Calculated Risks

In addition to strengths related to communication and negotiation, BDSM clients are also likely to have extensive familiarity with taking calculated risks. In particular, many BDSM clients will have experience with assessing the various goals and objectives that they bring to their BDSM participation and with reflecting on how these goals and objectives are related to (and often a direct function of) the inherent risks that are a part of many BDSM activities and relationships (Newmahr 2011a, 2011b). These risks include not only physical risks, but also emotional, psychological, and relational risks.

Drawing then on this kind of familiarity with taking calculated risks, social workers may find it helpful to encourage their BDSM clients to rely on such familiarity when dealing with various life problems and the potential risks and benefits that clients might experience as they attempt to develop strategies for engaging and overcoming problems that precipitated therapeutic intervention. Furthermore, social workers should also recognize that many BDSM clients will not only have familiarity with taking calculated risks but also with taking an incremental approach to slowly and carefully increasing these risks. Accordingly, BDSM clients might be encouraged to think about a stepwise approach of increasing risk and ongoing reassessment as they strategize to deal with potential problems and issues.

Awareness of Embodiment and Physicality

One of the ways through which this kind of reassessment can take place is through encouraging BDSM clients to draw on their awareness of embodiment and physicality as they listen to the feedback that their bodies are providing them as they engage and respond to various problems and issues. Along these lines, social workers should understand that BDSM clients are not only likely to have substantial experience with distinguishing between different kinds of physical sensations (such as different types of pain and pleasure), but BDSM clients are also likely to have experience with recognizing that these physical sensations can often act as precursors to subsequent thoughts and feelings. For example, physical indicators such as muscle tension, perspiration, and breathing patterns can all reveal important information to a BDSM practitioner about how he or she may soon feel.

Social workers can then utilize this experience of their BDSM clients to encourage these clients to recognize similar physical sensations throughout a range of life applications. For instance, whether a client is dealing with some kind of interpersonal conflict or perhaps feelings of depression or anxiety or even problematic anger—in all of these situations, social workers can encourage their clients to listen to their bodies and to develop strategies that allow them to respond to these conflicts or feelings in helpful and productive ways.

Coping and Self-Care

Stress is associated with predictable physiological responses, thus an acute awareness of physiological changes is useful in becoming quickly aware of the need for coping and self-care. BDSM seems to function as legitimate leisure experience (Newmahr, 2010; Williams & Prior, 2015b; Williams et al., 2016), and accumulating research suggests that leisure experiences reduce stress and help people cope with difficult life events (Bailey & Fernando, 2012; Iwasaki & Schneider, 2003; Kleiber, Hutchinson, & Williams, 2002; Magnuson & Barnett, 2013; Mannell, 2007). Thus, social workers should recognize that BDSM is likely an important form of regular leisure, and thus a strong source of coping, identity-expression and self-care, for clients who frequently participate in BDSM activities. Participating regularly in some form of leisure is a significant strength due to the ability of leisure to provide a wide range of potential benefits, including developing social support and a stronger connection with others (for shared leisure experiences), providing personal enjoyment and other positive emotions, self-expression, and opportunities for transforming self and relationships.

Resiliency

Kirst-Ashman (2013) noted that resiliency—the ability to recover successfully from adversity—is an important part of the strengths perspective and empowerment. Many people who regularly participate in BDSM have faced adversity in various forms. We previously discussed that people who practice BDSM frequently are marginalized, and unfortunately, have sometimes faced serious discrimination. In response to these cases, there have been times when individuals and groups have collaborated to support each other and take action to protect the rights of BDSM practitioners. The National Coalition for Sexual Freedom (NCSF) and other organizations have worked hard to try to reduce social injustice toward BDSM participants and sexual minorities.

There may be times when it may be helpful for social workers to inquire about times when their clients have potentially faced adversity within a BDSM context, and how such adversity was overcome. For some, drawing on social support, helping to educate outsiders, and engaging in activism are ways that facilitate resiliency.

Embracing Diversity and Giving / Receiving Support

Because of the long history of marginalization and discrimination that many BDSM practitioners have endured, they are well aware of the devaluing of people who are considered different or not normal. Many people who identify with BDSM seem to do so in full knowledge of not following societal norms, and some even revel in such resistance. People within the BDSM community sometimes jokingly refer to themselves as “the island of misfit toys,” referring to their lack of full citizenship within mainstream society (see Langdridge, 2006). Due to the “outsider” nature of many BDSM communities and the people who gravitate to them, some people who do not seem to fit within mainstream society also tend to be welcomed into BDSM spaces. BDSM communities that we are familiar with seem to welcome people from a

range of diverse cultures and ethnicities, gender identities, religious and spiritual beliefs, political ideologies, and sexual orientations and identities.

The support for human diversity in BDSM communities is a salient strength that may be helpful for many BDSM-identified people. Social workers can help BDSM-identified individuals in recognizing and utilizing this strength in specific contexts and situations to resolve problems. In some instances, clients may be reminded that they have an existing ability to educate and facilitate an understanding of diversity that can help resolve an issue that is the target of intervention. Other situations may call for reaching out for specific support to help deal with the issue, and many BDSM clients do this within a BDSM social context.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that there are many people who regularly enjoy BDSM practices and relationships, the topic of BDSM remains to be addressed within the social work profession. Without being sufficiently informed, clinicians can unknowingly inflict further harm upon clients (see Graham, 2014; Kolmes & Witherspoon, 2012; Williams, 2015). Although we have focused on positive aspects of BDSM, like other erotic practices, not all such encounters are necessarily healthy. Healthy experiences are dependent on sufficient personal awareness and careful negotiation among participants. Thus, when social workers encounter problematic BDSM encounters reported by clients, they should explore how the experience was structured based on a negotiation framework such as the 4Cs (Williams et al., 2014) mentioned earlier.

When working with BDSM-identified clients, Kleinplatz and Moser (2004) recommend that social workers and helping professionals should:

- (a) not assume that the presenting problem is related to or caused by BDSM;
- (b) do not make assumptions about clients goals;
- (c) realize that client distress over BDSM interests may signify normal internalized BDSM negativity, and thus stigma;
- (d) be attuned to how BDSM curiosities or interests may affect family, social, and work relationships;
- (e) realize that most people who practice BDSM still also enjoy conventional “vanilla” sex;
- (f) be aware of personal and cultural biases (and countertransference) and how these may affect BDSM-identified clients; and
- (g) become more knowledgeable about BDSM.

We fully agree with the recommendations above by Kleinplatz and Moser (2004). Moreover, herein we have identified several valuable strengths that are commonly associated with BDSM participation, including communication, negotiation, and development of trust; an ability to take calculated risks; an awareness of one’s embodiment and physicality; coping and self-care; resiliency; and embracing diversity along with an ability to give and receive social support. These salient BDSM strengths are valuable tools that BDSM-identified clients can apply in other life areas to resolve problems. Because social workers frequently utilize a strengths perspective, they are in a position to apply clinical skills that are grounded in a common professional model to empower BDSM-identified clients. By utilizing a strengths perspective with BDSM-identified clients, social workers and other helping professionals can become more effective in providing services to people in a community that, understandably, often fear seeking professional help.

References

- Bailey, A. W., & Fernando, I. K. (2012). Routine and project-based leisure, happiness, and meaning in life. *Journal of Leisure Research, 44*, 139-154.
- Baumeister, R. F. (1991). *Escaping the self*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Brandon, M. (2011). The challenge of monogamy: Bringing it out of the closet and into the treatment room. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy, 26*, 271-277.
- Cross, P. & Matheson, K. (2006). Understanding sadomasochism. *Journal of Homosexuality, 50*(2/3), 133-166.
- Graham, N. (2014). Polyamory: A call for increased mental health professional awareness. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*. Published online July 22.
- Guo, W., & Tsui, M. (2010). From resilience to resistance: A reconstruction of the strengths perspective in social work practice. *International Social Work, 53*, 233-245.
- Hammond, W. (2010). *Principles of strength-based practice*. Calgary, AB: Resiliency Initiatives.
- Iwasaki, Y., & Schneider, I. E. (2003). Leisure, stress, and coping: An evolving area of inquiry. *Leisure Sciences, 25*, 107-113.
- Kirst-Asman, K. K. (2013). *Introduction to social work and social welfare: Critical thinking perspectives*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Kleiber, D. A., Hutchinson, S. L., & Williams, R. (2002). Leisure as a resource in transcending negative life events: Self-protection, self-restoration, and personal transformation. *Leisure Sciences, 24*, 219-235.
- Kleiber, D. A., Walker, G. J., & Mannell, R. C. (2011). *A social psychology of leisure*. State College, PA: Venture.
- Kleinplatz, P. J. (2006). Learning from extraordinary lovers: Lessons from the edge. *Journal of Homosexuality, 50*(2/3), 325-348.
- Kleinplatz, P. J., & Moser, C. (2004). Toward clinical guidelines for working with BDSM clients. *Contemporary Sexuality, 38*(6), 3-4.
- Kleinplatz, P. J., & Moser, C. (Eds.) (2006). *Sadomasochism: Powerful pleasures*. Binghamton, NY: Harrington Park Press.
- Kolmes, K., & Witherspoon, R. G. (2012). Sexual orientation microaggressions in everyday life: Expanding our conversations about sexual diversity: Part I. *Independent Practitioner, Summer Issue*, 96-101.
- Langdridge, D. (2006). Voices from the margins: Sadomasochism and sexual citizenship. *Citizenship Studies, 10*, 373-389.
- Langdridge, D., & Barker, M. (Eds.) (2007). *Safe, sane and consensual: Contemporary perspectives on sadomasochism*. New York: Palgrave-MacMillan.
- Magnuson, C. D., & Barnett, L. A. (2013). The playful advantage: How playfulness enhances coping with stress. *Leisure Sciences, 35*, 129-144.
- Mannell, R. C. (2007). Leisure, health, and well-being. *World Leisure, 49*, 114-128.
- Moebus, D. C. (2013). *Safer sex Humboldt needs assessment*. Unpublished Master of Social Work thesis. Humboldt State University.
- Newmahr, S. (2010). Rethinking kink: Sadomasochism as serious leisure. *Qualitative Sociology, 33*, 313-331.
- Newmahr, S. (2011a). Chaos, order, and collaboration: Toward a feminist conceptualization of edgework. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 40*, 682-712.
- Newmahr, S. (2011b). *Playing on the edge: Sadomasochism, risk, and intimacy*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Ortmann, D. & Sprott, R. (2013). *Sexual outsiders: Understanding BDSM sexualities and communities*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Powls, J. & Davies, J. (2012). A descriptive review of research relating to sadomasochism: Considerations for clinical practice. *Deviant Behavior, 33*, 223-234.
- Prior, E. E., & Williams, D J (2015). Does BDSM power exchange among women reflect casual leisure? An exploratory study. *Journal of Positive Sexuality, 1*, 12-15.
- Prior, E. E., Williams, D J, Zavala, T., & Milford, J. (2016). What do(n't) American undergraduate social work students learn about sex? A content analysis of sex positivity and diversity in five popular HBSE textbooks. *Critical Social Work, 17*, 55-73.
- Rangan Aarti, S. (2006). Strengths-perspective in mental health (Evidence-based case study). In *Strength Based Strategies* (online). Retrieved from: <http://www.strengthbasedstrategies.com/PA/PERS/16RanganFormatted.pdf>
- Richters, J., de Visser, R. O., Rissel, C. E., Grulich, A. E., & Smith, A. M. A. (2008). Demographic and psychosocial features of participants in bondage and discipline, "sadomasochism," or dominance and submission (BDSM): Data from a national

- survey. *Journal of Sexual Medicine*, 5, 1660-1668.
- Saleebey, D. (1996). The strengths perspective in social work practice: Extensions and cautions. *Social Work*, 41, 296-305.
- Saleebey, D. (Ed.) (2009). *The strengths perspective in social work practice*. New York: Allyn & Bacon.
- Sandnabba, N. K., Santilla, P., Alison, L., & Nordling, N. (2002). Demographics, sexual behavior, family background and abuse experiences of practitioners of sadomasochistic sex: A review of recent research. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy*, 17, 39-55.
- Scherrer, K. (2013). Culturally competent practice with bisexual individuals. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 41, 238-248.
- Taylor, G. & Ussher, J. (2001). Making sense of S&M: A discourse analytic account. *Sexualities*, 4, 293-314.
- Weinberg, T. S. (2006). Sadomasochism and the social sciences. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 50(2/3), 17-40.
- Williams, D J (2006). Different (painful!) strokes for different folks: A general overview of sexual sadomasochism and its diversity. *Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity*, 13, 333-346.
- Williams, D J (2013). Social work, BDSM, and vampires: Toward understanding and empowering people with non-traditional identities. *Canadian Social Work*, 15, 10-24.
- Williams, D J (2015). Does social work need a good spanking? The refusal to embrace BDSM scholarship and implications for sexually diverse clients. *Journal of Positive Sexuality*, 1, 37-41.
- Williams, D J (2016). The framing of frequent sexual behavior and/or pornography viewing as addiction: Some concerns for social work. *Journal of Social Work* (Advance access).
- Williams, D J, & Prior, E. E. (2015a). Contemporary polyamory: A call for awareness and sensitivity in social work. *Social Work*, 60, 268-270.
- Williams, D J, & Prior, E. E. (2015b). "Wait, go back, I might miss something important!" Applying Leisure 101 to simplify and complicate BDSM. *Journal of Positive Sexuality*, 1, 63-69.
- Williams, D J, Prior, E. E., Alvarado, T., Thomas, J. N., & Christensen, M. C. (2016). Is bondage, dominance and submission, and sadomasochism recreational leisure? A descriptive exploratory investigation. *Journal of Sexual Medicine*, 13, 1091-1094.
- Williams, D J, Thomas, J. N., Prior, E. E., & Christensen, M. C. (2014). From "SSC" and "RACK" to the "4Cs": Introducing a new framework for negotiating BDSM participation. In *Electronic Journal of Human Sexuality*, 17.
- Wismeijer, A. & van Assen, M. (2013). Psychological characteristics of BDSM practitioners. *Journal of Sexual Medicine*, 10, 1943-1951.

Anal Sexual Practices among Undergraduate Students

Cristinia Molinares, Irina Kolobova, and David Knox
East Carolina University

Introduction

Approximately 30% of women and 35% of men report having engaged in heterosexual anal intercourse (HAI) in the past year (Hess, Reynolds, & Fisher, 2014). Other researchers have reported that between 1% and 40% of women and 8% and 43% of men have engaged in HAI at least once in their lifetime (Fahs, Swank, & Clevenger, 2015). The rate of HAI among college students is similar to that of the general population. Halperin (1999) reported that approximately 25% of students at the University of Maryland had engaged in HAI.

McBride and Fortenberry (2010) reviewed the literature on anal sex and noted that an Internet search for the term “heterosexual anal sex” yielded 790,000 links related to pornographic images and chats, scientific findings, and anal sex health information. The researchers suggested that anal sex is sometimes regarded as the “new” oral sex. A cultural shift in sexual norms may contribute to an increased prevalence of heterosexual anal sex. More women today are engaging in anal intercourse than previously. Data from 1991 and 1992 revealed that only 18-20% of women had ever engaged in anal sex compared with 28-33% in 2002, thus demonstrating an increase over a ten-year period (Fahs et al., 2015).

Even though data suggest that more individuals are engaging in HAI, there has only been limited research focusing on the motives for engaging in HAI. Thus far, researchers have identified religion, being in a monogamous/committed relationship and pleasure as motives for engaging in HAI (Fahs et al., 2015; McBride & Fortenberry, 2010). Some religious individuals engage in anal intercourse as opposed to vaginal intercourse in order to maintain their virginity (Fahs et al., 2015) since they do not consider anal intercourse as “real” sex (e.g., sexual intercourse) (McBride & Fortenberry, 2010).

Being in a committed relationship is also associated with engaging in anal sex. Trust has been identified as being higher in committed relationships compared to casual relationships. Reynolds, Fisher, and Rogala (2015) found that some of their female respondents felt less at risk for contracting an STI while engaging in unprotected heterosexual anal sex with a committed partner whom they trusted.

Pleasure is also a motivation for anal sex with men reporting more positive HAI than women. Almost sixty percent of heterosexual male participants compared to 13 percent of heterosexual female participants in Fahs et al. (2015) research reported having enjoyed their past anal sex experience. Other researchers have found that some women engage in HAI for their own enjoyment (Reynolds et al., 2015).

The purpose of this study was to move beyond the existing data and examine other motives for heterosexual anal intercourse. While previous research has focused mainly on high

risk populations such as substance users (Reynolds et al., 2015), the homeless (Hess et al., 2014), and men who have sex with men (Fahs et al., 2015; Hess et al., 2014), this study examined the motives for and interest in anal intercourse among a sample of heterosexual college students. First, we look at two theories which serve as the foundation for understanding anal sex as an increasing phenomenon.

Theoretical Frameworks

Sexual script theory and sexual liberalism provide the lens for viewing contemporary anal sex practices. Sexual script theory emphasizes that an individual's sexual behavior is influenced by social scripts which reflect a person's gender (Sakaluk, Todd, Milhausen, & Lachowsky, 2014). Due to the biological differences between men and women, the respective genders are socialized with different beliefs and values (Sakaluk et al., 2014). Traditional sexual scripts are entrenched (Sakaluk et al., 2014) and reflect traditional cultural gender norms (Sanchez, Fetterolf, & Rudman, 2012). For example, a study on anal sex practices among Puerto Rican university students found that 47% of the heterosexual men either "always" or "almost always" made the decision about having anal sex (Halperin, 1999). Eighty percent of the female participants reported that 65% of the time their partner "always" made the decision to have anal sex (Halperin, 1999). These data reflect the cultural norm in Puerto Rico that it is the male's role to initiate and make decisions about sexual intimacy (Sakaluk et al., 2014; Sanchez et al., 2012).

However, the world is changing. Sexual liberalism includes being the "Neoliberal" female, seeking to be free (not tied down to one partner), and sexually autonomous (Bay-Cheng & Goodkind, 2016). Sexual liberalism also implies that women are becoming more assertive in initiating, enjoying, and not feeling guilty about engaging in sexual behavior. While men may be initiating sex more often, women are both initiating and enjoying it too. We return to this theme in the discussion section.

Method

A descriptive, cross-sectional design was utilized to collect data from undergraduate women and men about their attitudes and beliefs regarding anal intercourse at a moderately sized southeastern university. Data were collected through a self-administered online survey via Qualtrics (Qualtrics, 2005). The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board.

Sample and Procedure

Undergraduate students in the third author's sociology courses were invited to participate in the research during the Fall 2015 semester. The students were emailed a link to the online survey and asked to complete the anonymous and voluntary survey. All students who completed the survey were at least 18 years of age.

Measures

Participants completed a 53-item survey (see Appendix A) developed by the authors that consisted of categorical questions and rating scales about participants' demographic information, sexual attitudes, and behaviors. An example of a question about a participant's sexual attitudes

was, “On a ten-point scale, to what degree are you open to new sexual experiences?” An example of a question about sexual behavior was, “Have you engaged in anal intercourse?” Participants that reported ever engaging in anal intercourse responded to additional questions about their experiences, beliefs, and satisfaction. An example of a question of this nature was, “What are your feelings about having participated in anal sex?”

Statistical Analysis

A variety of statistical techniques (univariate, bivariate, and multivariate analyses) were used to analyze the data. Descriptive univariate analyses were used to summarize the data and identify demographic characteristics of the sample. Chi-square and independent sample t-tests were used to compare variables across groups (e.g., those who engaged in anal sex compared to those who had not, male participants compared to female participants). Additional bivariate analysis with only those participants who reported having engaged in anal intercourse was also completed. Statistical significance was set at a p-value of <0.05 and pairwise deletions were used for missing cases. All statistical analysis was performed using SPSS software.

Results

Of the 265 undergraduates who were emailed the link, 189 completed the anonymous/voluntary survey (71%). Table 1 details the sample’s demographic characteristics.

Table 1.

Sample Characteristics (N = 189)

Frequency (%) or Mean (SD)	
Gender	
Male participants	29 (15.3)
Female participants	159 (84.1)
Transgender participants	1 (.5)
Race	
White	133 (70.4)
Black	34 (18)
Hispanic	8 (4.2)
Asian	5 (2.6)
Native American	3 (1.6)
Bi-racial	6 (3.2)
Sexual orientation	
Heterosexual	175 (92.6)
Homosexual	6 (3.2)
Bisexual	5 (2.6)
Pansexual	2 (1.1)
Asexual	1 (.5)
Class Standing	
Freshman	30 (15.9)
Sophomore	80 (42.3)

Junior	47 (24.9)
Senior	29 (15.3)
Graduate student	3 (1.6)
<hr/>	
Grade point average (N = 188)	
2.0 or lower	6 (3.2)
2.1 – 2.8	45 (23.9)
2.9 – 3.4	79 (42)
3.5 – 3.7	43 (22.9)
3.8 or higher	15 (8)
<hr/>	
Mother's highest level of education	
Did not finish high school	2 (1.1)
High school graduate	35 (18.5)
Some college	37 (19.6)
College graduate	80 (19.6)
Master's degree	30 (15.9)
PhD, MD, or JD	5 (2.6)
<hr/>	
Current relationship status	
Not dating	71 (37.6)
Casually dating	29 (15.3)
Committed relationship with one person	84 (44.4)
Engaged	3 (1.6)
Married	2 (1.1)

The majority of the respondents were women (84%), white (70% with 18% black, 4% Hispanic) and heterosexual (93%). Over half (58%) of the sample identified as freshman or sophomores. Due to the small number of non-heterosexual participants ($n = 14$), additional analyses was limited to heterosexual participants ($n = 175$).

Less than half (41.3%) of the sample reported having engaged in any type of sexual activity and over a third (34.5%) of the sample reported having engaged in anal intercourse. An interesting observation is that among those who reported never having engaged in any type of sexual activity, 26% reported having engaged in anal intercourse, suggesting some of the respondents did not view anal sex as “real” sex (e.g., sexual intercourse) or did not understand the question. Despite this observation, their responses were included in the additional analyses.

With regard to sexual values, 9% of the respondents were absolutist (e.g., virginity till marriage), 32% were hedonistic (e.g., sex focused on pleasure), and 59% were relativistic (e.g., sex in a relationship). Twenty percent of the respondents reported having had over 10 previous sexual partners. Additional descriptive results regarding participants' sex values and behaviors are presented in Table 2.

Table 2.

Sex values and beliefs of heterosexual participants (N = 175)

Own sexual attitude	
Sex before marriage is wrong	16 (9.1)
Sex is ok in a relationship	103 (58.9)
“If it feels good, do it”	56 (32)
Parents’ sexual attitudes	
Very open about sex	31 (17.6)
Household taboo	12 (6.8)
Hold traditional sexual values	34 (19.3)
Acknowledged but not discussed	98 (55.7)
Number of sexual partners (n = 173)	
0	25 (14.2)
1	38 (21.6)
2-5	54 (30.7)
6-10	22 (12.5)
11-20	22 (12.5)
21-50	9 (5.1)
51-75	3 (1.7)
Engaged in anal sex (n = 171)	
Yes	59 (34.5)
No	112 (65.5)

Overall, male participants had a higher degree of openness for sexual experiences (men: $M = 7.92$, $SD = 1.863$; women: $M = 6.19$, $SD = 2.154$; $t(172) = 3.702$, $p < .001$), a higher interest in anal sex (men: $M = 5.19$, $SD = 2.792$; women: $M = 2.45$, $SD = 2.287$; $t(172) = 5.241$, $p < .001$) and a greater openness for anal intercourse (men: $M = 6.00$, $SD = 2.993$; women: $M = 3.07$, $SD = 2.570$; $t(181) = 5.069$, $p < .001$) compared to women. Female participants reported a higher level of disgust ($M = 6.07$, $SD = 3.319$) than male participants ($M = 4.63$, $SD = 3.214$; $t(172) = 1.984$, $p < .05$) about anal intercourse. Male participants were more likely to have suggested anal sex to their partner (59%) compared to female participants (16.1%; $X^2(1) = 21.502$, $p < 0.001$). Female participants reported a higher level of pressure from their partners to engage in anal intercourse ($M = 2.69$, $SD = 2.257$) as compared to male participants ($M = 1.48$, $SD = 1.310$; $t(47.294) = 3.624$, $p = .01$).

Thirty percent of the female and 37% of the male participants reported that they had experienced anal intercourse. The primary reason reported for engaging in anal sex was “to please the partner” (32%), with female participants more likely than male participants to report this as a reason. Other motives included curiosity (27%) and “to spice things up” (10%). Less than half of the sample reported that alcohol was involved during their last anal intercourse experience. Less than 10% of the sample reported that drugs (other than alcohol) were involved during the last anal intercourse experience. There were no gender differences with regard to the presence of alcohol or drugs.

Other findings revealed that those who had engaged in anal intercourse reported being less religious than those who had not engaged in anal intercourse ($X^2(4) = 10.208, p < .05$). Rates of anal intercourse were lowest among female participants who held absolutist sexual values and highest among those who held hedonist sexual values ($X^2(2) = 8.819, p < .05$). Having engaged in anal intercourse was higher among juniors and seniors compared to freshmen and sophomores ($X^2(4) = 10.992, p < .05$). Participants in committed relationships were more likely to report having engaged in anal intercourse ($X^2(4) = 10.742, p < .05$).

Overall, male participants evaluated anal intercourse higher ($M = 7.00, SD = 2.530$) than female participants ($M = 4.19, SD = 2.924; t(56) = 2.934, p = .005$). Sixty-four percent of the men compared to 44% of the women reported positive feelings about participating in anal intercourse. None of the men and 9% of the women reported regretting the experience. Male participants were more likely to report that they initiated anal intercourse (54.5%) compared to female participants (15.2%; $X^2(1) = 7.799, p < .01$).

Finally, male participants were more likely to report having had an orgasm during the last anal intercourse experience (72.7%) compared to female participants (25.5%; $X^2(1) = 8.788, p < .01$). In a multiple regression model predicting evaluation of anal intercourse that included gender and orgasm, only having an orgasm was significant ($B = -.634, p < .001$) in predicting a higher evaluation of anal intercourse ($F(2,55) = 24.775, p < .001$).

Discussion

This study examined the motives for and interest in heterosexual anal intercourse (HAI) among a sample of college students. While research suggests that rates of engaging in HAI are increasing (Hess et al., 2014; Fahs et al., 2015), the literature is sparse regarding the motives for HAI. Findings from this study reflect new insights in regard to anal sex practices among heterosexual undergraduate students. Over a third (34%) of the sample reported engaging in the behavior, which is more than previously reported for a sample of students at the University of Maryland (Halperin, 1999). The higher rate among college students parallels the change in rates among the non-college population (Hess et al., 2014; Fahs et al., 2015).

Participants endorsed a variety of reasons for engaging in HAI, including to please their partners, personal curiosity, and to “spice things up”. Previous researchers have identified religion, being in a committed relationship and pleasure as motives (Fahs et al., 2015; McBride & Fortenberry, 2010). While overall, in this study, men evaluated HAI higher than women, 44% of women reported enjoyment with less than ten percent (9%) reporting any regret. A quarter (25.5%) of the female participants who had engaged in HAI reported having experienced orgasm and it is these females who reported greater enjoyment in anal sex. Furthermore, gender alone did not predict a positive evaluation of anal sex but rather, having an orgasm. This finding suggests that pleasure may be an important aspect of how individuals experience HAI and may serve as a motive for some individuals. This finding supports previous findings suggesting that some women engage in HAI for their own enjoyment (Reynolds et al., 2015).

Implications

This study provides evidence that undergraduate students are engaging in HAI at greater rates than previously reported (Halperin et al., 1999) and that women may be engaging in HAI for personal reasons such as curiosity and pleasure. These findings may be particularly useful to healthcare educators, healthcare providers, and researchers who work with undergraduate students.

There are three implications from these findings to consider. First, only a small portion of the sample reported having absolutist views on sexual activity and 41.3% of the sample had previously engaged in sexual activity. More than a third of the sample had engaged in heterosexual anal intercourse. These findings emphasize that undergraduate students are engaging in sexual activities and even more are likely discussing topics related to sexual activity. If anal sex is a “taboo topic,” this was not the case in our sample. While men were more likely to suggest HAI, women participated in and enjoyed HAI which supports the need for both men and women to receive comprehensive and timely information about healthy sexual activity from educators and healthcare providers. Information about safe sex practices should be geared towards empowering men and women to be responsible with their bodies.

Another implication from the findings is that gender roles are changing. One in three female participants reported experiencing anal sex, and of these, four in ten reported enjoying the experience. Less than ten percent of the women reported regretting the experience. Women of today who are sexually assertive initiate and communicate about the sex they desire (“I feel comfortable telling my partner what I want him to do”), refuse unwanted sex (“If I don’t want to do something, I tell him”), and communicate with their partners about sexual history and risk (“I ask my partner if he has practiced safe sex with other partners”) (Loshek & Terrell, 2015). Women are shifting from traditional sexual scripts and embracing sexual liberalism. Future research to understand this shift may be beneficial for empowering women to continue to ask for what they desire and to not feel pressured to engage in unwanted sexual activities.

The final implication of this research is in reference to the high rate of orgasm during HAI experienced by female participants. While women in general report experiencing predictable orgasm three to ten percent of the time via vaginal intercourse (Mintz, 2017), over a quarter of the female participants in this sample reported an orgasm during their most recent HAI experience. Experiencing an orgasm, not gender, was a significant factor in predicting a higher evaluation of HAI. This finding emphasizes the role of pleasure in women’s sexual experiences and highlights the need for more research about women’s sexual pleasure. Understanding the role of pleasure in women’s decision making process is important to healthcare educators and providers who are working with women on building positive sexual identities.

Limitations

While this study provides valuable insight into motives for HAI for undergraduate students, there are several limitations. First, the convenience sample of 189 undergraduate students is hardly representative of the almost 20 million undergraduate students throughout the United States. This sample was collected from a public university in the southeastern portion of the United States and may not be representative of other regions of the country. Second, the data

are quantitative with no qualitative interviews to provide insights on the raw statistics. Subsequent research on anal sex might include interviews about this private subject to understand how pleasure, social scripts, and expectations influence the decisions men and women make with regard to HAI. Third, the final sample only included heterosexual undergraduate students. Individuals who engage in same sex anal intercourse may have different motives for engaging in it and experiences with it. Additional research that compares these different populations would be beneficial for building an understanding of anal intercourse experiences.

Conclusion

This cross sectional study provides original findings regarding HAI experiences among a sample of undergraduate students at a southeastern university. Rates of HAI are increasing among undergraduate students and both men and women are enjoying the experience. As healthcare educators, providers, and researchers aim to meet the needs of sexually active undergraduate students, educating and empowering them about positive sexuality is likely to have better outcomes for all involved.

References

- Bay-Cheng, L. & Goodkind, S. (2016). Sex and the single (Neoliberal) girl: Perspectives on being single among socioeconomically diverse young women. *Sex Roles, 74* (5/6), 181-194.
- Fahs, B., Swank, E., & Clevenger, L. (2015). Troubling anal sex: Gender, power, and sexual compliance in heterosexual experiences of anal intercourse. *Gender Issues, 32*, 19-38. doi:10.1007/s12147-014-9129-7
- Halperin, D. T. (1999). Heterosexual anal intercourse: Prevalence, cultural factors, and HIV infection and other health risks, part I. *Aids Patient Care and STDs, 13*(12), 717-730. doi:10.1089/apc.1999.13.717
- Hess, K. L., Reynolds, G. L., Fisher, D.G. (2014). Heterosexual anal intercourse among men in Long Beach, California. *Journal of Sex Research, 51*(8), 874-881. doi:10.1080/00224499.2013.809512
- Loshek, E. & Terrell, H. K. (2015). The development of the sexual assertiveness questionnaire (SAQ): A comprehensive measure of sexual assertiveness for women. *The Journal of Sex Research, 52* (9), 1017-1027. doi:10.1080/00224499.2014.944970
- McBride, K. M. & Fortenberry, J. D. (2010). Heterosexual anal sexuality and anal sex behaviors: A review. *Journal of Sex Research, 47*(2-3), 123-136. doi:10.1080/00224490903402538
- Mintz, L. (2017). *Becoming Cliterate: Why Orgasm Equality Matters*. New York: HarperOne
- Qualtrics (2005). Qualtrics (Version 5.15). Provo, Utah, USA
- Reynolds, G. L., Fisher, D. G., & Rogala, B. (2015). Why women engage in anal intercourse: Results from a qualitative study. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 44*, 963-995. doi:10.1007/s10508-014-0367-2
- Sakaluk, J. K., Todd, L. M., Milhausen, R. & Lachowsky, N. J. (2014). Dominant heterosexual sexual scripts in emerging adulthood: Conceptualization and measurement. *Journal of Sex Research, 51*(5), 516-531. doi:10.1080/00224499.2012.745473
- Sanchez, D. T., Fetterolf, J. C., & Rudman, L. A. (2012). Eroticizing inequality in the United States: The consequences and determinants of traditional gender role adherence in intimate relationships. *Journal of Sex Research, 49*(2-3), 168-183. doi:10.1080/00224499.2011.653699

Appendix A: Survey on Anal Sex Practices among Undergraduate Students

Cristinia Molinares, Irina Kolobova, and David Knox
East Carolina University

Survey on Anal Sex

You are invited to participate in a research study titled "Anal Sex: Meanings and Negotiation in Relationships" conducted by David Knox, a sociology faculty member at East Carolina University, Cristinia Molinares (undergraduate senior majoring in sociology) and Irina Kolobova (doctoral candidate in medical family therapy). The goal of the research is to survey 400 individuals enrolled in courses taught by Dr. Knox. The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. The survey is anonymous and confidential. No data will be collected which will identify you. Your participation in the research is **voluntary**. You may choose not to answer any or all questions, and you may stop at any time. There is **no penalty for not taking part** in this research study. Please call David Knox at 252 756 3562 for any research related questions or the Office of Research Integrity & Compliance (ORIC) at 252-744-2914 for questions about your rights as a research participant.

There is no "capturing of your email or IP address" when you submit this questionnaire. In addition, no identifying code will be attached to any response. Finally, the questionnaire is to be completed by only by individuals age 18 or above. If you are underage, you have received this questionnaire in error; please disregard. The survey can be found at ****insert link here****

Background/Demographics

1. Sex

- Male
 Female
 Transgender

2. I regard myself as:

- White Black Hispanic
 Asian Native American Biracial Other

3. My class standing in college is:

- Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior Graduate Student

4. I define my sexual orientation as:

- heterosexual
 homosexual
 bisexual
 transgender
 other

5. I consider myself a religious/spiritual person

- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat Disagree
 - Neither disagree nor agree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
6. My Grade Point Average (GPA) is:
- 2.0 or lower
 - 2.1-2.8
 - 2.9-3.4
 - 3.5- 3.7
 - 3.8 or higher
7. On average, I consume alcohol:
- Once per day
 - Between 3-5 nights a week
 - Once a month
 - Several times a year
 - Almost never
 - I have never consumed alcohol
8. What is your mothers' highest level of education?
- she did not finish high school
 - high school graduate
 - some college but did not graduate
 - college graduate
 - Master's degree
 - Ph.D., MD, or degree in law
9. How would you describe your parents' sexual attitudes?
- They are very open about sex
 - Discussion of sex is a household taboo
 - They hold traditional sexual values (e.g. virginity at marriage)
 - Sex is acknowledged, but not spoken of often
10. Have you experienced any sexual activities (kissing, touching, fondling, intercourse, oral or anal sex) with someone of the same sex?
- yes
 - no
11. Approximately how many different partners have you had sexual intercourse with?
- I have never had sexual intercourse
 - 1
 - 2-5
 - 6-10

18. If you have ever watched a pornographic scene involving anal sex, what were the sexes of the participants?

- male-male
 male- female
 female-female
 I have never witnessed a pornographic scene of anal sex

19. Has any romantic partner ever suggested that you try anal sex?

- yes
 no

20. Have you ever suggested anal sex to a romantic partner?

- yes
 no

21. Given the opportunity, what is your level of interest in having anal sex?

Not interested										Very
interested	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

22. On a ten point scale, to what degree are you open to having anal sex?

Never										I am ready
now	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

23. On a ten point scale, to what degree do you find the idea of participating in anal sex disgusting?

Not at all										Extremely
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

24. How many times were you asked by your partner to have anal sex before it happened?

- less than 5 times
 between 5 and 10 times
 we immediately agreed
 more than 10 times
 my partner never asked me to have anal sex
 I have never had anal sex

25. On a ten point scale, how much pressure did you feel from your partner to have anal sex?

No pressure										Extreme Pressure
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

26. On a ten point scale, how much pressure did you put on your partner to have anal sex?

No pressure
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Extreme Pressure

27. Have you engaged in anal intercourse?

- yes
 no

28. In how many different relationships have you had anal sex?

- none
 one
 two
 three
 four
 five or more

If you have not engaged in anal sex, you have finished the survey. If you have engaged in anal sex, complete the remaining questions. If you have had more than one relationship in which anal sex was included, refer to the last relationship.

29. Describe the nature of your overall anal sex experience in the most recent relationship that has included anal sex.

- one time occurrence
 occasional occurrence (less than five times) with the same partner
 occasional occurrence (less than five times) with different partners
 frequent occurrence (more than five times) with the same partner
 frequent occurrence (more than five times) with different partners

30. What was your goal in having anal sex?

- to spice things up
 to live out a fantasy I have had about having anal sex
 to please my partner (I knew my partner would like it and I wanted them to enjoy)
 curiosity
 to explore my sexuality
 alcohol or drugs were involved and it just happened
 to stop my partner from pressuring me, I gave in

31. Who suggested the idea of having anal sex the first time it occurred?

- I did
 my partner

32. Did you have an orgasm during your last anal sex experience?

- yes
 no

33. What is your overall evaluation of having had anal sex?

Terrible

Wonderful

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

34. Was alcohol involved the last time you had anal sex?

yes

no

35. Were drugs other than alcohol involved during the anal sex?

yes

no

36. When did anal sex with your partner occur?

after vaginal sex

before vaginal sex

there was only anal sex

during foreplay

37. Did you use a condom during your last anal sex experience?

yes

no

38. If anal sex occurred after vaginal intercourse, was the same condom used?

yes

no

I do not know

we did not use a condom

anal sex did not occur after vaginal sex

39. If anal sex occurred before vaginal intercourse, was the same condom used?

yes

no

I do not know

we did not use a condom

anal sex did not occur before vaginal intercourse

40. Did you use any lubrication during your last anal sex experience?

yes

no

The following questions are about your overall experiences with anal sex or play.

41. Have you ever given a "rim" job (tongue on anus)?

yes

no

42. Have you ever received a "rim" job (tongue on anus)?

- yes
 no

43. If you have received a "rim" job, how much did you enjoy it?

No enjoyment
enjoyable

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Extremely

44. Have you ever given anal stimulation with your fingers?

- yes
 no

45. Have you ever received anal stimulation via your partner's fingers?

- yes
 no

46. If you have ever received anal stimulation via your partner's fingers, how much did you enjoy it?

No enjoyment
enjoyable

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Extremely

47. Have you ever given your partner anal stimulation using a sex toy?

- yes
 no

48. Have you ever received anal stimulation from your partner using a sex toy?

- yes
 no

49. If you have ever received anal stimulation from your partner using a sex toy, how much did you enjoy it?

No enjoyment
Extremely enjoyable

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

50. As a female have you ever "traded" anal sex for cunnilingus- you would let your partner have anal sex in exchange for your partner performing oral sex on you?

- yes
 no

51. What are your feelings about having participated in anal sex?

- I feel ashamed
 I am proud
 I enjoyed the experience

- I brag about my experience
- I keep this a secret
- I violated my own values
- I regret the experience
- I feel dirty

52. What is your level of interest in having another anal sex experience?

Never wait Can't

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

10

53. What was the relationship outcome of having anal sex with your partner?

- I have never had anal sex
- brought us closer together
- created strain in our relationship/more emotionally distant
- no effect
- we broke up

Thank you for completing the questionnaire.

Submission Guidelines

We invite original submissions from diverse epistemological and methodological approaches on any topic that explicitly pertains to positive sexuality. A full range of qualitative and quantitative methods is acceptable. We also encourage nonacademic professionals and graduate students to submit original work. Please follow these guidelines as you prepare your work for submission:

- Manuscripts should have a clear sex positive focus
- Manuscripts should be no longer than eight double-spaced pages, including references
- Manuscripts should be written in American Psychological Association (APA) 6th edition format, with the following exceptions:
 - No abstract is needed
 - References cited in text that have three or more authors should simply include the first author followed by et al. and the publication year, but do list all authors (per APA) of the citation in the reference list
 - DOI numbers are not needed in the reference list
- Given the diverse readership of the journal, authors should try to avoid using highly technical jargon whenever possible. As best as possible, strive for a manuscript that can easily be understood by scholars and professionals outside of your field
- For traditional research manuscripts, authors should provide a short summary of the current literature, briefly explain the methods used, and clearly report findings and implications.
- Theoretical, conceptual, and creative analytic (narrative, poetic representation, etc.) submissions also should reflect appropriate scholarly criteria and aesthetic presentation. Case reports and creative essays may also be submitted for review
- Full-length manuscripts should include an abstract AND a TDLR (“too long; didn’t read”) summary of the research aimed at a lay audience

Manuscripts should be submitted as an email attachment (Microsoft Word) to the editors at submissions@journalofpositivesexuality.org.

More information:

Manuscripts will be screened initially by the editors and anonymized before being reviewed by at least two experts. The editors will make publication decisions based on recommendations from the reviewers.

Publication decisions normally will occur within six weeks of manuscript submission.

Please note that publication preference will be given to shorter articles. Full-length manuscripts may take longer in the review process and may be held over for later publication.

We are interested in manuscripts and research that are cutting-edge. New methodologies, views on theories, and presentation of data are encouraged.

Revisions and Publication:

Authors may receive a reply that asks for revisions before possible publication. Authors are encouraged to revise their work as noted by the editors and resubmit for publication.

The editors will not revise content nor alter layout (other than necessary for transfer from Word document settings to PDF and web-based layout) of submitted work without the author's permission.

As best as possible, the editors will provide a sample of the final manuscript to the author before publication occurs.

The editors reserve the right to alter grammatical errors if required for publication without the author's permission.

Contact Us:

To submit work for review or inquire about submitted work, please email:
submissions@journalofpositivesexuality.org.

For all other questions, comments, or concerns, please email: **info@journalofpositivesexuality.org.**