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The First Anniversary of *JPS:*
Celebrating Accomplishments and Building on Success

D J Williams and Emily E. Prior, Co-Editors

It is fun to reflect back on our brief, yet vibrant, history of the *Journal of Positive Sexuality. JPS* was born from an idea back in the spring of 2014 on the campus of College of the Canyons. We were enjoying a beautiful southern California day and discussing some salient needs across the field of human sexuality, including the many pervasive myths about sexuality, even among licensed professionals, in contemporary sex-negative American society. We realized, too, of course, the glaring problem that most professionals and lay people do not have access to academic journals, and many may not have the time to read and try to digest long, scholarly papers. Also, sometimes academics may be hesitant (unfortunately), to move their work into more applied practice contexts. Recognizing these and other important needs in the field of human sexuality, we decided to embark on a new journey, and *JPS* was born. From its inception, a top priority of *JPS* was to bring people together, build bridges rather than walls, and work to create new understandings and solutions to a broad and diverse range of sexuality issues.

We are thrilled at the many accomplishments achieved in our first year, largely generated by the dedication and hard work of our staff and numerous supporters of the Center for Positive Sexuality (CPS). We would like to thank the CPS Board of Directors; our Research Affiliates; and our educators, volunteers, and many generous donors. We would also like to thank our world-class *JPS* Editorial Board, and of course, the authors who submitted articles. Finally, we would like to thank our many readers! In its first year, *JPS* was accessed by nearly 400,000 individuals in dozens of countries around the globe!

We plan to build on our many accomplishments as we move into our second year. We will continue to work to build bridges with similar institutional entities that share our vision. Indeed, CPS is delighted that the National Coalition for Sexual Freedom (NCSF) and the Community-Academic Consortium for Research on Alternative Sexualities (CARAS) are now co-sponsors of *JPS!* NCSF has a rich history of supporting sexual diversity and human rights, and it continues to enjoy strong alliances with several national academic and professional organizations that address human sexuality. Meanwhile, CARAS has been interested in sponsoring an academic journal for quite some time and we are extremely proud to help fill the niche. Thus, you will see a few new Editorial Board members joining the *JPS* staff from each of these fine organizations. Welcome NCSF and CARAS!

We hope our readers will enjoy Volume 2 of the *Journal of Positive Sexuality.* We hope that the current and future articles in this volume will be interesting and useful. We hope that our readers will continue to mention *JPS* to their friends and colleagues. Indeed, we extend a warm invitation to promote positive sexuality by empowering voices, building bridges, and working together to create solutions.

Macro Sex-Negativity to Micro Implications:

My Personal Experience with Absent (Abstinence) Sex Education

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Introduction

This paper focuses on how U.S. sex education programs that are rooted in widespread sex-negativity may impact individuals' personal lives. We begin by discussing sex-negativity and its infiltration into sex education. We then illustrate, via brief autoethnographic method, how such education (or lack thereof) has negatively impacted the personal life of the first author, who is a female graduate student studying at a western U.S. university under the supervision of the second author. We conclude by suggesting how a positive sexuality approach may improve sex education and provide important benefits to youths' lives.

Sex-Negativity and U.S. Sex Education

Sex negativity is reflected in both institutions and in individuals' attitudes, wherein frequent and/or diverse sexual practices are often regarded as unacceptable, deplorable, shameful or unhealthy. Societies that are largely sex negative generally have a narrow range of "appropriate" sexual behaviors and limited sex education and communication (Williams, Thomas, & Prior, 2015). At the same time, what is defined as *sexual health* is influenced by numerous micro, mezzo and macro interactions including peers, family, social networks, organizations, institutions and public policy frameworks (Richard, et al. 1996). In the United States, children are often taught in school about physical and physiological changes caused by puberty and, if a sex education program for teens is provided, about the risks and negative consequences of sexual intercourse. However, adolescents are provided very few, if any, tools to understand sexuality in its social and cultural context. This omission leaves no consistent, publicly-sanctioned discourse for positive adolescent sexual development (Russell, 2005).

Widespread institutionalized messages of sex negativity pervade many aspects of adolescents' lives and can detrimentally influence romantic relationships and sexual decision making as they mature. Much of American society is clearly sex-negative (Williams, Thomas, & Prior, 2015), especially in comparison to other developed nations such as Germany, Norway, and the Netherlands. While there is variation in the U.S education system concerning how sex education is taught and what precisely is covered, many states are required to emphasize sexual abstinence until marriage and only a minority are required to provide information on contraception (Guttmacher Institute, 2012).

Although comprehensive sex education programs in other countries have been found to be more successful in reducing teenage pregnancies and the spread of sexually transmitted infections, the U.S. has a history of funding abstinence-only sex education at staggering levels (Schaalama et al., 2004). Over the past few years, approximately $50 million per year was allocated for these programs (Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States, 2015). Not only do these programs reinforce a puritan, homogenous ideal of sexuality, current U.S. sex education programs also unintentionally promote race, class and gender-based inequalities (Connell & Elliott, 2009).

In light of this background, an obvious important question arises concerning how sex education programs, rooted in widespread sex negativity, may impact the personal lives of individuals. Researchers have directly or indirectly explored this question from different theoretical and methodological perspectives as it pertains to the marginalization of sexual minorities. However, our focus here is to utilize an autoethnographic method that focuses on sex education directly and how this has impacted the personal sexual development of the first author of this paper. Scholars and professionals who study sexuality frequently face stigma among their peers simply given their area of interest, thus it is not surprising that few, such as Bezreh, (2015), Blinne (2012), Prior (2013), Wagner (2009), and Thomas and Williams (in press) have openly discussed personal aspects of their sexualities. However, Thomas and Williams (in press) argue that researchers' own disclosure potentially can generate new knowledge and facilitate progress in sexual science. Thus, using a form of autoethnography (for an overview, see Ellis et al., 2011), we highlight a few specific personal experiences of the first author to illuminate how macro sex negativity in the form of sex education, or more precisely the lack thereof, significantly impacted her personal sexual development.

My Discovery of My Vagina within a Tradition of Silence, Mystery, and Fear

One of the most prominent and manifest characteristics of sex negativity is the general discomfort with discussing sex or related topics; this includes access to media depictions, and the dreaded "talk" about sex from parents to teens.

> *As a young child growing up in southeast Idaho in the 1990s, anatomy or any kind of sex education was avoided by my parents, who both came from a strict religious background. Sex was a taboo topic, just as it had been in their homes when they were growing up. This tradition of silence, mystery, and fear seemed to have a long history. Menstruation was discussed only once after my sister and I discovered what we thought were some strange form of adult diapers in the bathroom. My mother simply told me that "Periods happen when you're older. You bleed and they hurt." That was it! The end. Aside from that brief abrupt lesson, I had no realistic conception of what a vagina was. I was too young to question where the blood came from.*
>
> *Despite my fears surrounding specific anatomy and physiology, I was curious that there was something interesting, exciting, yet forbidden in the adult world. Clues surfaced occasionally both through movies and private conversations that I overheard among friends at school. One day, I saw the sex scene from the movie "Hellraiser" and came to*

> *the conclusion that sex was when adults rubbed their "naughty parts" (as my parents called them) together.*

Puberty is marked by many cultures as the beginning of sexual maturity, but the onset of puberty has been occurring earlier in females in the last century. Prehistorically and historically, women did not begin to menstruate until around age 17 or older; however, with puberty occurring earlier due to nutritional improvements, the average age of menarche is approximately 12 years old (Sarpolis, 2011). Due to this physiological shift, children have less time to develop cognitively and to obtain the social skills necessary to understand their unique bodies and sexualities. Thus, sex education should include not only accurate information on reproductive anatomy and physiology, but it should also address social skills, communication, and personal decision-making.

> *It was not until age ten when my period actually started that I ascertained what a vagina was and that I even possessed one. Curious of where the blood was coming from, I hid myself away in the bathroom to find out. Until then, I had no idea that this opening existed! This was the discovery of a whole new part of my body I did not know I had! I remember haphazardly inserting a finger and simply pausing, my brain racing as innumerable events and whispered conversations suddenly made more sense. Sex was not just rubbing body parts against one another, it involved fitting them together, and I happened to be the receiver! I remember thinking, "sex must feel really good if everyone makes such a big deal about it!" But I also remember thinking that since we go to the bathroom alone, bathe alone, and every sex scene I had inadvertently witnessed involved two people alone, and that I had to figure this out alone, then sex should be very private. It then made sense that no one talked about it! So, I didn't talk about it, or ask any questions about it either.*

This personal experience is, of course, illustrative of common aspects of sex negativity. Too many parents in prior generations have been uncomfortable discussing sex or anything related to it, but with no instruction or precedent, how could they be expected to discuss such topics with their children? However, this lack of education causes another problem. Many, if not most, children, when natural events occur, are logically able to extrapolate anatomic realities and social cues as to what sex seems to be. Yet, without guidance they are free to make assumptions and outright guesses in their comprehension of sex. The first author grew up believing that sex was something secretive, and something she passively received, or in other words, something that was done ***to*** her. This belief would have disastrous effects later in her life.

Compounding the Problem: Classroom Sex-Ed

The ultimate purpose of health education is to encourage voluntary actions conducive to well-being (Schaalama et al., 2004.) Prerequisite to voluntary actions is obtaining high quality knowledge from which one may then make informed choices, which does not seem to occur in many abstinence-only sex education programs.

> *In my school district, Sex Ed was taught in health class in 10th grade. The health teacher was required to teach health along with coaching his preferred sport. Our health text*

> *contained one chapter on human sexuality, which was covered in less than two days. I remember very little of the curriculum because there was barely anything covered. The teacher discussed STIs, stated abstinence was the only fool-proof method to avoid them, and abruptly finished. There was no mention of pleasure, different sexual orientations, or how to develop healthy relationships. His apprehension and discomfort in teaching the subject was blatant.*
>
> *The sex negativity I had grown up around was compounded in high school. I was ill prepared for romantic relationships. Like the adults who were responsible for educating me about sexuality, I was not comfortable with the topic and had very little knowledge. Much of my knowledge was faulty—very faulty! When I caught a boy peeping on my sister and me, I perceived the act as a compliment. Flattered and naïve, I began dating him.*
>
> *Our relationship started innocently with holding hands and talking on the phone, but his behavior quickly escalated into conduct that I did not know how to process or evaluate. Still, I thought I was in love. He would ask, "I noticed your car was gone for a few days, where were you?" I believed it was part of a normal relationship to know where the other person was at all times. I interpreted it as caring for one another.*
>
> *Not surprisingly, our relationship escalated into sexual activity. Since I believed sex was something not to be discussed, when his controlling behavior appeared, I kept it to myself. I assumed this was all normal and that I was in control of the situation. I believed that sexual coercion was normal as well, because I thought that women were passive receivers. Sex was something that happened to us—not something that we chose to engage in. So, when my boyfriend would repeatedly make attempts, I would eventually concede under duress. Eventually, I attempted to break up with him. Three times I told him that we were breaking up. Two of those times he forcefully replied, "No we are not!" This toxic relationship lasted on and off for three years, and I never talked about my relationship difficulties with my parents.*

New research suggests that adolescent relationships can be part of developmentally normative and healthy processes (Harden, 2014). Unfortunately, pervasive sex-negative socialization, including the absence of quality sex education, leaves many teens feeling inadequate and wholly unprepared to engage in healthy romantic and sexual relationships (see Burkett & Hamilton, 2012).

Elliott and McKelvy (2015) found that both parents and sex educators perceive youth as "too young to have sex and too sexed to handle information about sex" (p. 87). Clearly, these assumptions about youth are directly linked with sex-negativity, wherein sex is constructed as being particularly risky and dangerous, and youth are constructed as incapable and perhaps irresponsible. Sex education that is rooted in widespread sex-negativity may be less effective than complete ignorance at best, but at worst it may inflict serious damage in the personal lives of people that it should help.

Conclusion: Toward Positive Sexuality Education

U.S. sex education is rooted in sex-negativity and is inconsistent in its application, which seems to be somewhat detrimental to those it is targeted to help. Preston (2013) found while teachers see value in using sex-positive definitions, they see their duty as combatting risk to an audience that is immature and oversexualized. The result is that many adolescents lack a serious understanding of what positive, healthy sexual and relationship experiences can be. For the first author of this paper, she fortunately became much more knowledgeable about positive sexuality during her college experience. Yet many youth may not receive such helpful information that could significantly improve their personal wellbeing and relationships.

Sex education from a holistic, positive sexuality approach encourages empowerment and consent, promotes diversity and equality, focuses on wellbeing, and acknowledges that both risk-reduction and pleasure are important considerations (Russell, 2005; Williams et al., 2013). At present, sexuality education from a positive sexuality approach is extremely rare, however. Interestingly, scholars in medical and health sciences are beginning to call for a reconceptualization of sexual health that emphasizes wellbeing; positive and respectful relationships; sexual diversity, fluidity, and benefits (i.e., Anderson, 2013; Diamond & Huebner, 2012; Satcher et al., 2015). These developments show promise that despite current roots in widespread sex-negativity, U.S. sexuality education in the future may eventually improve.

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Asexual Polyamory: Potential Challenges and Benefits

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Introduction and Background

Over the past two decades, a broad community has come together around the asexual identity (Hinderliter, 2009). While asexuality generally describes a sexual orientation in which a person does not experience sexual attraction toward anyone, specific experiences of asexual people vary considerably (Carrigan, 2011), and related identities are often considered part of the asexual spectrum or "ace" community (Chasin, 2015). Some members of the ace community also identify as polyamorous, participating in multiple romantic or intimate relationships that are not necessarily sexual (Scherrer, 2010).

One self-identified "relationship anarchist and celibate asexual" described the overlap between these two communities simply: "Given that polyamory is about wanting and being capable of having more than one romantic/emotionally significant relationship at the same time, it should be easy to understand that some asexuals are polyamorous" (Crosswell, 2013). Asexuals may also choose to be in polyamorous relationships in which they have a single partner, but that partner may have one or more additional relationships.

Some asexual people have observed that polyamory seems to be more popular as a relationship style among asexuals than it is in the mainstream. Another polyamorous asexual described the contemporary state of affairs this way: "No longer a whisper, polyamory has become the main relationship model for romantic asexuals. Every panel and discussion on relationship models includes a token part on monogamy because it's assumed that everyone already knows about polyamory" (Cerebus, 2014).

This article draws heavily on the personal narratives of asexual individuals to explore this intersection and focuses on ways in which polyamory can be particularly challenging or beneficial for those in the asexual community. These first-hand accounts come from posts that have been previously published online and from personal correspondence. Thirty-four English-speaking individuals were reached through a combination of the author's own networks and snowball sampling (through both the *Facebook* and *Tumblr* popular social media sites). All correspondents identified as either part of the asexual community or as partners with someone in this community. The quotes included herein represent themes that emerged from the broader collection of responses.

There is a need for scholarship that focuses on the intersection of asexuality with polyamory. For example, Prause and Graham (2007) and Brotto et al. (2010) discuss asexuals' relationships broadly, but do not address specific types of relationships. However, the present exploration builds on the work of both Klesse (2014), who investigated the varied ways that polyamorous identities are experienced, and Scherrer (2010), who explored the ways that

asexuals define their relationships. Scherrer demonstrated that some asexuals are open to entering into polyamorous relationships.

Potential Challenges of Asexual Polyamory

Members of the asexual community have noted that there are ways in which polyamory can be particularly challenging for them (Cerberus, 2014; Morgie, 2015). These do not apply to every relationship, of course, but there are specific challenges that some asexuals may encounter with nonmonogamy. Asexuals also may face many of the same difficulties as others practicing polyamory, in addition to difficulties from identifying as asexual. As one writer described it, "Ace/Aro-spectrum[1] people are subject to a lot of misunderstandings and stigmas already. Being ace/aro-spectrum AND poly can mean dealing with a lot more confusion and judgment from people who just don't 'get it'" (Morgie, 2015).

One challenge is that outsiders may misunderstand why asexuals are nonmonogamous. A correspondent who asked to be identified as Claire elaborated on this issue: "I don't like the way aces are only really included in the discussions around polyamory in the tone of 'Poly can be great for aces, that way they don't have to provide sex for their partner!' That is true, but there are... aces like me who are inclined to multiple deep and meaningful relationships." It seems to be important to many asexuals that people with other sexual identities understand their particular identities and motivations.

In a similar vein, outsiders who know that an individual is nonmonogamous, but who are not aware that that person is asexual, may make false assumptions about the person's sexuality. Another anonymous correspondent wrote that "Polyamory, swinging, and open relationships are often associated with sex and orgies by people who don't know much about the poly community."

This can also happen specifically within polyamorous communities where there are expectations about sexual interest and availability. Rhian Ruari Kerr described that "it can be challenging, however, in the poly community, when people expect you to be more open to sexual exploration than you want to be or are in any way set up or aligned to be.... There's an assumption in the poly community, at least in my experience, that 'poly' means 'available' in some manner."

A correspondent who asked to be identified as Smiles described another challenge that occurs "...when a sexual person and an asexual person have a closed romantic relationship but an open sexual relationship because the lack of sex between the two caused problems. I see this type of open relationship suggested a lot, even in cases where one of the people in the relationship would prefer to be in a monogamous relationship." Particularly as nonmonogamy becomes a more popular relationship style in the asexual community, it may be commonly prescribed even though such an arrangement may not work for all relationships.

Beyond this, asexuals may also be pressured or coerced by a partner into a nonmonogamous relationship. As Morgie described it, "Ace/aro-spectrum people run a risk of being coerced into poly when they really don't want it.... An ace or aro person should never feel

like they are obligated to cave to others' desires" (2015). Asexuals may feel as though they must agree to a relationship style that they do not actually want.

Being nonmonogamous can also exacerbate relationship issues that asexuals already face. Morgie noted that "the problems in a relationship get magnified the more people are involved. So if there are unresolved issues, adding more people can just make things more complicated to resolve" (2015). An anonymous correspondent mentioned feelings of insecurity and jealousy in particular: "Aces who don't want to have sex but who have partners who have sexual relations with their other partner may feel left out or inadequate. It can be a source of jealousy." These could be difficult emotions that an asexual person already may struggle with.

Another anonymous correspondent commented on how it can be more difficult to navigate identities around multiple partnerships: "A last challenge is that being involved with multiple people means negotiating different levels of intimacy (sexual and otherwise) with each of them. This would be true whatever our sexual orientations, but I think for many asexual people these negotiations can be more tricky."

Potential Benefits of Polyamory for Asexuals

Members of the asexual community have also noted a number of ways in which polyamory can be particularly beneficial to them (Cerberus, 2014; Morgie, 2015; Scherrer, 2010). Again, these do not apply to every relationship. Asexuals may practice polyamory for many of the same reasons that others are polyamorous. For example, one may simply feel an innate desire to be in more than one intimate, loving relationship.

One of the most commonly cited reasons for asexuals to consider nonmonogamy is that it can allow their partners to get sexual desires met elsewhere when such desires are not met in the relationship or when meeting them is difficult. One correspondent, who asked to be identified as Laryssa, gave this description: "One of the main benefits of polyamory, specifically when it comes to asexual people, is when an asexual is dating an allosexual[2], polyamory allows the allosexual to get the sex they generally desire without it becoming a strain on the allo/ace relationship."

While this dynamic benefits an asexual's partner more directly, it could also offer an asexual substantial relief from pressure to have sex. Charlie Mitchell described such a situation: "I think for a lot of ace people, it can take the pressure off when dating an allosexual person. If you are both open to polyamory and able to manage it, then it can be good that your partner has someone with whom they can have a sexual relationship."

This pressure to have sex could come from a partner, but an anonymous correspondent also described the way it could come from other places: "Even with a partner who is willing to forgo sex, in traditional monogamous relationships there is an overwhelming pressure from society/the mainstream media.... If you're not having sex, people either assume that you are, or become concerned that you are not." Thus, nonmonogamy can also alleviate social pressure or an internalized sense of how a relationship "is supposed to be."

Another anonymous correspondent noted a very different way in which nonmonogamy was beneficial to them: "Polyamory is helpful in that it lets me explore the nuances of my desire for several different people. For a lot of my life I've had question marks surrounding my a/bi/sexuality, and while I still do, it's fascinating to be involved with multiple people of different genders, kink roles, and personalities." Rather than viewing nonmonogamy as a way to relieve particular burdens, this insight suggests that it can be active way to empower asexuals to explore desire or sexuality on their own terms.

Many also noted that the values emphasized in polyamorous communities could be particularly useful for asexuals. One writer described it this way: "The emphasis on good, consistent communication makes it easier for people of all orientations to express both their desires and their boundaries, and have these things respected" (Morgie, 2015). A number of correspondents specifically mentioned standards of communication, honesty, and openness.

Asexuals may also benefit especially from the flexible boundaries between intimate friendships and romantic relationships that nonmonogamy can make available. Smiles gave this description: "For some of us there is a blur between friendship and romance, and polyamory can help make that uncertainty less stressful. When I was in a monogamous relationship I was never sure whether or not my relationships with close friends were too intimate and crossed a line."

As Scherrer (2010, p.159) wrote, "Similar to those in polyamorous communities, asexual individuals are actively restructuring and rewriting their relationships, opening up possibilities for reimagining all of our lives." Many asexuals are finding benefits available to them in polyamory and other kinds of nonmonogamy. These benefits, along with the challenges previously discussed, highlight the importance of examining what polyamorous relationships look like specifically for the asexual community.

Conclusion

As is true for a wide range of diverse sexualities, polyamory is a relationship style that may be well suited for some asexual people but less so for others. Understanding the motivations that draw many asexuals to polyamory and the specific ways in which this kind of relationship can be difficult for them is a cornerstone both for providing culturally competent support and for conducting inclusive research. Three recommendations are offered below to help professionals and community members to better serve asexual and polyamorous individuals.

First, a clinician working with an asexual client should not assume what kinds of relationships the client may be a part of, or what the client's reasons are for choosing such relationships. The clinician should also remain sensitive to aspects of relationships that may be particularly emotional for specific clients.

Researchers studying nonmonogamy can be diligent in deciding what varieties of intimate relationships to be included in their work and communicating these decisions clearly throughout the research process. If a study is limited to looking at sexual relationships, potential participants should be aware of this limitation, and research reports should be clear that the

particular study does not necessarily encompass the potential richness and diversity of polyamory.

Finally, professionals advocating for asexuals through writing or speaking should strive to better reflect the full scope of experiences and insights that are represented within this community. Researchers can continue examining these rich and diverse experiences with additional study. While this paper offers insights regarding potential challenges and benefits of asexual people in polyamorous relationships, much more research is needed that focuses on the overlap between these communities. Particularly, research utilizing larger sample sizes that explores challenges and benefits, as suggested here, is warranted and useful.

Notes:

1. Aromantism describes a romantic orientation in which a person does not experience romantic attraction. “Aro” is a common abbreviation for aromantic, and such identities are often considered “the aro spectrum.”
2. In the asexual community, the word allosexual is used to describe people who do experience sexual attraction—that is, people who are not asexual. Allosexual is often abbreviated as “allo.”

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What Is Sex-Positive Feminist Pornography? The Answer Is in the Question

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Introduction

Being "sex positive" seems to be the new catch phrase -- of organizations, policies, educational programs, and even pornography – but what does this really mean in the context of porn? In an industry that has capitalized on trends in media, it is not surprising that pornography has caught on to the idea that positive sexuality content sells.

Concurrently, we have various "brands" of feminism arguing differing sides of political issues, from women in the workplace versus stay-at-home-moms to, again, pornography. Since the beginning of the "sex wars" in the 1970s, feminists have found themselves working against other feminists (Liskova, 2009), not just "the patriarchy." Some feminists, particularly radical feminists, believe that sex and sexual expression, especially heteronormative sexual expression, is hurtful to women and puts them in the role of the mindless, subordinate sex toy (Dworkin, 1989). Other feminists feel that women having power and space in society means allowing women, all women, to freely choose the types of sex, relationships, and sexual fantasies that work for them, whether or not other women agree with their choices (Dodson, 2013).

During the 1970s sex wars, a few women engaged in a type of anarchy. These few women began to create feminist pornography, pornography made for and by women, utilizing storylines, characters, sets, and sexual acts that were presumably more attractive to female porn users. Fueled by their own fantasies, as well as popular pornography of the time, these feminist pornographers created a niche market where female sexual expression was the order of the day, and a dominantly heteronormative male audience was not the driving force behind the work. Producers like Candida Royalle incorporated actual couples and their sexual preferences into the work, as well as paved the way for bodies and orientations outside of gender and sexual binaries to embrace sexual expression for the screen, for themselves, and for the viewers (Royalle, 2013).

Moving ahead several decades, producers like Tristan Taormino continue this tradition of feminist pornography, allowing actors to choose their partners, define the parameters of a shoot, and possibly even take part in the larger economy of porn production. This set of practices is now defined as "sex-positive feminist pornography" (Taormino, 2013). So, is this truly a new style of feminist pornography ? If so, how do we identify it as such?

Defining Feminist Pornography

From a radical feminist perspective, feminist pornography cannot possibly exist. From this perspective *all* pornography is by definition anti-woman, regardless of the intended audience, sex or gender of the producers, or the behind-scenes business practices. However, if

this were true, many women, and many feminists (regardless of gender) would find themselves at a serious loss for sexual expression. Radical feminists wanting to quash the pornography industry in the name of freeing women from sexual slavery has actually worked to silence or at least challenge women who enjoy a variety of sexual possibilities that may or may not fit the status quo. As Willis (1992, p. 221) points out, if porn is the enemy, "…the result will be to make a lot of women ashamed of their sexual feelings and afraid to be honest about them. The last thing women need is more sexual shame, guilt, and hypocrisy – this time served up as feminism." How could this possibly be pro-woman?

On the other hand, from a third-wave (and the up-and-coming fourth-wave) feminist perspective, feminist pornography not only exists but is thriving within an industry that was once primarily dominated by men. Women have taken control of their sexual desires and porn production, creating sexy images and storylines that may be more appealing to women, or at least some women. It is important to understand that porn created primarily for and by men also appeals to some women, and there's nothing wrong with that. Women are increasingly being given permission to enjoy what turns them on. And the feminist pornography movement has been adding to the spectrum of possibilities by including bodies, orientations, relationships, acts, and work practices previously not available through more mainstream pornography (Penley, Shimizu, Miller-Young, & Taormino, 2013).

Within this movement, there seem to be some distinctions that define what feminist pornography is and what it is not. Terms like "authentic", "real", "consent", and "fair trade" dominate the discussion on differentiating feminist pornography from other genres. The idea is that these variables may not be inherent in mainstream porn production, but are the crux of feminist porn production.

Both Young (2014) and Maina (2014) discuss how authenticity and realism are key components of feminist pornography. This is defined as performers having control over the sexual content within a scene or entire production, based on their own desires, fantasies, and partners. This is also expressed through the portrayal of a variety of bodies and gender presentations that seems to be lacking in mainstream pornography. Although even staged performances with mainstream porn actors can be appealing to a wide audience and is not necessarily unreal or inauthentic, feminist pornography offers a space for viewers and performers alike who may not fit within the normalized categories of sexy and appealing portrayed by mainstream porn. This space gives permission to those who do not fit, are outside of sexual and gender binaries, are not considered normal or attractive in mainstream society much less within pornography; a place to be sexy and to explore sex on their own terms.

Consent is another theme prevalent in feminist pornography. This is not to imply that nonconsent is the order of the day in mainstream pornography, but explicit, dynamic consent on many levels is made clear through many feminist production companies. Young (2014) discusses how she gives performers choices about who they work with, what types of activities they will engage in, even lube preferences. This establishes not only sense of personal freedom, but also a workplace in which performers establish and maintain discussions of consent around each aspect of the work day. That a performer engaged in a particular act with another particular performer on a particular day does not mean that same thing will occur on the next work day, or even in the

next scene. Young (2014) discusses this as not only valuing the people she works with but also establishing a norm of negotiating for healthy sexual expression.

Another key term interconnected with sex-positive feminist pornography is "fair trade". Although the term is used widely when discussing foreign politics or global economies, fair trade practices within the porn industry (or most American, nonagricultural industries) are not at all common. This concept revolves around the idea that the *actual* producers of a product (the workers, the farmers, the tradespeople) are given a fair market price for their work in an attempt to even the playing field in the larger economy by sharing the wealth with them, as well as creating sustainable products and business practices (Linton, 2012). In the context of feminist pornography, fair trade plays out in unique ways.

Mondin (2014) points out that feminist pornography, as an outgrowth of the punk subculture's do it yourself (DIY) ethic, is meant to create and uphold a sustainable product and community. This is not just about making money, but about supporting one another's sexual expressions. This fair-trade model of pornography production may allow performers and producers to collaborate on projects, often even overlapping their roles, as well as adopting economic practices that allow everyone a slice of the pie.

Where Positive Sexuality and Feminist Pornography Converge

In light of the above discussion, is feminist pornography inherently sex positive? With dimensions such as consent, authenticity, and free trade as hallmarks of feminist pornography, how does this match with a positive sexuality perspective? According to the multidisciplinary framework of positive sexuality outlined by Williams, Thomas, Prior, and Walters (2015), there seem to be many overlapping qualities. This framework discusses eight specific dimensions of positive sexuality, most of which seem to concur with the ethics, practices, and production of feminist pornography.

Positive is discussed as referring to strengths, wellbeing, and happiness, as well as there being a recognition of how multifaceted human sexuality really is (Williams, Thomas, Prior, & Walters, 2015). From a feminist pornography perspective, performers are encouraged to bring their real world experiences and interests to the set, coming from a foundation of what works for them and supports their sexual and personal wellbeing (Maina, 2014; Mondin, 2014).

Open and honest communication is also a hallmark of positive sexuality (Williams, et al., 2015) and feminist pornography (Young, 2014). Creating a safe work environment that is upheld by explicit consent and allows performers and producers to discuss content, action, filming techniques, and even distribution methods encourages a level of communication that is necessary, promotes safety and wellbeing, and coincides with ethical standards of practice.

Acknowledging the multiple social levels of how work is manufactured, produced, and distributed, as well as how most Americans tend to identify personally with their professions, is another aspect of both feminist pornography and positive sexuality. According to Williams, et al. (2015) "…sexuality is an integral part of who we are as people…" When we layer that with how integral our professions have become as identity markers, those working in professions where

sexual identities and work identities overlap must be especially aware of how important both of these aspects are to our overall wellbeing.

Encouraging professional ethics is another aspect both of these models have in common. Fair trade practices, sustainability, and supporting performers' personal rights seems common across the literature on feminist pornography (Comella, 2013; Mondin, 2014; Taormino, 2013). From a positive sexuality perspective, working from the ethics outlined in various helping professions as well as others that make clear an ethical standard of practice, "positive sexuality… promotes the voice, needs, choices, experiences, and life of every individual" (Williams, et al, 2015, p.4) This seems emblematic of the philosophy behind feminist pornography as well.

One other aspect that these perspectives have in common is that of peacemaking. Although by no means easy, peacemaking begins from a place of safety and acceptance, allowing people to be who they are at this time, without judgment or fear. Feminist pornographers also espouse a peacemaking philosophy, from creating sets and production companies that give voice to various sexualized persons as well as creating products that allow consumers the opportunity to feel supported, acknowledged, and sexy.

Conclusion

Theoretically, feminist pornography is consistent with a positive sexuality model. From fair trade practices to advocacy of performers' and consumers' interests, feminist pornography is becoming an icon of the positive sexuality movement. Even though not all brands of feminism are sex positive, it seems that feminist pornography may very well be.

Researchers should consider interviewing and observing more feminist producers and performers about what happens on set, both in front of and behind the camera. It should also be noted that there may be some producers and performers who do not identify as women but do identify as feminists, and interviewing them may lead to some very interesting perspectives about the present and future of feminist pornography production. Also, conducting a content analysis of the available feminist pornography may allow us to see if this genre truly lives up to the dual expectations of positive sexuality as well as feminism.

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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 are acceptable. We also encourage nonacademic professionals and graduate students to submit original work. Please follow these guidelines as you prepare your work for submission:

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- 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.
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