

our streets now presents:

our words



issue
12

Literary
magazine

HELLO FROM THE EDITOR

Dear readers,

Join us for this issue on the intersections between **pornography and sex education**.

In our first piece, our writer reviews *The Feminist Porn Book: The Politics of Producing Pleasure*, reflecting on feminist pornography and how it can be used as a tool in sex education. Our second piece is a powerful poem in which the writer highlights how schools don't consider queer relationships when teaching sex education. Our third piece is another review, this time about the book *Pornland*. Our writer analysis how this book critique the pornographic culture and its oppressive, misogynistic and discriminatory culture. Our fourth piece is another poem in which our writer exposes how schools are failing in providing comprehensive and useful sex education. In our fifth piece, our writer looks back at lived experiences, revealing the importance of parents talking about sex with their children and how sex education from a young age can help someone detect they are suffering sexual abuse. Our final piece is an article in which our writer examines the changes in the new guidance on the Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) curriculum in the UK and the role of porn when teaching about consent.

Enjoy your reading!

Renata Guimarães Naso
editor



contributors

EDITORS Renata Guimarães Naso

Allegra Campbell Boreham

Alice Nuttall

Harriet Norris

Asha Askoolam

(COVER DESIGNER) Olga Masevich

ILLUSTRATORS* Melissa Lakey

Adrienne Shelford

Chloe Powell

WRITERS Marica Felici

Progress Oberiko

Tilly Brogan

Gemma Ryall

William Walden

Heather Marie Willis

DESIGNER Alice Jackson

trigger warnings

This issue covers some sensitive topics and may be triggering for some readers. Each article will be marked with a specific TW and we advise readers to seek support if needed.

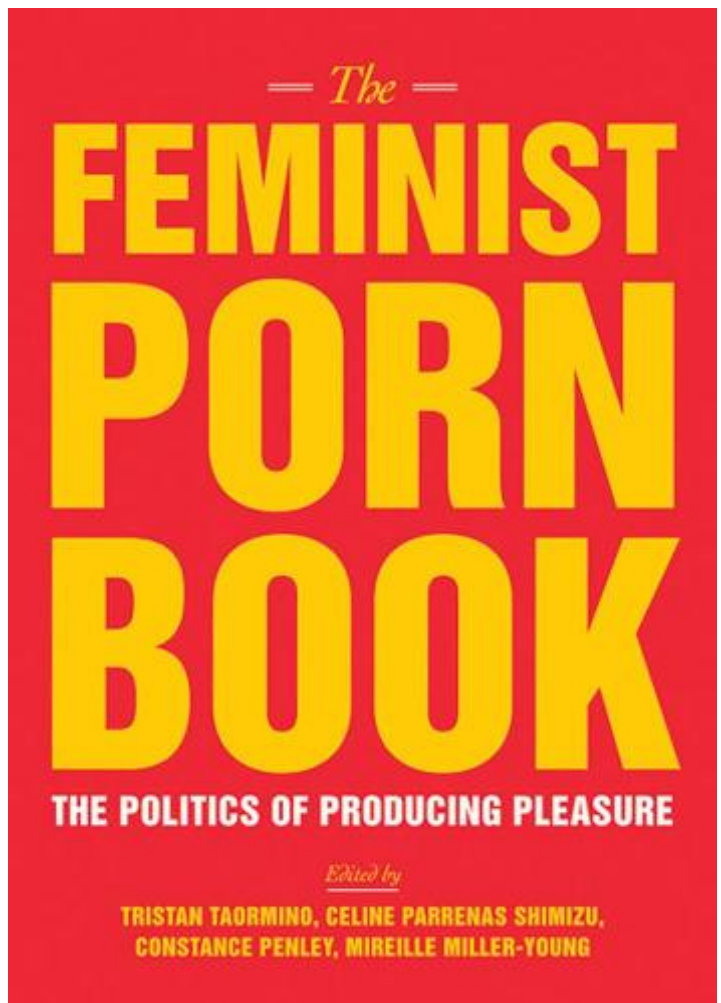
MAKING FEMINIST PORN: WHERE PLEASURE MEETS EDUCATION

Can pornography be feminist? And if yes, can feminist porn be used in sex education? Our writer looks into the intersections between feminism, pornography, and sex education through the review of *The Feminist Porn Book: The Politics of Producing Pleasure*.

Written by MARICA FELICI

TW pornography, mental health, rape.

The Feminist Porn Book: The Politics of Producing Pleasure was born from the idea of three porn professors and a porn director, namely Constance Penley, Celine Parreñas Shimizu, Mireille Miller-Young, and Tristan Taormino, to engage in the discussion of pornography and feminist politics. Penley, Parreñas Shimizu, and Miller-Young teach at the University of California, Santa Barbara, in the US. As researchers, they are concerned with understanding how racialised bodies are represented in porn, as well as how pornography changed over time. >>



>> Taormino is a sex educator, feminist porn director and producer, and books author whose work aims at educating people on sex. As editors, they came together to create a collection of articles and essays written by producers, actors and actresses, and scholars who work in the porn industry or in connection to it, in an attempt to answer the ultimate question: can porn be feminist?

Feminism and pornography have a rather complicated history that has its root in the 1980s, during the so-called 'feminist porn wars'. The feminist movement was divided into two sides: on the one hand, those who considered porn to be the maximum expression of misogyny, sexism, and violence perpetrated against women. This position was advanced by, for example, Ellen Willis and Robin Morgan, whose statement "pornography is the theory, rape is the practice"(1) became widely popular. On the other hand, we find feminists such as Gayle Rubin and Wendy McElroy who saw porn as empowering for women and sexual minorities. This sharp division among the feminist movement influenced the ideas and discussions about the representations of sexuality within society for the next three decades. And, as it's shown in *The Feminist Porn Book*, the debate is not over yet.

The production of porn from women's point of view took momentum from the 1980s with films that focused on elements such as storylines, romance, and female pleasure, contrary to what happens in traditional porn, where the focal points of all the action (and pleasure) are men. Since the first feminist film, produced by porn actress Candida Royalle – who is also one of the contributors to the book – more and more movies have been made. In the early 2000s, feminist porn became rather popular, and a new generation of filmmakers, actors and actresses, and producers identified their work as 'feminist'.

But what exactly is feminist porn?

The Feminist Porn Book gives a multiplicity of definitions and perspectives about what feminist porn is. Such views come from the voices and experiences of those people who engage, in different forms, with this type of pornography.

meet our writer

Marica is an anthropologist and historian who works as a content writer and translator. She is also a transfeminist activist and dedicates herself to promoting the inclusivity of trans* and non-binary folks through her writings, academic lectures, and the work at LGBTQ+ centres.

Feminist porn creates images and explores ideas of desire, agency, power, and beauty that challenge normative notions of gender and sexuality. It is designed "by and for women, transgender or genderqueer, and queer people", (2) and it broadens the dominant representations of race, ethnicity, ability, age, and body type, in addition to the aforementioned identitarian categories of gender and sexuality. Feminist porn films also take into serious consideration their audiences. In fact, these films assume multiple women and gender-non-conforming viewers with different sexual preferences and desires. In the book, it is argued that feminist porn works both on a personal level and on a socio-cultural one.

Participating in a feminist porn film, as an actor/actress or as a viewer, can be a process of social identity formation, both concerning non-normative sexual fantasies and desires as well as sexualities and genders. For example, Keiko Lane, in her contribution titled *Imag(in)ing possibilities: The Psychotherapeutic Potential of Queer Pornography*, (3) proposes that feminist porn can help transgender people in the exploration of their embodied subjectivities, becoming more connected with their bodies, desires, and overall gender identity. In mainstream porn, transgender representations are almost non-existent, and in the instances where we find them, these representations are stereotypical and harmful and not created for transgender viewers. This same discourse could be applied to portrayals of queer folks, racialised women, people with disability, all of which are extremely problematic in mainstream porn. Hence, feminist porn has the potential to positively impact the personal lives of women and marginalised people by showing and celebrating alternative bodies and desires.

Feminist porn can be considered an emergent social movement, following the steps of other sex-positive movements (e.g., the LGBTQ+ rights movement and the sex workers' rights movement) that has the potential to transform cultural paradigms of acceptable sexuality and desires, as Lorelei Lee argues in the book. (4) For example, feminist porn films create sexually explicit images of women, queer and trans folks, racialised, and disabled people, displaying their own sexual power, thus moving into roles that are different from the ones they have in mainstream media. The empowerment created by feminist porn is more than individual agency: it is a collective process of negotiating the socio-cultural norms that surround and incorporate women and other marginalised communities.

Feminist porn uses unconventional representations of desires and pleasure to shape the discourse of what is considered sexy and acceptable when it comes to sex, sexualities, and genders. This is why not only specific porn productions align with feminist politics and thus should be considered feminist, but also why feminist porn can be a powerful tool of sex education. Porn inevitably delivers an education, acting as a role model when it comes to sex and sexuality. The types of messages proposed by mainstream porn are not of diversity and inclusion, and they might also be harmful, as, for instance, Miller-Young discusses in relation to representations of Black women in mainstream porn.

>>

>> However, feminist porn, by showing and celebrating diverse bodies and identities engaging in the wider variety of sexual acts, gives examples of sexual autonomy and self-determination that empower all the people who work in the porn industry as well as the viewers. Given its importance, it is a shame that the production of feminist porn is still a small percentage in the adult film industry. One of the main consequences is that access to this type of pornography is more limited than mainstream porn, which can be viewed for free. Nonetheless, there are several popular porn websites (as the likes of Pornhub) that offers feminist porn for free; in addition, feminist porn can be accessed directly from the websites of the production companies for (cheap) subscription plans.

It is important to remember that sexual autonomy and self-determination are deeply connected with sexual and mental health topics, hence rendering feminist porn even more important from an educational perspective. Sex ed classes focus almost exclusively on avoiding unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, not paying enough attention to other critical topics such as consent, information on how to form healthy relationships, and content related to sexual pleasure, for instance, masturbation. Moreover, in the classroom, students may feel that their curiosity about sexuality and sexual behaviour is not satisfied, and for a reason: sex education programs do not address the questions students have. As a consequence, they turn to porn.

In sex-ed curricula, pornography is demonised, following the claims that porn exploits women and represents violent practices. Evidently, there is some porn that is as such but excluding all pornography from sex education is not wise because kids watch porn anyway. Thus, the best option would be to integrate porn into educational settings. And, as *The Feminist Porn Book* exquisitely argues, the best porn to use in sex education is feminist porn. If I had to pick a keyword to describe feminist porn after having read the book would be 'pleasure'. Feminist pornography gravitates around discussions of how great sex can be if properly managed, and it shows you how to do it. This is the main reason why feminist porn is an exceptional educational tool: it gives useful information in an explicit manner that brings out feelings of comfort, security, and confidence while showing that the quest for pleasure is everything but trivial. Feminist porn is educational because it shows positive representations of sexuality, and it does so through the expertise of those people who work in the industry.

It is not by chance that feminist porn performers become sexual health educators. When working in the porn industry, performers develop a high level of sexual health knowledge that can be incredibly helpful for everyone if shared. For instance, removing nail polish to reduce the risk of bacterial vaginosis or glycerine-free lube to reduce the risk of thrush. But there is more depth to it. Porn performers contribute to opening up conversational spaces on pleasure, emotional safety, consent, and diverse gender and sexual experiences. One great example is trans porn actor Buck Angel who, by appreciating and loving his not-conforming body (and specifically his vagina), revolutionised the porn industry and the discourses about trans healthcare. Clearly, there is more to learn about porn than we might expect, especially about feminist porn, which broadens our understanding of the connection between mediated representations and lived experiences of sex, sexualities, and genders.

As argued by sexual psychologist and author Justin Lehmiller: "knowledge is power, and sexual knowledge is no exception". Reading *The Feminist Porn Book* made me realise how much truth there is in this phrase. There is a great deal of stigma around pornography in our society, and we do not realise its potential benefits. I believe that *The Feminist Porn Book* does a fantastic job in underlying the multi-faceted world of pornography and the fact that every one of us is entitled to feel pleasure. I really enjoyed reading the book: it is very well structured, and every contribution is clear in the points made but without being overly academic (and boring). The best part for me was to be able to deepen my knowledge of pornography while discovering different approaches to it from feminist and queer standpoints. In my opinion, this book is a must-read for anyone interested in sexual politics, contemporary culture, or just simply curious about what porn can really teach.

Ultimately, porn is a multibillion-dollar industry and a potent cultural medium. In this scenario, feminist productions are still a small percentage, but one that is important to increase. As it is argued in *The Feminist Porn Book*, making porn can be seen as a form of activism, a political act that challenges the fixed and stereotypical ways sex and sexuality are depicted. In this sense, porn can serve the feminist agenda and can be regarded as the ultimate sex educational tool. As beautifully said by Loree Erickson, feminist porn "tell our stories of resilience, resistance, and systemic change".(6)

- (1) M. Robin. (1977). *Going Too Far: The Personal Chronicle of a Feminist*. Open Road Media, reprint, 2014.
- (2) M. Miller-Young. (2019). 'Interventions: The Deviant and Defiant Art of Black Women Porn Directors', in T. Taormino, C. Penley, C. Parreñas Shimizu, M. Miller-Young (eds), *The Feminist Porn Book: The Politics of Producing Pleasure*. The Feminist Press, NY. p. 106.
- (3) K. Lane. (2019). 'Imag(in)ing possibilities: The Psychotherapeutic Potential of Queer Pornography', in T. Taormino, C. Penley, C. Parreñas Shimizu, M. Miller-Young (eds), *The Feminist Porn Book*. The Feminist Press, NY. pp. 164-176.
- (4) L. Lee. (2019). 'Cum Guzzling Anal Nurse Whore: A Feminist Porn Star Manifesto', in T. Taormino, C. Penley, C. Parreñas Shimizu, M. Miller-Young (eds), *The Feminist Porn Book*. The Feminist Press, NY. p. 209.
- (5) M. Miller-Young. (2019). 'Interventions', in T. Taormino, C. Penley, C. Parreñas Shimizu, M. Miller-Young (eds), *The Feminist Porn Book*. The Feminist Press, NY. pp. 105-120.
- (6) L. Erickson. (2019) 'Out of Line: The Sexy Femmegimp Politics of Flaunting It!', in T. Taormino, C. Penley, C. Parreñas Shimizu, M. Miller-Young (eds), *The Feminist Porn Book*. The Feminist Press, NY. p. 328.

book information

TITLE The Feminist Porn Book. The Politics of Producing Pleasure
AUTHOR Tristan Taormino, Celine Parreñas Shimizu, Constance Penley, Mireille Miller-Young
PUBLISHER The Feminist Press (NY)
YEAR 2012
LANGUAGE English
GENRE Film criticism

INAPPROPRIATELY QUEER

Written by TILLY BROGAN

Illustration by MELISSA LAKEY

TW homophobic slurs, graphic sexual imagery.

According to government **guidance** for teachers on delivering Relationships and Sex Education, “pupils should be taught the facts about sexuality in an **age-appropriate** way.”

At 13, I learnt I couldn’t be queer because I looked nothing like the girl the boys whispered about at the back of assembly, *Did you know she’s a massive Lezzy?*

The same guidance clarifies when schools do “consider it appropriate to teach their pupils about LGBT”, it should be “fully integrated rather than **delivered as a standalone lesson**.”

At 15, I spent an hour instead learning about male masturbation and men having wet dreams and why men find it so hot watching two women fuck each other in porn.

The Department for Education outlines how to “**manage difficult questions**” like when “pupils ask teachers questions about sexuality.”

I never learnt to question whether *this was really it*. If these perfectly lovely guys I was dating at 17 was really the same kind of love that breathes beneath stains in old parchment letters.

The Department states that “effective Relationships and Sex Education **does not encourage early sexual experimentation**.”

At 19, I learnt to convince myself that parts of a man’s body *should* be attractive and there wasn’t a difference between wanting boys to like me and actually liking boys.

The government suggests schools are free to determine “how they teach their pupils about LGBT” but it’s expected that pupils are taught “LGBT content **at a timely point**.”

So it wasn’t until 23 that I found out sleeping with a woman is tender, soft, and unreserved, and sex shouldn’t make me think about when it’s going to end, just that it never ever stops.



MARKETING OPPRESSION: PORN CULTURE AND INDUSTRY ACCORDING TO *PORNLAND*

In 2010, Gail Dines published her ground-breaking sociological critique on the mainstreaming of porn culture. Over a decade later, our writer confronts the unpopular, uncomfortable, and often unheeded warnings presented in *Pornland*.

Written by WILLIAM WALDEN

TW sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, misogyny, child abuse, graphic content.

The era of mainstream pornographic consumption in Western societies has divided opinions among feminists, philosophers, and sociologists for decades. However, the contemporary societal environment of hyper sexualisation and increasingly pervasive normalisation and promotion of pornography has expanded the debate into one that shakes the foundations of culture itself. Originally published in 2010, *Pornland*, written by US-based English sociologist Gail Dines, serves as a scathing critique of pornography as both an industry and a cultural force. Over a decade later, the research and observations presented are still painfully relevant in a cultural environment that seems inexorably tethered to pornography.

Dines does not hold back, and at times, reading *Pornland* can be nauseating. The reader is assailed with graphic descriptions of the misogynistic violence that is commonplace in the 'gonzo' style of pornography that has become mainstream. It is this gonzo style that is undoubtedly the primary target of the book, and Dines defines it as 'hard-core, body punishing sex, in which women are demeaned and debased.'⁽¹⁾ *Pornland* often presents the reader with the uncomfortable reality of what they already know deep down, offering a vigorous dissection of the intersectional layers of oppression at play within the industry, from rampant misogyny and sadism to overt racism, child abuse, and trafficking.

The interlaced quotations from pornographers are particularly striking as an insight into the mindset of those with fiscal interest in the field. For example, Bill Marigold, pornographer and 'free speech campaigner', describes the gonzo 'cumshot' as allowing men to "get even with the women they can't have".⁽²⁾ Similarly, porn actor and director Max Hardcore, who specialises in scenes of sexual sadism, states that women are "more understanding... of their true purpose in life than ever before... to be receptacles of love, in other words, fuck dolls".⁽³⁾ These quotations serve to uncompromisingly showcase the total disregard of women's agency and humanity from those who profit from the industry. They also display the broader societal attitude pornographers bolster in their fiscal interest, femininity as subservience via sexual domination.

Pornland makes a special effort to dismantle the viewer's shield of non-culpability, which pornographers cultivate with carefully curtailed language. One example of this is found in the concluding chapter 'Children: The Final Taboo,' where pornified language such as 'barely legal' or 'young teen...' is stripped away, with Dines instead referring to such as pseudo-child porn. The goal of this is to shine a spotlight on the depravity that pornographers will employ to encourage complacency and audience self-justification. >>

>> When consuming this type of pornography, Dines argues that the viewer, in absorbing the very intentional and specific reality constructed through pornified language, will feel disconnected from the fact that what they are consuming is overtly acting as simulated child abuse. In this way, *Pornland* attempts to shatter the wall of linguistic ambiguity that the industry uses as protection.

Further to this, visceral examples within the book are used to dissect pornified language that segregates the 'porn woman' from others to justify abuse. In the industry, the porn woman is distinguished as being apart from the women in the viewer's life and is instead presented as a 'whore/slut/horny bitch' who seeks out debasement for her own gratification. The demarcation of these women is thus conducted using a precise lexicon. As Dines writes, "Once the humanness of these individuals is collectively rendered invisible by their membership in a sexually denigrated group, then it is much easier to commit acts of violence against them".(4)

The juxtaposition between *Pornland* and much of the pro-porn feminism that has been increasingly prevalent in recent years is often jarring. In an environment where small scale ethical porn is celebrated and elevated and female sexual reclamation justly applauded, the actions of predatory sex profiteers can go unnoticed. For instance, right at the top of *Pornhub's* categories list lies the category 'popular with women', which promises 'female-friendly' porn. However, within this category, one will find much of the same gonzo style pornography as in others. On top of this, there are exploitative neocolonial videos of white men offering money to women in countries such as Thailand and Sri Lanka for sexual videos from which they will then profit. In this type of video, men will take advantage of weak local currencies to coerce prostitution in local women. The individual or company will benefit from the video many times over, while the woman sees none of the return. In this way, mainstream pornographic distributors will attempt to paint their brands with the same pro-feminism image as smaller and 'ethical' distributors whilst continuing to profit from and promote oppression.

Despite small strides of progress, there is no escaping the fact that pornography is at its core a characteristically exploitative, capitalistic, billion-dollar industry. *Pornland* gives little time to discussing ethical pornography as a viable alternative to the mainstream. Capitalist oligarchs dominating the upper echelons of the industry may answer why, as they provide little space for the few ethical studios to flourish.

PORNLAND



HOW PORN HAS HIJACKED OUR SEXUALITY GAIL DINES

Were one or two feminist sites funded and promoted at a mainstream scale, it would still do little to disrupt the monopolistic influence of companies such as *MindGeek*, who owns *PornHub*, *RedTube* and countless other pornographic tube sites. *MindGeek's* websites alone are responsible for at least fifteen terabytes of pornography being uploaded every single day, equivalent to half of the entire Netflix catalogue. Amongst these fifteen terabytes are countless recordings of abuse and debasement, child exploitation, and financial sexual coercion. There are, therefore, debates to be had on the viability of ethical pornography as a force of liberation within a system in which it is unable to infiltrate meaningfully. There is an inherent anti-humanity in pornography as big business, and it is impossible to imagine feminist pornography providing a serious threat to the proliferation and dissemination of abuse within the industry without widespread and unprecedented revolution surrounding sexual ethics or legislative action curtailing the ability and influence of corporations to finance and profit from exploitation.

In the decade since the book's publication, the businessman has continued to profit from female sexual exploitation. This can be seen in the rise of *Onlyfans*, which has evolved into a multi-billion-dollar company in the last two years. >>

>> Forbes reports that *Onlyfans* billionaire owner Leonid Radvinsky made his initial fortune from link sites promising accounts for illegal websites, including 'the hottest underage hardcore' and 'the hottest bestiality on the web'. *Onlyfans* is advertised as a far more reputable venture and an attractive escape from the monotony of daily work life for many young people. However, the reality is quite different, with reports from the BBC discussing children as young as fourteen being exploited on the platform. *Onlyfans*, in 2021, was also linked to abduction cases of around 30 underaged individuals. In response, *Onlyfans claims* that its age verification systems go "over and above regulatory requirements". It appears clear that the company's goal is not freedom for individuals in an unfavourable economic market. Instead, it is to use people as means to a financial end, with total disregard as to the duty that an organisation in such a position has in terms of protection and safeguarding.

Another primary theme throughout the book, particularly in chapters two and six, is the cultural and societal impact of widespread pornographic consumption. Dines echoes Karl Marx's assertion that "human beings develop their identity and sense of reality out of the stories their culture tells".(5) She finds the culture surrounding contemporary female identity as being one defined by rampant sexualisation but also the contradictory sexual expectation of purity. Women are expected to elevate themselves above the 'sluts' that pornography presents as deserving of denigration whilst not deviating from a constructed identity of subservience with adherence to the male gaze. Dines identifies this as the "double bind of the oppressed", a term coined by feminist philosopher Marilyn Frye: "Situations in which options are reduced to very few, and all of them expose one to penalty, censure or deprivation".(6) Yet the parameters that define this self-defeating cultural identity go further than pornography itself, as *Pornland* makes a convincing case that porn culture has extended into all facets of daily life, including popular women's media.

From *Cosmopolitan* to *Sex in the City*, women's media often creates a narrative that places women as sexual accessories to men or as being defined by mechanistic consumption of beauty products and clothing which adhere to the male gaze.(7) For example, *Cosmopolitan* advertises itself as a force of empowerment. However, it presents this as attainable via beauty products that promote mindless consumerism and body image insecurity. It also features many articles on sex with a male-centric ethos, such as sex tips to "blow his mind".(8) In *Sex in the City*, there is a plot where the character Charlotte is married to a man unable to maintain an erection during sex.

She later discovers her partner hiding porn use from her, and instead of confronting this, sticks photographs of her own face into his magazines.(9) These examples show how porn culture has infected even women's media, which now presents women as sexual objects to men whilst contradictorily promoting liberation and independence.

The socialisation of men is altered through the same pornified lens. While some will argue that porn use only serves in a fantasy realm and does not warp relationships and self-perception in users, the psychological and anecdotal evidence presented in *Pornland* suggests the opposite. As shown in a 2008 study by Michael Kimmel, the average man living in the United States assumes that 80% of male college students are having sex on any given weekend. However, the reality is far lower at 5-10%.(10) Additionally, men in pornography are presented as soulless and unfeeling and maintain unrealistic sexual performance through the use of Viagra, as opposed to being presented as emotional and sensual equals.(11) The subliminal pressure of a desire to live up to the porn man combined with a warped sense of entitlement to women's bodies links pornography directly to feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt in men. Relating to this is the issue of pornography addiction, which in the same way as gambling and other behavioural disorders, has a positive correlation with diminished brain development in the prefrontal cortex. These alterations are not insignificant, leading to poor executive function in regard to impulsivity, learning processes, attention deficits, memory, and decision-making ability.(12) When one considers the rise of 'Incel' culture, the role of pornography and pornography addiction appear logically instrumental in cultivating aggression and resentment in men. It is no coincidence that violent crimes caused by sexual resentment are more common in a generation of boys who have been groomed by the pornography industry.

For the first time in human history, the unfiltered tendrils of big pornography can reach boys at a vulnerable and developmental age. The average age of first consuming pornography is now under 12 years old for boys, and it is around this age that sexual identity begins to develop and take form within them. The last 20 or so years have therefore ushered in a new paradigm, one where hardcore, uncensored pornography will have been available to this age group almost without limit. Hence, the technological age has presented new challenges for sexual development among children with unprecedented internet access and e-literacy. The rudimentary safeguards included in modern technology, such as 'safe searches' and 'child locks', are not enough to curb the barrage of pornographic images that seep into every facet of internet culture, from social media to advertisements, to video games. A remotely tech aware child will also have no problem dismantling or working around such obstacles as they are presented. >>

>> The danger of this is that, instead of organic sexuality formation, from "life experiences, peer groups, personality traits, family, and community", a generic and universal, toxic, and misguided, pornified sexuality can take root and become the norm.⁽¹³⁾ Opposition to any kind of child protection regarding pornographic access is often struck down, as shown by the pressure on UK politicians that resulted in the eventual scrapping of ID requirements for pornographic access in 2019. However, to mitigate the serious perception-altering damage that is being done to children every day, *Pornland* makes a clear case that more must be done.

Pornland also discusses the intersectional way in which porn culture bolsters systemic white male dominance. The industry conditions men to believe that women are sexually available so long as said men possess specific characteristics, be it wealth, confidence, or skin pigmentation. This is particularly prevalent in 'interracial' pornography. The introduction of a Black body instantly racialises how the scene is presented, with Black women presented as 'sluttier' or 'trashier' than their white counterparts, often succumbing to a barrage of sexually abusive behaviour as soon as money is brought into the equation. Black men are also described differently, being presented as unrestrained and uncivilised hypermasculine automata. ⁽¹⁴⁾ Black bodies are used in this way to reinforce racist stereotypes and encourage white male complacency with a mindset of 'it's in their nature'. Asians are also not free from harmful stereotyping in this way. This form of pornography nearly always features a white man with an Asian woman, and the attitude is best presented in the self-ascribed description given by *Hustler's 'Asian Fever'* site: "Asian Fever features scorching scenes of the sexual excesses these submissive far east nymphs are famous for".⁽¹⁵⁾

Pornography serves in this way as a reinforcement of societal power dynamics. Since 2015, in the wake of the global refugee crisis, there has been a steep increase in searches for refugee pornography on major websites. Similarly, when Russia began its invasion of Ukraine in February this year, the top search result on *Pornhub's* trending section was 'Ukrainian girls'. Throughout human history, sexual dominance has been used as a tool in the oppressor's arsenal. In the modern era, pornography can serve the same symbolic purpose.

At times, the methodology in *Pornland* can be shaky. Dines will, for instance, choose to use comments on pornographic videos instead of academic work as sources. Whilst these elicit more of an emotional response, the reader will occasionally question if the evidence presented fully supports Dines' conclusions. The focus is also mainly on cisgendered women and men. Although it often has intersectional analysis regarding race and class, I believe if it was written today, it would, or perhaps should, have a larger emphasis on the fetishisation of trans and gender non-conforming people in pornography. Despite this, *Pornland* serves as a necessary and passionate exposé into the dark underbelly of the pornographic industry. It serves as what is, at times, a deeply uncomfortable cultural critique that challenges contemporary sexual philosophy and serves as a ward against hypersexualised misogyny and exploitation in a commercialised world. ●

(1) Dines, Gail. (2011). *Pornland: How Porn Has Hijacked Our Sexuality*. Beacon Press. preface xi.

(2) *Ibid.*, introduction xxvi

(3) *Ibid.*, pg. 99.

(4) *Ibid.*, pg. 65.

(5) *Ibid.*, pg. 82.

(6) Frye, Marilyn. (2007). "Oppression" in *Race, Class and Gender in the United States*, ed. Paula Rothenberg. Worth. pg. 55.

(7) *Ibid.*, Pg. 105-109.

(8) *Ibid.*, Pg. 107.

(9) *Ibid.*, Pg. 106.

(10) Kimmel, Michael. (2008). *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men*. Harper. pg. 209.

(11) *Ibid.* pg. 90.

(12) de Alarcón, Rubén, et al. (2019). "Online porn addiction: What we know and what we don't—A systematic review." *Journal of clinical medicine*, 8(1).

(13) *Ibid.*, preface xi.

(14) *Ibid.*, Pg. 122-123.

(15) *Ibid.*, Pg. 124.

meet our writer

William Walden is an English writer living in Northern Ireland. A philosophy and politics graduate, his writing focuses on sociology, politics, popular culture, and feminism. As well as writing, he plays bass guitar for a band and has been featured on British, Irish and American television.

book information

TITLE Pornland: How Porn Has Hijacked Our Sexuality

AUTHOR Gail Dines

PUBLISHER Beacon Press

YEAR 2011

LANGUAGE English

GENRE Sociology



HOW DO YOU KNOW IF SHE WANTS IT?

Written by GEMMA RYALL

Illustration by [OLGA MASEVICH](#)

TW rape, sexual abuse.





"If she's wet,"
shouted the boy in the corner of the room -
followed by a laughter
that screamed
we didn't know what he meant.

No one remembers the actual answer
only this boy who replied
and the mid-thirties man
with gelled-up hair
asking the question.

The rest of the workshop consisted of
"put the condom on the dildo" -
extra points if you can do it with beer goggles
"write down as many STI's as you can think of"
here -
have some free condoms.

And what did we learn?
a feeling of being left behind
late to something
left out
as sex was a powerful word
pregnant with jokes we didn't understand
in circles we weren't welcome in
and nights we were never sure of.

We were naïve
to the forces of nature
the ones that governed our emotions
discovering sex as painful
sex as rape
sex as 'for the guy'
all at the hands of a system
that failed to teach us
the fundamentals of our bodies
of consent
real consent
of female pleasure
and sexual health.

How do you know if she wants it?
You don't
because you do it anyway.

WHAT IS THE COLOUR OF YOUR PANTIES?

Our writer explores through lived experiences the importance of sex education and the need for parents to talk to their children about it.

Sex education is a topic that many parents and older relatives find challenging to discuss with their children. They tend to shy away from this responsibility often because they worry about their children being exposed to the idea of sex at an early age. Parents (which in this case includes guardians and anyone responsible for a child's upbringing) often see sex as a very crude and discreet topic that is either somewhat 'holy' or too heavy for the child to be aware of it. And in some unfortunate circumstances, this supposed 'secret' might end up being demystified when, eventually, these kids learn it the wrong way. And the wrong way might include: learning about sex after being abused by someone they trusted, falling into some of the consequences of sex, like early child pregnancy and contracting an STD, or wrongfully exploring sex with their family members out of curiosity.

Growing up as an African child in Nigeria, there were terminologies that my parents amended for the sake of communicating with us. And one of them is the word 'fork'. As you already know, the word fork shares a similar pronunciation to 'fuck', which was almost sacrilegious to say as a child (the 'F' word is also prohibited for kids in many Western cultures). >>

Written by PROGRESS OBERIKO

Illustration by [ADRIENNE SHELFORD](#)

TW sexual abuse.



>> So whenever we had to eat with a fork, my mom would replace 'fork' with 'feck'. She would often say, "go and get your feck" or "eat your noodles with feck". This was her way of avoiding the F word or any other word similar to it. Only when I became a teenager did I learn that I had been using the wrong word. This was information I had to learn for myself in school and from other kids, not from my mom, because she never corrected me, even when I became older.

On the other hand, Dad had his strategies for shying away from sex education. Since he only had daughters, he was highly protective of his girls. Even though my dad never educated us about what we were actually being protected against, he guarded us jealously. He was very stern to our male friends. As a teenager, if he saw me standing with a guy, he would attempt to interrogate him with uncomfortable questions until he eventually stopped visiting. Apparently, his 'protectiveness' was to prevent us from getting into a romantic relationship with boys and probably (to his mind) ending up pregnant. However, he was at no point clear with his intentions. He had a more covert approach to sex education, which could have backfired and resulted in my sisters and I resorting to alternative measures to continue seeing our male friends. If you shy away from educating your children about sex, guess what? They will eventually find out, and it might surprise you to know how much they already know. *The earlier, the better!*

meet our writer

Progress is a young lady, a strong advocate with a knack for writing and storytelling, passionate about non-fiction, who believes in the use of storytelling for change. She makes short documentary films & Podcasts, writes scripts, and enjoys blogging. Progress currently works as a Youth Worker for a Charity based in London, where she mentors young people and co-facilitates social action projects.

Growing up in my family, we were not directly taught what the act of 'kissing' in a movie meant, yet, whenever we were watching a family movie that had a kissing scene, our parents' gestures towards us ensured that we hurriedly looked away. Sometimes their look was enough to make us disappear from the room. You could see how prudish we were. At least, I can now tell that such reaction from my parents stemmed from religiousness—which oftentimes meant that things like sex and kissing were unholy.

All these behaviours contribute to pushing children into becoming more curious about sex. Some children might openly shy away from sex scenes in the presence of their parents, but they could, simply out of curiosity, watch pornography in their spare time. We all know how influential and stimulating pornography can be. Consequently, children may start feeling the urge to explore what they have watched, which might have negative outcomes such as early child pregnancy, contracting STDs, or wrongfully exploring sex with their family members out of curiosity.

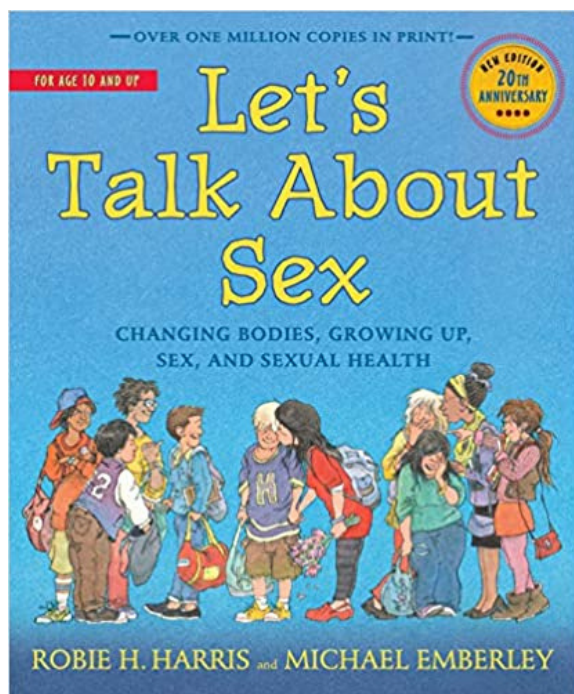
I once organised a workshop at a Junior Secondary school in Cross River State, Nigeria, where I spoke to young people between 10-15 years old about sex education, and when I asked them to share with me their understanding of sex, more than half of the class looked uncomfortable. Later, I found out that most of them had already engaged in sexual activities, but ironically, they could not find the language to explain it themselves. This is because their parents and even their teachers probably shy away from having these conversations with them. In turn, they have eventually 'outsourced' the knowledge of sex following their curiosity.

As a parent, don't just call it 'private parts'. Use the correct terminology and teach them the consequences of anyone going close to their genital/intimate areas. This knowledge will help children communicate appropriately if their bodies are tampered with inappropriately. For example, teach them that it is not okay for their school teacher, carer or even their relatives to touch their penis, vulva or breasts, and advise them to report immediately if that occurs. The teaching will keep them abreast with the knowledge of sexual abuse and, to a large extent, prevent them from falling into such situations. Also, it helps them to understand boundaries when it comes to their bodies and to develop a sense of confidence in their bodies. Teach them about consent; and that when they say no, their partners must respect their choice. Teach them that it is not disrespectful to say no, and to say no even to older people. Talking to your children about sex education will strengthen the bond and trust between you both, and they will feel comfortable discussing sex-related topics openly and honestly with you. Many domestic/sexual abuse cases tend to occur and linger because some of these victims do not know their rights or are not aware of the options available to them. This results from what they were taught as kids during their formation stage. >>

>> I lived in a neighbourhood where neighbours could look after their neighbours' children on behalf of their parents, especially while the parents were at work. We had this neighbour whom I fondly called 'uncle', and I used to go to his place when I returned from school. He also was a dad, and I played with his kids, but I then noticed that he always liked to carry me on his lap. Sometimes he'd ask to see what colour of panties I was wearing under my school uniform. It looked like genuine interest. He'd say, "lemme see what colour of panties mom bought for you." I didn't see his interest being harmful; I was less than ten years old. My mom, who had concerns about this, noticed, and she banned him from carrying me and forbid me from going close to him.

As a child, I didn't realise the impact of her decisions then, but now I do. Parents need to watch out for their children, but it is equally important for parents to ensure that they educate their children about sex and sexual abuse. It is the responsibility of both parents to tutor their children on sex education; you are the primary teacher of your kids and should not leave the responsibility of sex education to their teachers alone. Talking to them about sex and the possible invasions of their bodies helps girls and boys to identify abuse and report/discontinue it. Girls are often the most vulnerable in such situations, causing them to need guidance as early as possible. A large percentage of female abuse is carried out by males; hence it is vital that boys are taught that they have no right to a girl's body and that her choice must be respected in all situations!

"Teach them about consent; and that when they say no, their partners must respect their choice. Teach them that it is not disrespectful to say no, and to say no even to older people. Talking to your children about sex education will strengthen the bond and trust between you both, and they will feel comfortable discussing sex-related topics openly and honestly with you."



book recommendation

TITLE Let's Talk About Sex

AUTHOR Robie Harris

PUBLISHER Walker Books Ltd

YEAR 2021

LANGUAGE English

GENRE Children's book

Harnessing fantasy

to teach the realities of consent

In light of last year's Ofsted review of sexual abuse in schools, what will the new guidance for Relationships and Sex Education curriculums mean for teachers, policymakers, and students? Looking at untapped resources that could fuel our education on sexual health and consent and the boundaries restricting young adults' sex education, how could we harness adult entertainment to teach young people about the complex world of consent?

Written by **HEATHER MARIE WILLIS**

Illustrated by [CHLOE POWELL](#)

TW consent, rape, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, gender-based violence, child sexual abuse.

Before the 2020 introduction of new guidance for Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) curriculums in England, nearly 1 in 5 pupils reported their school's RSE as "not at all useful". Introducing the latest guidance is a welcome, long-overdue overhaul of our sex education curriculum, with RSE finally mandatory in all secondary schools and relationships education mandatory in primary schools. Sex education is still not compulsory in primary schools across England; however, primary schools in Wales are set to see RSE as a mandatory component of studies later this year. Guidance in Northern Ireland was updated in 2015, after reports highlighted support for teachers was necessary to prepare them to discuss sensitive topics, such as recognising the signs of abuse. But does the new guidance go far enough, and what other tools should we be investing in to improve education on sex and relationships?

RSE studies have always occupied the periphery of other academic subjects. In a 2013 report by *Ofsted*, Personal, Social, Health, and Economic Education (PSHE) (the equivalent of RSE) was found to need improvement in nearly 40% of secondary schools, with staff receiving little to no training to deliver PSHE lessons in over 20% of schools. This explains why I didn't even know what thrush was until I had it, and I was deeply ashamed, too, not understanding how common it is for women. >>

>> I left most sex education lessons with more questions by the end than at the beginning. If I had read *Our Bodies, Ourselves* when I was a teenager, I would have found some comfort in its pages on what thrush is, its causes and its treatments. With extensive information on female sexuality and sexual health, this book has proven more beneficial than any PSHE lesson I received at school. In our classrooms, we should be learning the sharing of valuable insights and advice and technical, scientific, and evidence-based information that broadens our understanding of our bodies and how best to take care of them.

Luckily, the Internet provides never-ending answers to our queries these days. Podcasts like Florence Given's *Exactly* take a deep dive into topics like sex, misogyny, sexuality, pleasure, and power. *Doing It with Hannah Witton* is a podcast discussing personal experiences of sex, relationships, and body image. Online resources like these provide valuable insight into other people's experiences navigating the world of sex and relationships. Nevertheless, there have been fears from Gen Z's that the 'sex positivity' movement only encourages the breakdown of sexual boundaries, normalising extreme sexual practices, and the sexualisation of women and girls.

Whilst internet sources encourage curiosity about sex, sex education curriculums have focused disproportionately on negative health risks of sex, promoting fear and shame over our sexual health and erasing ideas of pleasure and sex-positivity from the conversation altogether. There are opportunities to meet in the middle, where open dialogue is celebrated, and sharing experiences encouraged.

The guidance introduced last year – making health and mental health education mandatory in all state-funded schools, relationships education compulsory in all primary schools, and relationships and sex education required in all secondary schools – is still in its infancy. Training modules for teachers on handling topics such as consent, rape, sexual assault, and coercion have only been published by the government this month. Additional guidance from the government states that "teachers may find topics personally challenging," and if so, they should "speak to their line managers". This highlights the need for child development, psychology, and safeguarding specialists to lead RSE lessons. Also, it shows a lack of investment in training and support for teachers currently delivering RSE in schools. >>



>> The changes to our RSE curriculum include additional guidance for teachers to discuss the harm of 'cancel culture' and avoid reinforcing harmful gender stereotypes whilst using inclusive language. But the curriculum itself needs to address inclusivity, celebrating our differences, our sexualities, and our bodies whilst teaching us how they work and what they can do. Figures from UNESCO highlight that 20% of women and up to 10% of men report being victims of sexual abuse as children. Without effective dialogue in the classroom tackling complex topics like gender-based violence, sexual exploitation, and safe sex, future generations will reach adulthood unequipped to navigate safe, healthy, intimate relationships.

Quality RSE equips students with communication skills, empathy, an understanding of complex social issues, and an awareness of their bodies. Teaching students about respect, body image, critical reflection and dialogue lays the foundations for healthy, meaningful relationships as they mature into adults. Studies argue that a comprehensive RSE curriculum can prevent risk-taking behaviours, such as unprotected sex and alcohol and drug abuse, and promote broader child safety concerns like harassment and bullying. Good quality RSE should be delivered by teachers with appropriate RSE, child development, and safeguarding qualifications. The powers of responsibility for shaping RSE curriculums in the UK have long been delegated to school leaders, with minimal guidance to readily equip teachers and policymakers to develop and deliver valuable sex education lessons. While schools remain on varying pages, curriculums will vary in content and quality across the country, leaving students to win or lose the RSE lottery. Hence, the government has not gone far enough to take real ownership of the RSE curriculum.

The latest legislation still leaves it up to schools to make decisions about teaching subjects like LGBTQ+ relationships and what they deem appropriate for different year groups. Figures suggest that a higher percentage of LGBTQ+ pupils engage in unprotected sex, so arguably, all schools should be delivering a standardised curriculum for different year groups that cover all topics of sex, sexuality, and relationships. By standardising the curriculum, schools can avoid creating diverse RSE lessons and reduce the likelihood of a backlash from parents who oppose topics based on personal or religious views. Welsh parents recently protested that primary years is too early to learn about sex, and religious families often accuse schools of promoting relationships that don't correlate with their beliefs. Young people have the right to knowledge about their sexuality so they can make responsible decisions about their sexual and reproductive health and wellbeing. Parents should know how to discuss sex with their child, how important it is to name body parts correctly, and the value of setting clear boundaries, such as asking for a hug and respecting when they want their own space. The NSPCC has created resources for guardians and teachers to address topics of sex and relationships with children of different ages.

An additional burden on schools struggling to meet the demand for student health is the significant decline of school nurses, alongside practising nurses across UK's healthcare sector. As well as treating headaches or cleaning up cuts and scrapes, healthcare professionals play a valuable role in teaching, guiding, and advising young people as they mature into young adults.

The Royal College of Nursing highlighted the decline in school nurses as detrimental to recognising risk-taking behaviours and signs of abuse. Last year, police forces highlighted a 13% rise in reported rapes and sexual offences, the highest figure in one year according to the *Office for National Statistics* (ONS). Over 12,000 violations were against children under 16, with nearly half under 13 years old. An *Ofsted review* of sexual abuse in schools highlighted that sexual harassment and online sexual abuse are so commonplace that most young people see no point in reporting it.

It is time for us to leave behind the shame and stigma attached to sexual assault and create a culture of consent in our classrooms, which permeates out into the rest of society. Pupils taught about consent have been more likely to describe their RSE as useful than those who didn't. Students engaged with their curriculums, finding content relevant to their everyday lives, are much more likely to retain their learning and apply it to their lives. The new RSE guidance includes the laws relating to consent by defining, recognising, and communicating consent and showing how consent can be withdrawn in any context. Whilst the legalities of consent are important, schools should also be framing consent as a positive thing that leads to better, more pleasurable intimate encounters instead of something people have to do to avoid getting into trouble. Pupils in schools across England have been asking for the positive and emotional implications of sex to be considered in school curriculums since the start of the millennium. The classroom can be the ideal location to encourage debate, allowing students to learn from one another. Teachers can drive students towards critically productive conversations, covering ethics, morals, values, equality, and much more. Instead of covering just the 'how' of sex education, schools should be looking at the why; after all, sex starts with consent.

In a 2020 study, 78% of women said they did not have access to 'pleasure-positive' sex education, and only one in three could successfully map the female anatomy. The *World Health Organisation* (WHO) has called for pleasure to be considered a factor in sexual health education, highlighting a recent study that "recommends redesigning sexual education and health interventions to incorporate sexual pleasure considerations, including when promoting safer sex. This means acknowledging why people have sex, and recognising that sexual experiences can and should be pleasurable." Promoting sex for pleasure can broaden students' understanding of safe, consensual, intimate relationships.

If the school curriculum fails to answer students' questions and queries, they will seek the answers elsewhere. In a 2021 study by the UK's Department for Education, 65% of sex/gender diverse young people reported using the internet as a significant source of sex education. With most Gen Z having access to social media and search engines, we need to ensure the information they find is helpful and realistic. Research on the impacts of pornography on adolescents highlighted that those who were exposed to violent sexual material are six times more likely to be sexually violent. Mainstream pornography provides young adults with an unrealistic reference for sex and relationships.

>>

"Promoting sex for pleasure can broaden students' understanding of safe, consensual, intimate relationships."

>> Real-life sex is often nothing like what we see in porn. In fact, this study highlighted young men who used pornography as sex education did not realise that lubrication and slow penetration are important to safely have anal sex and reduce discomfort for their partners.

Recent changes to the Online Safety Bill will make it harder for under 18s to access adult websites and target the record number of online child abuse crimes being reported. *Ofcom* currently regulates UK porn sites; I propose a collaboration with relevant education providers, such as *Pearson Ltd*, local government, and educators in health and science, to build an appropriate bridge from the porn industry to the RSE curriculum. There are already organisations such as *Bellesa*, *LoveHoney*, and *SmileMakers* talking about sex, promoting pleasure, and creating valuable resources on sexual health. The adult entertainment sector could harness their content. In partnership with sexual health experts, a catalogue of 'how to' videos, sexual health articles, and written and illustrated stories could engage and inform young adults. Pornographic educational material could portray real sexual encounters, teach about different body shapes, relationships, the diversity of labia, myths about penis size, and safe-sex practices and consent. *The Pleasure Project* has created heterosexual porn films that feature male and female condoms to promote safer sex for viewers and sex workers, alongside research and training material promoting pleasure-based sexual health worldwide. *PinkLabel.TV* provides filmmakers access to ethical porn production, which features queer, trans, disabled, and older performers and promotes sexual health through a range of resources. Whilst this content isn't appropriate for under-18s, there is potential to create content that is.

Expanding school study materials to include erotic fiction, super-softcore pornographic material, and real-life stories about sex and relationships could allow RSE curriculums to celebrate pleasure and encourage open dialogue about sexuality, sexual health, and wider social issues without stigma or shame. One in three girls have experienced sexual violence from a partner, and this year, the *NSPCC* reported a record number of reports of child sexual exploitation. Encouraging critique in the classroom of a wide variety of material on sex and relationships could tackle issues around the sexualisation of girls within mainstream media, sexual violence, and coercive control. This porn pedagogy could create the tools young adults need to communicate their needs, discuss sex and sexual health openly, and seek more information when they require it. I am not arguing that the porn industry is in shape to achieve this yet. While feminist and ethical porn exists (*XConfessions*, created by feminist filmmaker Erika Lust, is a perfect example), the sites that gain the most traffic (e.g., *PornHub* and *Redtube*) showcase very limited body types and have been openly criticised for promoting misogyny, dismissing consent and normalising sexual violence. It is up for debate whether there is any ethical porn out there, but women-led and LGBTQ+ led sites are attempting to tackle issues in the sector by directly benefiting the sex workers involved.

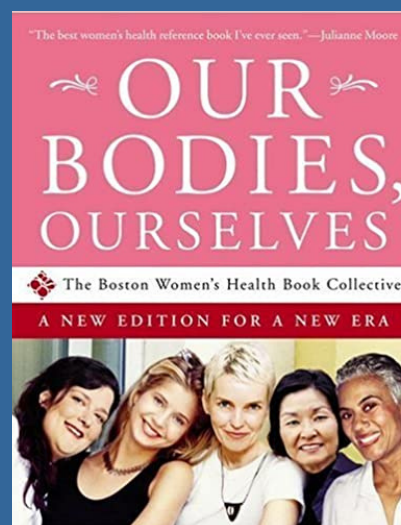
The frame around pornography as a moral and political issue within public debate has long hindered an industry that could play a valuable role in UK's sex education. The topic of sex is ingrained in British culture as taboo. Sex education started as just an A4 pamphlet in the 1940s and continues to remain 'behind the times' in its breadth and depth. Since the early 90s, online pornography has been framed as a risk to young people's wellbeing and sexual development, condemned for eroticising gender inequalities and extorting sex workers. >>

>> The difficulty for educators is that they may not legally distribute sexually explicit content to their students when they are under 18 years old, nor can they permit close reading of actual explicit material. And so, the need for collaboration grows infinitely stronger across industries. The content must be created to encourage open dialogue about sexual health, inclusivity, and healthy, consensual, and intimate relationships. If other school subjects fail to address broader cultural topics such as power, gender relations, and sexuality, then RSE lessons could open constructive dialogue between students by critiquing pornographic material, media that sexualises girls, and erotic fiction; encouraging them to evaluate these broader cultural issues.

There is a massive gap in the market for education and training providers, local authorities, and sexual health experts to collaborate with the porn industry and find that middle ground. Together, these sectors could achieve open, honest, and accessible information on sex and relationships for all ages, which properly tackles the reform we need to our curriculums. Suppose the relevant sectors were to combine their expertise. In that case, they could create a wealth of resources and development programmes that deliver a truly comprehensive RSE curriculum by trained, competent RSE specialists. With collaborations between experts in adult entertainment, media, education, child development, sexual health, and government policy, young people of all ages and backgrounds can access relevant sex and relationships education. There is much work to be done to ensure each emerging generation is equipped with the tools and knowledge they need to navigate the world of relationships and sex. We all can do our part: learning, researching, sharing knowledge and experiences, lobbying our local MPs, engaging with schools and community health experts, talking to our friends, family, and children; doing our bit to break the cycle of censorship around sex and pleasure.

meet our writer

Heather is a full-time freelance writer interested in politics, education, and mental health. Her passion for writing stems from her love of learning, reading, and research. When she isn't slurping Yorkshire Tea at her desk, typing away on her latest project, she is in the outdoors, finding nourishment in her garden or forest, bathing with her golden retriever.



book recommendation

TITLE Our Bodies, Ourselves

AUTHOR Boston Women's Health Book Collective

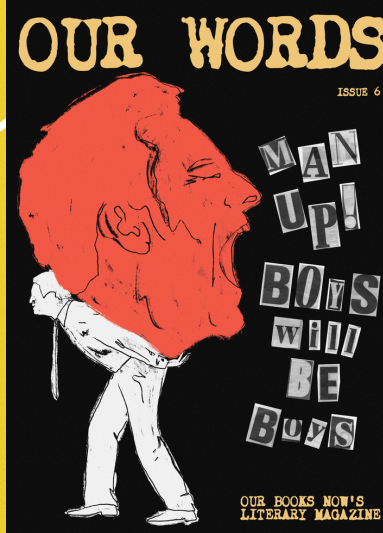
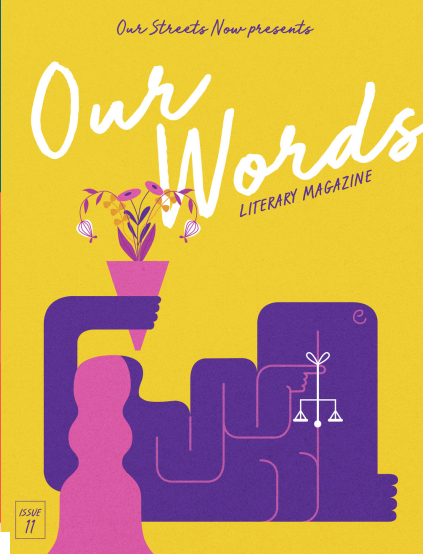
PUBLISHER Touchstone

YEAR 1970

LANGUAGE English

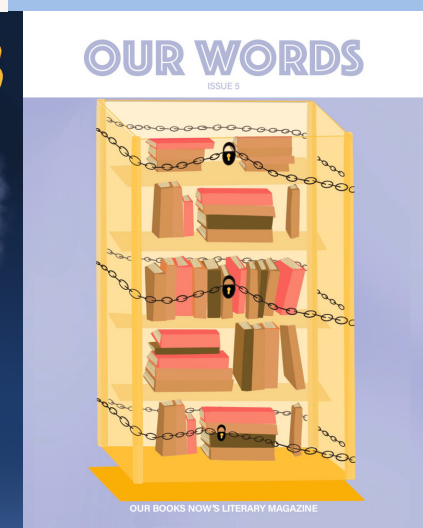
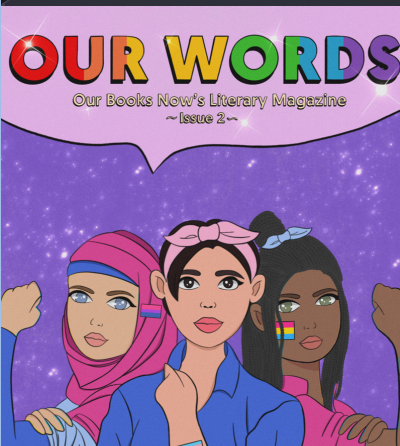
GENRE

Health, Relationships, and Personal Development



What do you suggest we do to celebrate one year of Our Words Literary Magazine?

Email or DM us with your suggestion!





about us

**#CRIMENOT
COMPLIMENT**



Our Streets Now

#ENDPSH
@OURSTREETSNOW

***Join the
movement
now!***

Our Streets Now is a campaign demanding the right of women, girls and marginalised genders to be safe in public space. How it has started? Two sisters, 15 and 21, spoke about how they experience the world as young women. About feeling afraid walking home at night. About being harassed in their school uniform. About how their lives were restricted by the fear of harassment. Channelling this anger into change, they decided to start a petition. Hundreds of women, girls and marginalised genders went online to share their stories of being insulted, followed and assaulted on the streets of Britain. Soon enough, thousands of voices were joining the Our Streets Now movement, tired of harassment being a 'normal' part of growing up a girl. Our Streets Now became a community determined to challenge the myths and taboos stopping this topic from being discussed and challenged, out in the open.

Our Words is part of Our Streets Now (OSN). Within Our Words, we have a Literary Magazine, a Book Club and events. We feature various writing pieces on topics covered by inspiring books in the Literary Magazine. The Book Club is an opportunity for the OSN community to engage with one another, creating spaces of dialogue. At events, we promote interviews, lectures, and poetry gatherings. Our Words' primary aim is collective learning. We appreciate our members' experiences, knowledge, and interest.

