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Sexercising our opinion on porn: a virtual discussion

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A variety of pressing questions on the current topics and trends in gay male pornography were sent out to the contributors of this special issue. The answers provided were then collated into a ‘virtual’ discussion. In a brief concluding section, the contributors’ answers are reflected upon holistically in the hopes of shedding light on the changing face of gay male pornography.

Keywords: gay male pornography; gay male culture; bareback sex; pornography

It is safe to say that gay male pornography has changed. Gone are the brick and mortar adult video stores with wall-to-wall shelves of pornographic DVDs and Blu-rays for rental and sale. The requirement to physically venture out of the household in order to find gay pornography, a fundamental gay rite of passage, is also gone. Future generations of gay men will not experience the thrill of slinking into a secluded adult video store, choosing a suitable porno flick that is arousing but not too embarrassing (your libido longed for Giant Uncut Dicks of Eastern Europe 7, but your modesty settled for Czech Point), and – arguably, worst of all – making the unavoidable and awkward small talk with the cashier, who you are convinced is judging your taste in skin flicks. The breakneck shift into digital distribution afforded by widespread access to the Internet has allowed gay men to anonymously tailor their pornographic consumption with a few key strokes, and a handful of clicks. Pornography is never out of reach when you have access to a computer, smartphone, gaming console or any device connected to the Internet. Porn will find a way.

Alongside the advent and rapid adoption of the pornographic digital age came social networking. For example, the wildly popular social networking site, Facebook, allows and encourages users to share every aspect of their life and receive instant gratification for doing so via a digital pat on the back in the form of a ‘Like’. This habitual oversharing, naturally, was perceptible in Internet gay pornography. With high quality camera technology being shoehorned into every Internet capable device – especially commonly used smartphones – user-generated pornography has become common place. Tube sites (i.e. free video streaming sites) specialising in pornographic content are flooded with homemade fuck flicks in every variety, with users taking requests or asking for fuck feedback. In an obvious contrast to the heyday of DVD- and VHS-based gay pornography, amateur content is now astonishingly easy to find.

Perhaps even more startlingly, the once taboo practice of bareback anal sex has swiftly moved from the fetish aisle of your local adult video store into the most mainstream gay pornography on the Internet. From the late 1980s up until the early 2000s, studios that specialised in bareback gay pornography were vilified by vocal HIV activists and condom

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advocacy groups. However, currently, in the 2010s, it seems bareback sex is a requirement for a hot sex scene. Many mainstream gay porn websites that previously endorsed safer sex now exclusively include bareback sex and shun condom usage.

Without question, there has been palatable and rapid change in gay pornography. The aetiology behind this change is contentious and debatable. Therefore, the time is ripe to assess how scholars of pornography make sense of these topical trends. Eleven gay pornography–related questions were sent to the contributors and editors of this special issue of *Psychology & Sexuality*. The instructions to the contributors were as follows: (i) to answer as many questions as they wished; (ii) to respond in a conversational tone, rather than in a traditional or authoritative academic writing style; and (iii) to keep the answers brief and succinct. The following questions are not presented in any specific sequence and the answers are listed in the order of their receipt. The respondents’ answers are reproduced verbatim, other than minor edits made to address typographic errors. Three questions were omitted due to space constraints.

**Question 1**

*Throughout the 1990s, condoms were de rigueur in gay male pornography. (Indeed, performers who did not practice safer sex on camera as well as the studios that sanctioned ‘unsafe sex’ were vilified [e.g. Hot Desert Knights and Treasure Island Media]). Today, the landscape of condom use has changed, with ‘raw’ (i.e. condom-free sex) becoming progressively more popular. Why do you think this transformation has occurred?*

**Todd Morrison**

I think AIDS has been reconfigured as a ‘manageable disease’ akin to diabetes. Also, throughout the late 1980s and 1990s, it was impossible to be gay and not think incessantly about AIDS. I remember an old Bette Midler comedy routine about – yes – AIDS. It goes something like this, ‘I love, love, love food. I used to love to have indiscriminate sex, but you can’t do that anymore; you fuck the wrong person and your arm falls off. And I just had a manicure too, so it’s back to food!’ ‘Raw’ (and I loathe the term) sex was inconceivable at that time.

Also I don’t think AIDS is very salient to young gay people – a group that is (over-) represented in gay porn. Finally, I think issues of masculinity come into play: Real men don’t fuck with rubber sheaths; we take our man cocks and ram them … well, you get the general idea.

**Mark Kiss**

With the increased prevalence of gay porn tube sites (free streaming video), porn studios need to create premium paid content that not only competes with, but trumps the appeal of easy-to-access and gratis tube sites. The majority of the uploaded videos on tube sites are user-generated amateur affairs or clips from full porn movies. Gay men who share their ‘sex tapes’ creations online may be in a committed relationship, and no longer feel the need to use condoms during anal sex. Therefore, users of tube sites are privy to endless videos that include real, intimate condomless encounters. In order for porn studios to compete, they would need to reproduce – albeit in a higher quality – the experience provided for free on tube sites. Segue to vanilla sex, ‘straight’ gazing websites such as
Sean Cody and Corbin Fisher requiring their Ken Doll performers to go bareback and up the intensity of their enjoyment via obvious contrivances such as deafening moaning every 2.5 seconds. The addition of prerequisite behind-the-scenes finds performers in the afterglow swearing up and down that the scene was THE BEST dick, fuck or ass they’ve ever experienced. Each performer in a Sean Cody fuck scene will often climax twice giving the viewer at least four cum shots. Take that Xtube.

Additionally, decades of constant reminders that gay men must obey safer sex practices or, in essence, risk death, have degenerated into white noise. Gay men have had unprotected sex, and they are still alive. Some gay men living with HIV have minimised the impact of the virus by suggesting HIV drug cocktails essentially cure them. Most gay men have forgotten the familiar faces and relatable stories behind most AIDS deaths, hopefully, not to their detriment.

**Benjamin Scuglia**

The landscape of condom use in gay pornography has changed so dramatically due to a perfect storm of conditions, including economic woes and what can be called ‘AIDS fatigue’, as well as the maturing of several younger generations of gay and bisexual men for whom the spectre of AIDS is not a daily visitor. Economics would be the primary reason; piracy, tube sites and an increasingly permissive culture have eroded the primary audience for gay porn. Studios – those who still produce primarily DVDs and companies who are primarily, or entirely, centred on the web – have not been able to stem the steady erosion of their audience – thus, the focus on content, like condomless sex, for which the audience has shown a steady appetite.

**Evangelos Tziallas**

Besides advances in HIV treatment, pre- and post-exposure medications (PReP and PEP), and the perception that HIV is ‘no big deal’, Tim Dean’s work has suggested that intimacy and community building are motivations for barebacking’s popularity: something Treasure Island Media (TIM) videos exude in spades. Looking at TIM videos, it is difficult not to see the utopian impulse of post-Stonewall gay liberation, which emphasised promiscuity (not discriminating) and resisted contemporary gay male culture’s conservatism, individualism and capitulation to market-consumerism. TIM is about enjoying all bodies rather than privileging and fetishising particular facets – sculpted bodies, brand name clothing, middle-class lifestyles and so on – that reinforce hierarchies and attitudes of exclusion. But, importantly, barebacking is also an attempt to cling to the real in the face of increasing virtualisation that distances us from others and ourselves, and sterilisation that trumpets self-preservation and security over tactility and the risk of ‘contamination’.

**Simon Rosser**

The all-anal-sex-with-condoms was a self-imposed standard adopted by industry leaders in the US for gay sexually explicit media (SEM). I understand they imposed the standard out of concern both for actors and in response to gay community pressure for SEM to reflect community values and promote health. Advances in technology leading to amateur porn, advances in treatment leading to less emphasis on safer sex, a change in perception that not all MSM (men who have sex with men) needed to practice safer sex (e.g. seroconcordant monogamous MSM), greed (seeing bareback as a lucrative gap in the
porn market), the desire to be ‘edgy’ (bareback SEM started as a ‘niche’ market similar to kink), some MSM’s personal preference for unsafe sex, the perception of unsafe sex as more ‘taboo’ and thus more erotic for some MSM, and consumer demand for condom-free sex are likely contributing factors that resulted in the collapse of the all-anal-sex-with-condoms standard.

**CJ Bishop**

I find this question difficult to answer seeing as I was born in the mid-1980s and, as such, couldn’t have possibly been cognisant of the AIDS crisis as it was unfolding. Based on what I have read, once it was discovered that HIV/AIDS was transmitted via bodily fluids, the push for safer sex practices began. However, this discovery didn’t seem to correspond with the introduction of safer practices within gay porn as this came (pun not intended … or was it?) several years later. It would appear that the advent of anti-retroviral drug cocktails seems to roughly coincide with the return of bareback gay porn. The myths that surround the anti-retroviral drug cocktails, I would imagine, began to take hold shortly after they were proven to be affective at treating HIV/AIDS symptoms. It is these myths (e.g. ‘these drugs are a cure’, ‘you don’t need to worry if you become infected because of these drugs’, ‘once you’re infected, you can’t be infected again’, etc.) that have had an influence on the return to bareback porn in conjunction with a sort of ‘safer-sex fatigue’ rising from the initial connotations of the ‘boogey man’ (when not using condoms) during the AIDS crisis. While it’s certainly possible that bareback porn represents the desires of a majority of gay porn consumers, I believe that the misinformation regarding HIV/AIDS and the function of anti-retroviral drug cocktails represents the greatest influence on both bareback sex becoming (re-)normalised within gay culture and becoming the norm within gay pornography.

**Richard Silvera and Christian Grov**

This is because the HIV epidemic and how to treat it has transformed. HIV is no longer a death sentence, and it is a chronic illness that can be managed with medication. The fear of AIDS has diminished. An entire generation of gay men have come of age where they know the risks associated with HIV and they did not see their friends dying left and right. It also may be that unprotected sex on film was, as you’ve described it, taboo, which may have made it more exciting or erotic for pornography audiences.

**Question 2**

Some individuals have argued that technological advancements will contribute to gay male pornography becoming more egalitarian (i.e. individuals are no longer beholden to what the industry dictates as erotic; instead, people can create pornography that reflects their own unique desires). What are your thoughts on the potential impact of ‘user generated’ (i.e. amateur) content? Do you think individuals of varying body shapes and sizes, ethnicities, etc. uploading sexual images/videos of themselves will have an emancipatory effect on the gay community at large? In other words, will this technology serve to free gay men from the belief they have to look a certain way in order to be sexually desirable? Why or why not?
Todd Morrison
No! I think this is wish fulfilment on the part of unattractive people. Yes, technological advances have altered the landscape of pornography; however, the bodies that predominate still adhere to a specific aesthetic. I think it is also critical to point out that pornography is akin to any fantasy medium. With few exceptions, the public doesn’t want ordinary; they want beautiful, handsome, etc. To quote Joan Crawford: If you want the girl next door, go next door! (Fuck: I’m referencing Bette Midler and Mommie Dearest – I’m the geriatric mascot of this virtual discussion!) Of course, men now have the ability to film themselves having sex – replete with hair on their back, a micro-penis and ‘moobs’ – but this doesn’t mean the ‘average person’ will want to watch them.

Mark Kiss
No. Although the growth and acceptance of user-generated pornographic content has drastically changed certain aspects of the gay pornography industry, I wouldn’t go as far to suggest that it has emancipated all gay men from their superficiality. While tube sites with amateur content have granted gay men access to a more realistic representation of the gay male body, popular imagery in gay pornography remains statically muscular, tanned and straight-acting. For instance, a handful of popular amateur tube channels that morphed into their own premium website, such as ‘Maverick Men’, generally featured young, attractive, in-shape men in their free of charge days; nothing ‘average’ at all.

Benjamin Scuglia
Technology has not freed gay or bisexual men from feeling they have to look a certain way to be considered desirable; only gay men can do that for themselves. Pornography is a mirror; it typically reflects our views and interests. The technological advancements that have enabled so-called amateurs, or user-generated porn, offer a ready alternative to those who don’t want to pay for adult content. And there is more variety available if you search for it; that’s true. But otherwise, men with oversized penises and slender, youthful, white men, typically blond, prevail. That won’t change until gay culture collectively decides to broaden its narrow definition of what is desirable or prized in men.

Evangelos Tziallas
Absolutely. Xtube is an excellent example of how digital technology has allowed people of different races, particularly individuals of Arab, Turkish and Indian ethnicity, as well as larger and older men to carve out a space for themselves, while tube sites more generally mix together professional and amateur videos, blurring their distinction and chipping away at their respective statuses. Other DIY platforms such as Tumblr, Grindr and Scruff, Dudesnudes, and Guyswithiphones, although buttressing normative representations, have also helped to dismantle normative strictures and expand the pornosphere: we are now our own porn stars. Digital technology allows for plurality to coexist, even if somewhat unevenly, and, generally speaking, those who post comments on user-generated sites rarely make negative remarks, regardless of one’s size, age or ethnicity. The feedback is often positive (i.e. ‘you’re hot!’) with criticism often focusing on technique (i.e. ‘too blurry!’ ‘clean your mirror!’ ‘bad lighting!’) rather than the bodies themselves.
Simon Rosser

I see this as a false discussion. It’s a bleeding of the discourse on heterosexual SEM and an attempt to apply the important feminist discourse on objectification of women to gay SEM. But it’s not relevant and here’s why. First, we must acknowledge that there is limited quantitative research on gay SEM and body objectification. However, what research exists suggests that while there is a significant negative impact on some MSM’s body image through watching SEM, it is a very small overall effect (meaning it likely affects a small minority of MSM in a small way). I’m betting that for men who have significant negative body image issues (a real problem in our community), watching SEM showing idealised bodies reinforces their negative body image concerns. But for most MSM, it’s not an issue, so greater diversity won’t lead to emancipation. Second, men – of all orientations – have different attitudes (on average) to body objectification. While gay men may support women, politically, in issues of objectification of women and sexism, we may have different attitudes to male objectification of men. Third, commercially generated gay SEM differs from heterosexual SEM in that there has always been greater variety of men’s bodies shown (e.g. twinks, bear, chubs, leather, older). Because of this, the impact of amateur porn and niche porn will likely be less.

CJ Bishop

This question presumes that gay porn is the cause of the lean/muscular aesthetic being afforded such a vaunted status and the ethnic ‘othering’ that occurs. However, it is possible that the attitudes and desires of the gay community are what influences gay porn. If so, then more egalitarian gay porn will not necessarily lead to more egalitarian attitudes and behaviour among gay men. Before I had ever been exposed to gay porn but realised I was attracted to other boys, I had a preference for those who were leaner and possessed certain facial features. Maybe something other than gay porn made me so shallow?

Related to ethnicity, Asian men are largely depicted as submissive bottoms and Black men as dominant tops. While offerings that depict Asian men as more dominant and Black men as more submissive are certainly possible with HD capable cell phones and webcams, the scope of such material is questionable (i.e. how far will it reach?). But then, does the scope matter? For example, if Asian men who identify as masculine tops become consumers of offerings where Asian performers are not relegated to the role of bottom, then one could view these offerings as being successful. However, such niche offerings seem like they might have the potential to further segregate these men from gay culture, leading to them being elided for not only their ‘atypical’ sexual preferences, but also for their consumption of ‘undesirable’ gay porn. In addition, it appears as though this scenario could potentially lead to a schism between Asian men who reject the ‘submissive bottom’ role and those who embrace it. If one group of Asian men rejects this role while another embraces it, there is potential for conflict. The same could certainly be true with respect to how Black men are typically depicted.

Richard Silvera and Christian Grov

We are already seeing ‘Porn 2.0’ content with the rise of websites where users upload their own videos and even sell viewership to users (xtube.com) as well as live streaming...
camera shows (cam4.com). I wouldn’t agree this has had an emancipatory effect on gay men. Emancipated from what? The gay community is diverse in its bodies and interest. Porn 2.0 caters to that; however, it doesn’t dismantle ideological images of youth, masculinity and perfect bodies.

**Elly-Jean Nielsen**

User-generated, amateur porn, *alone* cannot and should not serve to free gay men from ideals of the clone look. If the creators of pornography are increasingly affected by cinematic trends in broader film culture then the material in mainstream and commercial pornography too will edge towards displaying varying identities and body types. In other words, since what is considered sexually desirable is beginning to diversify in cinema in general – especially in the thriving independent film genre – the microcosm that is pornography should follow suit. And, yes, I believe the various mediums of pornography that are proudly and poignantly showcasing diverse peoples can have emancipatory effects on the gay community.

**Question 3**

Recently, what has become known as ‘extreme pornography’ has generated considerable interest among scholars. This type of pornography may be defined as: ‘depictions of sexual activity that result in, or are likely to result in, serious injury to a person’s anus, genitals, etc.’ (Attwood, 2011, p. 18). It also may be viewed as depictions of ‘non-normative’ sexual activity (e.g. identical male twins having anal intercourse). What are your thoughts on this category of pornography? Also, from the vantage of gay male pornography, what sorts of activities would you classify as ‘extreme’?

**Todd Morrison**

This question is exceedingly difficult to answer: how does one formulate a definition that doesn’t preclude someone’s (consensual) erotic fantasy or sexual behaviour? I think a more intriguing query is WHY do ostensibly extreme sequences arouse the viewer. Why, for example, does someone want to watch 50 men come on a teen-ager’s face? Why did I purchase (many year ago, mind you!), *Ten Tops one Fuller*? Was it simply because I thought Lane Fuller was hot and wanted to see him have sex with 10 guys at once? Or was there more to it than that? Incidentally, would that title fall under the category of extreme pornography?

Assuming we could even define ‘extreme’ porn, what do we do with material that falls under this definition? Should it be subject to legal censure unlike pornography that isn’t extreme? How do we prevent the definition from broadening – piss play, BDSM, fisting, etc. To conclude: just as I do not propose classifying sexual representations as erotic versus pornographic so, too, I am reluctant to divide pornography into permissible versus ‘extreme’.

**Mark Kiss**

Long-held indicators of what exactly constitutes ‘extreme’ gay pornography have been steadily creeping their way into ‘vanilla’ gay pornography. Bareback anal sex, graphic
Cream pies, twincest, double anal penetrations and light S&M are regularly uploaded to the most mainstream gay porno websites. These particular sexual activities were previously relegated to shady, dim backrooms studios (e.g. Treasure Island Media), but are now somewhat common place; perhaps even yawn worthy to especially jaded gay porn connoisseurs. In order to maintain the ‘extreme’ moniker, the genre now constitutes sexual practices that are harmful to the body. Penis torture, fisting, scat or subject matter that implies the performers are HIV+ or passing HIV to each other are the new ‘extreme’.

A recent title by Treasure Island Media entitled Viral Loads uses its title and back-of-the-box blurb to insinuate sex for the sake of HIV infection. The back of the box reads:

Mansex is a virus, one that uses men as its host. Some try to resist it. Others embrace it as the source of life and meaning. We live to breed the sex-virus, to pass it on to everyone random anonymous dude we meet and fuck. It’s how we reproduce, man. We shoot viral loads every time. Our jizz ain’t for making babies. Our sex spreads like wildfire, squirting out of one man’s dick, shooting deep inside another, then another and another. Join in, buddy. You’ll never look back.

A title like this couldn’t have existed in the 1990s or 2000s without the justified outcry from safe-sex and HIV prevention advocacy groups. In 2010, however, Viral Loads is our new extreme.

Benjamin Scuglia

One man’s definition of ‘extreme’ porn is another man’s dictionary-standard definition of plain, vanilla sex. Modern pornographers did not invent transgressive sexual acts! I would venture to say many scholars who are aflutter over so-called extreme porn are, in fact, shocked to have something they would never consider – or perhaps, conversely, their own secret desires – boldly reflected back at them. I do wish scholars studying porn would recognise that mankind has been pushing the sexual envelope – and chronicled their discoveries – for millennia, whether on a cave wall or a Grecian urn, inscribed inside a pyramid or acted out in front of a camera. A particular sex act is only ‘extreme’ if you wouldn’t want to do it.

Evangelos Tziallas

I think materials that elicit negative visceral responses are often deemed ‘extreme’, and that extremity is a matter of personal taste and affect. I personally consider anything that makes me feel queasy or light-headed, or anything that compels my mouse to make its way towards the little ‘X’ in my browser’s top right corner, ‘extreme’. My tastes, though, are pretty vanilla, so even something like fisting is bit too much for me, let alone goatse, ‘ball torture’, or even some ‘big dick’ porn. I think extreme porn, whatever it may be, is the epitome of digital media’s utopian and democratising promise to show everyone anything they want and allow anyone to express whatever they want, thereby equalising the playing field. At the same time, even though we live in the era of onscenity, obscenity hasn’t really disappeared: it just manifests and is deployed differently.

Simon Rosser

The last decade has seen an explosion in SEM consumption thanks to the Internet which has overcome major issues of access, anonymity and affordability. The ability of
consumers with ‘rarified’ tastes to search out ‘niche’ SEM has now made such SEM economically viable to produce and distribute. The result is that we see greater diversity and some production companies focusing on niche markets (e.g. gay porn involving Mormon missionaries).

In our SEM study, we explored common preferences in MSM’s SEM behaviour and found three. The first group (61% of the sample consuming the least amount of SEM) may be described as the preferring ‘conventional’ gay SEM group. They like to watch two men enjoying each other, kissing, feeling each other, oral sex and anal sex (both with a condom and without a condom). If I had to guess, these are men who enjoy watching what they typically enjoy doing or would like to do. In other words, they are conventional, liking their SEM to be ‘realistic’ defined as matching their experience. The second group (comprising 32% of the sample) are best typified as the ‘amplified’ group. This group likes watching what the first group likes, plus they report preferring watching group sex, extreme penetration, cum swapping/snowballing. So, if I like sex with my boyfriend, watching/imagining sex with him and another man is even hotter. If I like being penetrated, watching double penetration is even more exciting. If I enjoy seeing cum, seeing cum play enhances excitement. This group appears to select their SEM to enhance or amplify what they enjoy doing. The third group of MSM (7% of the sample who consumes the most) are best described as enjoying everything – all of the above, plus any and all forms of kink, plus depictions of forced sex. While at first glance, these MSM may seem like they are paraphilic (a clinical term for fixated or out of control), I disagree with this conclusion. These men selected everything – both normophilic and paraphilic – as preferred. (If they were clinically paraphilic, they should have only endorsed the kink or extreme items). A better explanation of the results is that these men enjoy SEM as fantasy, and prefer variety in their SEM. They enjoy using SEM to explore their (and others’) sexuality, and may place a high value on novelty in SEM. For most of this group, I suspect, the kinkier, more unusual, or more different, the better. While we are still analysing data on how these preferences correlate with their reported behaviour, I would predict that in all the groups, only a sub-group actually engages in the behaviour watched, and for ‘extreme’ behaviours, it’s likely to be very rare.

This analysis gives us a new and richer way of thinking about gay SEM consumption than a simple dichotomy of normal–extreme or dangerous–non-dangerous as suggested in the question. The history of sexual oppression of gay men should warn us against the danger of proposing simple dichotomies which reduce discussion to this-sex-good, that-sex-bad.

CJ Bishop

This notion of ‘extreme’ pornography is one that, while I accept that it exists, is something that I don’t quite understand. When I think of the term, my mind immediately leads me to think about offerings which depict activities such as ‘fisting’ which I cannot even comprehend as being enjoyable. However, this is not to say that individuals who do enjoy such activities are somehow deviant or should reevaluate what they find sexually arousing. It’s just, to me, it pushes the body to its limits and in some cases beyond and I find it troubling to see such activities take place. I suppose that activities such as fisting or using ‘horse cock’ dildos may release endorphins thus promoting even more intense sexual gratification. I am at a loss of what may make this type of porn gratifying for some consumers; perhaps, it has something to do with becoming desensitised to other ‘softer’ porn offerings.
As I reflect on this notion of ‘extreme’ porn I start to consider incest-themed offerings as well. I suppose that if I was going to provide a definition of what might be considered ‘extreme’, I would suggest that it is all about pushing limits. Related to penetration with body parts or large dildos, it would seem that bodily limits of the performers and consumers are being explored. Related to incest offerings (e.g. the Peters twins), it would seem that the moral limits of the performers and consumers are being explored. The notion of morality varies from person to person, but incest is typically seen as especially taboo and I would imagine that some would find incest porn to be highly arousing, while others may experience disgust/revulsion.

Richard Silvera and Christian Grov

‘Extreme’ is entirely in the eye of the beholder; what is mainstream to one viewer may be shocking to another. I would not describe this as pornography becoming more extreme but instead would suggest that the expanded market and more venues for pornography have allowed viewers to pursue more specific types of erotic images or fetishes. In the past, viewers may not have had access to things that specifically turned them on, but the Internet and social media allow viewers to not only find such pornography but also others who enjoy it.

Question 4

Some researchers believe that gay pornography is problematic because it: (i) promotes a specific type of body (namely muscular) as attractive; (ii) suggests that anal intercourse is an integral part of gay men’s sexual behaviour; (iii) emphasises casual, impersonal and non-relational sexual activity; and (iv) reinforces, rather than challenges, misogynistic discourses and hegemonic masculinity (e.g. gay men are referred to as ‘cum hungry whores’ and getting their ‘man pussies bred’). Do you find these elements of gay male pornography concerning? Why or why not?

Todd Morrison

And the problem is … I’m being facetious, well sort of. I think (some) of us, particularly po-faced academics whose life mission is to eradicate ‘sexual filth’, lose sight of the fact that pornography is fantasy. Do I assume that my sexual partners will look like the porn star du jour – of course, not! (If I did, I’d never have sex.) Do I assume that because SOME pornography depicts casual, impersonal encounters, gay men are doomed to cruise glory holes and have furtive liaisons in parks. No! (To avoid sounding judgmental, I should note that if you enjoy having pine needles and leaves in your ass, or relish crouching beside a toilet, that’s in desperate need of Mr Clean, to give head – ENJOY.) Does language such as ‘man pussy’ or ‘cum hungry whore’ have implications for my masculinity (however, one wants to define that construct), the answer is NO. I do not operate from the assumption that the AVERAGE viewer – gay, straight, bisexual, asexual, queer, etc. – is so malleable, so impressionable, so fucking weak that witnessing something on a computer screen has implications for his/her sense of self. ‘Rex was just called a filthy whore. Rex is fucking a man in this clip so Rex must be gay. I’m gay too … oh dear that must mean I’m a filthy whore. I better call mom and dad right away and let them know’. The relationship between medium and viewer is a wee bit more complicated than monkey see, monkey do.
**Benjamin Scuglia**

The purpose of pornography is to provide erotic stimulus. If hearing about your ‘man-pussy’ or being described as a ‘cum-hungry whore’ doesn’t turn your crank, then go find something more romantic, sensual and egalitarian. Even within a shrinking industry there is plenty of variety. Take some initiative to find the porn that speaks to your desires – or make your own. A porn movie is not designed to be an instructional film on how to establish and maintain a lasting emotional connection and spiritual bond with another human being. Although porn producers have, in the past, taken it upon themselves to offer instruction and guidance, it is not their primary responsibility to educate anyone. That is the job of parents and the school system – and the individual himself, once he is an adult.

**Evangelos Tziallas**

There is so much gay pornography and the representations are so varied that any claim made about any feature can be counteracted by an alternative example; and if so much of what is being consumed is self-made, we should be focusing more on the contributing factors that give rise to these representations and less on the representations themselves. As for the particular points made:

1. The valorising of physique is not a new phenomenon.
2. Although bareback porn seems to equate gay male sexuality with anal intercourse, the taxonomy of tube sites separate activities into discreet behaviours – ‘blowjob’, ‘ass play’, ‘facials’, ‘handjobs’, ‘jerk off’ – de-centring anal intercourse and removing it from its privileged position at the end of a typical sexual encounter.
3. More and more videos seem to emphasise romance, sensuality (kissing, caressing) and coupling. A Thing of Beauty by Cocky Boys is a perfect example of a growing trend.
4. Sexual desire isn’t politically correct and so neither will the language used be politically correct. Sexual desire is fluid and dynamic, and digital technology allows us to navigate the ebbs and flows of our desire: sometimes we want to see, or be, a ‘cum hungry whore’ who gets their ‘pussy mouth’ seeded, and sometimes, maybe even a few minutes later, we want to see, or be part of, a married couple who make love while on vacation.

**Simon Rosser**

Based on the typologies we identified in the previous question, I suspect that MSM (and MSM researchers) who are in the first group are most likely to view gay pornography as problematic. MSM (and MSM researchers) in the second group officially or publicly hold that it is problematic while privately enjoying such pornography, a situation which should result in cognitive dissonance. MSM (and MSM researchers) in the third group may be predisposed to dismiss the questions as yet another attempt to pathologise gay SEM. I’m not sure it’s productive to re-hash debates between these groups. To move the field forward, we need to (i) know and own our own preferences (or biases) in SEM; and (ii) get beyond simple dichotomies which reduce discussion to be this-good or that-bad. The richer and more important question for research is to understand the psychology of SEM. Put another way, it’s more helpful to ask for whom is this problematic and for
whom is this not. So, for example, I suspect MSM who like watching what they would do, may be very threatened or frustrated by watching idealised bodies (which they may view as unattainable), specific behaviours (which might get them into trouble) or listen to men being referred to as ‘cum hungry whores’ (which they likely would view as demeaning). But the MSM who view SEM for fantasy and variety are likely to view the same materials as just fantasy and no big deal.

**CJ Bishop**

I believe that each of the points above can be analysed beyond their ‘face value’. For example, some gay porn promotes a certain aesthetic type. But mainstream media is also complicit in promoting a certain male aesthetic. If this was not the case, then body image concerns would only be relevant to gay men. Also, there are numerous niche sites that eroticise alternative body types (e.g. ‘bears’).

I agree that anal sex is presented as an integral part of gay men’s sexual behaviour. However, anal sex is an integral part of many gay men’s sex lives. Does this mean it is true of all gay men? Of course not! The number of solo and oral scenes available seems to refute this notion. Also, the Internet allows consumers to easily locate ‘anal-free’ offerings.

What’s wrong with depicting promiscuity? It seems that promiscuity is linked with one’s virtue which appears to be a problem with society’s views on sexuality. To suggest that men who attend gay clubs with the sole purpose of ‘hooking up’ do so because of their consumption of gay porn is absurd. There is a rather large subset of gay porn that depicts performers who are in a relationship or who ‘act’ as though they are. And what about the gay men who have no interest in hook-ups yet still consume gay porn?

Finally, some argue that using ‘pussy’ and ‘whore’ only serves to feminise the bottom, thus reinforcing patriarchy. However, others may argue that since a man is the target it serves to destabilise patriarchy since the precedent is being set that a man can be a ‘whore’. Those agreeing with the former may be accused of unwittingly reinforcing patriarchy by relegating the bottom to a more feminine status and stripping him of his masculinity.

**Richard Silvera and Christian Grov**

The porn industry is supported by its users. It is responding to what users want. Some may argue that the relationship is in the opposite direction (the porn industry dictates what its users will want to see), but users vote with their wallets. Thus, perhaps, we should stop blaming pornography.

**Question 5**

*What functions do you believe are served by viewing gay male pornography? On a related note, do you believe that watching this type of material serves any political functions?*

**Todd Morrison**

The primary functions remain sexual arousal and masturbation. In terms of political functions, at one time, pornography was the only concrete manifestation of gay desire. There was nothing else out there – unless, you count *Blue Lagoon, All the Right Moves*
and *Footloose* (the original, please), all of which featured brief – very brief – shots of men’s asses. At the time, gay teenagers took what they could get (even if it involved Tom Cruise). Today, gay sex is more visible; however, pornography remains the only option for explicit representations of male intimacy. From that vantage, it serves a ‘political’ purpose.

**Benjamin Scuglia**

Porn, however flawed, is proof that your erotic inner life is worthy of exploration and even admiration. This can be a life-changing revelation in a culture where heteronormativity is expected and encouraged. Two (or more) men having sex on camera without inhibition is proof of what’s possible for you, if you want to follow that path. It can serve as fuel for your own erotic fantasies. Truly, man cannot live by bread alone. Yes, porn can serve a political function. Gay porn, however ridiculous, demonstrates that we exist, that we are fully human and that we deserve all of the same considerations as heterosexuals.

**Evangelos Tziallas**

I think that viewing gay pornography in the West was an act of political resistance decades ago but is now simply part of our daily media consumption and complements our daily sexual activities. Outside of the West, particularly in cultures where pornography and homosexuality are taboo or officially forbidden, the viewing of explicit material is political because it undermines authority. I also think that certain films can carry political connotations or be overtly political in their intentions – I made this argument in my piece – and that consuming these films *can* be political by way of supporting companies that produce those works financially and contributing to the demand for further representations. Representation and reception, though, are not equivalent: political representations need not be consumed politically, and can even be entirely divorced from their context, such as when a video or portion of a video is miscategorised on a tube site.

**Simon Rosser**

The research on heterosexual and general population studies indicates viewing SEM has many functional benefits, including releasing sexual tension, improved mood, better sleep, improved sexual confidence, improved sexual communication, less sexually specific and general anxiety, and less depression. SEM likely plays an important role in maintaining interest in sex as we age, and can be a valuable outlet for couples whose sexual desires are discrepant. In addition to the sexual, emotional and mental benefits, men who orgasm regularly (including from SEM) may also derive some physical health benefits, notably perhaps even decreased risk for prostate cancer. (But this is less established). Curiously, at least one study has shown that SEM consumption (with accompanying masturbation) improves math ability in adolescent males (but I’m not sure this has been replicated). In our study of MSM, we see many of these same benefits that heterosexuals report in MSM, that may be summarised as it’s fun, relaxing and a great stress reliever. MSM overwhelmingly report benefits from SEM use with very minor negative effects. In addition, gay SEM plays a critical role in affirming sexual orientation among those questioning their sexuality, in re-affirming sexuality and orientation across the life-span, and in educating MSM about the physics of gay sex.
While censorship of gay pornography was used historically to buttress a politician’s homophobia and conservative credibility, I don’t recall gay male SEM being used to advance politics (yet).

**CJ Bishop**

Although overly simplistic (but for the sake of space), I feel that viewing gay porn can be described as serving three main functions: (i) fantasy; (ii) pedagogic; and (iii) political.

Most consumers use gay porn during masturbation or maybe during sexual encounters. It would seem that how gay porn fuels one’s fantasies is dependent on the consumer. For example, maybe someone wants to ‘replace’ one of the performers being depicted and he takes on that role in his mind (and hand). Or, maybe, someone enjoys the voyeuristic aspect of watching others have sex. There are numerous possibilities.

Gay porn also serves a pedagogic function. Many men have described how gay porn was their introduction to ‘gay sex’ as most (if not all) schools do not provide sexual minority sex education. But gay porn can also provide the mechanics of many novel sexual acts (e.g. anal sex, blowjob techniques, etc.). The argument could be made that gay porn serving a pedagogic function is becoming anachronistic given society’s presumed increased tolerance; however, this is with regard to identity and not sexual practices. Thus, it seems unlikely that ‘alternative’ sex-ed programmes will be offered anytime soon. Others may argue that there are non-pornographic websites that deal with the topic of same-sex sexuality. However, I believe that depictions of gay sex would be more salient to the questions gay teens may have and also more fun.

Finally, some argue that because gay porn depicts gay sex, it destabilises tenets of hegemonic masculinity by providing an alternative to ‘typical’ male gender roles. Similarly, it also provides gay men with a venue in which homonegativity is non-existent because only sexual minority men are being depicted and, as such, within that ‘alternate universe’, gay sexuality is the only form of sexual expression that exists.

**Elly-Jean Nielsen**

The idea that viewing pornography might serve a political function is certainly overlooked. Since pornography, compared with other genres of film, has a decisive purpose – that is, a stimulus used for sexual arousal and masturbation – other functions are eclipsed. As pornography becomes increasingly widespread and diverse so, too, will the purposes for engaging in it. Thus, I predict that pornography will no longer serve the unitary, utilitarian purpose of masturbation and will instead grow into a medium capable of fulfilling other functions, such as political ones. As an aside, I feel qualitative work would be keenly appropriate to help decipher these other crucial, likely intertwined functions for viewing pornography. The implications of such a study could be quite impactful and serve to debunk existing stereotypes about pornography being low-grade material. Who would like to embark on this research study with me?

**Question 6**

Dean (2009) notes the cum shot never lies: since it cannot be faked, it reveals a dimension of truth. Do you think this is one of the reasons why the ‘money shot’ is so important to
pornography – gay or straight? What other reasons can you provide to account for the importance of ejaculate in contemporary pornography?

Todd Morrison

Dean is mistaken: cum shots DO lie. If a performer can’t ejaculate, another performer may furnish the money shot. Sometimes hand cream will be used to simulate ejaculate. Dean’s point is akin to saying the female orgasm never lies. Uh, I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but...

I also question whether the cum shot is as important as many contend. First, do all viewers necessarily watch the cum shot or do they, ahem, ‘finish’ prior to that seminal scene? Second, when they see a performer cum, do viewers necessarily regard it as erotic? I don’t. Instead, my inner Molly Maid rises to the surface: Where are the tissues? Time to wipe up that face, stomach or sheets, pronto!

Mark Kiss

If a cum shot doesn’t lie, a cream pie must be a sworn affidavit. Popular gay porn websites such as ‘Sean Cody’, ‘ChaosMen’ and ‘Corbin Fisher’ have recently begun to incorporate lengthy, lingering shots of cream pies in their sex scenes. A typical clip usually consists of an eager bottom coaxing the top to ‘just cum in me’ when he senses the top is near climax; as if to suggest the act is completely spontaneous. Then, the bottom will forcibly push the cum out of his ass to provide tangible proof of the top’s pleasure in the act. The top drones generic verbal approval while playing with the resulting ‘proof’ with his cock and finger. Merely a decade ago, a scene that included a sex act akin to the aforementioned would have been considered on the very far end of extreme pornography. Here we are, in the 2010s and anal cream pies are frequently featured on websites that are generally considered ‘vanilla’ gay porn.

With heteronormative ideals being projected onto gay men in mainstream media, such as a 2.5 child, suburban, white picket household, the antiquated image of gay men in ass-less chaps frequenting leather bars have been relegated to a fetish subculture within gay culture. Therefore, the act of the top cumming into the bottom during anal penetration can be viewed as the ultimate heterosexual imitation; a hard coded biological urge for a man to – excuse the expression – ‘plant his seed’. A cream pie may be as authentic as studio pornography can get. The viewer is privy to a passionate encounter where the top doesn’t have time to pull out and put on a show for the camera or viewers. The reality fades when the bottom has to give an awkward – sometimes nauseating – ‘push’ in order to provide proof that allows the viewer to authenticate the sex as ‘real’. It is important that the top didn’t fake it, because the viewer does not fake his reaction to the scene while he masturbates and eventually climaxes. No one likes the feeling of being tricked into cumming.

Benjamin Scuglia

As a filmmaker, I have had a hand (no pun intended) in faking many onscreen money shots. Film is fantasy; smoke and mirrors. Erections are often chemically enhanced and the money shots may be simulated through editing and other clever camera tricks. Otherwise, the ejaculation is important because for most men – gay and straight – that’s when sex ‘ends’. Obviously, there is a lot more to sex than just the final
ejaculation. But filmmaking demands certain visual shortcuts and the money shot is ideal for that purpose.

_Evangelos Tziallas_

Because the cum shot is such a visual spectacle and also contains an element of surprise, one cannot help but want to bear witness to its release. No cum shot is alike: will it dribble, land in someone’s eye, or go over one’s head? Will there be a little or a lot? Will it be clear and runny or thick and white? The reason why the cum shot is associated with truth, even though it can be faked, is because the characteristics of a cum shot are supposed to reveal one’s interior feelings and the intensities of a particular sexual encounter, even though the two aren’t necessarily contingent. Although porn fetishises semen flying out of an erection, most men do not, in fact, ‘shoot’ semen, and even though the amount of semen unloaded may indicate a particularly good session, it may simply indicate a lengthier interval since one’s last ejaculation.

_Simon Rosser_

The simplest answer why ‘cum shots’ are important to pornography is because it is exciting and interesting to watch men cum. Because ejaculation is normally a private behaviour, there may be also something taboo about it. And since most of us, when we ejaculate, intensely enjoy the experience, we strongly equate enjoyment with ejaculation. However, I would dispute Dean’s observation on historical grounds. During WWII, in a series of unethical experiments, homosexual men were forced to have sex with women (and showed they could perform under horrendous conditions); many heterosexual porn actors work in gay SEM films and are able to ejaculate with men; and in situations of abuse and rape, case reports show some male victims get erections and ejaculate. While it is common, convenient, and in most cases reasonable to equate ejaculation with enjoyment, mechanistically it can be just the result of physiologic stimulation and autonomic response.

_CJ Bishop_

I somewhat disagree with Dean that the cum shot never lies. There have been articles written by those in the business who recount the use of ‘stunt cocks’ on set when a performer is unable to become aroused or cannot cum. Someone with a similar looking penis may serve as a stand in for the cum shot so that the scene can be completed. While I have no idea how often something like this would take place, I feel that, in these instances, since a performer is not actually cumming it problematises this statement. I think the ‘money shot’ is so important because it provides a ‘big finish’ and it provides a point of association for the male consumer. I wouldn’t be shocked to learn that many consumers try to time their orgasm with that of a performer on screen as a way of sharing in his pleasure and possibly reinforcing the fantasy that may be centred on one of the performers being depicted.

_Elly-Jean Nielsen_

Ejaculation/ejaculate is a polysemic image in pornography. Thus, I find Dean’s reasoning compelling, however, I would not terminate my analysis of the money shot at one cogent
argument. A director can film ejaculation in countless ways and as such this moment can take on countless meanings. As one example, under the reins of the realist film tradition, the inclusion of ejaculate might point to efforts made to capture a phenomenon (i.e. sex) in totality – in an uncensored and honest portrayal. From such a position, the inclusion of ejaculate is more a commentary on the freedom from the encumbrances of mainstream chaste filmmaking than it is a moment of corporeal authenticity. In an orthodox realist text, the presence of ejaculate would represent just one dimension of truth among many others across the film.

Question 7
Dean (2009) comments on the ‘startling variety of non-genital practices that can be eroticized’ (p. 121). Yet, the cock retains its primacy in gay male pornography. To what extent do you find this medium phallocentric?

Todd Morrison
I assume that Dean is talking about mainstream pornography and not the niche markets that present almost anything as arousing. When I watch pornography, I want to see three things: a good body, a hot ass and a nice-looking dick. I am not interested in artistic close-ups of someone’s eyelashes or manicured fingernails. It’s porn so, of course, it is going to focus on men’s primary erogenous zone, namely their penis. Does that make it phallocentric? I don’t think so – no more than straight pornography’s emphasis on pussy makes it pussycentric.

Mark Kiss
Gay pornography cannot be ‘pornographic’ without a penis. The exposure and erotic manipulation of the penis is, in fact, a mechanism of pornography. Yes, two men, for example, rubbing one another’s bare feet suggestively is probably not suitable for all audiences, but is it necessarily pornographic without genital nudity or sex? It may be erotic to some viewers, yes. However, until one of those guys loses his pants and does something about that foot rub, it barely constitutes a sexual act. While some tops may disagree, and are only interested in seeing tight asses, by virtue, gay pornography will always be ‘phallocentric’ because the penis is the centre of male pleasure. A cock visually indicates when a man is aroused and is a necessary tool in order to display the male orgasm; gay porn simply isn’t porn without a dick.

Benjamin Scuglia
The medium is phallocentric because men are phallocentric. Men are visually oriented creatures; men typically learn to masturbate with our cock and we tend to be creatures of habit and therefore we stick with what works. We don’t learn to eroticise non-genital practices until our habits and practices have been set into a well-worn groove. Porn reflects these habits. Porn is also a visual medium; filmmaking necessitates certain visual shortcuts and a stiff cock doesn’t require much context.
Evangelos Tziallas
I think that bareback pornography has shifted a lot of the attention onto the asshole, especially with ‘reverse money shot’ challenging the penile cum shot, and onto the power bottom’s stamina and endurance (Dawson of TIM) – although the manly, aggressive power top that plows raw ass still attracts his fair share of the gaze too. I’ve also noticed that more and more representations are making use of hands and fingers, and it seems like licking feet and sucking on toes while one gets fucked or blown are now simply part of the full body experience. Regardless of these changes, gay male porn is still phallocentric: from gloryhole blowjobs and ‘straight guys’ giving facial to eager to service (gay?) men, to webcam jerk offs and our collective cock pic mania, it is crystal clear that the cock is still the true star and the rhythmic zen art of cock-sucking reigns supreme.

Simon Rosser
Gay SEM is highly phallocentric and analcentric, especially when compared with heterosexual SEM which we could describe as typically breastcentric and vaginocentric. When we show gay SEM to persons attracted to men (i.e. gay men, bisexuals and heterosexual women) they report finding the focus on the penis arousing, and conversely when we show SEM depicting women, to persons attracted to women (i.e. lesbians, bisexuals and heterosexual men) they report finding the focus on women’s bodies arousing. What has long fascinated me is the psychological processes involved in what people don’t prefer. Anecdotes from heterosexual male friends report that when they see a penis or man’s body (non-preferred stimuli) in heterosexual SEM, they either pretend it is their own or kind of mentally fuzz it out. Similarly, in our formative research, we found lots of MSM watch heterosexual SEM. Clearly, some enjoy looking at women as well (if they like female stimuli). But the men who don’t like looking at naked women but do watch heterosexual SEM report either that they visually replace the women with themselves or focus on the man and mentally ‘fuzz’ the women out. Personally, I think how humans can mentally blind ourselves to visual cues is fascinating and worthy of more study. Another area of research which, to the best of my knowledge, has never been conducted is a comparison of what tops and bottoms watch in gay SEM. It would be reasonable to hypothesise that tops like looking at asses and bottoms like looking at penises, but a usability test is needed to confirm if this is actually the case.

CJ Bishop
Gay porn is absolutely phallocentric and I think the reason is that the (hard) cock represents the most accessible source of male sexual pleasure. Dean is absolutely correct that non-genital practices can be eroticised; however, it wouldn’t necessarily be as pleasurable for either the performer or the consumer (in the sense that gay porn is typically used as a masturbatory aid). Personally, I would prefer there to be a little less emphasis on the cock in gay porn as I find that lingering close-ups tend to elide the facial expressions of performers which I enjoy as well.

Richard Silvera and Christian Grov
I think the idea that the penis is central to gay male pornography is a faulty assumption. As we discussed above, there is a variety of gay male pornography which may be more or less phallocentric.
Question 8

Mowlabocus, Harbottle, and Witzel (2013) assert that the trajectory of bareback pornography from hardcore or niche ‘kink’ in the late 1990s (i.e. the margin) to more diverse and mainstream in contemporary contexts (i.e. centre) is the most notable shift in gay male pornographic content. What do you imagine will constitute the next ‘big shift’ 20 years from now?

Benjamin Scuglia

I’m not sure the gay porn industry per se will exist in two decades. Advancements in 3D and virtual reality interfaces will allow customers to create their own highly personalised films. As well, livecam shows and Snapchat or similar technology allows porn models to interact directly with fans and make money without the middleman, so to speak, of a studio or director. Porn thrived for several decades – including magazines and theatres – because it had a captive audience, so to speak. That’s not the case anymore.

Evangelos Tziallas

I think the next major step is the fusion of flesh and machine with technology that simulates sex (sex suits; flesh-like appendages that can be connected to one’s computer; humanoid robots) and integrates our sexual activity into the streaming of our daily life. Recorded sexual activities will be defined less as porn because consuming and creating sexual representation will be routine and fully integrated into our recorded and transparent lives. If our sexual activities are fully mediated by technology and integrated into a global stream, though, regulating and controlling sex and bodies will be easier than before; with something like LA County’s Measure B speaking presciently to this potential. (Note: Measure B is an ordinance requiring producers of adult films to obtain a County public health permit, to require adult film performers to use condoms while engaged in sex acts, to provide proof of a blood-borne pathogen training course, to post permit and notices to performers, and make violations of the ordinance subject to civil fines and criminal charges.)

Simon Rosser

I like Yogi Berra’s observation that, ‘It’s tough to make predictions, especially about the future’. I think it’s reasonable to assume that SEM consumption will continue to grow as Internet access grows, that some producers will continue to push the boundaries about what is permissible, while others will continue to warn about the dangers of going too far. I doubt the next ‘big shift’ will be in content (since there is a lot of diversity already). Rather, one big shift will be in who uses and consumes SEM under what circumstances. For example, the greater availability of gay SEM has given heterosexual women unprecedented access to male-focused SEM. This, in turn, may be leading gay men and heterosexual women to demand equal access and time. On a popular cable television show depicting nudity (i.e. Game of Thrones), the latest discussion is not about whether there should be nudity, or even the frequency and the degree of nudity, but about equal depictions of male and female actors in nude scenes. The old definitions of soft- and hard-core pornography will continue to blur into irrelevance, as nudity and sex in media increases.
Clinically, the use of gay SEM by heterosexual men to clarify their attractions and overcome homophobia is an interesting idea to consider. In terms of education, for over 40 years, some medical schools have shown students a broad array of SEM to help future physicians clarify their sexual attitudes and values, to de-mystify sex, and to enable them to be better prepared to discuss the sexual issues of their patients. For over 90% of students it works really well (for the most conservative, however, it has counterproductive effects). The first medical school to convert their sexual education course into a massive open online course (MOOC) will undoubtedly be controversial but will likely represent another big shift.

CJ Bishop
Since I am only cognisant of gay porn 20 years ago by virtue of reading various books and articles dedicated to the topic, this is a very difficult question to answer. I would imagine that gay porn will continue to shift away from studio produced offerings with only the largest companies (e.g. Lucas Entertainment) surviving. DVDs will be long dead, as will the notion of physical copies of titles. Regarding the nature of the sexual practices depicted, I don’t necessarily agree with the sentiments of Mowlabocus et al. (2013). While they are correct in their linear account as to how bareback gay porn has become mainstream, they fail to take into consideration that all gay porn before the 1990s was ‘bareback’ in the sense that the notion of ‘safer sex’ for gay men didn’t really exist. As such, I would imagine that how the next 20 years will unfold is dependent upon how long HIV remains manageable. Ideally, HIV will always remain treatable using the anti-retroviral drug cocktails (if not cured), but in the event these fail due to a mutated strain as a result of the careless behaviours of some, the eroticisation of safer sex will make a comeback out of necessity. Other elements, such as the aesthetics of the performers, will likely continue to oscillate in a cyclical fashion. For example, the preference for body hair on performers seems to ebb and flow as time passes.

Elly-Jean Nielsen
I hope I do not sound like a broken record, but I see what I call the ‘indie porn flick’ as the dominant aesthetic in pornography 20 years from now. In my view, fetish fantasy scenarios involving rough trade and rugged masculinity will become passé and be exchanged for self-reflexive and highly realistic encounters. I imagine that 20 years from now, gay porn will resemble amateur content but with a high degree of artistic sophistication.

Discussion
Gay male pornography has changed considerably over a short span of time. Through the varied dialogues the contributors provided, the current trends in gay porn were both saluted and scrutinised. Despite the contributors’ varied backgrounds, similar themes emerged for a number of questions.

As predicted, the sudden popularity and rapid acceptance of once ‘extreme’ bareback sex in mainstream gay porn was one of the most relevant and controversial talking points in the discussion. The majority of contributors tacitly agreed that the bareback sex boom is the product of ‘AIDS fatigue’. That is, HIV is no longer a central concern for younger gay men, and moreover, older gay men now view HIV as a manageable disease rather than
an immediate death sentence. Furthermore, contributors suggested that studios include bareback sex because they need to compete for the attention of a shrinking audience who will actually pay for their porn.

Overall, contributors did not agree that the use of derogatory language in porn titles and dialogue (e.g. ‘pussy bred’, ‘faggot fucking’) were especially problematic. Gay men are not irreparably marked by such descriptors, and more interestingly, contributors suggested that gay men vote with their wallet, so the continued existence of these titles must serve a purpose to certain gay men. Lastly, the contributors agreed that gay porn, by nature, is phallocentric. The penis is not only an indicator of a gay man’s sexual arousal, but also a requirement for gay pornography.

The contentiousness of gay pornography was also readily apparent in the contributors’ answers. The contributors had difficulty conceptualising ‘extreme’ gay pornography, arguing that there may be issues with the term ‘extreme’ in relation to defining specific sexual acts. The assessment of content was said to be highly relative; one man’s ‘extreme’ fuck scene may be another man’s ‘vanilla’ boredom. Due to the number of ‘everyday’ men and realistic body representations that may be available on tube sites, it was questionable whether amateur content may have a liberating effect on gay men’s body concerns. The contributors were split on the proposed positive effects of amateur content. Some posited that frequently viewed amateur content did not include ‘normal’ gay bodies at all, but rather, beautiful amateur men. However, contributors did recognise that the ability to search for specific content can challenge problematic aspects of mainstream gay porn such as implicit racism or the lack of variability in body shapes or cock sizes.

The contributors’ perception of the importance of the cum shot in gay pornography varied appreciably. Many countered Dean’s (2009) notion that the cum shot cannot be faked, and argued that it is not an indicator of a particularly erotic scene. Others opined that the cum shot can indeed provide an element of sexual realism that combats the artificial aspects of the scene. Finally, others explored the context of the cum shot and how it changes according to its ‘delivery’.

Tellingly, none of the contributors shared a similar vision of the future of gay male pornography. There were suggestions of sex with computers, virtual reality sex, sex in multiplayer online video games and the merging of pornography with independent cinema. Perhaps two decades from now the seemingly immovable Internet as the go-to porn distribution tool will be as dead and buried as VHS. Undoubtedly, many questions remain and answers are called for. Will the future of pornography shape gay men’s desires or vice versa? Will condom usage make a comeback out of necessity? It is impossible to say what is in store for gay male pornography; however, what does unfold will likely be ripe for discussion.

Notes on contributors
Elly-Jean Nielsen began graduate studies in psychology at the University of Saskatchewan in 2012 in the stream of Culture, Health and Human Development. Her previous qualitative research centred on disclosures of queer identities in an academic context. Her future PhD research will focus on expressions of queer experience through art forms (e.g. film, print art, spoken word poetry).

Mark Kiss is a fourth year psychology undergraduate candidate. His research interests include human sexuality, LGBT psychology, aging, death and male body image. His research has been included in the Journal of Homosexuality, Psychology and Sexuality, and Sexuality and Culture. Previously, Mark worked extensively in the music industry in a marketing and project management capacity.
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