

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/291728849>

Identity, Resistance and Moderation in an Online Community of Zoosexuals

Article in *Sexualities* · February 2016

DOI: 10.1177/1363460715583585

CITATIONS

6

READS

1,088

2 authors:



Philip R. Kavanaugh

Pennsylvania State University

22 PUBLICATIONS 204 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)



R.J. Maratea

George Washington University

15 PUBLICATIONS 147 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:



Normative Work in an Online Frontier: Status Degradation and Cyber-Shaming [View project](#)



Killing with Prejudice: Institutionalized Racism in American Capital Punishment [View project](#)

Identity, Resistance and Moderation in an Online Community of Zoosexuals

Philip R Kavanaugh

Penn State Harrisburg, USA

RJ Maratea

New Mexico State University, USA

Sexualities

2016, Vol. 19(1/2) 3–24

© The Author(s) 2016

Reprints and permissions:

sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav

DOI: 10.1177/1363460715583585

sex.sagepub.com



Abstract

Regulation plays a key role in the construction of sexuality. Given the extent to which new forms of communication technology have had a liberating effect on the production of new discourses emanating from historically marginalized sexual communities, this study examines how zoosexuals active in an online community work to construct, assert and manage their sex-based identities, situate their sexual practices, attempt to resolve ethical dilemmas, as well as moderate and sanction dissidents for the greater civility of zoosexual discourse. We conclude by further considering the complications inherent in accomplishing these interactive tasks in a virtual space.

Keyword

zoosexuality; ecofeminism; counter-publics; discourse; virtual communities

From the late nineteenth-century, sexuality in industrial capitalist societies has been constructed as hierarchical and heteronormative, with its own inequities and processes of exclusion. In modern Western cultures, the most valued sexual type remains the historically normative form of heterosexuality based on traditional gender arrangements, marriage, and childbearing (Rubin, 1984; Seidman, 2009; Weeks, 1989). This essentialist system of sexual value continues to ensure that the further sexual behaviors deviate from the normative ideal, the more likely those practicing them will be subject to ridicule, shame, restricted social mobility, clinical intervention, or criminal sanction. As Rubin (1984: 152–153) has observed, sexual

Corresponding author:

Philip R Kavanaugh, Ph.D., School of Public Affairs, Penn State Harrisburg, 777 W. Harrisburg Pike, Middletown PA 17057, USA.

Email: prk114@psu.edu

status systems “function in much the same ways as do ideological systems of racism, ethnocentrism and religious chauvinism. They rationalize the well-being of the sexually privileged and . . . relegate vice to the underprivileged.”

While certain devalued sexual forms such as homosexuality have been contested and renegotiated with some success in recent decades (e.g., Herek, 2002; Rubin, 1984), the institutions of psychiatry, medicine and law continue to construct the experience of the modern zoosexual and define their place in the fabric of social relations (Rudy, 2012). Though much of the literature on human-animal sex frames such relations as necessarily coercive and exploitative of the nonhuman animal (e.g., Beirne, 2001), a competing paradigm challenges this monolithic depiction, acknowledging substantial variation in zoosexual practice (Dekkers, 2000; Earls and Lalumiere, 2009; Miletski, 2002; Rudy, 2012; Williams and Weinberg, 2003).

While dominant understandings of human-animal sex are predicated on familiar tropes of psychopathy and animal abuse, virtual communities provide an alternative vision. Unlike medico-legal understandings, such communities are able to better account for the complex and highly varied conditions under which human-animal sex manifests, while resisting dominant discourses that frame zoosexuals as a universally deviant caste. Fraser (1990: 67) refers to such groups as subaltern counter-publics, that function as “. . . discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs.”¹

In this article we examine how zoosexual persons interacting in virtual space cultivate a cultural discourse around their sex-related identities, articulate tactics of resistance, and sanction dissidents. The Internet provides users with a felt-anonymity, allowing for the most intimate aspects of one’s sexuality to be expressed communally without fear of stigmatization. Consequently, virtual communities have emerged as important refuges for those participating in human-animal sex to openly seek out one another for support (Durkin et al., 2006; Maratea, 2011; Williams and Weinberg, 2003). The narratives produced therein highlight issues pertaining to sexuality and identity construction in the late modern era and also provide valuable information on how stigmatized groups such as zoosexuals establish and negotiate social order.

Zoosexuals, stigma, and marginality

While the forensic and popular literature often conflates bestiality and zoophilia, or uses these terms pejoratively (e.g., Aggrawal, 2011; Animal Legal Defense Fund [ALDF], 2012), clinical and social science research acknowledges important behavioral-identity distinctions between them. Whereas bestiality is defined as sexual contact with animals for immediate sexual gratification void of emotional meaning, zoophilia constitutes a “sexual desire for, emotional attachment to, and love for animals,” often realized in the selection of an animal partner with whom

an intimate relationship is established² (Wilcox et al., 2005: 317; also see Matthews, 1994). Even those opposing human-animal sex on ethical grounds cede that zoophilia “comprises a broader category of action than the restricted notion of sexual intercourse” (Beirne, 2001: 49). Herein, we use the term *zoosexual* (see Wilcox et al., 2005) to acknowledge it as a viable sexuality without invoking the clinical and normative value judgments associated with the terms bestiality and zoophilia.

Due to the intense social stigma associated with its practice, prevalence rates for human-animal sex are unclear. Kinsey et al. (1948, 1953) reported fewer than 10% of all men and 4% of women as having engaged in the practice. Despite significant changes in sexual attitudes and behaviors in the wake of the sexual revolution of the 1960s, some estimates suggest that human-animal sex may be less prevalent today (under 5% for men, 2% for women; Hunt, 1974; also see Miletski, 2001). Though most jurisdictions prohibit sexual contact with nonhuman species under sodomy, animal cruelty, or crimes against nature statutes, a number of states in the US have recently enacted specific anti-zoosexual legislation where none previously existed. Human-animal sex is presently illegal in 37 US states, felonious in 18, with laws enacted most recently in Colorado (2007), Alaska (2010), and Florida (2011) (ALDF, 2012).

While the legal sanctions for human-animal sex are numerous and continually emerging, most forms of everyday social control are informal and non-legal, but still effective in marginalizing zoosexuals. As with other discreditable stigmas, concealment of one’s status among friends, family, and colleagues, typically results (Goffman, 1963; Rubin, 1984). Because human-animal sex is defined as an “extreme” behavior that almost universally elicits a negative social reaction (Durkin et al., 2006), “the likelihood of a subculture developing in physical space is nearly nil” (Jenkins and Thomas, 2004: 5). Zoosexuals have consequently lacked a clear mechanism for establishing social support, instead reconciling their sexuality in solitude or the company of small, intimate groups (Miletski, 2001).

Virtual community and moral order

None of this is to suggest that zoosexuals are completely secluded. The Internet has facilitated the development of online forums that have allowed for the open expression of zoosexual identities in virtual anonymity with similarly oriented others from around the world (Durkin et al., 2006; Maratea, 2011). Indeed, a number of studies have found that web forums play a significant role in demarginalizing those with stigmatized but concealable sexual identities (McKenna and Bargh, 1998; Koch and Schockman, 1998) and facilitate social networking (Durkin et al., 2006; Jenkins and Thomas, 2004). As persons become “cyber colleagues” (Adler and Adler, 2008: 50), they engage in identity work, as well as obtain validation, emotional support, and camaraderie without the risk of stigmatization present in embodied forms of communication.

This trend is particularly relevant considering the Internet's capacity to integrate large numbers of people via relatively anonymous interactions diffused across wide geographic spaces (Adler and Adler, 2008). In addition to cultivating support and camaraderie, virtual communities also facilitate mobilized responses that have real-world effects for a variety of counter-hegemonic groups, including those dedicated to LGBT rights (Nip, 2004), eating disorders (Day and Keys, 2008), anti-globalization (Clark and Themudo, 2006), corporate resistance (Carty, 2002), and white supremacy (Bowman-Grieve, 2009).

We do not suggest that contemporary zoosexual communities necessarily reflect the ideological dispositions of white supremacist or other dissident groups; but rather, that they sometimes engage in identity politics and networking in ways that mirror these others. Collectively, their "interactions develop into a discourse that structures the generation, activation, and diffusion of [counterhegemonic] ideas, objects, and practices" (Williams and Copes, 2005: 70). For there to be truly meaningful effect, however, we may presume that those with stigmatized identities must value, or feel personal investment with, their membership in the group.

Online sexual communities, however, are different cultural and organizational entities than their nonsexual counterparts. While technological advances have provided an interactive social world facilitating the production and dissemination of new sexual discourses (e.g., Langdridge and Butt, 2004), late capitalist modes of mass consumption have also "encouraged . . . a pornographication of culture, more liberal and egalitarian sexual attitudes, and an acceptance of fleeting, temporary relationships" (Brents and Hausbeck, 2007: 426). In modern Western societies, online sexual communities arguably function as "aggregations of self-interested, self-seeking individuals" (Adler and Adler, 2008: 51); cooperative, but largely utilitarian. In this vein, Newmahr (2010) has reproached much of the current research on marginalized sexual communities for drawing too heavily on analyses of web forums and chatrooms, where sex is more often fetishized and group commitment likely more tenuous. In light of her critique, we might expect developing a communal affect among many thousands of zoosexuals, in a context where the fetishization of sex is likely given primacy, to be an exceedingly complicated endeavor.

The present study

With the aforementioned considerations in mind, we examine how zoosexuals active in an online community negotiate order, cultivate a shared cultural discourse, and further reconcile questions broadly pertaining to their sex-based identities. Historically, identity has been of central concern in classic works on deviance and marginality (e.g., Goffman, 1963; Lofland, 1969), in Foucault's (1997) work on the individual experience of sexuality in the context of normative knowledge systems, and remains so in more recent studies on marginalized groups interacting in virtual space (Adler and Adler, 2008; Langdridge and Butt, 2004).

To this point we have used the term identity in a general sense. While there is no theoretical consensus on what identity is, our conceptualization derives from Schwalbe and Mason-Shrock (1996: 143), where identities are “semiotic constructs . . . created in interaction . . .” We further distinguish between personal-social and collective-public identities. Personal-social identity refers to the meanings attributed to the self by the actor, further negotiated through identity “talk” or “work” in the group context (Schwalbe and Mason-Shrock, 1996; Scott and Lyman, 1968), and so is a joint accomplishment. This view is consistent with symbolic interactionist treatments of identity as “largely a matter of signifying, labeling and defining . . . and the interpretation of others’ signifying behavior” (Schwalbe and Mason-Schrock, 1996: 115), as well as reflecting Foucault’s (2001) notion of “frank-speech” as a rhetorical tactic for ethical self-practice. We define collective-public identity as a groups shared sense of “cognitive, moral and emo-tional connection with a broader community, category, practice or institution,” (Polletta and Jasper, 2001: 284), and a concerted attempt at a coherent, public presentation of a group self (Johnston et al., 1994). We situate the production and negotiation of zoosexual discourse as an ongoing communal project aimed at reconciling internal “personal-social identities” with external “collective-public identities.”

Data and methods

Data for this article were collected in March 2013 from an interactive zoosexual Internet discussion forum referred to herein by the pseudonym *Zoo Town*, with a stated membership of approximately 1.5 million users.³ Our method may be characterized as unobtrusive direct observation, a strategy where we conducted qualitative content analysis of forum postings without engaging the participants. Unobtrusive approaches are especially advantageous when studying sensitive topics or stigmatized groups, as researchers can observe persons interacting in their natural setting without directly impacting or leading subjects in a manner that might artificially impact the data due to social desirability effects.⁴

Given the unobtrusive nature of our method, it is unclear how many of the roughly 1.5 million members actively communicate using the discussion forum, as the site also contains forums dedicated to the active trade of zoosexual media, homemade artwork, sexual fantasies, and an online shop where members can purchase full-length DVDs. The site also features a “Personal Ads and Dating” section, organized by global region (U.S. and Canada, Europe, etc.) where members may arrange in-person meetings. The decision to use *Zoo Town* was based on three factors: (1) threads were regularly created and updated, suggesting members actively participate in forum dialogue; (2) the substantial membership meant that many persons could post or respond to discussion threads at any time; and (3) the archival capacity of the forum permits the development of interaction chains over time (Williams and Copes, 2005).

The final sample was comprised of 115 randomly sampled discussion threads from a universe of approximately 19,000. Our sample contained 6,670 posts from March 2004 to March 2013.⁵ All threads were copied into a MS Word file using the print screen function for document analysis with ATLAS.ti7 qualitative software. An initial analysis of each archived thread was performed in order to create a preliminary list of frames. Then, using individual forum posts as the unit of analysis, we employed a “tracking discourse” approach, examining them “to become familiar with formats and emphases, while suggesting topics and themes that emerge or remain consistent over time” (Altheide, 1996: 70). A second round of coding was performed to collapse redundant frames. The accuracy of frames was verified by having the researchers cross-reference their coding and re-reading each post in the sample. To preserve anonymity, all names used are pseudonyms and excerpted posts have been amended for grammar and spelling so that verbatim quotations cannot be located using standard search mechanisms.⁶

Analysis

In his genealogy of sexuality, Foucault (1985) references two “ideal types” of moral systems that broadly orient our analysis.⁷ The first emphasizes a moral code; the second; ethical practices. In the first type, “the authority that enforces the code [takes] a quasi-juridical form, [wherein] the subject refers his conduct to a law, or set of laws” (Rabinow, 1997: xxvii). We address enforcement in our final section on moderation and public identity. The second system emphasizes the creation of techniques directed at the self, developed through a reflected appraisal process (e.g., Cooley, 1902) that encourage ethical practice. Here authority is self-referential, communal and often takes a quasi-therapeutic form. In Zoo Town, this manner of identity work occurs primarily through the sharing of personal stories- the experiences and thoughts that ground their identities, and reflection on other member experiences. Our observations uncovered three recurring themes that frame their narratives: sexual identity and guidance; collective esteem and resistance; and moderation-censor.

Member characteristics

Zoo Town features a dedicated section where users create and respond to polls allowing for the self-identification of certain characteristics pertaining to their sex-based identities. Several polls were used to extract the information comprising tables 1 and 2. Below each poll is a discussion thread where members elaborate on polled subjects, often at length. Per Table 1, membership appears skewed toward younger, white men, though women were very active in forum discussions.⁸ Most kept their sexuality concealed or disclosed only to select friends. Though a majority had not disclosed to their family, 6% claimed one or more of their family was zoosexual; 5% of members’ families were “accepting.”

Table 1. Member Characteristics.

Categories	Number	%
Sex/gender (N = 770)		
Male	604	78
Female	166	22
Age (N = 526)		
18-29	300	57
30-39	79	15
40-49	57	11
50 and over	90	17
Race/ethnicity (N = 195)		
White	135	70
Black	10	5
Asian	11	6
Hispanic	12	6
Native American	7	4
Bi- or multi-racial	14	7
Other	4	2
Disclosed zoosexual identity to others (N = 690)		
No	326	47
One person	153	22
Two persons	66	10
Three persons	48	7
Four or more persons	97	14
Disclosed identity to family/parents (N = 1280)		
No	1026	80
Yes – family member disclosed as zoosexual	75	6
Yes – accepted	61	5
Yes – disappointed	42	3
Yes – irate/disowned	76	6
Met zoosexual persons offline (N = 301)		
Yes	145	48
No	156	52
Met persons from Zoo Town offline (N = 233)		
Yes	80	34
No	153	66

Table 2. Zoosexual Identity and Orientation.

Categories	Number	%
Zoosexual identity (N = 438)		
Zoophile (sex to express love)	164	37
Bestialist (sex as its own end)	113	26
Zoophile/bestialist	90	21
Voyeur only	58	13
Furry only (cartoons/anime/manga)	13	3
Sexual orientation to animals (N = 1442)		
Male: zoo-bi	583	40
Male: zoo-gay	363	25
Male: zoo-straight	252	17
Female: zoo-bi	65	5
Female: zoo-gay	12	1
Female: zoo-straight	134	9
Other	33	2
Self-acceptance as zoosexual (N = 516)		
Not difficult: always accepted	140	27
Not difficult: took days	105	20
Difficult: took years	95	19
Difficult: took months/weeks	64	13
Still in the process of acceptance	112	22

Sexual identity and guidance

Table 2 shows member designations of their sexual identities, using categorical options similar to those used to orient them clinically (Aggrawal, 2011; Miletski, 2001), or discredit them (Wilcox et al., 2005; ADLF, 2012). Accordingly, many elaborated that their sexuality is more complicated than the available categories implied, and as such, not best understood within the confines of familiar orientations. Their interactive exchanges reveal a nuance in understanding sexual identities; or, at least, they tended to use mainstream conceptions of these identities only as a starting point for articulating more complicated sexualities. Thus their discourse functions to “sustain a sexual field of multiple, debinarized, fluid, ever-shifting differences” (Fraser, 1997: 24). Or, as Meeks (2001: 338) terms it, a politics of anti-normalization: “an active attempt to create a sexual lifeworld” that has little use for dualistic taxonomies. Indeed, many such exchanges indicated reluctance in self-identifying with labels such as “zoophilie” or “bestialist.”

WANDALICIOUS: Which one of these is putting the wellbeing of your pet first? Or which one is where you only have consensual sex with your animal or where you love your

animal whether they have sex with you or not? I can't even word this!!! All I know is that none of those really described the kind of Zoo I am.

CURIOUSGIRL: I don't think I fit into any of those categories as I'm neither Bestialist nor Zoophile. I'm not Zoophile because I'm not dog exclusive and still like relationships with men. I'm not Bestialist because it's more than just "sex with a dog" to me. It's about loving the dog and them being my companion as well as sex. So, I didn't vote.

While their exchanges reflect the limitations inherent in the available categories, others used these categories to discursively situate their zoosexual interests in a broader context of sexual experimentation. Such narratives illustrate their attempts to negotiate a pluralistic sexuality where zoosexual practice is framed as a benign extension of more 'vanilla' sexual preferences.

PETGUY: Zoobi here, though only experienced with female animals. Well, female animal. Less bi with humans. I'd get fucked by a guy, but I don't often feel that attracted to them. I think I'm just a bit of a man-slut.

BREATHWOLF: I'm a really bloody strange guy. I find masculine girls attractive and feminine men attractive but at the same time men don't turn me on at all. As for sexuality with animals (canines only for me), I'm completely heterosexual and currently interested in wolves and German Shepherds.

CALICO: I'm bi all around and just generally open to sex, lol. When I was younger, just discovering animals, and unsure of my sexuality I was still calling myself straight but was exclusively into male animals. Now I'd love to experience love making with a female animal mostly because I've never tried it before.

We often observed talk of incorporating zoosexual practices into one's vanilla sex life and the embrace of benign sexual variation in the context of otherwise monogamous human sexual partnerships. Their narratives align with queer theory's constructionist rendering of identity, where personal sexual preferences are a creative endeavor situated on a fluid continuum (Seidman, 2009).

In other instances, members revealed that their zoosexual interests developed in part from negative human relationships. Many such narratives anthropomorphize pets, imbuing them with ideal human characteristics— particularly their emotional capacity for honesty and love (also see Williams and Weinberg, 2003). The following narratives are illustrative:

TIGERGRAZE: I've been meaning to ask. What is it about humans that puts you off wanting to feel close to them? Personally, I find often after putting in effort to get close, and working to make something happen with humans, it all ends up wasted, as all is not what it seems at the start... Also, the fake and manufactured 'sexuality' and all their expectations, is completely un-sexy to me. I think peoples 'animal magnetism' or 'spark' has faded with too much other mental junk. I don't have the emotional space to give to a person with agendas other than love and commitment. Animals never have those issues.

LOLA55: This is something I hadn't confronted before reading what everyone's written here. But I have to face this: human men, while initially very attractive, ALWAYS turn into people who're disrespectful, lack compassion, become abusive, act out old issues, harm me physically, and never provide a sense of safety and protection. Canines, on the other hand, don't scoot away in bed as a show of displeasure; they love you unconditionally and are always glad to see you; sense when you're in emotional pain and offer comfort without question; will actively protect you from danger; and sexually, they're utterly honest, passionate and powerful enough to match even the lustiest of needs...

Here LOLA55's narrative suggests that human gender characteristics that traditionally characterize masculinity (and femininity) can be easily transposed to animal partners, though sometimes to their detriment. As companion animals are forced to "adapt...to their unusual ecological niche as social support providers,...abnormally accentuated dependency" and displays of anxiety are increasingly common in pets (Serpell, 2003: 83, 94). Anthropomorphism also enables humans to project their fantasies of reciprocated desire and love without the potential complication of an articulated response (Taylor, 2014). Such welfare considerations are never directly addressed in their discourse. However, other narratives eschewed anthropomorphic justifications altogether, and instead constructed dialogues invoking more essentialist notions of their sexuality.

ZK9: You're asking the wrong question. I get along with humans just fine. Some of my best friends are humans. I just don't see anything sexy about them. I dislike all those bad habits, but there're some humans that don't have any of them. But they still don't do anything for me sexually.

OFFROAD2005: I don't have an aversion to people due to finding them hard to manage. Personally, I wouldn't turn to animals as a substitute in this way. I do dislike those aspects of humans you mentioned, but these aren't traits they all possess. Now, I'm not entirely zoo-exclusive, as I wouldn't pass up the opportunity for a human relationship. The problem is I simply don't have the same emotional-physical attraction to humans as I do animals. So for me, a human partner would have to play second to my animal partner and I couldn't ask this.

These extracts illustrate the complexities of establishing a shared sexual identity in the community, while also broadly reflecting long-standing academic debates regarding essentialist and constructionist positions on the naturalness of sexual desire (e.g., Langdridge and Butt, 2004).

In addition to discussions of identity labels and the particularities of desire, member discussions emphasized issues pertaining to sex acts and best practices. In this regard, members often seek practical guidance concerning the appropriateness of various sexual behaviors or circumstances. Such discussions most commonly develop when less experienced members' questions broach moral issues, and elicit advice from established community members.

PIERCE58: I was wondering if anybody out there knew of any ideas that I could try to get my year old male lab interested in sex.

GIDDYUP: At one year he's capable of having sex. But if he's interested he will do it on his own. So don't try to force the issue.

SHORTFATPOODLE: One may be a little young, and I agree that it is important to NEVER force anything.

The following exchange is further illustrative:

ZOOGUY6789: I just had a very exciting experience. My friend brought a dog over, a lovely little Bulldog male he's minding for a friend. He's a little pup, got him about 9 months ago so I'd say he's around a year old or maybe less ... In a very rushed 4 minutes, I got to fondle his balls, lick them twice and masturbate him a bit I definitely have no intention of ever doing what the dog didn't want to. That goes without saying.

WINDSONG: It's very impolite to try anything with someone else's animals without permission. Also, if you don't know the animal, you can't truly be certain it's a willing participant. They may get hurt, or may hurt you, and then you have a lawsuit on your hands in addition to criminal charges. I'd suggest working to develop the proper knowledge and respect for the animals and their humans. This thread is a good place to start.

In his late work on ethics and the self, Foucault (1997) aims to discover how persons freely make themselves into moral subjects of their own conduct through ascetic practices of self-fashioning, developed in relation with others. In this regard he stresses: "the care of the self also implies a relationship with the other insofar as proper care of the self requires listening to the lessons of a master. One needs a guide, a counselor, a friend, someone who will be truthful with you ... To take care of the self is to equip oneself with these truths." (Foucault, 1997: 284–287).

Here narrative guidance in the form of truth-telling functions to delimit the kind of sexual activity that is acceptable within the community. However, the ethical problems uncovered in their dialogue do not simply reveal individual defects that one is prompted to address for their own good. Rather, they reveal broader moral problems that one is prompted to reflect on and resolve so they may improve in the view of others.

Another recurring theme in their discourse pertains to ethical notions of consent, regarding the animal's ability as an agent to communicate desire, to give or deny consent, and how humans can key in on these signals (Grebowicz, 2010). Although many of their narratives constitute self-stories, they are offered for others in the community to engage in reflection. The following are illustrative:

PONYBOY: When I walk in the barn and my mare nips my thigh and then breaks down and squats with her tail lifted over her back. I know what she wants. And if I don't give it to her she tries and back me into the wall. So it's kinda obvious when she initiates ...

SARAHMICHELLE: My lover, Hector (a mastiff), is well trained. The signal that I'm interested is being inside the house, alone with him, and my getting naked in front of him. When Hector wants me, he brings the special socks I made for his forelegs to keep him from scratching me. He's very good about only doing so when we are alone. For that reason I try to be very good about making him happy when he asks...

The narratives shared here- pertaining to the creation of sex routines- provide members with behavioral templates where the tactics required to become an ethically principled subject are available to adopt, reflect on, or modify. They also employ a discourse that grants animals both agency and fulfillment. As Haraway's (2008: 79) notion of "encounter value" suggests, "all mortal beings... live in and through the use of one another's bodies" and thus are reciprocally means and ends to one another. Zoosexual discourse on encounters and practice similarly suggest that bodies and selves are perpetually under deconstruction and constituted through the act of relating. Or, in Rudy's (2012: 610) words: "as a result of our relationships, interpolations occur..."

Yet as Foucault notes, "ethics is the considered form that freedom takes when it is informed by reflection" (1997: 284). In this regard, Taylor (2014) criticizes zoosexual discourse as providing an arrogant, self-serving view of sexual consent and relational (re)constitution. She argues that as with the case of coercion among sexual slaves, these animals have been transformed not only into docile bodies, but into beings that are emotionally and psychologically bound to the humans who manipulate them. Such critical reflections on the anthropocentric nature of zoosexual practices are wholly absent from their narratives.

Collective esteem and resistance

Extending from- and very much related to- identity work pertaining to issues of desire and practice, are forum narratives emphasizing *collective esteem and resistance*. Narratives of esteem develop into discourses of resistance when members disparage dominant perceptions of zoosexuality as pathological by promoting a shared sense of one-ness in the face of oppression. This was accomplished in two ways. First, member narratives clearly distinguish zoosexual practice from legally sanctioned forms of animal abuse. The following excerpts are illustrative:

CUTDEAD: It's a shame because zoophilia rarely makes the news and when it does, it's never positive. It's outrageous that sex with animals is according to many 'wrong, sick, disgusting and abusive to animals' in world that sells Kentucky Fried Chicken by the bucket. Now that's wrong, sick, disgusting and abusive to animals -yet perfectly legal. The double standard is so obvious but people are too blind to see.

LAKOTA: I can't help but feel people lack common sense. You can open up a kill shelter to kill animals on a massive scale because nobody wants them...but when somebody does want them, and loves them 'very much', its illegal? True lack of understanding.

Efforts at building collective esteem reinforce the sentiment that human-animal sex is not morally problematic, but rather, an ethically justifiable practice that persons must conceal due to existing social definitions. However, they invoke these hypocrisies chiefly to defend zoosexual practice rather than to problematize other forms of animal exploitation (Taylor, 2014). By situating zoosexuality as resolutely against animal abuse, they articulate a discourse of resistance while also overlooking its coincidence with the exploitative practices of factory farming, genetic modification, forced breeding, poaching, trophy hunting, and pet fashion/fetishization that prominently characterize human-animal relationships in the global era of neoliberalism and its emphasis on consumption.

Second, members distance themselves from other marginalized sexual castes, such as pedophiles, while cultivating a discourse calling for individual and collective action that would lead to increased acceptance of zoosexuals.

HUSKYLOVE: I will be damned before I allow our community or our furry companions whom I feel and hope we all love to be killed/jailed because we loved them without us fighting for them. I firmly oppose people who hurt animals; I firmly oppose pedophilia and rape, and I LOATHE being compared to those people because I was born loving another species. We MUST remain strong and we must garner support where we can. I myself took the hardest step of my life. I told my younger sister that I am a zoophile and it is that kind of trust that will determine our future.

ALEXANDER376: People need to stop being ignorant and realize that most sexual interactions between humans and animals aren't abusive. The anti-zoosexual propaganda (i.e. that it's 'animal abuse') needs to be attacked by lots of pro-zoo information and the pro-zoo philosophy. More zoosexuals need to put that information into the public realm, in an attempt to normalize zoosexuality, make it less taboo, legalize it, and make it acceptable.

By engaging in comparisons to distance themselves from persons engaged in devalued sexual practices, members articulate a politics of exclusion against sexual others (Meeks, 2001; Travers, 2000). Many narratives indeed demand that zoosexuals be recognized as having the same rights and privileges as heterosexuals; that is, to identify as “normal” rather than with the deviant or queer. Scholars have long noted how persons employ social comparisons to develop a positive sense of self (Rosenberg and Kaplan, 1982), and such boundary work was a recurring theme in their discussions. The excerpted narratives also promote an ethic of resistance predicated on sharing stories with embodied significant others, underscoring the forum’s function as a digital counter-public for the dissemination of zoosexual culture.

Other narratives, however, strongly contest the wisdom of resistance, emphasizing the practical complications associated with “coming out.” The following post reflects this sentiment:

MEATFLAVOUR: I sincerely hope that one day genuine zoophiles can turn the tide. However, bearing in the mind the current attitudes in society this won't be easy. Change starts with one person speaking out. But who's willing to risk their freedom, their life,

jobs, and relationships (either the authorities re-home your lover to 'free' him/her of abuse, or euthanize him/her) to speak out? I don't care what might happen to me, but the thought that the love of my life will be taken from me or even murdered is too much to bear.

While contesting the practicalities of an oppositional identity and questioning the quasi-activist discourse articulated by others, Meatflavour's post encourages members to develop a realistic grasp of the forms of social control that constrain them, further reminding them they are members of a subject population. By articulating such concerns, here the dialogue re-focuses to emphasize the practical wisdom of withdrawal; or at least, in resisting socio-legal constraints cautiously. While Fraser (1990: 68) argues that counter-publics "function as spaces of withdrawal and regroupment...and training grounds for agitational activities..." Meeks (2001) emphasizes the apolitical nature of withdrawal, and the self-fashioning it enables. However, as Meatflavour's post suggests, motives for withdrawal among zoosexuals are often borne as much out of fear as for the purpose of creating new sexual lifeworlds.

Moderation and public identity

While Internet technology has created spaces for the textual circulation of discourse contributing to the formation of a nascent zoosexual counter-public, in the Zoo Town case, the "emancipatory potential" Fraser (1990: 68) ascribes to counter-publics is tempered by the fact that this space is not wholly theirs to control. Rather, dependence on an external platform leaves members vulnerable to surveillance from site administrators whose concerns center as much on the avoidance of legal recourse as enabling zoosexual communiqué. In an attempt to responsibly manage this space, Zoo Town is regulated by a small group of *moderators*, who function as community leaders responsible for defining and maintaining boundaries. They work to restrict zoosexual discourse according to their vision of what it ought to be.

Upon entering the site users are directed to 90 rules specifying unacceptable conduct. Sanctions range from posting blocks and suspensions to permanent banning of one's ISP address. While many of the specified rules pertain to interactions with other members, they also articulate a sexual ethic pertaining to the welfare and treatment of animal partners. For example, regulations specify that any member posting images of, or making reference to, sex with underage humans or animals faces permanent expulsion: "The mention of any activity approaching sex [with an animal] before puberty can get you banned... don't even go there."⁹

Although the rules are clearly specified for members upon registering with the site, human moderators subjectively judge whether a particular narrative or community member is problematic. Given the large number of deleted user accounts observed, it is clear that moderators take seriously their charge to guard the health and ethical code of the community. By censoring troubling discourse and

sanctioning those constructing it, moderators reinforce symbolic boundaries that reflect an emerging clinical distinction between benign and pathological zoosexuals (Aggrawal, 2011). In this regard, valued and devalued sexual identities are fixed, and based on an insider-outsider dynamic that cannot be challenged without risk of sanction (Langdridge and Butt, 2004).

Cultivating a shared set of zoosexual ethics in an online community of over one million registered users is an onerous burden. While we did observe moderators participating in forum dialogue with rank-and-file members, certain symbols distanced them from other members. For example, the title *Mod* or *Supermod*, is denoted in a text box under their Username-Avatar, and the bulk of their interactions focus on policing the forum for problematic narratives. The authority to terminate or forcibly redirect discussions, or delete user accounts, provided moderators with their greatest power. The following exchange is illustrative:

EK5320: I'm new here and while this place seems friendly andwelcoming, one thing stands out. I've noticed what appears to be a rash of one-time active members who contributed that are now banned. I've followed a few and saw absolutely nothing in their posts that would warrant a ban. So what's with the bannings? I haven't been here long...[but] that's irrelevant to me...It's a huge turn-off.

EAST TEXAS (Supermod): Let me just say that we don't care what the fuck is irrelevant to you-had you read the rules you'd know that we delete accounts for MANY different violations- but obviously you didn't- you'd have also known that making posts complaining about rules is breaking them- we don't give a fuck if you don't post anymore - and we don't give a fuck if you like the rules or not- but you WILL follow the rules or we'll ban you like the others- if we have to we'll ban the entire ISP in your area- so shut the fuck up- read the rules- follow them.

The power to edit content as well as subjectively apply community rules— which was most evident when members committing similar violations were treated differently— occasionally made those who moderated the forum with a more punitive interaction style the focal point of collective scorn and restricted their ability to interact as colleagues with other members.

SKEETER (Mod): I have no idea what I'd do without this place. It owns space in my heart. That's the central message here - I need you to recognize this place means as much to me as it does to you - that I'm no different than you... I am a mod- but it doesn't make me any more important—it's only the way that I contribute to the forum... Whether you like me personally or not I've stepped up to the plate [and] willingly relinquished a comfortable place in this community to bridge those gaps...I ask you to recognize that I have been here for all of you at a terrible personal cos...In return I ask for your trust. Can you please give me that much?

Skeeter's narrative suggests moderator status in the community, while privileged, is also tenuous, as their oft-abrasive style of interaction as forum police occasionally

compromised their ability to engage with rank-and-file members as equals. As Goffman (1961: 89) observed regarding role distance and interaction among marginalized persons more generally, they often become “locked into a position and coerced into living up to the promises and sacrifices built into it.”

The highly visible (and occasionally contested) moderation of comments and censoring of members raises two other concerns. First, moderators appear to spend a considerable amount of time on ethical gatekeeping. The practice of banning those presenting dissident narratives likely subverts discussion of difficult and highly relevant issues for zoosexuals requiring guidance and feedback. As Hughey and Daniels (2013) have argued, moderation is necessarily a reactionary tactic. Rather than cultivating an environment that engages with dissidence in meaningful ways, moderators attempt to erase the problem and frame the offenders as Others, often making visible examples of them.

Second, although detailed depictions of zoosexual experiences (and fantasies) were prominent in their communiqué, as well as discussions reflecting on identity in the context of desire and practice, the discourses presented in Zoo Town are, to some extent, sanitized. Indeed, the prominent number of banned one-time members suggests a rather matter-of-fact practice of censoring and expulsion. While visible and sometimes heavy-handed moderation tactics are certainly beneficial for the greater civility of zoosexual discourse, it also constructs an idealized image of the community that expunges more complicated and ethically troubling narratives that might otherwise emerge. In broader terms, and as Foucault (1981) has noted, all discourses, especially those that counter dominant institutionalized ones, are plagued by the possibility of descent into irrationality. As such, “prohibitions, barriers, thresholds and limits [are] set up in order to master, at least partly, the great proliferation of discourse in order to remove from its richness its most dangerous part . . .” (Foucault, 1981: 66). The viability of a coherent, nonclinical zoosexual discourse, then, appears to be largely contingent on its rational containment.

Conclusion

Our analysis began by referencing Foucault’s (1985) conceptualization of two ideal types of moral systems: one based on authority, the other on ethical self-practice. Foucault also emphasized that, in reality these forms are not wholly distinct, and in fact may be co-constituted. This contrast is nevertheless instructive, and the tension between these two types is particularly relevant in light of the neoliberal globalization of the sex industry and the liberalization of sexual culture more broadly (Brents and Sanders, 2010), and which is especially apparent in digital contexts such as Zoo Town. In our view, one of the chief complications besetting zoosexuals attempting to negotiate their sexuality pertains not simply to their struggle to obtain basic rights and legal protections (a subject that many forum members eschew altogether), but rather to impoverished or ethically troubling sexual relationships between humans and their nonhuman animal “partners.” Both systems work in concert to resolve this complication, though for different reasons, and with different ends.

The authoritative moral system is constructed by Zoo Town administrators, and enforced by moderators recruited from the community itself, and its aims are two-fold: 1) a clearly stated need to avoid legal recourse, and to ensure the site is not shut down by law enforcement, and 2) a less apparent, though tacitly articulated need to ensure continued traffic to the site to bolster membership, and by extension, revenue. These aims are utilitarian, and often contrast with those of rank-and-file forum members, most of who are seeking a venue in which they can openly discuss their experiences and dilemmas without fear of stigma or sanction.

Moderators have a very visible presence in forum discourse, and we may presume they are beholden to site administrators to ensure the site remains both legally viable and heavily trafficked. Thus they work to assimilate what is proper for members to know, expunge that which is not, and to expel those they perceive as hostile to advancing a zoosexual discourse that is both rational and celebratory. Moral order is thus enforced from the top down, both to avoid legal recourse as well as encourage continued market activity. While morality emerges from a neo-liberal and utilitarian logic on the one hand, on the other, many rank-and-file members take their role as purveyors of ethical practice seriously, and work semi-autonomously to promote a communal ethos and properly socialize members according to an ethic of animal welfare that encourages critical self-reflection (though their narratives sometimes obscure broader complications, are romanticized, or are otherwise uncritical), and emerges from the bottom up.

Perhaps contradictorily then, the community is also where some of the more iconoclastic and transgressive representations of zoosexuality are presented and consumed. Such representations can be evidenced not only in their narratives, but also in Zoo Town's extensive archive of pornographic film, artwork and stories. While the Internet's role in mobilizing social movements and offering support to various dissident groups has been examined before, its growing role in counter-hegemonic identity formation, resistance and politics becomes potentially compromised when situated in a heavily eroticized context.

Future research may thus wish to further consider the tensions inherent in cultivating a communal ethos in a digital space featuring extensive access to erotic material, and in the context of a global neoliberal culture where sex is increasingly commodified. Indeed, a key point emerging from our observations is that the participatory roles of forum members are varied, occasionally contentious, and that those controlling the forum position its commercial viability over its therapeutic function. As Jacobs (2004: 76) has noted, "in capitalist societies, full membership of the public has traditionally been tied to the ability to partake in commodity exchange." Though Zoo Town works to foster a "community friendly commodity environment" (Jacobs, 2004: 77), our observations also suggest that status in the community is partially based on the ability to purchase commodities such as user-created erotic artwork, stories, and video content.

Although Zoo Town provides a space for similarly marginalized persons to develop solidarity and shore up a burgeoning collective-public identity, even a casual perusal of forum threads indicates that human-animal sex is rather clearly

fetishized. It is difficult to speculate on the degree to which lurid depictions and images of zoosexual experiences and fantasies; and the drive to access a cornucopia of erotic content; may impede the nurturance of sexual communities in cyberspace. As we observed, dedicated forum members volunteered for the oft-alienating task of policing the community in part to protect against the possibility of legal recourse, but also to discourage users from treating the site solely as a masterbatorium.

It is also unclear if Zoo Town's viability as counter-hegemonic group would be stronger were forum discourse not as heavily moderated by insiders, or if this kind of regulation instead facilitates more productive identity work among forum members- that is, still highlighting a multiplicity of oppositional identities while also emphasizing the need for ethical practice. What is clear, however, is that without the Internet as a conduit to a sexual culture that diffuses through expansion of weak ties, zoosexual persons would have tremendous difficulty accessing such a rich and varied collection of narratives. Zoo Town, however, is far from a *laissez-faire* sexual Disneyland. Rather it (re)produces subjects in a Foucaultian context of surveillance and regulation. Indeed, member talk of sexual experiences attempts to serve as an ethical heuristic, as stories are shared communally, reflected upon, questioned, and expunged in an ongoing self-ing project that curtails identities while also allowing for their creation.

Notes

1. Nonhuman animals are, of course, set apart from these discourses. Indeed, given the context of their domestication, the animals' relationship to the human zoosexual community is one of inequality and ownership (Taylor, 2014). Zoosexual discourse then, while often attempting to subvert or undermine the human-animal binary, simultaneously exemplifies it.
2. Although less pejorative than the term bestiality, zoophilia is also a clinical term, itself the product of a powerful discourse. While the American Psychiatric Association (2000: 405) states "zoophilia is virtually never a clinically significant problem by itself," its long-standing status as a paraphilia places it within the realm of mental disorder. A similar judgment characterizes the forensic literature, where "bestiality" or "zoosexual interest" is said to typify the lives of violent criminals (Aggrawal, 2011; Wilcox et al., 2005).
3. Sites were excluded if they were run or monitored by experts, were inactive, had low membership, or required registration with an administrator.
4. As Atkinson and DePalma (2008: 184) note, drawing discourses from "a forum where participants interact with each other rather than with us would yield much richer data than a survey or interviews, as meanings could be socially constructed through member interactions, rather than limited to what we might think to ask." Furthermore, given that Zoo Town members routinely revealed personal aspects of their sexual selves, we were also concerned about establishing a new power relation between researchers and "subjects." Not fully participating in Zoo Town as community members "while demanding access to them [would have] effectively render[ed] the dialogue more of an interrogation" by interjecting ourselves into the meaning-making process (Atkinson and DePalma, 2008: 188).

5. These data were collected solely from a publicly accessible Internet forum that did not require users to complete an online registration, demand a password to enter the site, or obtain clearance from an administrator to access the discussion forum. While it is reasonable for members of restricted access sites to believe their conversations are confidential, communicants on open access discussion forums have no reasonable expectation of privacy, as these forums are freely accessible to the public (see Hurley et al., 2007). Despite this, we took several measures to preserve anonymity, described in the body of the article.
6. While Zoo Town membership is global in scope, forum rules require members to post in English. Thus we may presume that persons from English-speaking nations are most active in forum discourse. To further contextualize our work geographically we tallied the total number of posts in each region of the Personal Ads/Dating section, of which there were four: 1) US-Canada, 2) Europe, 3) Asia-Australia-Pacific, and 4) Rest of the world. Dividing the posts for each region by the total for all four regions indicated 66% of posts were from members in the US-Canada (with 93% of those posts from US-based members), 24% Europe (with 31% of those from UK-based members), 8% Asia-Australia-Pacific (with 95% of those from Australian members), and 1% in the rest of the world.
7. We draw on Foucault to situate the analysis for two reasons. First, we believe issues of ethics, welfare, and agency are among the most significant to raise in the problematic of zoosexuality. Second, Foucault's final interviews and essays, where he elaborates most clearly on ethics, only became widely available beginning in the late 1990s (and only widely interpreted and debated in the years following). These later works thus remain useful in guiding empirical research where issues of ethical practice are of interest.
8. As Table 1 suggests, Zoo Town's membership appears overwhelmingly white and male. While theorizing the homogeneity of their demographics is beyond our focus, Taylor (2014) offers a promising start in this regard, drawing on notions of white male privilege to frame her critique of zoosexual practice.
9. In addition to discouraging posting pedophilic or coercive content, forum rules also restrict members from posting any content 'depicting harm to people or animals, i.e.: blood, death, vomit, etc.; anything depicting rape or involuntary bondage,' or "extreme fetishes such as with scat."
- * We wish to thank Nicole Lloyd and the anonymous reviewers at Sexualities for their thoughtful readings and helpful comments on earlier drafts of this article. We also wish to acknowledge Agnes Skamballis at Sexualities for her generous assistance during the review process. This article is dedicated to Poyo. RIP.

References

- Adler PA and Adler P (2008) The cyber worlds of self-injurers: Deviant communities, relationships, and selves. *Symbolic Interaction* 31(1): 35–56.
- Aggrawal A (2011) A new classification of zoophilia. *Journal of Forensic and Legal Medicine* 18(2): 73–78.
- Altheide DL (1996) *Qualitative Media Analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- American Psychological Association (2000) *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (4th ed., text rev.). Washington DC: American Psychological Association.

- Animal Legal Defense Fund (2012) *The crime of bestiality/zoophilia: Sexual assault of an animal*. [online] Available at: <http://www.aldf.org/article.php?id=1098> (Accessed 9 March 2013).
- Atkinson E and DePalma R (2008) Dangerous spaces: Constructing and contesting sexual identities in an online discussion forum. *Gender and Education* 20(2): 183–194.
- Beirne P (2001) Peter Singer's "Heavy Petting" and the politics of animal sexual assault. *Critical Criminology* 10(1): 43–55.
- Bowman-Grieve L (2009) Exploring "Stormfront": A virtual community of the radical right. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32(11): 989–1007.
- Brents BG and Hausbeck K (2007) Marketing sex: US legal brothels and late capitalist consumption. *Sexualities* 10(4): 425–439.
- Brents BG and Sanders T (2010) Mainstreaming the sex industry: Economic inclusion and social ambivalence. *Journal of Law and Society* 37(1): 40–60.
- Carty V (2002) Technology and counter-hegemonic movements: The case of Nike Corporation. *Social Movement Studies* 1(2): 129–146.
- Clark JD and Themudo NS (2006) Linking the web and the street: Internet-based "dot-causes" and the "anti-globalization" movement. *World Development* 34(1): 50–74.
- Cooley CH (1902) *Human Nature and the Social Order*. New York: Scribner's.
- Day K and Keys T (2008) Starving in cyberspace: A discourse analysis of pro-eating-disorder websites. *Journal of Gender Studies* 17(1): 1–15.
- Dekkers M (2000) *Dearest Pet*. New York: Verso.
- Durkin KF, Forsyth CJ and Quinn JF (2006) Pathological Internet communities: A new research direction for sexual deviance research in a post modern era. *Sociological Spectrum* 26(6): 595–606.
- Earls CM and Lalumiere ML (2009) A case study of preferential bestiality. *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 38(4): 605–609.
- Foucault M (1981) The order of discourse. In: Young R (ed.) *Untying the Text*. London: Routledge, pp. 17–41.
- Foucault M (1985) *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 2. New York: Pantheon.
- Foucault M (1997) The ethics of the concern for the self as a practice of freedom. In: Rabinow P (ed.) *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, vol. 1. New York: New Press, pp. 281–301.
- Foucault M (2001) *Fearless Speech*. Pearson J (ed.) Los Angeles: Semiotext(e).
- Fraser N (1990) Rethinking the public sphere: A contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy. *Social Text* 25/26: 56–80.
- Fraser N (1997) *Justice Interruptus*. New York: Routledge.
- Goffman E (1961) *Encounters*. Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill.
- Goffman E (1963) *Stigma*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Grebowicz M (2010) When species meet: Confronting bestiality pornography. *Humanimalia* 1(2): 1–17.
- Haraway DJ (2008) *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Herek GM (2002) Gender gaps in public opinion about lesbians and gay men. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 66(1): 40–66.
- Hughey MW and Daniels J (2013) Racist comments at online news sites: A methodological dilemma for discourse analysis. *Media, Culture & Society* 35(3): 332–347.
- Hunt M (1974) *Sexual Behavior in the 1970s*. New York: Dell.
- Hurley AL, Sullivan P and McCarthy J (2007) The construction of self in online support groups for victims of domestic violence. *British Journal of Social Psychology* 46(4): 859–874.

- Jacobs K (2004) Pornography in small places and other spaces. *Cultural Studies* 18(1): 67–83.
- Jenkins RE and Thomas AR (2004) *Deviance Online: Portrayals of Bestiality on the Internet*. Oneonta, NY: Center for Social Science Research.
- Johnston H, Larana E, and Gusfield JR (1994) Identities, grievances, and new social movements. In: Larana E, Johnston H, and Gusfield JR (eds.) *New Social Movements: From Ideology to Identity*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, pp. 3–35.
- Kinsey AC, Pomeroy WB and Martin CE (1948) *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*. Philadelphia: PA: Saunders.
- Kinsey AC, Pomeroy WB, Martin CE and Gebhard PH (1953) *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*. Philadelphia: PA: Saunders.
- Koch NS and Schockman HE (1998) Democratizing Internet access in the lesbian, gay and bisexual communities. In: Ebo B (ed.) *Cyberghetto or Cybertopia?* Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Langdridge D and Butt T (2004) A hermeneutic phenomenological investigation of the construction of sadomasochistic identities. *Sexualities* 7(1): 31–53.
- Lofland J (1969) *Deviance and Identity*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Maratea RJ (2011) Screwing the pooch: Legitimizing accounts in a zoophile online community. *Deviant Behavior* 32(10): 918–943.
- Matthews M (1994) *The Horseman*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus.
- McKenna KYA and Bargh JA (1998) Coming out in the age of the Internet: Identity ‘demarginalization’ through virtual group participation. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology* 75(3): 681–694.
- Meeks C (2001) Civil society and the sexual politics of difference. *Sociological Theory* 19(3): 325–344.
- Miletski H (2001) Zoophilia– Implications for therapy. *Journal of Sex Education & Therapy* 26(2): 85–89.
- Miletski H (2002) *Understanding Bestiality and Zoophilia*. Bethesda, MD: East-West: LLC.
- Newmahr S (2010) Rethinking kink: Sadomasochism as serious leisure. *Qualitative Sociology* 33(3): 313–331.
- Nip JYM (2004) The Queer Sisters and its electronic bulletin: A study of the Internet for social movement mobilization. *Information, Communication & Society* 7(1): 23–49.
- Poletta F and Jasper JM (2001) Collective identity, social movements. *Annual Review of Sociology* 27: 283–305.
- Rabinow P (1997) Introduction: The history of systems of thought. In: Rabinow P (ed.) *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth, vol. 1*. New York: New Press, pp. xi–xlii.
- Rosenberg M and Kaplan HA (1982) *Social Psychology of the Self-Concept*. Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson.
- Rubin G (1984) Thinking sex: Notes for a radical theory of the politics of sexuality. In: Vance C (ed.) *Pleasure and Danger*. London: Routledge, pp. 143–178.
- Rudy K (2012) LGBTQ. .Z?. *Hypatia* 27(3): 601–615.
- Schwalbe ML and Mason-Schrock D (1996) Identity work as group process. *Advances in Group Processes* 13(1): 113–147.
- Scott MB and Lyman SM (1968) Accounts. *American Sociological Review* 33(1): 46–62.
- Seidman S (2009) *The Social Construction of Sexuality*, 2nd edn. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Serpell JA (2003) Anthropomorphism and anthropomorphic selection: Beyond the “cute response.”. *Society & Animals* 11(1): 83–100.

- Taylor C (2014) Sexual ethics and other animals: An ecofeminist critique of zoosex. In: *2nd Students for critical animal studies conference*, Montreal, QC, 28–30 March 2014. Montreal: McGill University.
- Travers A (2000) *Writing the Public in Cyberspace*. New York: Garland.
- Weeks J (1989) *Sex, Politics and Society*, 2nd ed. Essex, UK: Longman.
- Wilcox DT, Foss CM and Donath ML (2005) A case study of a male sex offender with zoosexual interests and behaviors. *Journal of Sexual Aggression* 11(3): 305–317.
- Williams CJ and Weinberg MS (2003) Zoophilia in men: A study of sexual interest in animals. *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 32(6): 523–535.
- Williams JP and Copes H (2005) How edge are you? Constructing authentic identities and subcultural boundaries in a straightedge Internet forum. *Symbolic Interaction* 28(1): 67–89.

Philip R Kavanaugh is an Assistant Professor in the School of Public Affairs at Penn State Harrisburg. His research interests include crime and deviance, social control, gender and sexuality, and sociological theory. His publications have appeared in *Feminist Criminology*, *Deviant Behavior*, and *The Sociological Quarterly*.

RJ Maratea is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Criminal Justice at New Mexico State University. His research interests include mass communication, social problems, deviance, and capital punishment. His publications have appeared in *Symbolic Interaction*, *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, and *Deviant Behavior*.