SEX, WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR?

A DRL READING GROUP BLUEPRINT BY EMMA HOLMES, DAVID MACDONALD, YICHI ZHANG, AND SAMUEL DANDO-MOORE

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LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE

INTRODUCTION

This blueprint is about the ethics of sex and the place of sex in our lives. We explore consent, desire, love, and responsibility. We hope it will help participants to delve deeper into well-known concepts, like consent, as well as to explore issues relating to sex they might not have considered before.

HOW TO USE THIS BLUEPRINT?

This Blueprint features one main reading per week, accompanied by some further readings. The questions refer to the main readings, but your understanding will be enriched by exploring the other sources.

We suggest you spend a session before you start reading, having some preliminary discussions. This would include:

- General content warnings for the group, which include discussions of unwanted and forced sexual interactions, personal identity where relevant for sexual consent (e.g. trauma experience, mental health, LGBT+ membership, ethnic or racial identity).
- Making sure everyone is aware of the available support at your university/school/community in case the discussion causes emotional difficulties of any sort.
- Collectively setting rules for how the discussions should go.
- Researching the university/school/community's policies about sex as well as the laws where you are.
- Discussion of meaning of morally charged terminology such as "rape", and how giving definitions might be complicated.
- Discussion of what participants already know and hope to learn from the group.

CATEGORIES

- Philosophy of Sexuality
- Feminist Philosophy
- Sexual Ethics
- Philosophy of Love
- Sexual Consent

AVAILABLE ONLINE AT:

https://diversityreadinglist.org/blueprint/sex-what-is-it-good-for/

WEEK 1. CONSENT

This week tackles a core question: what is consent? This is an important building block for most of the topics we will go on to cover and a central concept in ethical and legal discussions of sex.

ALEXANDER, LARRY, HEIDI HURD AND PETER WESTEN. CONSENT DOES NOT REQUIRE COMMUNICATION: A REPLY TO DOUGHERTY

2016, Law and Philosophy. 35: 655-660.

Difficulty: Easy

Abstract: Tom Dougherty argues that consenting, like promising, requires both an appropriate mental attitude and a communication of that attitude. Thus, just as a promise is not a promise unless it is communicated to the promisee, consent is not consent unless it is communicated to the relevant party or parties. And those like us, who believe consent is just the attitude, and that it can exist without its being communicated, are in error. Or so Dougherty argues. We, however, are unpersuaded. We believe Dougherty is right about promises, but wrong about consent. Although each of us gives a slightly different account of the attitude that constitutes consent, we all agree that consent is constituted by that attitude and need not be communicated in order to alter the morality of another's conduct.

Comment: The authors argue that consent is an attitude, rather than an act of communication. They give two examples to support this view where the communication of consent doesn't occur or goes wrong somehow, but nonetheless (they claim) it is intuitively a consensual interaction.

FURTHER MATERIALS:

JENKINS ICHIKAWA, JONATHAN. PRESUPPOSITION AND CONSENT

2020, Feminist Philosophy Quarterly. 6(4).

Difficulty: Intermediate

Abstract: I argue that "consent" language presupposes that the contemplated action is or would be at someone else's behest. When one does something for another reason—for example, when one elects independently to do something, or when one accepts an invitation to do something—it is linguistically inappropriate to describe the actor as "consenting" to it; but it is also inappropriate to describe them as "not consenting" to it. A consequence of this idea is that "consent" is poorly suited to play its canonical central role in contemporary sexual ethics. But this does not mean that nonconsensual sex can be morally permissible. Consent language, I'll suggest, carries the conventional presupposition that that which is or might be consented to is at someone else's behest. One implication will be a new kind of support for feminist critiques of consent theory in sexual ethics.

Comment: Here Ichikawa argues that the language of "consent" to sex presupposes that there is a 'requester' who asks for sex and a 'consenter' who then replies yes or no. Ichikawa argues that this reinforces sexist norms of how sex works.

HURD, HEIDI. THE MORAL MAGIC OF CONSENT

1996, Legal Theory, 2(2): 121-146.

Difficulty: Intermediate

Abstract: We regularly wield powers that, upon close scrutiny, appear remarkably magical. By sheer exercise of will, we bring into existence things that have never existed before. With but a nod, we effect the disappearance of things that have long served as barriers to the actions of others. And, by mere resolve, we generate things that pose significant obstacles to others' exercise of liberty. What is the nature of these things that we create and destroy by our mere decision to do so? The answer: the rights and obligations of others. And by what seemingly magical means do we alter these rights and obligations? By making promises and issuing or revoking consent When we make promises, we generate obligations for ourselves, and when we give consent, we create rights for others. Since the rights and obligations that are affected by means of promising and consenting largely define the boundaries of permissible action, our exercise of these seemingly magical powers can significantly affect the lives and liberties of others.

Comment: This paper is a seminal paper in defining the role of consent in philosophy of law. It investigates the "magic" quality of consent to make impermisable actions permissable. It is worth reading as it very well describes the standard view of consent and how consent makes sex morally permissable.

- 1. What is "wanting" to have sex (in the sense that is relevant for consent)? Is it a desire, impulse, decision, or something else?
- 2. Is it possible to consent to sex while communicating to your partner that you don't consent?
- 3. Is it possible to lie about whether you consent (or don't consent) to sex?
- 4. If consent is an attitude, do we always know whether we consent to sex?
- 5. Is communication necessary for consent? Does the fact that Jane and Jim don't talk at all about whether Jim can come to the party undermine their view that he comes to the party with Jane's consent?

WEEK 2. LIES AND DISCLOSURE

This topic investigates the relationship between consent and lying or deceiving. We will ask when a lie renders sex non-consensual, or otherwise unethical, and why. We aim to build on the understanding of consent built in the previous week and use it to work out difficult questions about deceit and consent.

DOUGHERTY, TOM. SEX, LIES, AND CONSENT

2013, Ethics, 123(4): 717-744.

Difficulty: Easy

Abstract: How wrong is it to deceive someone into sex by lying, say, about one's profession? The answer is seriously wrong when the liar's actual profession would be a deal breaker for the victim of the deception: this deception vitiates the victim's sexual consent, and it is seriously wrong to have sex with someone while lacking his or her consent.

Comment: Dougherty argues that if something is a 'deal-breaker' for someone's sexual consent - for example, they will only have sex if their partner is not a soldier - and their partner lies about it, then the sex they have is seriously wrong, because it is non-consensual. The argument goes like this:

1. It is seriously wrong to have non-consensual sex with someone because of their right to bodily autonomy - they should be able to decide when they want to have sex for any reason they choose.

2. When someone is deceived about one of their deal-breakers, they would not have consented to having sex if they had known the truth, so they haven't really been able to make the decision for themselves about the sex they would actually be having.

Therefore, sex when someone is deceived about a deal-breaker is seriously wrong. Dougherty spends the most time arguing for 2 - that deceit about deal-breakers renders sex non-consensual.

FURTHER MATERIALS:

2019, University of California Press.

FISCHEL, JOSEPH J. SCREW CONSENT: A BETTER POLITICS OF SEXUAL JUSTICE

Difficulty: Intermediate

Fragment: Chapter 3, 'The Trouble with Transgender "Rapists"'.

Abstract: Joseph J. Fischel argues that the consent paradigm, while necessary for effective sexual assault law, diminishes and perverts our ideas about desire, pleasure, and injury. In addition to the criticisms against consent leveled by feminist theorists of earlier generations, Fischel elevates three more: consent is insufficient, inapposite, and riddled with scope contradictions for regulating and imagining sex. Fischel proposes instead that sexual justice turns more productively on concepts of sexual autonomy and access.

Comment: This reading documents a troubling implication of certain views about consent and deceit so is useful for a real-life application of the debate.

TILTON, EMILY AND JONATHAN JENKINS ICHIKAWA. NOT WHAT I AGREED TO: CONTENT AND CONSENT

2021, Ethics, 132(1): 127-154.

Difficulty: Intermediate

Abstract: Deception sometimes results in nonconsensual sex. A recent body of literature diagnoses such violations as invalidating consent: the agreement is not morally transformative, which is why the sexual contact is a rights violation. We pursue a different explanation for the wrongs in question: there is valid consent, but it is not consent to the sex act that happened. Semantic conventions play a key role in distinguishing deceptions that result in nonconsensual sex (like stealth condom removal) from those that don't (like white lies). Our framework is also applicable to more controversial cases, like those implicated in so-called "gender fraud" complaints.

Comment: Tilton and Ichikawa attempt to work out what goes wrong in certain deception cases but not in others. This is useful as a reply to Dougherty's argument that sex from deception is always morally serious and it engages with the issues Fischel raises around gender deception.

- 1. Can sexual deception ever be innocuous? What sort of lies seem alright?
- 2. Stealthing is the practice of one partner secretly removing the condom from their penis without telling their partner during sex. Brosky (2017) asks: is stealthing only as bad as secretly putting on a condom when someone has said they don't want to use one? If it is not as bad as stealthing, does this tell us that what is really going wrong in deception cases is the harm?
- 3. Are there things that we ought to disclose before having sex just in case it is a deal-breaker for someone? Is it only if the "deal-breaker" has been made explicit?
- 4. What are the difficulties in a legal response to consent and deceit?
- 5. What if I know someone will lie to me and I want to have sex with them anyway? Is that sex nonconsensual?
- 6. Is it really true that having sex with an unconscious person and deceiving someone into sex are wrong "for the same reason", as Dougherty claims?
- 7. Fischel (2019) documents how trans people have been prosecuted in the UK for failing to disclose to sexual partners that they are transgender. Are these cases different to the others (such as stealthing), as Fischel claims they are?
- 8. Fischel replies that in these cases what is lied about is "bullshit" questions like "are you a man?" are "bullshit questions" because of the differing social meanings these terms can have. Are these "bullshit questions"? Are there any "bullshit questions" when it comes to sexual consent?

WEEK 3. 'BAD' DESIRES

This week concerns whether fantasies, desires, or sexual preferences can be morally or politically 'bad' and, if so, what someone can and should do when they have such a desire. In the reading for this week, Bartky is focused on masochistic sexual desires, which she thinks are sometimes at odds with feminist beliefs. Other examples might be: sadistic desires; racial fetishes or preferences (only or especially being attracted to people of a certain race); only finding certain conventionally beautiful bodies attractive; and so on. Is there anything troubling about these desires? If there is, what is to be done?

BARTKY, SANDRA LEE. FEMININITY AND DOMINATION

1990, Routledge.

Difficulty: Intermediate

Fragment: Feminine Masochism and the Politics of Personal Transformation, pp. 45-62.

Abstract: Bartky draws on the experience of daily life to unmask the many disguises by which intimations of inferiority are visited upon women. She critiques both the male bias of current theory and the debilitating dominion held by notions of "proper femininity" over women and their bodies in patriarchal culture.

Comment: Bartky's chapter is about what a feminist should do when they have a sexual desire which is in tension with their feminist beliefs in a way that makes them feel ashamed. There are two natural choices: to give up the shame and continue to have the desire, or to give up the desire. Bartky examines both of these choices and finds us in a tricky situation: it is sometimes apt and understandable to feel shame about a sexual desire (when it really is in tension with your principles), but she is sceptical about the view that we can change our desires at will or with therapy.

FURTHER MATERIALS:

ZHENG, ROBIN. WHY YELLOW FEVER ISN'T FLATTERING: A CASE AGAINST RACIAL FETISHES

2016, Journal of the American Philosophical Association, 2(3): 400 - 419. Difficult

Difficulty: Easy-Intermediate

Abstract: Most discussions of racial fetish center on the question of whether it is caused by negative racial stereotypes. In this paper I adopt a different strategy, one that begins with the experiences of those targeted by racial fetish rather than those who possess it; that is, I shift focus away from the origins of racial fetishes to their effects as a social phenomenon in a racially stratified world. I examine the case of preferences for Asian women, also known as 'yellow fever', to argue against the claim that racial fetishes are unobjectionable if they are merely based on personal or aesthetic preference rather than racial stereotypes. I contend that even if this were so, yellow fever would still be morally objectionable because of the disproportionate psychological burdens it places on Asian and Asian-American women, along with the role it plays in a pernicious system of racial social meanings.

Comment: Zheng argues that some sexual desires are morally problematic - namely, racial fetishes. Some people defend racial fetishes by claiming they are mere aesthetic preferences, lacking racist content or origins. Zheng responds that they are objectionable regardless because of their role in the sexual objectification of certain racial groups. This is useful as a case study of a "bad" desire: is it really bad? What is bad about it? Can someone change it?

WILLIS, ELLEN. TOWARD A FEMINIST SEXUAL REVOLUTION

1982, Social Text, 6: 3-21.

Difficulty: Intermediate-Advanced

Abstract: In this essay I argue that a sexual liberationist perspective is essential to a genuinely radical analysis of women's condition. Much of my argument centers on the psychosexual dynamics of the family, where children first experience both sexism and sexual repression. This discussion refers primarily to the family as it exists - actually and ideologically - for the dominant cultures of modern industrial societies. Clearly, to extend my focus backward to feudal societies or outward to the Third World would require (at the very least) a far longer, more complex article. I strongly suspect, however, that in its fundamentals the process of sexual acculturation I describe here is common to all historical (i.e., patriarchal) societies.

Comment: Willis describes the double binds women are in: between being too good – boring, frigid, a sexual failure, a cold bitch – and being bad – easy, insatiable, demanding. Willis argues that the only way to solve this is to end the association between sex and badness. This presents an answer to Bartky's dilemma: we should choose to eradicate sexual shame, rather than our desires.

- 1. Is there anything wrong with having masochistic sexual desires? Does it depend on who has them and their social context? Does sadomasochism challenge or reinforce any sexual norms? (Does it create new sexual norms?)
- 2. Are there unobjectionable sexual desires?
- 3. Should we only be concerned with reality and not with fantasy?
- 4. Is consent legitimate if your desires have been shaped by an oppressive society?
- 5. Can you really be an advocate of sexual freedom while morally critiqueing sexual desires as Bartky does?
- 6. Are there other "bad" desires (e.g. racial fetishes, sadistic desires, restrictive beauty conventions,...)?
- 7. Can people change their desires generally? Can they change their sexual desires?
- 8. Is there anything worrying about a movement calling for people to change their sexual preferences?
- 9. Are getting rid of the desire and getting rid of the shame our only two options, as Bartky claims?

WEEK 4. SEX, DESIRE AND LOVE

Proust's *The Captive* and *The Fugitive* explore the complex relationship between sex, desire, and love in intimate relationships and shows how the boundary between sexual and romantic desire is often unclear. This session seeks to use the novel to explore questions about love, sex, and jealousy; as well as how the use of different artistic mediums affects our understanding of these issues.

PROUST, MARCEL. IN SEARCH OF THE LOST TIME, VOL. 5: THE CAPTIVE

1929, Various editions. Moncrieff, C.K. Scott and Kilmartin, Terence (trans). Difficulty: Intermediate

Fragment: From the paragraph starting 'No doubt, in the first days at Balbec' until 'These means of action are not wanting, alas!' (pp. 58-82 in the Read Free copy PDF conversion).

Abstract: Proust's main character in the book, the narrator, lives with his major love interest, Albertine, in a Paris apartment during this time. He falls in love with her but is constantly tormented by her due to his jealousy. He suspects and accuses Albertine has other same-sex lovers. The volume's name refers to how he wants to keep Albertine to himself, but she keeps trying (and eventually succeeds in) running away from him.

Comment: In the excerpt, the narrator talks about his feelings for Albertine. Sentiments such as sexual desire, love, jealousy, and obsession intertwine, forming a vivid image of a possessive and miserable lover. One highlight of this part is him looking at Albertine sleeping. (See the interpretation of choreographer Roland Petit with the same excerpt/chapter 'Look at her sleeping'.) To a large extent, this excerpt is also representative of the same mentality expressed throughout the entire book.

FURTHER MATERIALS:

PETIT, ROLAND. LOOKING AT HER SLEEPING

2007, Harmonia Mundi.

A contemporary dance piece performed by Paris Opera Ballet.

Comment: By showing body movements of love and sexual desire, this clip would provide an representation of the embodied dimension of Proust's emotional and sexual rumination. We can learn from it that it will be partial understanding if we only describe, analyse and debate sex topics in a dryly manner within academia.

Difficulty: Easy

LUHMANN, NIKLAS. LOVE AS PASSION: THE CODIFICATION OF INTIMACY

1987, Harvard University Press.

Difficulty: Intermediate

Fragment: Chapter 11, 'The Incorporation of Sexuality'.

Abstract: Niklas Luhmann is one of the greatest of contemporary social theorists, and his ultimate aim is to develop a conceptual vocabulary supple enough to capture what he sees as the unprecedented structural characteristics of society since the eighteenth century. Ours is a society in which individuals can determine their own sense of self and function rather than have that predetermined by the strict hierarchy of former times, and a key element in the modern sense of individuality is our concept of love, marriage, and lasting personal relationships. This book takes us back to when passionate love took place exclusively outside of marriage, and Luhmann shows by lively references to social customs and literature how a language and code of behavior were developed so that notions of love and intimacy could be made the essential components of married life. This intimacy and privacy made possible by a social arrangement in which home is where the heart is provides the basis for a society of individuals—the foundation for the structure of modern life. Love is now declared to be unfathomable and personal, yet we love and suffer—as Luhmann shows—according to cultural imperatives.

People working in a variety of fields should find this book of major interest. Social scientists will be intrigued by Luhmann's original and provocative insights into the nature of modern marriage and sexuality, and by the presentation of his theories in concrete, historical detail. His work should also be capital for humanists, since Luhmann's concern throughout is to develop a semantics for passionate love by means of extensive references to literary texts of the modern period. In showing our moral life in the process of revising itself, he thereby sheds much light on the development of drama and the novel in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Comment: What is the difference between friendship and passionate love? By analysing history of European literature, Luhmann proposes a history of evolving emotional, intimate and conversational systems. This adds to the main reading in discussing nuances between relationships.

- 1. Can you think of any important ethical effects of jealousy? What does the novel have to say about the potential ethical upshots of jealousy?
- 2. How does sexual desire function in the narrator's relationship in the chapter?
- 3. How do you feel about the same portrayal with different mediums, one with words (the novel), and the other with body movement (the dance)?
- 4. How do we write about and analyse the subjective experience of desire and love?
- 5. What is the relationship between love and sex?
- 6. Does the interconnectedness of sex, love, and desire have implications for the morality of some types of sexual interaction? Is it harder or easier to work out if sex is consensual when love is also present?

WEEK 5. RESPONSIBILITY

This week seeks to explore an alternative view of how consent works in sexual morality: the relational view. Focusing on Quill Kukla's 2021 paper, the intended outcome of this session is to allow participants to discuss how much care and attention one owes one's sexual partners. This revolves around questions of how an individual's characteristics affect how they consent, and how much others will need to construct a positive environment for this consent to function best. Example included in the paper are women's ability to consent to sex with men being undermined by sexism, and people with memory loss's ability to consent being undermined by their own capabilities, or lack thereof. The aim of this week is to ask what people can do to ensure other's consent is looked after, and when (if ever) we can say that an individual cannot consent to sex at all.

KUKLA, QUILL R. A NONIDEAL THEORY OF SEXUAL CONSENT

2021, Ethics, 131(2): 270-292.

Difficulty: Easy

Abstract: Our autonomy can be compromised by limitations in our capacities, or by the power relationships within which we are embedded. If we insist that real consent requires full autonomy, then virtually no sex will turn out to be consensual. I argue that under conditions of compromised autonomy, consent must be socially and interpersonally scaffolded. To understand consent as an ethically crucial but nonideal concept, we need to think about how it is related to other requirements for ethical sex, such as the ability to exit a situation, trust, safety, broader social support, epistemic standing in the community, and more.

Comment: Kukla uses this paper to describe a view of consent which is relational. This means that rather than asking questions about what each person individually consented to or not, the question is how the people having sex communicated. If they communicate sufficiently well then the sex is consensual, and if they do not it is not. We can use this to challenge a view of consent which has been implicit in most of the readings so far. This paper is used to discuss blameworthiness and responsibility for wrongful sex, and to ask questions about what the real world obligations of agents are, given their lack of complete information

FURTHER MATERIALS:

DOUGHERTY, TOM. AFFIRMATIVE CONSENT AND DUE DILIGENCE

2018, Philosophy and Public Affairs, 46(1).

Difficulty: Easy-Intermediate

Summary: This paper tries to answer the problem of the moral luck of sex. It uses examples of conduct where the responsible agent fails to check properly for consent, and asks how much of a difference it makes whether their partner considers themselves to have consented or not. It concludes that there are two different obligations: one to conduct due dilligence to ascertain the prescence of valid consent and other to refrian from non-consensual sex.

Comment: This paper provides an alternative answer to how to determine individual responsibility to Kukla, Quill R. (2018) 'A Nonideal Theory of Sexual Consent'.

- 1. How would mental illhealth (e.g. disability: ADHD, or Dementia; Illness: Anxiety, Depression, trauma experience or PTSD) affect one's ability to consent to sex freely and how, if possible, could one skaffold the consent of a mentally ill partner?
- 2. What do you think about Kukla's example of sex in residential care for elderly people? Is it possible to have morally good sex in this situation?
- 3. Is it possible to scaffold an unknown persons's consent enough to be sure the sex is consensual on a onenight-stand under Kukla's view?
- 4. Does Kukla's "relational" view of consent or Dougherty's "Intentional" view explain sexual consent better?
- 5. Does a requirement for an "enthusiastic Yes" that many university sexual consent campaigns focus on cover the issues in Kukla's paper sufficiently?

WEEK 6. SEX WORK AND A CARIBBEAN CASE STUDY

This week aims to use research about the history of sex work and its perceptions in the Caribbean to explore questions of what counts as sex work, how sex work is viewed, what sex work is like, and the ethics of sex work in light of our discussions in previous weeks.

KEMPADOO, KAMALA. SEXING THE CARIBBEAN: GENDER, RACE AND SEXUAL LABOUR

2004, Routledge.

Difficulty: Intermediate-Advanced

Fragment: Chapter 3, 'Sex, Work, Gifts, and Money: Prostitution and other Sexual-Economic Transactions', pp. 53-87

Abstract: This unprecedented work provides both the history of sex work in this region as well as an examination of current-day sex tourism. Based on interviews with sex workers, brothel owners, local residents and tourists, Kamala Kempadoo offers a vivid account of what life is like in the world of sex tourism as well as its entrenched roots in colonialism and slavery in the Caribbean.

Comment: The chapter is about the perceptions of sex as transactional in the Caribbean and how the definition of "prostitution" has shifted over time. It details how sex work is organised, both in brothels and in other establishments, such as hotels, nightclubs, etc. It explores the experiences and feelings of women who have experiences of various kinds of transactional sex. This chapter can be used as a case study which allows the reader to explore sex work through a variety of lenses: its interaction with broader social issues like racism and poverty; the place of transactions and intimacy in sex and sex work; sexual norms and the social meanings of sexual relationships; and freedom and choice when engaging in sex and sex work.

- 1. What is the social impact or function of sex work? What is the difference between it, concubinage, and marriage? How did it change over time?
- 2. "Sex workers stress the possibility of finding tenderness and sexual pleasure for herself or himself." What do we think of the possibility of transactional and intimate sex (or generally non-romantic sex)? Does this have any implications for whether sex work can be fulfilling or non-exploitative work?
- 3. "In Guyana, the Dominican Republic, Belize, and Cartagena, various parts of the body are defined as offlimits to the client, commonly a woman's breasts and lips." They're reserved for a romantic partner or spouse. Are there any aspects of sex which we find inappropriate for a transactional interaction? Does the fact that the intimate parts are "off limit" affect what you think of the sex work?
- 4. What counts as sex work as opposed to merely someone having sex for materialistic benefit? What is the difference between paying for sex and giving a "gift" for sex? Can we describe 'mistresses' as prostitutes, when their primary motivation for being in the arrangement is to gain materialistic benefits?
- 5. How do gender and race affect the definition and social effects of sex work?

WEEK 7. SEXUAL PLANNING AND SEXUAL PROMISES

This week aims to use previous weeks' analysis of the general conditions under which sex is morally permissable and apply it to a specific case. The case of promising challenges our intuitions about communication, responsibility for others, and other consent concepts. This leads to asking whether sex is fundamentally different from other actions, and if it is what the previous moral and social concepts discussed mean for whether sexual promises can be premissably made.

LIBERTO, HALLIE. *THE PROBLEM WITH SEXUAL PROMISES* 2017, Ethics, 127(2): 383-414.

Difficulty: Intermediate

Abstract: I first distinguish promises with positive sexual content (e.g., promises to perform sexual acts) and promises with negative sexual content (e.g., promises to refrain from sexual acts—as one does when making monogamy promises). I argue that sexual content—even positive sexual content—does not cause a promise to misfire. However, the content of some successful promises is such that a promisee ought not to accept the promise, and, if she does accept, she ought then to release her promisor from the promise. I argue that both positive and negative sexual promises have content of this kind.

Comment: Liberto argues that promises to have sex, and promises not to have sex, are a special type of promise that it is morally wrong to make. She does this by first arguing why promises to have sex are "overextensive". This means that sexual promises promise something too important: sex. After she concludes that promises to have sex are overextensive she spends the second half of the paper arguing why promises not to have sex (i.e. monogmany promises) are not disanalogous to promises to have sex, and thus are also overextensive.

- 1. Can promises to have, or not have, sex ever be morally binding?
- 2. Is Jane obliged to have sex with John if he wins the football game?
- 3. Is it permissible to hold your partner to being monogamous?
- 4. Is there an important difference between making a binding plan to have sex and making a binding promise to have sex?