

Disability Porn: The Fetishisation and Liberation of Disabled Sex

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Submission Date: 10.05.2018

Submission: Book Chapter

**Book Title: ‘Diverse voices of disabled sexualities in the
Global South’**

Abstract:

Set against dominant ableist discourses of sexuality, engaging in sex in the face of physical disabilities seems not only impossible but also highly improbable. Long-standing myths and discriminatory stereotypes around the sexuality of people with disabilities are commonplace, in part due to the sheer unknowns about the sexual lives and practises of people with disabilities. In recent years, members of the disabled community have emerged professing to thriving sex lives, and one avenue that provides evidence of not only the existence of disabled sexuality but also the multitude of possibilities within disabled sexuality is in the burgeoning genre of disability pornography. While disability and sex merge in pornography, there is limited interchange in the scholarship on disabled sexuality and pornography. In this chapter, I aim to address this privation by examining the intersection of pornography and disabled sexuality. I conclude that disability pornography not only has positive spinoffs, such as enfranchisement of disabled sex, but also negative upshots, which include the fetishisation of disabled sexuality.

How do disabled people have sex? Do disabled people even have sex in the first place? For many people in both the academy and broader society, it might be difficult to imagine a physically disabled individual with an active sex life. For a long time the sex lives of people with disabilities have been cloaked in misconceptions, myths, and stereotypes; and often these ideas have been associated with either asexuality or sexual deviance. Milligan and Neufeldt (2001) have reported that, prior to the 1970s, sex and disability was not only under researched, but the literature too focused primarily on the biological and medical understanding of disability. In contrast, reforms in thought, brought about in part by advocacy groups and lobbying, have led to a significant amount of socio-political discussion in recent scholarship in disability studies.

Paradigmatic shifts, as developed through the activism enterprise, raises questions of whether social reforms have influenced academic thought or whether it is the academy that has mobilised the shift. Despite being unable to pinpoint its origins, knowledge about the sex lives of individuals with disabilities has moved into the public domain and there is one place, with a relative ease of access, where disabled sexuality is exceedingly unveiled: pornography. In recent years, pornography featuring people with physical disabilities has emerged and it is steadily increasing in the online public domain.

The body of literature on disabled sexuality has steadily grown and has evolved from simple biological and medical discourse to the socio-political and socio-cultural politics of disability and disabled sexuality (Shakespeare & Watson, 2001). The body of literature too on pornography is prolific (Dworkin, 2004; Mackinnon, 2011; O'Toole, 2000). In contrast, pornography (featuring disabled bodies in particular) and the sexuality of people with disabilities are still largely separate in the academy, yet it is an avenue where sexuality and disability intertwine.

This chapter synthesises and integrates the two separate fields of pornography and disabled sexuality, with two key aims. The first is to examine disability pornography and the second is to establish its potential function in disabled sexuality. Through an analysis of the scholarship I intimate that pornography can function both to enfranchise and demystify disabled sexuality and concurrently to fetishise and other it.

The major arguments that underpin this chapter emanate from an analysis of selected literature on disabled sexuality and pornography. Through a survey of the literature, I first review the historical position and development of notions about sex and disability. Secondly, I discuss the dynamics and complexity of disabled sexuality, which includes an overview of selected intrinsic and extrinsic challenges in disabled sexuality. I then consider representations of the sexualities of people with disabilities, and focus on pornography of disabled sexuality before concluding. I also introduce the terms *saktevoerotophilia* and *saktevoerotophobia* in this chapter to describe love and fear of disabled sexuality, respectively.

At the outset, important parameters are set on the definitions of disability, sex and pornography as they are understood in this chapter. In order to maintain focus, a rudimentary understanding of all of these factors is deployed. In terms of disability, although there are gradations within different categories of disabilities, there are two major variations: psychological and physical. The psychological category includes psychiatric and intellectual disabilities, and the physical category includes chronic, congenital and disability acquired from traumatic injury and amputation of the physical body. It is physical disabilities, regardless of aetiology, that are the focus here. Further, this focus excludes total paralysis, as the ability to physically engage in sexual activities is at the core of most of the pornography that is being interrogated in this chapter.

Pornography in this chapter is restricted to those audio-visual representations of uncensored penetrative heterosexual activity between two or more people that is easily accessible with an internet connection and technological device (cell phones, tablets and computers). Rationale for these parameters stem from the hegemonic heteronormative able-bodied gaze that dominate socially. It is also from this monopoly gaze that the function of pornographic representations of disabled sexuality is probed in this chapter. There are many specialised and burgeoning genres of pornography, for example pornography made for and by women, pornography made for and by disabled individuals and queer crip pornography featuring disabled gay men. The focus in this work is on heterosexual sex performed by people with physical disabilities, which is presumably watched by the general consumer of pornographic material. It must also be mentioned that anti-pornography critiques have a particular understanding of pornography, primarily centred on the violence, subjugation and sexual objectification women (Dworkin, 2004; McKinnon, 2011). However, the intricate critical

debates on pornography while acknowledged, are not the focus of this chapter; instead, it is the voyeurism and sexual explicitness that all types of pornography entail that is the focus.

Similarly, manifestations of disabled sexuality are multifaceted, as will be discussed later. However, to focus on the issue at hand, in the context of this chapter, sex is understood as heterosexual penetrative intercourse. This elementary yet socio-politically loaded understanding of sex is employed because it is the physical performance of sex acts engaged in by disabled men and women, and the audio-visual consumption thereof in pornography that is relevant for this work.

Disabled past to sexual presence

Disability studies have posited a novel approach to studying disability. It has shifted the focus of disability as a medical or biological condition to a form of social oppression, where disability is defined with reference to discrimination and prejudice (Shakespeare, 1999). For Shakespeare (1999), people with disabilities are disabled not by their bodies, but by a society that routinely subjects them to devaluation and desexualisation. In this regard, Garland-Thomson (2012) stated that it is against hegemonic able-bodiedness that disability ironically becomes visible.

From the 1980s, feminist disability scholars have deconstructed dominant narratives of disabled sexuality (Rembis, 2010). Shifts in knowledge and thought about sex and disability have not only taken place paradigmatically, but also increasingly in the complexity of disabled sex as communicated by individuals with disabilities themselves (Naidu, 2015). The traditional and hegemonic Masters and Johnson (1966) model of sex proposed a sequential linear progression of sex from arousal to resolution, involving specific physical responses, particularly those that lead to genital sensation and climax. Moreover, this model solidified the dominant ableist sexual responses and functioning. So deeply accepted is this model that a host of sexual pathologies have found their aetiologies constructed through deviations from this model. The hegemony of the Masters and Johnsons model of sex reminds us that there are particular scripted ways that sexuality must be performed (Butler, 1990). Against this traditional model, Tepper (2000) affirmed that the sexual functioning for individuals with disabilities is automatically deemed dysfunctional and improbable.

In reviewing traditional models of sexual functioning, Di Giulio (2003) raised questions about the sexual encounters of people with disabilities whose experiences may not manifest in the same way as it does for people without physical disabilities. Cases in point include a man, who in the absence of an erection experiences pleasure and climax from touching and being touched by a partner, or a woman who may experience orgasmic pleasure from having her breasts fondled. Similar ideas were echoed by Tiefer (1995). These examples problematise what constitutes sex, and specifically, about what constitutes disabled sex. Is sex limited to penetration en route to orgasm? Or, is it possible for sex to adopt a novel form of sexual engagement? What are the possibilities for sex acts for individuals with disabilities? Perhaps pornography maybe useful in answering some of these questions.

Dynamics and complexity of disabled sexuality

A perusal of the literature indicates that there are a number of intrinsic and extrinsic factors that impede sex and sexuality in the lives of disabled people. Some of these obstacles to disabled sexuality are discussed further as an understanding of these challenges is important because of how pornography may function in relation to these barriers.

Bodily pleasures seem to be a salient feature of contemporary life. However, social barriers hinder the full experience of sexuality for people with disabilities (Shakespeare, 2000). According to Milligan and Neufeldt (2001), the subjective narrative accounts of people with disabilities form the most compelling evidence that people with disabilities are deemed to be unbecoming as sexual partners, particularly by able-bodied individuals, in part because of the othering with which the sexuality of people with disabilities is imbued with (Meekosha, 2005).

From self-advocacy groups to academics, concern has been raised about people with disabilities being abjectified by the hegemony of able-bodied myths and stereotypes. This abjection seems to oscillate between asexuality (Gill, 1996; Hahn, 1981; Naidu, 2015) and deviance (Di Giulio, 2003; Shakespeare, Gillespie-Sells, & Davies, 1996) on the one hand and as victims or perpetrators of sexual abuse on the other hand (Shakespeare et al., 1996; Shakespeare, 1999; Maart & Jelsma, 2010; Naidu, 2015).

Firstly, there is an expectation that when able-bodied adults become disabled, they have to mourn the loss of sexuality (O'Toole, 2000). According to Milligan and Neufeldt (2001), the

myth of asexuality is supported by the misconceptions that individuals with disabilities are, through actual or perceived inabilities, unable to physically perform sexually. In many instances, this misconception of asexuality can be self-fulfilling (Anderson & Kitchin, 2000; De Giulio, 2003). The inability to perform gender and sex according to the hegemony of ableist sex renders people with disabilities intrinsically limited due to the unavoidable consequence of living with a disabled body (Rembis, 2010). Butler's (1993) notion of the irreducible materiality of sex is invoked here because physical sex cannot happen without a functioning material body.

Secondly, the myth of asexuality is frequently driven by limited and or biased sex education (McKenzie, 2013). Inadequate sex education compromises the attainment of the skills necessary to manage sex and sexuality. This misperception of asexuality can sometimes begin during adolescence or even earlier if the person has had a long-standing disability. Parents of disabled children socialise their children to lead lives in which sex does not feature as a normative developmental process, which leads to fewer opportunities to not only gain accurate information about sex, but also to model themselves sexually. In the Global South, particularly in South Africa, youth with disabilities have been reported to not only engage in sexual activities, but also engage in sexual activity earlier than their able-bodied counterparts (Maart & Jelsma, 2010). This was particularly true for female youth with disabilities. Perhaps because younger women view sexuality as a means of affirming their femininity. Similar reports have been reported by Cheng and Udry (2002), who confirmed that more than half of their disability sample engaged in sexual activity. However, not all sexual activity is engaged in willingly. Thirdly, many individuals with disabilities lack the financial resources to enable the socio-sexual development that accompanies sexual practices, such as provocative clothing and access to sexual hangouts.

Fourthly, Milligan and Neufeldt (2001) have suggested that people with disabilities experience lack of opportunities for sexual gratification. A significant proportion of the disabled population housed in care homes experience compromised privacy that impedes experiencing and experimenting with sexuality. This deficit of privacy may force individuals with disabilities to venture into public spaces where, if caught, will be reprimanded or treated with punitive disdain for acting inappropriately, which then reinforces the perception of sexual deviance (Di Giulio, 2003).

Finally, the hegemony and dominant discourse of able-bodiedness is not the only problem. A unique barrier for people with disabilities is not the desire for sex, but, as Shakespeare (2000) points out, the dilemma of who to have sex with (rather than the how and where to have sex). Shakespeare et al., (1996) argue that the social undesirability of the disabled body, combined with an aberrant body aesthetic and low self-esteem that people with disabilities are purported to have, further complicate the acquisition of sex. According to Shakespeare (2000), the self-esteem required for being sexually competent is lowered in a significant proportion of people with disabilities. Consequently, in a society where physical perfection is revered, individuals with physical disabilities have been compelled to assume roles that deny them as sexual beings (Hahn, 1981). The internalised attitudes of people with disabilities towards themselves and their peers are problematic. Even if individuals with disabilities manage to engage in and maintain romantic relationships, many still experience feelings of diminished sex appeal, tending to view themselves as asexual and physically unattractive (Rousso, 1996).

Sex activities in South Africa have unique features. With the high prevalence of high-risk behaviours, intergenerational sex, and transactional sex, individuals with disabilities face particular challenges. Individuals with disabilities are three times more likely to be physically and sexually abused than their able-bodied peers (Groce, 2004). Cheng and Udry (2002) similarly report a higher number of physically disabled girls being sexually exploited compared to able-bodied girls. Furthermore, there is a similar pattern for males and females in the potential for abuse.

The vulnerability of individuals with disabilities is often submerged by the idea that, as a population, they are sexually inactive, unlikely to use drugs, and at low risk of violence and rape (Maart & Jelsma, 2010). This has proven to be untrue in South Africa because they remain highly vulnerable to rape and sexual abuse, particularly given their everyday dependence on attendant care. As a group, in the South African context, people with disabilities are less able to negotiate rules of sexual engagement. Furthermore, in addition to being vulnerable to abuse, individuals with disabilities are also placed at increased risk for contracting sexually transmitted infections, notably HIV. Seemingly, disabled bodies are easy targets to act out sexual manipulation and mistreatment. These reports highlight the irony of how a body deemed void of sexual possibility becomes a site of sexual abuse and exploitation.

Hahn's (1981) postulation of the misconception that people with disabilities are sexually undesirable and therefore less sexually marketable feeds into the scarcity of sexual partners. Despite the increased openness and tolerance for people with disabilities in occupational and social settings, people with disabilities often find it difficult to sexually and romantically partner with nondisabled persons. In South Africa for example, according to the South African Federation of the Disabled, sex partners who have disabilities are often hidden away (McKenzie, 2013). In other words, sexual or intimate pairing between people with and without disabilities may bring a response of repulsion that hinders acceptance of this coupling in a hegemonic able-bodied society (Hahn, 1981).

Sexual discrimination is a deep wound for individuals with disabilities. Hahn's (1981) work has been significant in establishing how people with disabilities have been instituted as a minority sexual group. While there may have been some reform in discriminatory practices in employment, education, and housing, sex and reproduction are still sites of profound oppression for people with disabilities (Finger, 1992).

Fear of the freak

Over and above these intrinsic factors, a number of extrinsic influences maintain and reproduce dominant discourses of disabled sexuality. Attitudes towards disability have been widely studied and evidence confirms that negative attitudes have contributed to social rejection or avoidance (Wright, 1983). As early as 1979, an investigation found that sex acts performed by disabled individuals are viewed with reproach (Haring & Meyerson, 1979). Hahn (1981) cites many studies about the widespread and entrenched attitudes of aversion and prejudice towards individuals with disabilities that maintain and perpetuate societal positions of being undesirable, the other. This widespread saktevoerotophobia (fear of disabled sexuality) has led to people with disabilities losing opportunities for sexual experiences or access. Collectively it seems that the general stigmatisation as aesthetic outliers and rejection as potential sexual and or romantic partners solidify the idea of saktevoerotophobia.

However, Hahn (1988) proposed that it is not only the myth of asexuality and othering that contributes to negative attitudes, but the stance of what he calls aesthetic anxiety. For Hahn (1988), this refers to the fears provoked by an appearance that either deviates from the typical human shape and form, or one that includes physical traits considered to be unappealing.

These fears are reflected both in the propensity to shun people who are physically different and the pressure to attain “supernormal standards of bodily perfection” (Hahn, 1990, p. 42). The possible absence of the prerequisite physical chemistry in the performance of sex potentially disadvantages people with disabilities (Hahn, 1981). Proscribed sexual contact with disabled bodies is entrenched in the collective unconscious of people without disabilities. Once again, Butler’s (1993) notion of the irreducibility materiality of sex is relevant in the study of disabled sexuality. Physical attractiveness and sexual desirability seem like compulsory prerequisites that disadvantage people with visible physical disabilities.

When studying disabled sexuality, we are also reminded of Foucault’s (1978) idea of the body being a site of control and power. Beauty, youth, sex appeal, and physical perfection are prized not only in interpersonal relationships, but also in the media; thus, individuals with physical disabilities are particularly vulnerable to feeling unworthy and having a diminished sense of themselves as sexual beings (Di Giulio, 2003). In a society that idolises physical perfection, individuals with physical disabilities are by default relegated to the object. Safilios-Rothschild (1970) labels the repugnance with which disabled individuals are perceived as aesthetic-sexual aversion.

Other than aesthetic anxiety, Hahn (1981) articulates existential anxiety as an underlying feature of the aversion held towards disabled bodies. Existential anxiety stems from able-bodied individuals fears of the potential loss of their own physical functionalities. In Canada, this is paradoxically labelled ‘temporarily able-bodied’ (Shakespeare, 1999), because any able-bodied individual has the potential to become permanently disabled from illness or trauma. Often, the threat of permanent, debilitating disability and the ensuing consequences outrank even the fear of death, which is evitable.

Thus far, I have given an account of the socio-political and psychosocial facets of disabled sexuality both intrinsically and extrinsically. Interweaving the presence and function of representations of disabled sexuality opens more avenues in the arena of disabled sexuality and despite prevailing dominant discourses of disabled sexuality; representations of disabled sexuality have shifted in certain forms of media.

Representations of disabled sexuality

The coupling of media and technology in the 21st century has provided information and entertainment for people the world over and has had a particularly positive spin off for many in the disabled community. For example, media technology and social networking have increased contact between researchers, rehabilitation hospitals, advocacy groups, and chatroom-users, so that people with disabilities can network and mobilise themselves (Milligan & Neufeldt, 2001). There has also been an increase in people with disabilities campaigning for sexual citizenship from the point of promotion of disability rights (Davies, 2000). The Global North seems to have taken the lead. Many designated organisations have emerged to address sexual enfranchisement and sexual citizenship of people with disabilities. These organisations promote sexual access and sexual networking to provide for the specific and specialised social and sexual needs of people with disabilities. Similar organisations in many parts of the Global South have yet to create such clear visibility. The campaign for sexual citizenship can be understood as a sexual minority group's claims for sexual rights; these include rights to sexual autonomy, inclusion, equity and justice, as well as demands for choice. These campaigns pragmatically translate into reproductive rights, protection of privacy, sex education, protection from sexual violence and sexual access (Liddiard, 2014; Weeks, 1998).

Despite a history of exclusion from sexual life, many people with disabilities have satisfying sex after a period of adjustment and the establishing of a disabled identity (Rembis, 2010). Moreover, individual narratives of disabled sexuality in the mainstream media, despite being predominantly those of heterosexual white men, have moved from the private into the public domain in western nations such as the United Kingdom and Australia.

The right to access is part of enfranchising disabled sexuality and disability pornography may be seen as one way of fostering the emancipatory endeavours started by the disability rights movement. The existence of pornography for *saktoerotophilia* (love for disabled sexuality) can potentially be seen as a positive move towards the liberation and increased visibility of the sexuality of people with disabilities. A recent development stemming from efforts that promote disability rights and disability pride is the eagerness to celebrate disabled sexuality. In both public and academic spheres, strides have been taken, although there is a dominant emphasis on heterosexuality. Currently, in the disability movement, representations of disabled sexual minorities such as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered and ethnic minorities

are side-lined, even in pornography. Nevertheless, pornography holds potential to circumvent some of the barriers of disabled sexuality as will be discussed shortly.

Representations of disabled sexuality seem to be a contested area in contemporary sexual politics. The content of media depictions and references to sex are dominated by ableist stereotypes, with the exception of the specific genre of disability pornography where disabled bodies and disabled sexuality are laid bare. However, it is important to note that pornography posts featuring sex acts of people with disabilities seem to be voyeuristic, amateur homemade pornography instead of professionally directed pornography from professional production studios, as is evident in many online porn websites such as XVideos and Pornhub.

In South Africa, the political dispensation coupled with the perceived freedom of the media, have benefited all types of pornography. Pornography has become increasingly and readily available; however, the heterosexual bias is further dominated by able and agile bodies. Even the more conservative versions of erotic magazines in South Africa has changed. No longer do little stars cover the nipples of scantily clad women, as was seen in the *Scope* magazine (a popular men's lifestyle magazine in the 'old South Africa').

Buckingham and Bragg (2002) have asserted that media helps people make sense of life and reality and it is known to play a pivotal role in attitude formation (Giles, 2003). According to Milligan and Neufeldt (2001), the media has supported and perpetuated myths of asexuality of people with disabilities. Representations of sexuality take on many forms, but able-bodies dominate the imagery of sexuality, beauty, perfection and desire globally. From the earliest representations, portrayals of disabled bodies continue to presuppose inferiority based on perceived functional incapacities (Hahn, 1988). Hahn (1988) consequently argues that prejudicial attitudes held by able-bodied individuals stem from the disabled body's violation of entrenched social norms and values.

Apart from pornography, representations of disabled sexuality in mainstream media have created impressions for individuals with and without disabilities, that people with disabilities are sexually uninteresting and unable to perform sexually (Norden, 1994). Representations that challenge these myths are scarce. Pornography seems to be a productive site that actively displays the sexual prowess of people with disabilities and dispels ideas of asexuality. Before pornography featuring disabled bodies became widely available, one pivotal representation

appeared in a 1984 edition of *Playboy*. Ellen Stohl, an average American college student, brazenly wrote to Hugh Hefner (founder of Playboy Enterprises) about how the sexuality of a disabled person is one of the most difficult aspects to live out. This prompted the magazine to feature the author of the letter as an object of sexual desire. For Ellen Stohl, contrary to many feminist viewpoints against the sexual objectification of women, sexual objectification was an avenue of liberation.

However, although featuring a woman with a disability, this depiction was presented in a way that all markers of disability in the photoshoot were hidden (Fiduciary, 1999). Only the inserts showed images of Ellen in her daily life. Although, the audience connected to her as a sexual being and not as a woman with a disability, this feature inadvertently still separated sexuality and disability, despite its best intentions (Schriempf, 2001). This 34-year-old example from *Playboy* contrasts starkly to currently available pornography on the internet. Contemporary pornographic representations of the sexualities of people with disabilities reveal every aspect of disability, from the actual disabled body, to wheelchairs and leg braces. This subgenre of pornography that is inclusive of images of persons with physical disabilities can be seen as a move towards normalising and enfranchising the sexuality of this particular minority group.

Compared to other sites of sexual activity such as strip clubs or brothels, the internet is a thriving home for sexuality and pornography (Waskul, 2004). It is easily, anonymously and instantly accessible, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, ability status or socioeconomic status, as even in economically impoverished communities, citizens own mobile devices on which internet pornography may be accessed instantly. For example, smartphone use in Brazil is reported to be around 73%, which is the highest in the region (Mari, 2017). In South Africa, there are more sim cards than there are people, making it a mobile first society (Shezi, 2014). It has reported that approximately 32 million people have cellular phones, and a staggering 81% of the population access the internet through their phones (Shezi, 2014), which makes disability pornography easily accessible for both the disabled and able-bodied gaze.

Desirability of disabled sex and disability porn

The disability pornography subgenre not only embraces the disabled body, but also displays that body as a site of physical pleasure. A chief instance of an avenue for disability

pornography is XVideos. As a free online pornography aggregator, XVideos states that it is the “best free porn site” and claims to upload 10 000 new free pornographic videos a day. The site contains hundreds of thousands of posts. According to Thornhill (2012), the site receives more than four billion hits a month. By September 2017, the site contained 179 amputee tagged posts, 349 disabled tagged posts, 148 wheelchair tags, 155 handicapped tags and 12 posts with the paraplegic tag. However, the abovementioned tags count for only 8% of the content, of the 10 000 new posts uploaded per day. This amount could arguably be less if posts are tagged more than once, for example, a single post that contains a person with an amputation and a wheelchair. Other tags that can be found on pornographic websites featuring disabled sex include: legless, cripple, paraprincess, amputee, midgets, stump, paraplegic and invalid. Although tags featuring disability accounts for a minuscule amount of content compared to the total number of posts that the website contains, it is evident that there is a market for pornography featuring people with disabilities.

Disability pornography makes visible historically stigmatised sex configurations, thus empowering a previously largely unrepresented and marginalised group. The subgenre can serve to reconstruct and normalise the once *repugnant* performance of disabled sex. Against Butler’s (1993) ideas of the material irreducibility of sex, viewers’ conceptualizations of the irreconcilability of disability and sexual performance are challenged when the socially desexualised body is transformed into a physically sexualised body. In this way, this subgenre of pornography reveals human sexuality across the able-disable divide. Pornography may expand possibilities for the sex lives of individuals with disabilities themselves, particularly because of internalised ideas that have desexualised them.

A further instance that exemplifies saktevoerotophilia is a group known as ‘amputation admirers’. Amputation admires, epitomises the reverence of the disabled body as having sexual potential. Admiration and attraction to physically disabled bodies have been a growing phenomenon. Earliest recordings were purported to have occurred in the UK, where men actively sought sexual partnering with women who have had limbs amputated (Riddle, 1989). Initially this propensity for amputees was pathologised as acrotomophilia; and this desire was considered by disability movements as either perverse or a celebration of the desirability of an atypical body. For this group of admirers or ‘devotees’, the attraction to a disabled body is no different from the more socially acceptable attraction to long legs.

Similar activities of saktevoerophilia include instances where able-bodied people use disability aids (e.g., wheelchairs or leg braces), transforming themselves into 'pretenders' or they may take on the role of 'wannabees', acting out the desire not merely to imitate the roles of individuals with disabilities, but also to willingly amputate one or more healthy functional parts of their bodies (Solvang, 2007). The latter is normalised by groups that maintain that such amputations are no different from other body modification practices such as tattooing and piercings. Equally, wannabees, admirers and devotees are pathologised as deviant and sometimes seen as offensive and insulting to some people with physical disabilities (Solvang, 2007).

Sexual worth is strongly correlated to the degree of physical beauty and attractiveness (March, Grieve & Marx, 2015). Thus, images of sex acts being performed by imperfect or abject bodies in pornography imply the vitalising of the sex appeal of disabled bodies. Further, pornography may assist individuals with disability to safely explore erotic alternatives and satisfy a healthy sexual curiosity. The subgenre offers stimulation for those who have no sex partner, enabling sexual climax without the emotional intimacy of a romantic partner, which Brown and Russel (2003) have asserted, promotes both physical and psychological wellbeing.

Developmentally, sex advice from peers and parents may have been absent for people with disabilities, given the tendencies towards infantilisation and its accompanying asexuality; pornography may overcome this unique challenge. Readily available internet pornography acts as an online sex encyclopaedia and manual for those individuals with disabilities who lack education and exposure to sex.

Williams (2004) has argued that pornography has exerted a gradual influence in bridging the gap of the visibility of interracial sex. Over time, pornography has helped transform the taboo of sex between different race groups; in doing so, it has fostered more open attitudes towards interracial sexual encounters. Similarly, although a speculation that requires research, pornography of disabled bodies may contribute to more favourable attitudes towards the sexual intermingling of abled and disabled bodies. In this regard, Chatterjee (2001) and Waskul (2004) commends the use of the internet to provide a platform for sex outside the boundary of heteronormative and able-bodied sex.

Heterosexual pornographic imagery depicts sexual interactions between able and disabled men and women. In South Africa for example, relationships between people with disabilities and without disabilities are viewed with disbelief and suspicion (McKenzie, 2013), and partners with disabilities are often hidden away. Disability pornography in contrast holds the potential to steadily normalise and create new possibilities for disabled sexuality and sexual interaction between able and disabled bodies.

Pornography succeeds over other avenues for sexual satiation because it is arguably less complicated than buying sex from sex workers. Buying sex requires a degree of privacy and autonomy (Sanders, 2008), which many people with disabilities do not have. In contrast, access to pornography requires only some privacy and an internet-enabled technological device. Nevertheless, it can be argued that pornography falls short, because it lacks the embodied learning that can come from acquiring sex and sexual assistance from sex surrogates, for example (Liddiard, 2014).

Overall, the preceding arguments indicate that the nexus of disability and pornography may benefit the sexuality of people with disabilities and potentially fosters a more inclusive attitude in able-bodied individuals. The antithesis of this argument may however, hold equally true.

A fetish for freaks

Historically, disabled bodies were made public as oddities, and many people with disabilities earned an income from displaying such queerness. This was prevalent in the freak shows in the 16th century. Kafer (2003) stated that, from the early 19th century, when freak shows became a fully established commercial enterprise, there began excitement and curiosity about disabled sexuality, which was considered as inherently kinky, bizarre and exotic. Along the same lines, can disability pornography be considered a freak show of the technological age?

As early as 1963, Goffman noted that the gaze of able-bodied people towards people with disabilities was loaded with peculiarity and that people with disabilities were therefore considered inhuman or subhuman. Hence, sexualising the disabled body as an object of desire will be similarly deviant (Solvang, 2007). Shakespeare et al., (1996) have argued that positioning disability and sexuality in a way that arouses and satiates sexual appetite can be construed as an act of deviancy. Abjection of the disabled body is often communicated

as a natural response. Able-bodied individuals respond with feelings of queasiness when faced with disabled bodies (Siller, 1976). The body with a disability represents a threat from the natural order of corporeal life. Shakespeare (1999) also mentions the view that people with disabilities are conceived of as the other.

Hahn's (1988) hypothesis of existential anxiety may help explain the identification process for people without disabilities when they imagine or witness the difficulties of performing sex with a disabled body. These imagined images may influence the projection of existential fears onto people with disabilities. This projective identification may bolster the otherness of people with disabilities and their sexualities. In this way, the notion of disabled sexuality is cast off from the salutatory sexual selves of those with able bodies.

The abjectification of disabled sexuality can be further explained by Hahn's (1988) notion of aesthetic anxiety mentioned earlier. The subjugation of an individual with a disability as inferior and devalued because of an unconventional physique is a major cause of aesthetic anxiety for the able-bodied. Hahn (1988) states that an anatomical deviant elicits serious discomfort and creates much anxiety, with the deviant becoming an object to be warded off. Individuals with disabilities are viewed simultaneously as inferior and threatening, becoming relegated to a special category of fiend.

Additionally, stemming from aesthetic anxiety, people without disabilities show tendencies to relegate those who are different to subordinate or abject roles. Against the dominant discourses that privilege the white, youthful, heterosexual, and able body, the black, disabled, homosexual, or aging body becomes defiled as abject. Hence, pornography, whilst potentially functioning as a liberator of the sexualities of people with disabilities, may simultaneously disadvantage the disabled body when approached as a queer object to be gazed at.

Disability pornography runs the risk of reinforcing the marginalisation of disabled sexuality. In this way the formation of a 'special group' or subgenre of pornography of the abject in focus, inadvertently contributes to the othering and queerness of disabled bodies and disabled sexuality.

Fetish or celebration?

The disabled body in relation to sex is presented as either a site of sexual abuse when linked to sex acts, or it is positioned as being so repugnant and inferior that it decries any meaningful sexual contact. Pornography challenges both of these accounts.

This chapter considered two positions. On the one hand, disability pornography may be considered a fetish for the able-bodied gaze, which strengthens discourses around pathology, asexuality and otherness of disabled sexuality. On the other hand, pornographic representations of disabled sexuality portray the physical bodies of individuals with disabilities as sites for pleasurable sexual contact for both able and disabled bodies.

The hegemony of ableist representations of sexuality reinforces dichotomised thinking around disability and sexuality. If mainstream able-bodied pornography is viewed as a product of hegemonic able-bodied discourse, then disability pornography may be considered as the celebration, liberation and acknowledgement of bodies that deviate from anatomical normalcy. The subgenre of pornography may represent an accolade for people with disabilities, both in debunking myths of asexuality and affording disabled sexual citizenship. People with disabilities can now have access to the same pornographic stimuli previously geared towards the satiation of the able-bodied sexual appetite.

In pornography, the sexuality of all types of bodies are displayed. Pornographic representations of individuals with disabilities contest dominant socially and politically sanctioned views of disabled sexuality. They challenge what the disabled identity ought to be, and what sex roles people with disabilities are pressured to adopt. Disability pornography has the potential to enfranchise this marginalised group to create their own standards and varieties of experiencing bodily pleasures. Pornography challenges the able-disable binary, thus narrowing the gap in erotic and bodily encounters as it has done in the realm of interracial sex.

However, the intersection of pornography and disabled sexuality introduces further complexities for consideration. For example, even liberatory discourses could still exclude certain disabilities. Does disabled sexual enfranchisement privilege disabled bodies that still retain some functional mobility? Where do individuals who live with extensive paralysis fall within the nexus of disability and sexuality? Engagement with these topics may augment the complex field of sexuality and disability. More questions can be raised in an examination of

new identities such as devotees, pretenders and wannabees. Who are the creators of disabled pornography content? Who consumes this content? Answers to these questions encourage dialogue on the intersection of disability, sexuality and pornography. The intersection of disabled sexuality and pornography definitely warrants further empirical, conceptual and methodological engagement not only in the south, but globally as well.

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