

**SCHOOL OF SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL POLICY
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Module code: SLSP3071

Module title: Sexualities and Society

Question number and title: Q6) How and why was sexuality central to feminist debates during the 1980s and 1990s?

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Q6) How and why was sexuality central to feminist debates during the 1980s and 1990s?

Introduction

The 1980/90s 'sex wars' was an intense period of feminist sexuality debate, marked with bitter divisions and distorted representations. However, the essay intends to illustrate the complexity of the 'sex wars', as despite charged rhetoric, most feminists shared a similar critical conception of hierarchical heteronormative sexual relations. Nevertheless, many feminists, in criticising heterosexual hegemony, have constructed new sexual value systems – therefore, the essay will advocate the utilisation of communal-anarchism/anarcha-feminism, to illustrate connections between feminist perspectives and the need to criticise *all* hierarchical relations.

To begin, the essay will assess social, political and economic factors that influenced sexuality's prominence within the 1980/90s' feminist debates; essentially considering the move from a one-sex to a two-sex model, an analysis of Sexology and its constructions of categories separating 'normal' and 'pathological' sex practices. Also discussed, will be the influence of the 1960s' sexual revolution and the moralist right-wing 1980s backlash, upon the 'sex wars'. Whilst the essay will consider the relevance/effects of the first wave feminist movement, there will be a concentration upon second wave feminism, given its prominent relation with the 'sex wars'. Second wave feminists were criticised for having exclusionary/restrictive practices, as pro-sex and third wave feminists developed as a counteraction to emphasise the importance of diversified sexual pleasure, in contrast to the lesbian/radical feminist undermining of sexual diversity.

After considering the context of the 1980/90s sexuality debates, there will be a reflection on the relevant theoretical arguments that influenced the 'sex wars'; including liberal and

Marxist feminism, and an in-depth analysis of radical feminism. The essay will discuss the pro-sex and third wave feminist arguments, and their critique of radical feminism. Following this, will be an outline of the reasons for why anarchism, specifically anarcho-communalism/anarcha-feminism, can assist with the sexuality debates still taking place within feminism - given many of the 1980/90s debates remain unresolved. To illustrate this, the essay will draw on Rich's (1980) compulsory heterosexuality conception and Butler's (1990) work into the heterosexual matrix, demonstrating their relation with anarchist criticisms of hierarchical relations. To finalise and explore the central arguments, the essay will consider four case studies - pornography, sadomasochism, lesbianism and heterosexuality - that were central to the 1980s/90s and current feminist debates.

Political Economic Context

The political and economic context is important when understanding why and how sexuality was central to the 1980/90s feminist debates. The 'sex wars' centred around sexuality, its 'nature', manifestation and effects (Cohen 1986). Laquer's (1990) one-sex/two-sex model is relevant when charting the progression of views regarding sexuality. The one-sex model was predominant prior to the eighteenth/nineteenth century, arguing there is variation of genders alongside a unified sex. In contrast, the two-sex model, developing after the eighteenth/nineteenth century (illustrated by the rise of Sexology), polarised differences between men and women based upon biological/genital assumptions. Some feminist sexuality theories during the 'sex wars' drew parallels with the two-sex model; however, the critical conceptions of sexuality associated with the pro-sex, third wave and queer theorists/feminists have demonstrated the socially constructed nature of both sex and gender. This development is essential for critically deconstructing hierarchical sexuality relations.

Nye (1999) refers to the rise of industrialisation in the nineteenth century, with health becoming a central state concern. It was the first time sexual ‘problems’ were hierarchically categorised/ordered in an act of professional specialisation. This marked the beginning of sexualities’ influence/importance on identity – an issue central to the ‘sex wars’. It illustrates the excessive rise of the individual; something Elias (2000) calls *homo clauses*. In fact, Elias’s (2000) analysis of sociogenetic (social, political and economic relations) and psychogenetic (behavioural and emotional) changes is helpful for understanding the development of sexuality and its connection to political economy. For him, the increasing level of interdependence has issued in a heightened level of self-restraint regarding emotions, including sexuality – and if breached, produces shame. Sexology (the scientific study of sexuality) was shaped by these changing sociogenetic and psychogenetic processes, especially the focus upon controlling sexuality, with sexuality constructed as the most powerful, potentially destructive/‘perverse’, biological essence (Bullough 1994; Rubin 1989). Categories/typologies developed, including the infamous homosexual, where ‘pathological’ (non-reproductive) and ‘natural’ (reproductive) sexual behaviours/practices were hierarchically separated. Nevertheless, despite Sexology’s flaws, it highlighted sexual diversity – whilst constructing a sexual value system – having a positive influence upon feminist debates (Rubin 1989).

Enlightenment philosophers’ emphasis upon preventing ‘irrational’ homosexuality influenced Sexology, but initiated a movement away from the citizens to the state, with homosexuality made illegal in 1885 (Hekma 1988). However, such developments produced a current of counter-power identity politics, specifically in the 1940s, to fight against increasing regulation. The 1960s marked the beginning of the sexual revolution and the inspirational formation of new social movements (Weeks 2007; Harriss 1989). In backlash, the 1970s/80s witnessed the rise of the moral right, something many feminists have argued had a profound

influence upon the development of radical/conservative feminist analyses of sexuality (Segal 1998; Chancer 2000). Therefore, even though the rise of Thatcher/Reagan had positive effects upon homosexual right mobilisation (specifically in response to Section 28 – see Stacey 1991), the effects were also counterproductive for feminist analyses when considering the essentialist notions developed by radical feminists.

What became known as first wave feminism formed around 1850-1930 (Banks 1986), and has roots in the mid-nineteenth century abolitionism movement - as women were frustrated by the patriarchal attitudes of many within the movement; thus, they began discussing the 'women's question' (DuBois 1971). Banks (1986) provides a detailed outline of the wave, referring to its preoccupation with women's suffrage. Initially, liberal politics/ideas shaped the wave, but as the movement developed, feminism became increasingly associated with socialism; reflecting the intensified sophistication of the state, alongside the Labour Party replacing the Liberal Party's hegemony. However, Banks argues socialism 'destroyed' the first wave, as divisions formed, with many leaving feminism to focus upon socialism.

Socialism also had an interesting relationship with second wave feminism (see Harriss 1989), which developed in the 1960s in conjecture with profound social, political and economic shifts. As mentioned, the sexual revolution (1960s-80s) was an essential catalyst for the prolific organisational development. Escoffier (2004a; 2004b; 2004c; 2004d; 2004e) outlines the sexual revolution, referring to its promotion of extra-marital sex, pleasure, relaxation of morality and the invention of the Pill. The sexual revolution's origins date back to the 1940/50s where writers, such as Wilhelm Reich, challenged Freudian arguments that repression is required to sustain modern life. Reich branded the state as destructive, through its maintenance of sexual repression; creating dangerous by-products such as fascism (Reich also had a notable influence upon anarchism – Cohn 2010). Kinsley's empirical research into sexuality, in 1958, influenced the sexual revolution, through challenging hegemonic

constructions of sexuality by illustrating the diversity of sexual behaviours/practices. The sexual revolution undermined Sexologist's assumptions of 'natural' sex, as people began to explore other practices such as homosexuality, sadism and masochism (S&M), bisexuality and transgenderism.

Second wave feminism utilised consciousness-raising as a political strategy, where small groups of women shared experiences for collective empowerment and 'sisterhood' bonding (Sowards and Renegar 2004). MacKinnon (1982) argues conscious-raising challenges male constructions of reality/'truth'. However, Freeman (1970) warns that whilst the creation of these 'structurelessness' groups reflected a history of oppression, there is no such thing as a 'structurelessness' group, and that such a conception is created by those with the power to control the hidden structures. Nevertheless, third wave feminism - which developed partly in response to the 'sex wars' - adapted consciousness-raising to become a broader cultural critical movement; unfortunately often having the limitation of excessive individualism (Sowards and Renegar 2004).

As mentioned, the sexual revolution resulted in a counter-revolution by the moral right. The USA moralist current was stronger than in Britain, largely accounting for the differences in success (Weeks 2007; Wilson 1983). Furthermore, a section of the feminist movement responded with the same venomous backlash, as typified by Jeffreys's (1990) analysis of the sexual revolution. Jeffreys argued the sexual revolution failed to challenge damaging male defined power relations, and that women's increasing economic and political rights were undermined through the sexual revolution's reinforcement of heterosexual power. Jeffreys proclaimed that attempts to remove sexual inhibitions actually constructed new pressures/oppressions for women. Therefore, the sexual revolution, for many feminists, was profoundly different to women's sexual liberation; with Wagner (1982) arguing that only when the link between sex and power is broken, will we see the latter's realisation.

In fact, the anti-pornography movement (specifically, MacKinnon and Dworkin 1997) within USA worked alongside the moral conservatives to construct the 1983 anti-pornography Ordinance, which was eventually denounced as unconstitutional (Vance 1993). The Ordinance, for radical feminists, was constructed as a critique against (and potential replacement of) the USA's Obscenity law (which the moral right never took seriously, given the Obscenity law's Republican vote appeal) arguing that pornography is an abuse of women's civil rights and that women who are 'harmed' by pornography should be able to take the 'perpetrators' to court (Segal 1998). Whilst the Ordinance failed, anti-pornography ideas were mainstreamed, feminism was stereotyped, and the state's role within sexuality intensified – as shown by the cooption of feminist arguments by the right-wing during the 1985-86 Attorney General's Commission on Pornography (Vance 1993). Vance states that many of the commission's recommendations have been implemented, restricting diversity and sexual expression.

Such moralist conceptions were central to the 'sex wars'. The 'sex wars' were marked by the 1982 ninth Barnard Conference, "Towards a Politics of Sexuality", with many feminists feeling isolated due to the rise of the moral right (Vance 1993). The Conference, held in the USA, saw women travel from around the world – men were allowed, but few attended (Wilson 1983). Vance (1993) argues that given the then growing backlash, the Barnard Conference wanted to focus upon sexual expression, especially as the anti-pornography movement's views were hegemonic within the USA. Therefore, there was controversy regarding the make-up of the Conference's planning group because of their emphasis upon sexual diversity (Wilson 1983). Complaints by radical feminists resulted in the President of Barnard interrogating staff and confiscating the Dairy (a booklet documenting the one year Conference planning group) (Vance 1993; Fraimen 1995) alongside the Conference series losing its funding (McBride N.D.). The Coalition for a Feminist Sexuality and Against

Sadomasochism (made up of Women Against Pornography, Women Against Violence Against Women and New York Radical Feminists) produced a leaflet called “We Protest” for the conference, whilst feminists accused each other of McCarthyism tactics (Dejanikus 1982), as others criticised *Off Our Backs* for misrepresenting the conference (Wilson 1983). Although the anti-conference feminists petitioned outside the event, issuing strong personal attacks against pro-sex academics, many argue the conference represented the end of anti-pornography’s dominance (Vance 1993; Fraimen 1995). For instance, Stryker (2008) states that whilst transgender was barely discussed, the conference provided impetus for feminist recognition of transgender.

Theoretical Debates

There is a fatalistic perception that the ‘sex wars’ were intensely polarised (Ciclitira 2004), ignoring the complexity of the debates (Cohen 1986). For instance, many pro-pornography feminists accepted the reality of sexism within hegemonic pornography (Fraimen 1995; Chancer 2000), and even radical feminists such as Adrienne Rich supported the movement against the anti-pornography Ordinance (Vance 1993). Therefore, the essay seeks to demonstrate the potential for anarchist theory to illustrate the consensus amongst feminists, now and during the ‘sex wars’, when criticising hierarchy, patriarchy and heterosexual dominance. As Rubin (1989) argues, a hierarchical sexual value system exists where married, heterosexual, reproductive sex presides over a sliding scale of ‘deviant’ sexualities. Rubin refers to this as the charmed circle (‘normal’ sexuality) versus the outer limits (‘deviant’ sexualities), where a line, subject to change, between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ sexuality, is drawn.

Central feminist theoretical perspectives that influenced ‘sex war’ debates include liberal feminism, Marxist/socialist feminism and radical feminism. Liberalism has a conflicting relationship with feminism, given its patriarchal historical background. For instance,

Rousseau argued women were the source of sexual passion, creating inequality given men's inability to resist; he therefore advocated patriarchal control in order for men to be free/rational (Eisenstein 1981). This contradiction between liberalism and patriarchy is central to twentieth-century liberalism's problems. Regardless, Saenz (2006) argues liberalism is often misconceived, with many feminist critiques of liberalism actually reliant upon liberal assumptions, forming internal, not opposed, critiques. Moreover, liberalism was central to the successes of the first wave, alongside the second wave, given its emphasis upon rights and equality.

Eisenstein (1999) is an example of Marxist/socialist feminist arguments that influenced the 'sex wars', through illustrating the profound interdependent effects capitalist patriarchy has, whilst acknowledging patriarchy existed before and after capitalism. Eisenstein argues that whereas orthodox Marxists have focused upon the relations of production, feminists (essentially, liberal feminists) have concentrated upon the relations of reproduction – both ignoring the complex interrelation. Whilst both Marx and Engels recognised the inequality caused for women due to marriage and the family, they only saw this as a class/proletariat matter. Regardless, Barrett (1988) refers to conceptual problems with the Marxist feminist analysis; for instance, there is confusion over whether to privilege an analysis of class or patriarchy.

Radical feminists such as MacKinnon (1982) have even adopted Marxism terminology/analysis, arguing sexuality for feminists is like work for Marxists and that feminists have illustrated the internal, alongside external, nature of power. However, MacKinnon falls into the same essentialist problems most radical feminists do, conflating sexuality and gender, arguing the former defines the latter. Essentially radical feminists want to remove power from sex, even aiming to challenge domination/submission fantasies, which they see as an unconscious reflection of patriarchal socialisation (Cohen 1986). Such an

analysis illustrates strong connections to Sexologist/two-sex model constructions of sexuality being a powerful, potentially destructive, force and source of identity (Kesler 2002). Their negative analysis of power is central to their critical conception of consent (Cohen 1986; MacKinnon 1982). They paternalistically argue that those unaware of the 'damages' such thoughts do are in a state of false consciousness due to patriarchal relations (Dejanikus 1982). For instance, Jones (1985) argues she enjoyed heterosexual sex, but primarily 'on the bottom' because of her patriarchal masochist ('coping') tendencies and the power of 'romantic love'. This essay argues, however, that power is embedded within a nexus of interdependent relations shaped by the changing balance of internal and external restraints (Elias 1987), therefore acknowledging the ability for positive resistance within power relations (Munt 2007).

As Rubin (1989) argues, radical feminists construct new forms of hierarchical sexual relations, where their 'ideal' sexuality is 'vanilla' lesbianism with "tenderness, intimacy, and an egalitarian loving relationship" (Cohen 1986: 75). For many radical feminists, through having sexual relations with men, women lose control over their sexuality (Jones 1985). Radical feminists argue that the promotion of sexual diversity is a justification of the belief that men's 'sex drive' should not be repressed (Jackson 1985). Pro-sex feminists, which developed throughout the 'sex wars', criticise radical feminists' reductive power analysis, arguing such absolutist conceptions construct new forms of repression, as practices such as pornography allow for sexual expression if the patriarchal relations underlying it are challenged (Cohen 1986). Pro-sex analyses utilise a Hegelian master/slave construction, illustrating that whilst the master is in charge, the master is also dependent upon the slave, providing chance for resistance and counter-power forces (Cohen 1986). Essentially, pro-sex feminists demonstrate the socially constructed nature of both sex and gender, something third wave feminists (forming around the 1980s-90s) have developed.

Third wave feminism is very attractive to younger people engaged in feminist reclaiming processes (Sowards and Renegar 2004), highlighting the contradictions within the second wave (Orr 1997). For instance, Riot Grrls formed due to the male dominated punk scene and their disillusionment with second wave feminism; however, their attempts of hegemonic resistance were undermined, with the media co-opting their advances for mainstream gain, distorting their radical message (Jacques 2001). However, Orr (1997) argues third wave analyses are often too simplistic and ahistorical, ignoring the enormous influence the previous waves have had. However, third wave feminism has a more complex analysis of sexuality than pro-sex feminists; for instance, Chancer (2000) argues that the pro-sex feminists ignore the broader context of practices such as S&M (capitalism, for example). Unfortunately, third wave feminism is often individualistic; nevertheless, there are collective movements/orientations growing stronger within the wave (Borda 2009; Wolf 1991).

As mentioned, it is argued anarchism, specifically anarcho-communalism/anarcha-feminism - in contrast to individualistic anarchism, can assist with illustrating the commonality amongst feminists in the 'sex wars' and now. Anarcho-communalism's focus upon self-liberation (Bookchin 2004), illustrates parallels to pro-sex/third wave emphasis upon self-expression/diversity. Furthermore, anarchists' critical historical analysis of hierarchical development (Bookchin 1982) can assist with social, political and economic understanding of sexual hierarchical development. Bookchin's (1995) dialectical naturalism, for instance, can help challenge hierarchical relations with its advancement of an 'actualised reality' where rationality and ethics are employed to construct a fairer, non-hierarchical society. In this vein, feminists from all perspectives should concentrate upon constructing an 'actualised' reality where hierarchy is undermined – however it should be critically remembered that many, especially the radical feminists, are guilty of constructing new hierarchical relations and sexual values systems (Rubin 1989).

Anarcho-communalism and feminism have a very interesting, strong and liberating frequently ignored connection/history, with both considering the negative facets of hierarchical relations and the importance of self-liberation, as discussed by Moody (1990) (also see Chuck 2010.; Kornegger 2000). Moody argues that both the first and second wave feminists were influenced by anarchist ideas, even if not acknowledged; and that with the notable exception of Proudhon, anarcho-communalists disagreed with liberal assumptions that men and women are 'naturally' different. Many anarcho-communalists rejected the idea of a fixed human nature, instead constructing an early conception of patriarchy and socialisation, acknowledging the prevalence of power/politics in contrast to liberal assumptions regarding the separation of 'natural' and social/political arenas.

Modern feminists have criticised anarchist influenced free love movements (see Jeffreys (1990) on the sexual revolution, for instance) for covertly disguising male power. However, Moody (1990) argues that despite popular perceptions, free love is essentially about women having control over their sexuality:

Sexual liberation according to anarchists meant that women should have the freedom to love whom they wanted, when they wanted, without a double standard, with or without a sanction of marriage, and with control over the reproductive consequences (p.166).

Context is essential. Free love was particularly attractive for women within the eighteenth/nineteenth century, given that women were often forced into marriage/motherhood. In fact, many women became asexual, as a radical political statement, given the inadequacy of birth control and associated problems – Emma Goldman even went to jail for defending birth control rights (Moody 1990). However, Fahs (2010) argues that asexual radical feminist politics (such as Cell 16's) during the

‘sex wars’ were largely ignored, especially given the influence of the sexual revolution. Emma Goldman (1900-1923), central to the free love movement, was very progressive for her time, being one of the first women to campaign for homosexual rights; even some anarchists tried to silence her lectures on homosexuality. Sexology also had a marked influence upon her views regarding homosexuality. However, female anarchists often criticise prevalent patriarchy within the anarchist movement (see Miriam and Ali N.D.); nevertheless, anarcha-feminism can assist with ensuring male anarchists’ practice what they preach (Chuck 2010).

Adrienne Rich’s (1980) political lesbianism and Judith Butler’s (1990) work on the heterosexual matrix are feminist analyses that can illustrate the connections between feminist theory and anarchism, essentially through their critique of heterosexual hierarchical constructions/power. Rich, a radical feminist, argued feminism marginalises lesbian existence and that the ‘choice’ involved within supposedly ‘natural’ heterosexual relations requires critical consideration. Instead, Rich argued that heterosexuality is a compulsory man-made political institution, controlling women. Whilst Rich’s lesbian continuum has been criticised for desexualising lesbianism (Goodloe 2009; Calhoun 1995), broadening lesbianism to consider non-sexual women experiences/connections helps challenge hierarchical constructions. However, Rich (1989, cited in Kitzinger *et al* 1992) has regretted the perceived desexualisation. Despite this, Rich was one of the first to criticise the supposed ‘naturalness’ of heterosexuality (Goodloe 2009). Emma Goldman’s (1900-1923) own writings could even be indicative of the lesbian continuum and its potential for political resistance:

Modern woman is no longer satisfied to be the beloved of a man; she looks for understanding, comradeship; she wants to be treated as a human being and not simply as an object for sexual gratification. And since man in many cases cannot offer her this, she turns to her sisters (no page number).

Rich's analysis is partly essentialist, as the sexual value system is reordered, not competently challenged (Rubin 1989). This is where the work of Judith Butler can help, given her more critical conception of the hierarchical 'natural' links between sex, gender and sexuality and its relation to compulsory heterosexuality. For Butler (1990), hierarchical structures/boundaries are constructed through abjects, something expelled from the body to construct a subject. The heterosexual matrix is sustained and constructed through these abjects, as sex, sexuality and gender are portrayed as 'naturally' linked; Butler concentrates upon illustrating the discursive/political production of the matrix and 'intelligible' genders. Butler utilises drag to illustrate the instability of the matrix as through gender imitation, drag demonstrates the imitative 'nature' of gender *per se*. Thus, certain gender performances, which repeated (illustrating its instability) constitute the 'I' (Butler 1997), demonstrates the flawed notion of an 'original' (i.e. heterosexual) gender, assisting with the proliferation of genders as hegemonic gender norms are challenged by internally criticising the very power relations the heterosexual matrix relies upon through a process of performative reinscription. This highlights the productive potential of power for resisting damaging hierarchical constructions, and the problems of reductive analyses of power that dominated the 'sex wars'. For instance, Riot Grrls' practices threaten, whilst meeting notable resistance, 'authentic' meanings associated with masculinity linked to the heterosexual matrix (Coates 1997). Atkinson and DePalma (2009) are however concerned that the heterosexual matrix will become fixed, undermining the flexibility and instability of the concept/external reality, which is why in 1993 Butler renamed the concept to the 'heterosexual hegemony'.

Butler's work had a strong influence upon Queer Theory (associated with third wave feminism), which aims to deconstruct/destabilise identities and the idea of a 'natural' sex,

sexuality and gender (Jagose 1996). Queer Theory can help anarchism focus upon challenging the sexuality hierarchies, despite the tensions between anarchism and post-modernism (Shannon and Willis 2010). However, identity can be important - even Butler progressed from romantic ideas of identity politics within *Gender Trouble* (1990) to consider the necessity and political potential universal categories, such as 'woman', can have if adopted critically (Olson and Worsham N.D.).

The 'Sex Wars'

Alongside what is known as the 'Big Three' (pornography, S&M and butch-femme relations) (Vance 1993), lesbianism and heterosexual sex/pleasure are discussed below as case study examples of the 'sex war' debates; further illustrating how and why sexuality was central to feminist 1980/90 debates, alongside demonstrating the connections to the theoretical debates, namely anarcha-feminism/anarcho-communalism, above.

Pornography

The 'sex wars' are sometimes referred to as the 'porn debates' (Fraimen 1995). Segal (1998) argues that pornography was *the* feminist issue of the 1980s, being the best-funded campaign in feminist history. The moralist backlash had a significant impact upon radical feminist arguments; for instance, central questions included whether pornography causes violence, with radical feminists often using misrepresentative images to create causal links (Segal 1998). In fact, S&M pornography was used and misrepresented by supporters of the Ordinance to justify their attempted censorship of pornography (Vance 1993). Radical feminists relied upon the media effects model, which argues there is a direct link between consumption and behaviour, relying upon biased, unreliable 'scientific' experimental research (Gauntlett 2005). Separating erotica from pornography and aggressive and non-aggressive pornography, Donnerstein (1984) argued that aggressive pornography slightly increases

violence, for instance. Cynically, it partly illustrates why radical feminists generalised with violent pornography, equating all pornography to when women are “violated, being humiliated, tortured, whipped, chained, burned, bound, gagged, suffocated” (MacKinnon and Dworkin 1997:384). However, pro-sex feminists critically argued/argue that media effects’ studies fails to demonstrate a consistent relationship between pornography and violence, with media effects researchers’ even admitting their utilisation of stereotypes (Segal 1998).

The profound irony within radical feminist discourse/writings on pornography was their actual reproduction of ‘violent’ and erotic/pornographic scenes (Ciclitira 2004; Segal 1998). For instance, Brooke (1979) covered a Women Against Pornography conference, documenting the conference’s use of a pornography slideshow. Generally, radical feminists criticised pornography’s misogyny, degradation, male power and violence; illustrating the profound negativity attached to power by radical feminists – as demonstrated by the following quote:

The most pernicious message relayed by pornography is that women are natural sexual prey to men and love it; that sexuality and violence are congruent, and that for women sex is essentially masochistic, humiliation pleasurable, physical abuse erotic (Rich 1980:641).

As mentioned, radical feminists’ arguments often rested upon biological/essentialist assumptions, where erections were accounted as a ‘natural’ male response to pornography (Segal 1998). Radical feminist, Wagner (1982), believed that pornography teaches men to manipulate power to control women through sadism, whilst women are passively duped by the patriarchal relations and ‘romance’ - becoming masochists. In response to censorship criticism, radical feminists argued such freedom is male defined, failing to allow expression for *all*. In fact, even liberal feminists such as Clare Short (1991) argued the production of

Page 3 censors women's freedom of expression. However, pro-sex feminists', during the 'sex wars, criticised radical feminists, stating that many lesbians/women watch and derive pleasure from pornography (Fraimen 1995). Furthering the need for a reformation of the sex industry, pro-sex feminists emphasised the increasing break down of barriers, as technological advances allow different ethnic groups and classes (for instance) to produce/consume pornography - despite the prevalent restrictions (Ciclitira 2004; Segal 1998). For instance, there has been a growth in female erotica, such as *Black Lace*; but whilst drawing upon feminism, it heavily relies upon male pornographic conventions - failing to criticise the broader facets of male power (Ciclitira 2004).

Despite the divisions, there were/are areas of convergence, with most feminists recognising the patriarchal relations involved in hegemonic pornography. Whilst conceptions of ends differ, the desire to break down heteronormative hierarchically defined sexual relations creates a common focus that can be heightened through anarcho-feminist/anarcho-communalism understanding, through respecting freedom of expression alongside challenging damaging power hierarchy/relations.

Sadomasochism

'Sex war' discussions regarding radical feminists' analysis of heterosexual relations representing sadism (men) and masochism (women), illustrates the profound tensions sexuality caused the feminist movement during the 'sex wars'. This relates to feminist debates on whether S&M imitates male power relations; resulting in a focus upon lesbian S&M rather than heterosexual S&M (Wilson 1983). Such bias also ignored class/race relations (France 1984). Consent was central to all 'sex wars' debates, but especially S&M. Views regarding consent were/are shaped by where the sexual practice falls on the sexual value system; the lower the practice, the more problematic consent is (Rubin 1989). Anti

S&M campaigners argued the 'free choice' justification utilised by pro S&M advocates was an expression of male defined liberal 'autonomy' (Hein 1982). Groups such as SAMOIS (a lesbian feminist S&M group in San Francisco) campaigned against the repression of lesbian S&M, as the anti-S&M protesters (essentially radical feminists) argued that S&M is only done under damaging, politicised male power relations (France 1984). However, France (1984) argued that even SAMOIS used private/public 'natural' sex distinctions to justify S&M by arguing that it is acceptable, if done in private.

Ardill and O'Sullivan (2005), demonstrate the tensions S&M caused amongst feminists, especially lesbians, through drawing upon their own experiences regarding the controversy, during the 'sex wars', of whether S&M groups should be allowed to meet at the London Lesbian and Gay Centre, as S&M was considered a threat to political lesbianism. The majority of the managerial committee did not want S&M groups at the centre, and there was a bitter campaign by anti-S&M lesbians against the presence of S&M groups. Eventually, S&M groups were allowed access, leading to many anti-S&M groups writing to the Greater London Council - accusing the centre of fascism/racism and anti-lesbianism.

S&M, as an outer limit sexuality, has been constructed as deviant partly through the legal/criminal system (Rubin 1989). For instance, whilst not directly related to the 'sex wars', White (2006) discusses the 1990 Spanner Trials where 16 men practicing S&M were convicted of assault (sadists) or abetting abuse (masochists) and 26 were cautioned, as the courts judged their S&M activities, which were photographed/videoed, un-consented.

'Operation Spanner' was undertaken by police after they received one of the video tapes, in belief that the practices had resulted in murder - importantly, something ignored throughout the trials, no one was murdered nor required medical assistance. The video was edited by the police, misrepresenting the nature of the practices, especially regarding consent. The Spanner Trust (N.D.a) formed in response to the Spanner Trial. However, legally, S&M rights have

been increasingly threatened with the 2008 Criminal Justice and Immigration Act making it possible to receive up to 3 years in prison for possessing 'extreme images' (The Spanner Trust 2008). Images judged as 'extreme'/'obscene' include those produced solely for sexual arousal, which can cause a 'serious injury' or are 'life threatening' (two subjectively defined terms) – illustrating the connections between S&M and pornography, and the effects of radical/moralist campaigns (The Spanner Trust 2008). In response, Backlash (N.D.) is campaigning for the repeal of section 63 of the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act. However, only recently was Rhianna's, a pop singer, song/video 'S&M' banned in several countries (NME 2011), with the Brits' asking her to 'tone down' the S&M references (Lee 2011); illustrating Hopkins's (1994) point that S&M debates have moved their emphasis from private to public identity questions.

A central 'sex war' debate was the extent to which gender norms and social context shape our perception of S&M, illustrating notable parallels to the Butler's (1990) desire to work within the heterosexual matrix to destabilise its restrictive gender norms (France 1984). For instance, Hopkins (1994) referred to how people engaged in S&M did not believe S&M was violent *per se*, due to the contextual and consensual nature of the act. By this, for pro-S&M/sex feminists, S&M utilises patriarchal relations within another context, performing (in Butler's words), with 'safe words', a scene - demonstrating a positive complex use of power and potentially radical challenge to the heterosexual matrix/hierarchical relations. Whilst many, such as Rubin, recognised the constraints upon consent - the emphasis upon the *simulation* of an act is important when illustrating the consent involved. However, radical feminists' emphasis upon broader power relations influencing sexual acts (such as capitalism) was/is important (Chancer 2000).

Anti and pro S&M activists would benefit from combining their conceptions of power to demonstrate the links between patriarchal hierarchical relations and S&M practices, but also

the positive reclaiming consensual nature many S&M actors take part in. Again, the potential for anarchy-feminism/anarcho-communalism, and its critical conception of hierarchical relations, but emphasis upon freedom of self-expression, would prove useful.

Lesbianism

Goodloe (2009) outlines three main stages to lesbian-feminist history. Around the beginning of the 1900s, in America and England, the emergence of the 'New Women' – where women obtained new rights - rejected 'femininity'. These women were tolerated because they were seen as asexual, not desiring women. However, the next generation of 'New Women' were treated more critically; with Sexology on the rise, they were accused of demanding male privilege and denounced as inverts. This laid the foundations for the 1940/50/60s butch/femme lesbian culture, developing in working class/urban communities.

The 'sex wars' divided the lesbian community through discussions regarding 'authentic' lesbianism (Hopkins 1994; Farquhar 2000); movements such as the anti-pornography campaign was associated with lesbian feminism, as male sexuality was demonised, alongside lesbians who undertook butch/femme roles (McBride N.D.). Role-playing related to debates on whether or not lesbians 'should' use dildos. Some, especially the lesbian feminists, saw/see dildos as male artefacts, representational of a penis undermining 'woman-identified-womanhood' - whereas, others (essentially, pro-sex) argued/argue dildos do not represent a penis as they are sex toys (Findlay 1992). However, the rise of lesbian feminism challenged heterosexual dominance within feminism, with many heterosexual feminists leaving to join political activism (Ardill and O'Sullivan 2005). For instance, Betty Friedan, feminist and President of the National Organisation of Women, argued lesbian issues were a 'Lavender Menace' (Chenier 2004); and despite lesbians making up a sizeable proportion of the Women Against Porn movement, leading figures - such as Brownmiller - had notable problems with

lesbianism (Brooke 1979). Therefore, lesbian feminists promoted lesbian 'woman-identified-woman' as a form of political resistance (Rich 1980).

Rudy (2001) documents the prevalence of lesbian separatism (a form of radical/revolutionary feminist politics and lesbian feminism) in the 1970s/1980s. Drawing on her own experiences of living in a women's only community/commune, Rudy demonstrates the profound restrictions such communities had, as diversified lesbian practices were ignored/stigmatised (Ardill and O'Sullivan 2005). Furthermore, lesbian separatists' critical conception of butch/femme roles illustrates an ignorance towards class differences and the potential for the roles to destabilise/denaturalise the heterosexual matrix (Goodloe 2009). However, Freedman's (1979) analysis of separatism's history within feminism reveals separate women's spheres radical potential. Such movements date back to the late nineteenth century/early twentieth century, assisting with feminist struggles, such as the women's suffrage; exemplifying, for Freedman, why lesbianism separatism revived the feminist movement.

The 'sex wars' and queer theory illustrated the importance of difference, whilst threatening the unity of lesbian feminism; as the separatist communities were criticised for their ahistorical, white, middle class essentialist constructions of 'women'. The separatist and radical lesbian feminists, for Rubin (1989), replaced heterosexual monogamous long-term relationships, with lesbian monogamous long-term relationships – therefore, the sexual hierarchy remained intact, limiting everyone's expression. Furthermore, tensions between bisexuals and lesbians were/are common. For instance, Jeffreys's (1999) argued the development of a 'bisexual movement' related to the male defined sexual revolution, as male bisexuals adopted the term 'bisexual' to indulge in homosexual sex, alongside maintaining their heterosexual relationships, spreading AIDS/HIV and practising S&M. Jeffreys (1999)

ironically claimed bisexual politics preaches essentialist notions of ‘truth’, claiming to be superior to lesbianism, through rejecting binaries.

However, whilst the rise of pro-sex/third wave feminism promoted a diversification of expression, through challenging political lesbianism’s hegemony, there are notable reservations regarding such movements working against lesbianism. Calhoun (1995) argues that despite an increasing consideration of diversity, the differences between lesbians and heterosexual women have been largely ignored, undermining lesbian history. For instance, when discussing S&M, the lesbian community focused upon women’s sexuality, not lesbian sexuality *per se*, with heterosexual women’s sexuality as the reference. As Farquhar (2000) argues, lesbians have been marginalised by gay men, within the homosexual community, and therefore have more to lose from a destabilisation of identity.

Again, divisions formed between and within lesbian, bisexual and heterosexual feminist communities, due to hierarchical constructions of ‘right’ and ‘wrong’. Again, anarcho-feminist/anarcho-communalism’s focus upon respecting self-expression and challenging hierarchical categories is relevant for creating an inclusive, fairer society for *all*. Therefore, through a critical analysis of compulsory heterosexuality, and the damages this creates for all women, alongside maintaining respect for the historical identity of lesbians and their right to self-defined sexual practice, essentially through the critique of heterosexual normative hierarchical relations; common elements of struggle between feminists can be emphasised – now and in the ‘sex wars’.

Heterosexuality

Many feminists, especially radical feminists, have been openly critical of heterosexual penetration (penis) and what they see as its patriarchal power connotations (MacKinnon 1982). For instance, Jeffreys’s (1999) criticism of bisexuality partly centres on her belief that

having sex ('enjoyment') with men works against, rather than with, women. Rich's (1980) analysis of heterosexual sex is very damning, undermining the choice many women make in heterosexual relationships. Rich's emphasis upon political lesbianism illustrates the rather ambiguous political nature of heterosexuality within the 'sex wars'. However, as Thompson (1992) argued, lesbians and heterosexual women have common experiences, and constructing divides only reinforces heterosexual hegemony. This illustrates the need to challenge *all* hierarchical relations. However, the dominance of lesbian feminism within the 1970s/80s meant that heterosexual pleasure and sexuality has only recently been seriously considered (Kitzinger *et al* 1992). For example, Jeffreys (1990) termed heterosexual desire the 'eroticisation of power differences', undermining many women's experiences/feelings.

Kitzinger *et al* (1992) argue that feminism is missing a theory of heterosexuality, as political identification with the label 'heterosexual' is rare, given its appearance of accepting, not subverting, the heterosexual hegemonic order. Heterosexual women often face conflicts between their personal experiences and political views. For instance, Jacklin (1992) argues that stating, "I am a heterosexual" is repressive, given the essentialist, imperialist notions attached to such a statement, acknowledging the inequality within heterosexual relations but also the potential for equality. Importantly, there are feminists such as Rowland (1992) who argue heterosexuality is not only about male power. Therefore, again, there is commonality amongst feminists, with many heterosexual feminists recognising the problems heterosexual hierarchical relations create – however, only through working towards destabilising all hierarchical forms will this heteronormative oppression be diluted and heterosexual pleasure respected; again demonstrating the potential for anarcho-communalist/anarcha-feminist perspectives.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the essay has illustrated how social, political and economic changes influenced the 1980/90s' 'sex wars'. Essentially, the rise of Sexology and the two-sex model allowed for a greater consideration of sexual diversity, but also influenced feminist essentialist sexual value constructions, as did the 1980s' moral right backlash, where hierarchy was left largely unchallenged. In response, the third wave/pro-sex feminists, utilising Sexology's and the sexual revolution's emphasis upon sexual diversity, campaigned against the sexual repression they felt many within the second wave were advocating.

Four case studies were utilised to illustrate how and why sexuality was central to the 1980/90s' feminist debates, through connecting the 'sex wars' to wider social, political, economic and theoretical debates. The heterosexual dominance of the feminist movement was challenged in the 1970/80s by lesbian feminism and its specific branch of lesbian separatism, with political lesbianism advocated as a form of political resistance. However, with the rise of the pro-sex/third wave movements, lesbian feminism was challenged by heterosexuals and lesbians, as it was accused of being too proscriptive/restrictive.

Heterosexual sex had been demonised, with women's pleasure undermined unless 'vanilla' style lesbian sex was practiced. This was true for butch/femme role-playing and S&M, as well, as lesbian feminists criticised both for reinforcing heterosexual dominance/power relations. Many lesbian feminists were also involved within the anti-pornography movement, and unlike pro-sex feminists who advocated a reformation of the sex industry, they argued pornography represented male power, creating violence, rape and degradation.

Power was central to the 'sex wars'. For radical/lesbian feminists, power is totalised, reductive and negative. Pro-sex feminists and the third wave, however, considered the positive subversive ability of power. Here is where Rich and Butler conflict, as Butler advances from Rich's absolutist analysis of heterosexual power to illustrate the ways people can perform within and subvert normative gender assumptions. Regardless, both theorists are

examples of feminist theory that have strong parallels, despite differences, with anarchist desire to break down hierarchical relations. Essentially, the essay has argued that through an anarcha-feminist/anarcho-communalist perspective, the mainstream conception of feminist polarisation during the 'sex wars', and even now, can be challenged through a consideration of the commonality between feminist perspectives regarding sexuality, essentially through focusing upon feminists' general critique of hierarchical heteronormative sexual relations.

With recent comments, such as David Willetts's (Prince 2011) - a government minister, alongside the government's moralist/two-sex social, political and economic policies – there is rightful concern that another feminist backlash will/is take/taking place. Given this, it is important feminism remembers the 'sex wars', alongside potentially embracing anarcha-feminist/anarcho-communalist theory, to resist further fragmentation and emphasise the commonality feminists share in their desire to challenge hierarchical sexualities and the compulsory heterosexual male power endemic within such relations.

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