

sExploration 2021



Remaining Sexually Connected While Socially Distanced



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Most people associate “sexual health” with STD’s, birth control and reproductive processes. However, The World Health Organization defines sexual health as “...a state of **physical, emotional, mental, and social well-being in relation to sexuality**; it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity.” During the COVID-19 outbreak there are dramatic challenges to attaining this and mental health professionals are particularly qualified and positioned to overcome these. *Sexual Health 2021* explores pandemic impacts on sexual wellness using biopsychosocialspiritual perspectives.

sExploration

Sexual issues can be as difficult for clinicians to address as they are for clients to share. While it is easy for them to go unrecognized, they are present across the lifespan. The annual **sExploration** series are designed by PASD as catalysts for discussions on integrating sexuality issues into all levels of our work: assessment, consultation, research, clinical practice, and teaching.

SCHEDULE OVERVIEW

All presentations will be held from **12:00 – 12:50 pm** CST via Zoom

Students will present their posters in 30-minute sessions which will include a facilitated discussion and Q&A.

This link will be used for all sExploration presentations:

<https://tcsedsystem-hipaa.zoom.us/j/95984944169?pwd=TU1HWZpNC84aUpaRE9vUkVqTTVvUT09>

Date	Day	Topic
March.17	Wednesday	Poster Presentations
March.18	Thursday	Physical Therapy, Sex & Psychological Wellbeing
March.22	Monday	Sexuality Among South Asian Women Throughout the Lifespan
March.24	Wednesday	Poster Presentations
March.25	Thursday	Sexuality, Disability & COVID
March.29	Monday	Empowerment & Destigmatization of Online Sex Work
March.31	Wednesday	Poster Presentations
April.01	Thursday	Discussion: Dating & Sex During COVID-19
April.05	Monday	Book Discussion: "It's Perfectly Normal"
April.07	Wednesday	Posters Presentations
April.08	Thursday	<i>PASD Sexually Speaking: Remaining Sex Positive During A Pandemic</i>

PARTICIPATE!

Sex and Dating During COVID-19: A Community Survey

This survey takes an informal peek at how the pandemic has impacted sex and dating for students at The Chicago School of Professional Psychology. The results of the anonymous questionnaire will shape a panel discussion on April 1st which will explore how these personal experiences may impact clinical perspectives. Please note that this is not a psychological study and survey participants are free to skip any questions or end their participation at any point.

If you would like to contribute please visit ...

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScIBsyNHEV_37MxLChn26IkU2wHyTNxdhWBN_hSuqwZyEwUYQ/viewform?usp=sf_link

PRESENTATIONS

Poster Presentations

Wednesday, March 17th

The Relationship Between Endometriosis and Bipolar Disorder: How Painful Periods Can Exacerbate Pre-Existing Mental Disorders

Paris Benson-Perez, B.A.

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This poster provides an overview of the clinical and diagnostic features of Bipolar Disorder found in the DSM-5, as well as the symptomatology of the menstrual disorder Endometriosis. The relationship between a psychiatric illness and a menstrual cycle disorder is explored, focusing on how the pain experienced while menstruating exacerbates and greatly impacts the symptoms and severity of Bipolar Disorder.

Adjusting New Mothers to Their New Sex Life

Nicole Dutz, M.S.

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This poster provides a review of challenges associated with sexual health and motherhood. Positive interventions that may prepare new mothers for their new sex life, while adjusting to new parenting roles, are explored. The impacts of mental health, relationship adjustments, and biological changes on sexual health are also considered.

Connecting to Our Bodies: Physical Therapy, Sex and Psychological Wellbeing

Thursday, March 18th **rescheduled for Thursday, April 15th**

Physical Therapists play vital roles in sexual wellbeing. Learn what pelvic health therapy entails, what therapists do as a pelvic health specialist, what conditions they treat and how they go about evaluating and treating them. Mental health/psychological implications of these conditions will be explored. Bring your questions! **Presenter: Emily Grimm** is a Physical Therapy at Rush Physical Therapy. She graduated from Kenyon College with a BA in Psychology in 2005 and completed a Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) at A.T. Still University in 2010. She specializes in general orthopedics and is a pelvic health specialist, which allows her to treat a variety of conditions for both men and women that include pelvic floor dysfunction and sexual dysfunction.

Sexuality Among South Asian Women Throughout the Lifespan

Monday, March 22nd

South Asians are one of the fastest-growing immigrant communities in North America. The presentation provides an overview of how first and second-generation South Asian women understand their sexuality throughout their lifespan and how cultural factors impact their sexual health. Specific factors associated with gender-role socialization, relationship and intimacy, and roles of women within collectivist, hierarchical, and patriarchal structures will be discussed. **Presenters: Herleena Verraich** completed her BSc. in Psychology: Brain and Cognition and Neuroscience from the University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada, and is currently a first-year student in the Clinical Psy.D. Program. **Isha Mahajan** is a third-year Clinical Psy.D. student writing her dissertation on the lived experiences of South Asian mothers in the U.S. **Khyati Patel** is also a third-year Clinical Psy.D. student. She completed her master's thesis in sexual education among South Asian Women in Canada. She is currently writing her dissertation on the lived experiences of South Asian parents who have children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in the U.S.

Check out the ***Sugar & Spice Virtual Festival*** (March 23-27) which provides a forum for people raised in traditional societies to express themselves with confidence and purpose when it comes to sex. <https://sugarandspice.asia>

Poster Presentations

Wednesday, March 24th

Many Ways to Make a Family: A Look into Gamete Donation and its Impact on a Child's Mental Health

Elana Horowitz, B.A.

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This poster provides information on how children and parents perceive conception through gamete donation and touches on the mental health of children conceived in this way. The relationship between the parent(s) and child of gamete-donation families is investigated.

Asexuality: Desire, Shame, and Sexual Health

Shairee Lackey, M.A., M.S., LCPC

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This poster provides a review of asexuality as a sexual orientation classification including the historical pathologizing of the population. The presentation will discuss all facets of asexuality including an exploration of desire, shame, and sexual health for this emerging population.

Sexuality, Disability and COVID-19

Thursday, March 25th

Pandemics place everyone at risk, but for some populations such as individuals with disabilities, these risks may have a domino effect on other areas of functioning. According to the World Health Organization, disability status is the largest minority group in the world and comprises about 15% of the population. Among these individuals roughly 6.6% are living with mobility concerns that may require additional assistance or services. With the outbreak of COVID-19, many states placed restrictions on work, travel and programming that created obstacles for many disabled individuals' life. For various reasons, these services can be instrumental in an individual's ability to visit partners, go on dates, and have sex. Sexuality as a source of pleasure and as an expression of identity is not often recognized for people with disabilities. This presentation will focus on the impact of COVID-19 and related restrictions on the romantic and sexual lives of individuals with disabilities.

Presenter: Logan Wiseman completed their Master of Counseling degree at The Chicago School of Professional Psychology and is currently a second-year student in the Clinical Psy.D. Program.

Empowerment & Destigmatization of Online Sex Work in a Digital Era

Monday, March 29th

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, utilization of the internet as a sexual outlet has reached an all-time high. With no face-to-face contact, how can we ensure that our sexual health is being attended to? Online sex work seems to have accounted for this lack of human contact, and in this interview with Alexis Luna we will discuss her personal experience with the pandemic and how it has affected her work, as well as sexual empowerment and the strive towards reducing the stigma surrounding sex work. **Presenters: Alexis Luna** received her Bachelors in Human Development and Family Studies with a specialization in Gerontology and a minor in Sociology from Purdue University Northwest. She received her Master of Social Work with a focus in Health from Indiana University Northwest. Alexis works as a Behavior Technician in a Psychiatric Hospital. **Caroline Rutherford** is a first-year Clinical Psy.D. student with a specific interest in neuropsychology. She received her B.A. in Psychology from Indiana University Northwest.

Poster Presentations

Wednesday, March 31st

"Is this Safe?": The Effects of Covid-19 on Sexuality and Sexual Wellness

Katrina Ramirez, B.A.

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This poster examines sexuality and sexual wellness concerns related to COVID-19, exploring safety issues for those who are sexually active during the pandemic. Sex positive approaches to interventions, such as PLLISIT model (Annon, 1976) and sex safety plans are presented.

Disorders of Sexual Development: Intersex Individuals and Sexual Development

Caroline Rutherford, B.A.

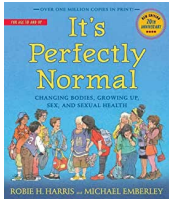
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Disorders of sex development (DSDs) are medical conditions in which the development of chromosomal, gonadal, or anatomic sex varies from normal and may be incongruent with each other, therefore intersex individuals are born with sex characteristics that do not fit into the normative binary notions of male or female bodies. Questions regarding the utility of gender assignment at birth are considered. The intersection of medical decisions and the consequences of them for sexual health and development are explored.

Discussion: Dating and Sex during COVID-19

Thursday, April 1st

As part of sExploration 2021 an anonymous survey regarding the impact of COVID-19 on sex and dating was sent to students across programs in The Chicago School of Professional Psychology. This discussion will use the results of the survey to explore how COVID-19 has impacted sexual health and perspectives on clinical work. **Moderator: Elana Horowitz** is a first-year Clinical Psy.D. **Discussant: Blake Klinsky** completed her M.A. clinical psychology. She is doing her doctoral research on the motivations behind downloading and using dating applications during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Book Discussion: "It's Perfectly Normal"

Monday, April 5th

The book, "*It's Perfectly Normal: Changing Bodies, Growing Up, Sex, and Sexual Health*" by Robie H. Harris, has been on the banned books list, meaning that it has been removed from libraries and classrooms, since 2006, while "The Care and Keeping of You" written by American Girl, has been readily available. This discussion will compare these two sexual health books and explore why "It's Perfectly Normal" continues to be banned in most academic settings. The importance of proper sex education encompassing all areas of sexual health, including intercourse, and why this isn't regularly enforced, will also be discussed. **Presenters: Paris Benson-Perez** completed her B.A. in Psychology and a minor in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Studies (CAMS) at New York University, and is first-year student in the Clinical Psy.D. Program. **Shairee Lackey** holds master's degrees in counseling psychology and applied psychology. She is currently pursuing her Psy.D. in clinical psychology and a master's degree in clinical psychopharmacology.

Book available at: https://www.amazon.com/s?k=it%27s+perfectly+normal+by+robie+harris&i=stripbooks&ref=nb_sb_noss

Poster Presentations

Wednesday, April 7th

Comfortability Around Conversations About Sex in the South Asian Community

Herleena Verraich, BSc

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Even though the South-Asian population is one of the fastest growing immigrant populations in North America, there is very little research around the topic of sexual health, and open conversations about sex within the community. This poster provides a review on the South-Asian concepts around sexuality, by placing an emphasis on the cultural differences that influence how sexuality is perceived. The presentation will look at how generational and cultural differences influence the comfortability around conversations about sex.

PASD Sexually Speaking: Remaining Sex Positive During A Pandemic

Thursday, April 8th

Join us for our first monthly salon! We will be discussing the challenges and opportunities COVID-19 has presented for sex positive practitioners and movements. **Moderators: Braden Berkey, Psy.D., CSE** is an Associate Professor in the Clinical Psy.D. Program. He is an AASECT certified sexuality educator and a director of the Multiplicity of the Erotic Conference (www.mote-con.org). **Frances McClain, PhD, LCPC, NCC**, is the Director of Clinical Training in the Counseling Psychology Department. She is the President-Elect and one of the co-founders of the Association of Counseling Sexology & Sexual Wellness. She is a member of the editorial board of the Journal of Counseling Sexology and Sexual Wellness: Research, Practice, and Education.

FURTHER READING

Sex and Covid-19: Frequently Asked Questions

National Coalition of STD Directors and NASTAD

<https://npin.cdc.gov/publication/sex-and-covid-19-frequently-asked-questions>

Intimacy, Sex, and COVID-19

Huma Farid, MD

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/intimacy-sex-and-covid-19-2020041519550>

Making Kink COVID-19 Safe

David Ley, Ph.D.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/women-who-stray/202006/making-kink-covid-19-safe>

Sex Positivity and Counseling Psychology: An Introduction to the Major Contribution

Burnes, Singh and Witherspoon

The Counseling Psychologist 2017

<https://www.apa.org/education/ce/sex-positivity.pdf>

Introducing a Multidisciplinary Framework of Positive Sexuality

Williams, Thomas, Prior and Walters

Journal of Positive Sexuality 2015

<http://journalofpositivesexuality.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Introducing-Multidisciplinary-Framework-of-Positive-Sexuality-Williams-Thomas-Prior-Walters.pdf>



2021 Event Planning & Management	Paris Benson-Perez, B.A. Nicole Dutz, M.S. Elana Horowitz, B.A. Shairee Lackey, ,M.A., M.S., LCPC Caroline Rutherford, B.A. Herleena Verraich, BSc
Braden Berkey, Psy.D., CSE.....	PASD Executive Director bberkey@thechicagoschool.edu
Ashley Molin, Psy.D.	PASD Social Media Director

Projects Advancing Sexual Diversity applies the practice of psychology to further the understanding and acceptance of diverse sexual and gender identities, practices and cultures. We explore narratives of healthy, normative development in these populations. Utilizing innovative research and interventions, PASD also strives to create sustainable change in conditions impacting the welfare of sexual and gender minority individuals, families and communities.

www.ProjectsAdvancingSexualDiversity.org