

**Mark Lerner 0:03**

Welcome to Fellow Fellow, a new podcast from Harvard Kennedy School's Technology and Public Purpose project. I'm your host, Mark Lerner, and I'm a fellow at the TAPP project. In this podcast, I interview my fellow fellows about their research and perspectives on some of the most interesting challenges at the intersection of technology and society.

Really happy to be here with a good friend and former coworker and I guess current coworker in a way, Clare Bayley, Clare, so nice to have you here.

I know that, you know, given the premise of the entire podcast, folks already know that you're a fellow of mine, or a fellow fellow at the Technology and Public Purpose project. People might not know that you most recently served as the Director of Product for the US Digital Service, working under the White House to improve how the government makes and uses technology. You and I worked together. It was super fun to meet you there and happy that we can continue working together. And of course, today we're talking about your project at TAPP, which is sexual censorship on social media. Really excited to dive into this conversation. So could you maybe start just by giving a little bit more of an intro into the project?

**Clare Bayley 1:21**

For sure. So the best way I like to intro this is by describing a kind of a day I had back in October of 2019, I ran across two news articles that I read. One was a summary on the New York Times of a speech that Zuckerberg gave at Georgetown, where he was basically doubling down on their commitment to free speech in the wake of calls to remove various kinds of hate and violent content on the platform, just like, "Free speech is the most important, more important than anything else, we got to hold to it." The other article was from a much smaller news outlet, and it was talking about how Facebook and Instagram had recently added the eggplant, peach, and water droplets emoji to their list of what they considered sexually suggestive content for the purpose of solicitation.

This does not mean, I want to be clear, this does not mean that those emojis are banned from the platform, you can certainly use them. "For the purpose of solicitation" means that you can ask someone if they would like to have sex on Facebook, and that's fine. But you cannot say, "would you like to have sex" and then use an eggplant, peach, or waterdrop emoji because that can get you thrown off the platform.

**Mark Lerner 2:22**

Really?

**Clare Bayley 2:23**

Mm hmm. It is that specific. And to me absurd. Especially that these two things came down at the same time. Like I'm not entirely sure where the free speech concerns come in. But when they constrict your use of the eggplant emoji so much seems like that you're qualified to me.

**Mark Lerner 2:40**

Mm hmm. And so the, I mean, the eggplant emoji aspect is one of a much larger piece, right? Like, sexual censorship is much more than just what emojis get used on these platforms.

**Clare Bayley 2:52**

It is, it is. I mean, the reason that vegetable and fruit emojis are used at all is because people cannot use their actual content, right? There is no penis or vulva emoji that people can just use for that kind of thing. So they find metaphors and kind of agree on things that they know mean something else. A lot of sexual content is just not allowed on any social media platform, Facebook and Instagram have very strict rules against sexual content, you know, nudity of almost all kind suppose people have heard about kind of the female versus male nipple debate and how much argument has happened around that.

A lot of platforms, even ones that it could be argued built their popularity on sexual content, such as Tumblr is the big one that people know about had a whole bunch of communities based around pornography back in the old days, when it was bought by Yahoo, they just went through and removed all of what they call adult content from the platform, in kind of one fell swoop. And now it's a place where sexual content is also banned, despite it being such a big part of their success in their early days. And to me, this is a big problem. Because sex is really important. It's a topic that is relevant to literally every single person on the planet. Like, maybe you're not having it, maybe you don't want to have it, maybe you're ace, maybe it's a traumatic thing for you. But all of those things, it's still relevant, it's still important. Like, I don't care who you are, it's still a part of your life in some way. But we just, we don't talk about it. People have crazy high amounts of shame around it. It leads in part to a whole lot of societal problems we're seeing, you know, relevant to sex and relationships. And social media is by - in theory, they're, you know, taking the societal values of not talking about it and translating it to the platform, but they're really doing is like amplifying this existing horrible, horrifying bias in society and making it a lot worse. One of my favorite examples, favorite slash least favorite examples of this is that there is a link to a page on Scarleteen, which is a fairly popular sex ed website for teenagers. They have a page on barrier use, which includes how to use a condom. So it's literally a website about how to use a condom, which includes diagrams, because if you try to explain how to use a condom without diagrams, it's actually quite difficult. You cannot send a link to this page in a one-to-one private message on Facebook Messenger. You put it in, you hit Enter, and you get this little red error message that pops up that says, like, "This link violates our community standards." Now there is a thing on that that says, "If you want to, if you think we've got this wrong, please let us know." But if you click on that link and go to the form, they're sure to tell you that they get a lot of these and they probably won't reply or do anything about it. So that's a thing. Now, I do want to note with that example, that all these platforms that banned sexual content, almost all of them have in their rules, an asterisk that says, okay, but except for educational content, like that stuff's good. People should know how to use a condom, right like that. That's a line that goes off pretty well with most people. But that's what's in the rules. It's not how it plays out in practice.

**Mark Lerner 6:01**

So when it comes to the actual content that we're talking about, could you maybe provide a little bit more breadth of an explanation in terms of what actually constitutes sexual content? Because I know that when a lot of people hear that they immediately jump to pornography. And while that's certainly you know, a large amount of sexual content, there's a lot more to it.

**Clare Bayley 6:23**

It is, yes, it's a very wide spectrum of content that we're talking about here, including a lot of things that people probably don't think about. I'll start with kind of what I'm not talking about that I wanted the platform, but that's kind of some stuff that's obviously bad, right? Like child abuse imagery, revenge porn, you know, things that kind of exploit or manipulate people in the sake of gaining money or whatever. All of those things need to not be on the platform. But not because they're sexual, because they exploit manipulate people. When we're talking about sexual content. It is everything from kind of how to put on a condom to hardcore pornography, but also like, clips from HBO shows, full just like artistic nudity type things. You know, there's a lot of things that you see in mainstream media, such as 50 Shades of Grey, for example, both a movie and like, if you took that out of context, you'd be like, this is kind of porn, this is kind of porn, because there is no good definition for that there just isn't.

**Mark Lerner 7:23**

Sure, sure, wow. So I mean, at this point, a lot of the things that you're looking at, have been - what are all these massive platforms doing when it comes to the censorship of all this sort of content? You've come at this from the perspective of, you know, someone who understands technology, who has a background in tech, but I'm curious to know, how did you actually get here in your career? I mean, you know, what drew you to this particular project, aside from those two articles that you referenced?

**Clare Bayley 7:54**

Yeah, those two articles certainly wasn't the first time in my life that I thought about this connection. So other than being just someone who works in tech and a fairly sexually driven person myself, this has just always been an area of overlap for me. When I was in college, I went to MIT, where I majored in computer science and I minor in Women's and Gender Studies with a focus on sex and sexuality. After college, I went up to Silicon Valley. Before, as you mentioned, I came to DC and work for the White House. I was at Google for four years. But before that, I was actually working in business intelligence for kink.com, a BDSM pornography company that works out there. So my career has been kind of in and out of this field the entire time. This is the first time really that I've had a gig that combined them so fully in an advocacy way. But the, the ideas of sex and technology and how they intersect has been pretty integral to both my personal life and my career all the way through.

**Mark Lerner 8:52**

Gotcha. Actually, in that sense, is there any history that we should know about of how sex and sexual content on the internet has evolved, that sort of leads us to how we got to this point in time?

**Clare Bayley 9:07**

Oh, I mean, there's lots and it's very complicated. The big one that some folks might have heard of, and that has caused the most recent wave of changes is the passage of SESTA FOSTA through Congress. It was a package of bills that was intended to or well – I'm pretty, I get a little prickly when talking about the intentions and actual effects the bill. It was a package of bills, who stated aim - let me say it that way - whose stated aim was to stop sex trafficking via the internet, which is great. Let me be clear, that's a good goal. No one should be trafficked. That is bad.

**Mark Lerner 9:42**

Right.

**Clare Bayley 9:43**

What it actually did is start a kind of wholesale removal of any kind of sexually interactive content via the internet, specifically targeting sex workers and content around that. So this is when we saw the removal of personal ads from Craigslist. It was funny, I had an interview for this project a few days ago with someone who met their husband on Craigslist.

**Mark Lerner 10:08**

Really?

**Clare Bayley 10:08**

I mean, yeah, they were bemoaning SESTA FOSTA to me because they're like, "I never would have met my partner without those ads."

Like SESTA FOSTA has not actually been tested in courts. So this removal and this tightening of rules like I, you know, I haven't - Facebook didn't consult me before they made this emoji decision, but I'm pretty sure you can link it back to this kind of legal fear based on these bills around solicitation and what they focus on there. It just introduced a lot of legal fear and worry. And my view of it, is that sex is not considered an important positive subject. Like it's a thing... It's a thing that, okay, you know, we know people are into it, but like, maybe we have this view that porn is bad. We all, we're all uncomfortable talking about sex. We know a lot of people are going to get angry if we, like, leave this content on our platform. Now there's a legal thing, we're just gonna take it down, right? Like, it's for the good of humanity. You know, it's kind of easy in their minds, like, we're just gonna take it down. We don't want to deal with this.

**Mark Lerner 11:10**

It's sort of like a cover your ass measure where these people are—

**Clare Bayley 11:12**

It is exactly a cover your ass measure. Yeah. And it's really easy, because there are a lot of groups that will applaud you for doing that. Right? It's kind of hard in this day and age to stand up and say the radical thing that, like, sex is good, maybe we should talk about it. Like, that's not imagine someone in Congress standing up to that in the wake of SESTA FOSTA, being like, "Actually, I think sex should be allowed on these platforms," like that—

**Mark Lerner 11:33**

Right.

**Clare Bayley 11:33**

– I don't think that would go over well, and it's a damn shame, because I'm pretty sure every single Congress person has had sex at some point in their lives. And even if they haven't, their parents sure did.

**Mark Lerner 11:42**

That's fair. So, certainly hear you, like, sex is an incredibly important thing in everyone's life. I'm certain that there's going to be people that are listening to you making this argument, maybe

on this podcast, maybe in a blog post that you're writing, that are gonna bristle at this idea of having these platforms be a little bit more "spicy". I - the thing that I wonder is, what do you actually envision these platforms looking like in a better world, right? It's not just sort of that you go to facebook.com, and all of a sudden, you see a bunch of porn.

**Clare Bayley 12:17**

It's just a porn side now, yeah.

**Mark Lerner 12:18**

Right, exactly. But, but what is the actual vision that you've got for what these things can be?

**Clare Bayley 12:23**

Yeah. So that's a great question. Part of that is what I'm doing this fellowship to build. So you know, check back in six months, and I have a better answer for you.

**Mark Lerner 12:31**

Sure.

**Clare Bayley 12:32**

The biggest thing, though, to keep in mind is that consent is important above all else. Like, the reason that, you know, I talked about child abuse imagery and revenge porn, the reason those things are problems are because they're massive violations of consent and abuse. I do not want anybody to have to see porn, who does not want to see porn. That goes against kind of the very tenets of why I want this stuff to be available in the first place, right? I do think educational content should be able to be viewed by everybody, should be publicly accessible. That is, in theory, what they should do according to their own current rules. So some of it is just changing their implementation to match their stated policies. But if people want to see sexual content, you know, our society has set, our society and our law has set the age of 18 to be the kind of general standard for when this kinds of things are okay to see. So let's just add an 18 plus filter. Like maybe people can set themselves, you know, when they upload content, they're like, "This is sexual content, please put it behind this filter." When you go to default the site, when you first log in, it's set to not show you this thing. This is exactly how Google Safe search works, right? Like, Google is not in a million years going to remove porn from search because they'd lose like 30% of their traffic. But what they do want to do is make sure that no one sees porn, who doesn't want to see porn. So when you go to Google, they have say, search defaulted and so on. Now, if you want to see some of the more "spicy" content, as you called it, you're just going to turn it off, and then you get your spicy content.

**Mark Lerner 14:00**

Right.

**Clare Bayley 14:01**

And that, in kind of a broad strokes, is pretty much how I envisioned these working.

**Mark Lerner 14:05**

Okay. Now, I mean, one of the factors that really complicates things is, you know, a piece here of how you decide what goes behind that filter and what doesn't, it's that sort of the content moderation as it were.

**Clare Bayley 14:18**

Yeah.

**Mark Lerner 14:18**

How do we solve that problem?

**Clare Bayley 14:21**

Well, you don't, that's not a thing that's ever going to be solved. Content moderation is very, very difficult. We're seeing that now already with the wrestling around hate speech and violent content and terrorist content. There's always things that slip through and then they cause big international incidents, right? Like there's always - humans do terrible, terrible things to each other. And that's always been the case. But now it's in our faces a lot more because it's so easy to share. And so these platforms are always constantly trying to keep up with some of the bad stuff. And so it's a really hard problem. It's never ever going to be perfectly solved. People are going to keep finding new ways to get around rules and get around this kind of thing. But tech companies were created to deal with hard problems. Like the fact that Facebook exists, that the cloud exists, that artificial intelligence exists, these things are really, really hard problems that people have done amazing things to go, you know, down that path to creating them. So the, the fact that content moderation is a really, really hard thing is not at all an argument about why we shouldn't try to do it better.

**Mark Lerner 15:24**

Now, one of the things that comes to mind for me immediately is that there's actually been quite a lot of federal investment in research for a lot of the technologies that you just mentioned - AI, for instance. Do you have a sense that this is something that maybe we should be looking into more as a country, as a society, to actually invest our own dollars into researching how to do this more appropriately?

**Clare Bayley 15:45**

How to do content moderation in general?

**Mark Lerner 15:49**

Mm-hmm.

**Clare Bayley 15:49**

There are people who focus on that as an academic topic who can speak much better this to me, a lot of kind of First Amendment folks that have a lot of opinions about content moderation. I am not convinced that that's something that should be regulated at a federal level. I think there's some small parts of it. You know, there there is like a, I can't remember the name right now. But there is a terrorist content group, there are child abuse imagery groups that work with pieces of the federal government specifically for those areas, to make sure that like, the government gets laws and the government gets oversight, and that, for the really serious things, there is some interaction there. One of the big concerns around, kind of, the government actually getting

involved in content generation as a whole is that then there would be one solution to this problem. And right now, kind of, each platform is finding its own. And while there would be some scaling benefits to that, as much of a fan as I am of government as a concept, like, government does not get things 100% right, either - ever. And it's a lot harder to, kind of, change that once it gets set in policy. So content moderation, as a broad concept is not something that I think the government should really, kind of, throw his hat into.

**Mark Lerner 17:05**

Mm hmm. Gotcha. I know that we have so many more topics to cover. I think we should probably take a quick break right now. And we'll come back soon to cover some more, some more spicy topics.

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If you're finding yourself interested in Clare's work, be sure to follow her on Instagram @clarebayley. That's @clarebayley.

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And we are back with my fellow fellow and dear friend Clare Bayley, talking about sexual censorship in social media. Clare, one of the things that you mentioned when we were first talking about this was about this idea of the journey from discomfort to acceptance as part of how we grow in accepting this kind of, you know, conversation, talking more about sex, being more open about sex. And I would love to hear more of your thoughts on that sort of journey on that sort of path.

**Clare Bayley 18:51**

Yeah, it's a big part of this topic. This may seem like a strange thing to say, but discomfort is actually a pretty big part of my work around this. I remember when I was interviewing with the people who run the TAPP program for this fellowship, in one of the later stage interviews, they asked me, you know, the group I was talking to at the time was a whole bunch of like, young women of color. And they were like, "So if you came to do this fellowship, you'd be at Harvard, and you would get to be the person in the room who says the word sex a lot in front of a whole bunch of middle aged white dudes who may, who are very uncomfortable with that, like, are you okay? Are you, are you ready to be the person who does that?" And my reply was basically, "Yes, I'm looking forward to it." Because nothing changes if you stay in your comfort zone. And this is true with sex as with so many other things, but I think with sex it's particularly weaponized.

**Mark Lerner 19:44**

Right.

**Clare Bayley 19:44**

Um, you know, we're at a place where maybe we're really bad at talking about race but as a society, it sure as fuck is being talked about. This is something that on like a deep personal level, people have a great sense of sexual shame in the sense that this is not a thing to be

shared and discussed and related. And that's, that's a problem, both for society and for people personally.

**Mark Lerner 20:12**

Can you describe more about why that's a problem?

**Clare Bayley 20:14**

Yeah. I mean, most sex involves more than one person. Masturbation is certainly a valid and very enjoyable form of sex. But a lot of sex that we're talking about here involves more than one person. And communication is really important. I cannot stress this enough. Communication is really important. A lot of the examples and this also kind of gets to the heart of why I think sexual content should kind of be free to be other places, because I think if it was less stigmatized, we get a lot better quality of it. People's lessons about romance and sex and relationships are taken from really shitty examples, you know, to go back to 50 Shades of Grey, like, that, that book, that book, that movie, that series is so popular, and that relationship is so unhealthy. Like, as someone who's worked for kinky company, who's deep into the kink scene myself, like, that, that books portrayal of BDSM is so incredibly unhealthy. That books portrayal of like relationships is unhealthy, that book's portrayal of just sex in general is unhealthy. And people are taking that and copying it. You know, the same is true with a lot of the old 70s 80s rom com movies that, you know, even back when I was growing up as a teenager in, you know, the 90s and early aughts was these like kind of models of romanticism. And from our modern perspective, we look back and we're like, yeah, that's stalking.

**Mark Lerner 21:36**

Right.

**Clare Bayley 21:37**

It's just stalking.

**Mark Lerner 21:38**

So how do you cross this, this issue that we have now where, because of how people are exposed to sex, which a lot of it is through this content that you can just very easily and freely find on the internet. People are learning about sex, about themselves, about how they approach it in a wide variety of ways. They're being exposed to it in different ways. And because of how these platforms tend to work, it also tends to be siloed, right? We tend to see reinforcing content and content that you know, fits the bubble that we might, you know, be in for some reason. So how does it differ, you know, now learning about sex on the internet versus, you know, having the sex talk with your parents or having sexual education in schools, which I mean, that's certainly not necessarily great, either. Would you say that we're better off now that we have the ability to learn about sex online, or that we're worse off because it's controlled by these platforms?

**Clare Bayley 22:34**

I'd say we're better off as a whole. I'd say there's a lot of room for improvement. But I think we're better off as a whole. The, the thing that comes to mind immediately that, like, I don't need to think beyond to really give an answer to that is access for people in minority communities. And I mean, that both kind of obviously, in the LGBT space, for people of, you know, non heterosexual

sexuality, people of trans, people of nonbinary, asexuals, that type of thing. Where there's not a whole lot of understanding in society and populations of people with those characteristics are, can be somewhat rare, especially depending on which bubble you're in, as you said. And the internet lets those people find others and learn about themselves by connecting with others who are the same, and that there's no substitute for that. You know, when I feel like maybe parents felt it was better when they got control the information that went to their kids, but I'm not sure that kids would agree that it was better when they got to control the information. Because, you know, what, if your kid's, what if your kid's gay, and you don't talk to them about gay issues, right? Like, you're, you're never going to know, they aren't going to talk to you just going to be this huge big thing.

**Mark Lerner 23:45**

Yeah.

**Clare Bayley 23:46**

So despite all the horrible content that is on the internet, there are ways it has really brought those communities together, that is just so valuable.

**Mark Lerner 23:54**

And is the censorship that we're seeing that you're talking about here of sexual content. How is it affecting those communities that people are finding themselves in? And what is it doing to the shape of those communities or the ways that those communities can actually interact?

**Clare Bayley 24:08**

It is, I think this will come out as no surprise to anybody who works in the advocacy space - those communities are being censored disproportionately. There are legions of examples of this that are easy to find on the internet. In summary, the further from a young, thin, straight white woman you are, the more likely you are to have your content removed. So people, you know, non-white folks, older folks, people with larger body sizes, people of minority sexualities, all that type of thing. That content is censored much more frequently than quote unquote, mainstream content.

**Mark Lerner 24:44**

Mm hmm.

**Clare Bayley 24:45**

No one's quite sure why. If someone a Facebook hears this, and they know why, please give me a call, because I'd love an answer to that. I don't think it's intentional, right? Like no one sits down and is like we're gonna ban gay content at a higher rate than straight content. Like, it's 2020, no one makes that intentional decision. One of the theories is that a lot of the content moderation is outsourced to different parts of the world that have different values that aren't those of San Francisco and Silicon Valley where the policies are created. So the policies might treat all of this stuff equally. But the implementation on the ground is done by people who see a lot of content quickly all day. And their default viewpoint may not match that of the people who wrote the thing. So we're not entirely sure why that happens. But it's, it's become pretty clear that it is happening, it's affecting those minority communities disproportionately, which obviously,

is pretty terrible, because they're the ones who need more information and more support, because they don't get it from mainstream society.

**Mark Lerner 25:40**

So I mean, this points to something that's really interesting, which is that, as you noted, a lot of these tech companies are based in Silicon Valley, are based in San Francisco, which, generally speaking has been a more progressive, more - especially in terms of sexuality, liberal sort of place, and yet, what we're seeing is that a lot of these companies and these platforms are basically going against the same principles of the location where they come from, and essentially, you know, by, by extension of the people that make them up. How do you figure that came to be? Is it that there's influence coming on to those companies from the outside? Is it the companies themselves or seeing just market forces? Or is it SESTA FOSTA, as you mentioned earlier?

**Clare Bayley 26:28**

Yeah. I think it's complicated. And so in part all of the above. The first thing that I think I would point to, though, is that I don't necessarily agree that California and Silicon Valley is as liberally minded about sexuality as even they perhaps think they are. Like, they certainly are about, like gay, lesbian and bi issues. They're doing decently on trans issues, but those of those have kind of become like the cool hot topics, right? Stuff that hasn't come forth yet is, you know, should we have pornography on our platforms. I've, you know, I lived in Silicon Valley for six years and worked for a porn company for part of that time, and I met plenty of people who are very anti porn. When you spin the argument in terms of these disproportionately affected minority communities, they can all agree that that's an issue. But it's much bigger than that. And that's a harder point to make. When I say it's much bigger than that. I mean, that, you know, straight people are also vastly affected by this. Like, I want to - I want to be very clear on this point, this is not an issue that only affects like gay people, or trans people, or other minorities whose issues, you know, are important to deserve to be catered to. But like, there are a whole lot of people who would consider themselves of mainstream sexuality that have been told a lot of really shitty information about their bodies, that carry a lot of shame, that put themselves or like stay in a lot of unhealthy relationships. There are people who have a lot of bad sex, and maybe they don't even realize it, because they've never thought about it, because they can't talk about it. And they have no other examples to compare to. And I think that the people who run these Silicon Valley companies are in that population.

**Mark Lerner 28:12**

Mm-hmm

**Clare Bayley 28:12**

Like, you know, it seems like a weird quote to be out here and be like, "Well, I think Mark Zuckerberg is still probably having a lot of bad sex," but probably. Probably. He doesn't seem like that much of a guy who's put a whole lot of thought into his own gender and sex life, right?

**Mark Lerner 28:27**

Mm hmm.

**Clare Bayley 28:28**

We're taught very simplistic scripts from a very early age that really get us in a rut and keep us in this kind of shame box.

**Mark Lerner 28:35**

Right.

**Clare Bayley 28:36**

And that's the part that - not the identity part, it's the the personal shame, the like, personal kind of erotic, sensual self that is stuck in these boxes and kept down. And that is not something that is recognized or kind of top of mind for the quote unquote, Silicon Valley liberals.

**Mark Lerner 28:55**

Mmhmm. So, you know, at this point, now, we're talking about and getting into how we learn about all this sort of stuff, how we are taught, how we educate each other and educate the next generation about sex and sexuality and gender. And, you know, you and I have had a lot of conversations about gender and masculinity in particular. It's, you know, one of my favorite topics to discuss. But one of the things that I love about this, this particular project that you're working on, is that it challenges a little bit about who gets to decide what is educational content, and it brings about a question, which is, you know, how do we figure out as a society, who those decision makers should be and how broad those decisions should be. Because on one hand, you have the former example that we talked about, of, you know, the parents giving their kids the talk about the birds and the bees. And there is certainly an argument to be made about how, you know, a parent should have a say in the education of their child. On the other hand, there's also an argument that should be made about how you know, society has A lot of educational goodness to give to the next generation, and it takes a village. And sometimes there's, there's conflict in that, right? And so, how do you view that conflict? How do you view, you know, the, the - basically the decision of what ends up being appropriate for educational content through this lens?

**Clare Bayley 30:20**

Yep. Yep. That's that's a great topic. If you look at the system right now, the way it is, we're abstinence only is still taught in a majority of American schools - I grew up in Arkansas, I got abstinence only education in school. In a system where children are denied a lot of information where maybe their parents don't give them a lot. They give them a talk, they give them some facts with a school doesn't give them a lot of information, where it's banned on social media, and on the places they spend a lot of their time. I would argue that pornography is currently educational content, because of how many people learn about sex from it.

**Mark Lerner 30:51**

Wow, yeah.

**Clare Bayley 30:51**

I don't think it should be. I think it's a pretty terrible teacher.

**Mark Lerner 30:57**

Right.

**Clare Bayley 30:58**

Porn should be considered educational content in the current educational thing, just because of how many people fucking learn about sex from it. It's crazy. I mean, anybody as part of this project, I've been interviewing a lot of folks, some around my age, some younger, some older, and asking them about their current experiences on social media and sexual content, but also just, also about their puberty time and how they learned about sex. And the number of people that have said, like, "I learned about sex from something that would be considered a mainstream educational resource," is zero. It's literally zero.

**Mark Lerner 31:36**

Yeah, yeah. I certainly didn't.

**Clare Bayley 31:38**

Right. I, you know, I have a friend with a teenager in the California school system right now, and actually some of the stuff that he's been learning in his sex ed class sounds pretty great, and I would have loved that information. So maybe there are a few places where hopefully, that answer will change if I can ask them down the line. But no, you learn about it from the content, you want to see, like, the stuff that parents - again, it comes down to discomfort, right? The stuff that parents are comfortable talking about what their kids only go so far, the stuff that is allowed in schools and on social media only goes so far. And the big thing that is missed in almost all of this is pleasure, is fun. Which, let's remember, is the reason most people have sex. And so if you get how to use a condom, and how your body works, and all these different kinds of things, like that's great, that's all very important information that everybody should know. But then also, like, how do you know what you want?

**Mark Lerner 32:33**

Yeah.

**Clare Bayley 32:34**

How do you know what kind of treatment you should expect from a partner? How do you know what kind of treatment you should say "No" to. Right? How do you know what's a healthy way to show someone your interested and what's not. All these things that, you know, have become very high profile societal issues all the way up to, you know, government confirmation hearings of various kinds?

**Mark Lerner 32:57**

Yeah, yeah.

**Clare Bayley 32:58**

Like that - it's all so missing and where people go next is pornography, for the most part. Pornography or chat rooms, or partners who may or may not have a better education themselves, right. And it's just this huge gap where people learn, they imbue this misinformation. And then they might never talk to anybody about it ever again. Because everybody's really ashamed of it. And so that's just all the information they have. So anyway, not a good - there's nothing I can uphold as a sterling example all around.

**Mark Lerner 33:28**

Sure.

**Clare Bayley 33:29**

You know, I think there are pieces that I love that I can pick from all over. Someone told me recently about a TV show, I think it was from one of the Nordic countries, where it was like, six people are on a stage talking to children. And all those people on stage are naked. And they have a wide variety of bodies and kind of all different ways. And they're talking to the kids like about their bodies, and about how they work. And the kids are allowed to just ask all these different questions and see these different representations. And that is awesome. Like, how valuable would that be when everything else we see is like this very kind of manicured pluck perfected Photoshop view of the human body. And I also that would never in 100 years be allowed on American television, or YouTube for that matter, as long as it had someone you identified as a woman on the stage. No, actually, anybody because it would be full nudity. Anyway. So there's also some books that have come out recently, I'm a big fan of a book called "Come as You Are" by Emily Nagoski. There are there, are a lot of people, kind of, moving in this field right now that I think have a great message and are doing really good, kind of, writing and educating on their own. But in terms of like central coordinated orgs, or people who were like teaching the whole thing, right? I don't know. I don't know. I don't know what to tell you.

So really, even though there are certain examples that are doing well, there's no one that you can really point to, let's say like, this is the example that we should all be following.

I can't and honestly, I'm not sure that we should all be doing the same thing. Like sexuality is such an individual exploration that if there was one defined standard that we all went through, we'd probably fucking miss something.

**Mark Lerner 35:06**

Right.

**Clare Bayley 35:07**

Like, part of it, part of it has to be teaching people to explore for themselves. Maybe that's it, maybe that's the answer, right? Someone needs to come to the organization to teach people to figure it out for themselves. But that's partly a great idea and partly kind of a cop out.

**Mark Lerner 35:19**

Yeah. Well, I'll take the great idea half of that and leave the, leave the cop out for later. Yeah.

**Clare Bayley 35:25**

Fair enough.

**Mark Lerner 35:26**

Well, I think that I've gotten all of the questions out that I wanted to ask you and it's been awesome to get to hear more of your perspective, more your project, and more of your descriptions of what the problems are that we're facing in, in a space where honestly not a lot of people are thinking about this. And so I'm really grateful that you are part of this fellowship program with me. And thanks for, thanks for the time.

**Clare Bayley 35:51**

Yeah, happy to be here. Always happen to be that person in the room who gets to say the word "sex" a lot.

**Mark Lerner 36:14**

Fellow Fellow is a podcast produced at the Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center, as part of the Technology and Public Purpose project. Music is by Zack Pfeiffer. Artwork by Zi Wang. I'm your host, Mark Lerner. Join us next time as we talk to the other fellows about the problems they're tackling. Thanks for listening.