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What Is Human Sexuality?

Learning Objectives



THE SCIENCE OF HUMAN SEXUALITY

LO1 Define the science of human sexuality

SEXUALITY AND VALUES

LO2 Define the value systems people use in making sexual decisions

THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT HUMAN SEXUALITY

LO3 Explain how you can become a critical thinker



PERSPECTIVES ON HUMAN SEXUALITY

LO4 Discuss the historical perspective on human sexuality

LO5 Describe the biological perspective on human sexuality

LO6 Describe the evolutionary perspective on human sexuality

LO7 Describe the cross-species perspective on human sexuality

LO8 Describe sociological perspectives on human sexuality

LO9 Describe psychological perspectives on human sexuality

LO10 Discuss feminist theory

LO11 Discuss queer theory

LO12 Explain why it is useful to look upon human sexuality from multiple perspectives

MY LIFE, MY SEXUALITY: THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT SEXUAL ADVICE ON THE INTERNET: ARE THERE ANY QUICK FIXES?

sex, *n.*

sex, *v.*

sex, *adj.*



Explore the video, **Adolescent Sexuality**, by scanning this QR code with your mobile device. If you don't already have one, you may download a free QR scanner for your device wherever smartphone apps are sold. You can also view this video in MyDevelopmentLab. For more videos related to this chapter's content, log into MyDevelopmentLab to view the entire Human Sexuality Video Series.

TRUTH OR FICTION?



Which of the following statements are the truth and which are fiction? You will find the answers as you read this chapter.

- 1 Scientific knowledge will enable you to make the right sexual decisions. **T F?**
- 2 In ancient Greece, a mature man would take a sexual interest in an adolescent boy, often with the blessing of the boy's parents. **T F?**
- 3 Throughout most of human history, women were considered to be the property of their husbands. **T F?**
- 4 The production of sex manuals originated in modern times. **T F?**
- 5 The graham cracker came into being as a means for helping young men control their sexual appetites. **T F?**
- 6 Female redback spiders eat their mates after the females have been inseminated. **T F?**
- 7 In our dreams, airplanes, bullets, snakes, sticks, and similar objects symbolize the male genitals. **T F?**



Let's Google the islands off the coast of Europe and in the South Pacific—both in space and time. We go to Google Maps, find Inis Beag, click on the satellite image, further click on 1955 (no, you can't really do this—yet), and swoop in ...

And suddenly we find ourselves visiting two islands that are a world apart—sexually as well as geographically. Our first stop is Inis Beag, which lies in the Atlantic, off the misty coast of Ireland. Our second stop will be Mangaia, which lifts languidly out of the blue waters of the Pacific.

The distant satellite image shows Inis Beag as a green jewel, fertile and inviting. The residents of this community do not believe that it is normal for women to experience orgasm. Anthropologists have reported that any woman who finds pleasure in sex—especially the intense waves of pleasure that can accompany orgasm—is viewed as deviant.

Premarital sex is all but unknown on Inis Beag. Prior to marriage, men and women socialize apart. Marriage comes late—usually in the middle 30s for men and the middle 20s for women. Mothers teach their daughters that they will have to submit to their husbands' animal cravings in order to obey God's injunction to "be fruitful and multiply."

But the women of Inis Beag need not be overly concerned about frequent sex, since the men of the island believe, erroneously, that sexual activity will drain their strength. Consequently, men avoid sex on the eve of sporting activity or strenuous work. Because of taboos against nudity, married couples have sex with their undergarments on. Intercourse takes place in the dark—literally as well as figuratively.

During intercourse, the man lies on top. He is always the initiator. Foreplay is brief. The man ejaculates as fast as he can, in the belief that he is the only partner with sexual needs and to spare his wife as best he can. Then he turns over and falls asleep. Once more the couple have done their duty.

On to Mangaia, which is a pearl of an island. It lies on the other side of the world from Inis Beag—in more ways than one. From an early age, Mangaian boys and girls are encouraged to get in touch with their own sexuality through sexual play and masturbation. At about the age of 13, Mangaian boys are initiated into manhood by adults who instruct them in sexual techniques.

Boys practice their new techniques with girlfriends on secluded beaches or beneath the listing fronds of palms. They may visit girlfriends in huts where they sleep with their families. Parents often listen for their daughters to laugh and gasp so that they will know that they have reached orgasm with a visiting young "sleepcrawler." Parents often pretend to be asleep so as not to interfere with courtship and impede their daughters' chances of finding a mate. Daughters may receive a nightly succession of sleepcrawlers and have multiple orgasms with each one.

Mangaian look on virginity with disdain, because virgins do not know how to provide sexual pleasure. Thus, the older male makes his contribution by initiating the girl.

Mangaian expressed concern when they learned that many Western women do not regularly experience orgasm. Orgasm is apparently universal among Mangaian women. Therefore, Mangaian could only assume that Western women suffered from some abnormality of the sex organs.



Mangaia. Perhaps they didn't wear coconut shells, but a generation or so ago, sex on Mangaia was free wheeling. In other places and at other times, sex has been seen as a necessary evil to follow God's command to "be fruitful and multiply."





The residents of Inis Beag and Mangaia have similar anatomical features but vastly different attitudes toward sex. Their cultural settings influence their patterns of sexual behavior and the pleasure they gain—or fail to gain—from sex. Sex may be a natural function, but few natural functions have been influenced so strongly by religious and moral beliefs, cultural tradition, folklore, and superstition.

We are about to embark on the study of human sexuality. But why study human sexuality? Isn't sex something to do rather than to talk about? Isn't sex a natural function? Don't we learn what we need to know from personal experience or from our parents or our friends?

Yes. And no. We can learn how our bodies respond to sexual stimulation through personal experience, but experience teaches us little about the biology of sexual response and orgasm. Nor does experience inform us about the variations in sexual behavior that exist around the world. Experience does not prepare us to recognize the signs of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or to evaluate the risks of pregnancy. What many of us learned about sex from our parents can probably be summarized in a single word: "Don't." The information we received from our friends was probably riddled with exaggeration, even lies. Many young people today receive accurate information through sex education courses in the schools, but they are usually taught about STIs and contraception, not about sexual techniques.

You may know more about human sexuality than your parents or grandparents did at your age, or do today. But how much do you really know? What causes an erection or vaginal lubrication? What factors determine sexual orientation? What are sexual dysfunctions and what causes them? How do our sexual responsiveness and interests change as we age? Can you contract a sexually transmitted infection and not know it? If you have no symptoms, can you infect others?

These are just a few of the issues we will explore in this book. One feature of this text, "Real Students, Real Questions," illustrates some of the questions and erroneous ideas many of us have about sex. 

 **Watch the Video**
Gender versus Sex:
Florence Denmark
on **MyDevelopmentLab**

Real Students, Real Questions

Q *I am 17 years old, and the topic of sex in my family is nonexistent. How do I begin a conversation with my family?*

A Most people find it difficult to talk about sex. You'll find ideas for initiating conversations about sex with family members and other people throughout this text—conversations about contraception, STIs, and problems in relationships. In all cases, think about selecting a good time and place to talk. Consider asking permission to talk about a sensitive topic, as in "I know that talking about birth control is a no-no in this house, but I have some questions. Can we talk about them?" Or, "I could use some help. Can we talk about it?" People who care about you might just surprise you by accepting the challenge of trying to communicate about topics that can be off-limits. If you desire parental help, you might think about catching the more receptive parent when he or she is alone.






The Science of Human Sexuality?

What is human sexuality? This is not a trick question. Consider the meaning, or rather meanings, of the word *sex*. One use of the term *sex* refers to our anatomic sex, male or female. The words *sex* or *sexual* are also used to refer to anatomic structures, called sex organs or sexual organs, that play a role in reproduction or sexual pleasure. We may also speak of sex when referring to physical activities involving our sex organs for purposes of reproduction or pleasure, as in *having sex*. Sex also relates to erotic feelings, experiences, or desires, such as sexual fantasies and thoughts, sexual urges, or feelings of sexual attraction.

Many researchers reserve the word *sex* for reference to anatomic or biological categories, but prefer the word **gender** when they are referring to social or cultural categories. For example, one might say that “reproductive anatomy appears to depend on the *sex* (not the *gender*) of the individual, but in so-called traditional societies, **gender roles** (not *sex roles*) are often seen as polar opposites.”

The term **human sexuality** refers to the ways in which we experience and express ourselves as sexual beings. Our awareness of ourselves as females or males is part of our sexuality, as is the capacity we have for erotic experiences and responses. Our knowledge of the gender roles in our culture also has a profound influence on us. 

 **Watch the Video**
The Big Picture: The Power of Sex
on **MyDevelopmentLab**

THE STUDY OF HUMAN SEXUALITY

The study of human sexuality draws on the scientific expertise of anthropologists, biologists, medical researchers, sociologists, and psychologists, to name some of the professional groups involved in the field. These disciplines all make contributions, because human sexuality reflects biological capabilities, psychological characteristics, and social and cultural influences. Biologists inform us about the physiological mechanisms of sexual arousal and response. Medical science teaches us about STIs and the biological bases of sexual dysfunctions. Psychologists examine how our sexual behavior and attitudes are shaped by perception, learning, thought, motivation and emotion, and personality. Sociocultural theorists examine relationships between sexual behavior and religion, race, and social class. Anthropologists focus on cross-cultural similarities and differences in sexual behavior.



TRUTH OR FICTION REVISITED: Although science provides us with information, it cannot make sexual decisions for us. In making sexual decisions, we also consider our **values**. The Declaration of Independence endorsed the fundamental values of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”—not a bad beginning. Our religious traditions also play a prominent role in shaping our values, as we see in the following section.

Gender The behavioral, cultural, or psychological traits typically associated with one sex.

Gender roles Complex clusters of ways in which males and females are expected to behave within a given culture.

Human sexuality The ways in which we experience and express ourselves as sexual beings.


Values The qualities in life that are deemed important or unimportant, right or wrong, desirable or undesirable.

Sexuality and Values

Our society is pluralistic. It embraces a wide range of sexual attitudes and values. Some readers may be liberal in their sexual views and behavior. Others may be conservative. Some are pro-choice on abortion, others pro-life. Some approve of premarital sex for couples who know each other casually. Others hold the line at emotional commitment. Still others believe in waiting until marriage. People’s sexual attitudes, experiences, and behaviors are shaped to a large extent by cultural traditions and beliefs. They influence how, where, and with whom we become sexually involved.

As noted by feminists, some of the variability in sexual behavior between males and females reflects power rather than choice (Smith & Konik, 2011). Throughout history and in many places, for example, women have been considered the property of men. Even today, women are often “given away” by their fathers to their husbands.



Let's consider the various value systems that people draw on in making sexual decisions. 

VALUE SYSTEMS FOR MAKING SEXUAL DECISIONS

Although sex is a natural function, most of us choose how, where, and with whom to become sexually involved. We face a wide array of sexual decisions: Whom should I date? When should my partner and I become sexually intimate? Should I initiate sexual relations or wait for my partner to approach me? Should my partner and I practice contraception? If so, which method? Should I use a condom to protect against STIs, or insist that my partner does? Should I be tested for HIV (the virus that causes AIDS)? Should I insist that my partner be tested for HIV before we have sex?

Value systems provide a framework for judging the moral acceptability of sexual options. We often approach sexual decisions by determining whether the choices we face are compatible with our moral values. Our value systems—our sexual standards—have many sources: parents, peers, religious training, ethnic subcultures, the larger culture, and our appraisal of all these influences. Value systems include legalism, situational ethics, ethical relativism, hedonism, asceticism, utilitarianism, and rationalism.

Legalism The legalistic approach formulates ethical behavior on the basis of a code of moral laws derived from an external source, such as a religion. The Hebrew and Christian Bibles contain many examples of the moral code of the Jewish and Christian religions. In the Book of Leviticus (20:10–17) in the Hebrew Bible we find many of the prohibitions against adultery, incest, sexual activity with people of one's own gender, and bestiality:

10: And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.

11: And the man that lieth with his father's wife hath uncovered his father's nakedness: both of them shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.

12: And if a man lie with his daughter in law, both of them shall surely be put to death: they have wrought confusion; their blood shall be upon them.

13: If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.

14: And if a man take a wife and her mother, it is wickedness: they shall be burnt with fire, both he and they; that there be no wickedness among you.

15: And if a man lie with a beast, he shall surely be put to death: and ye shall slay the beast.

16: And if a woman approach unto any beast, and lie down thereto, thou shalt kill the woman, and the beast: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.

17: And if a man shall take his sister, his father's daughter, or his mother's daughter, and see her nakedness, and she see his nakedness; it is a wicked thing; and they shall be cut off in the sight of their people: he hath uncovered his sister's nakedness; he shall bear his iniquity.

18: And if a man shall lie with a woman having her sickness,¹ and shall uncover her nakedness; he hath discovered her fountain, and she hath uncovered the fountain of her blood: and both of them shall be cut off from among their people.

¹That is, menstruation.

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Many religious followers accept the moral codes of their religions as a matter of faith and commitment. Some people find it reassuring to be informed by religious authorities or scripture that a certain course of action is right or wrong. Others, however, take a more liberal view. They say that the Bible reflects the social setting of the time in which it was written, not just divine inspiration. Now that population growth is exploding in many parts of the world, biblical injunctions to be fruitful and multiply may no longer be socially and environmentally sound. Prohibitions, such as that against sexual relations during menstruation, may have been based on prescientific perceptions of danger. Some people thus view religious teachings as a general framework for decision making rather than as a set of absolute rules.

Situational Ethics Episcopal theologian Joseph Fletcher (1966, 1967) argued that ethical decision making should be guided by love for others rather than by rigid moral rules, and that sexual decision making should be based on the context of the situation that the person faces. For this reason, his view is termed *situational ethics*. According to Fletcher, a Roman Catholic woman will have been taught that abortion is the taking of a human life. Her situation, however—her love for her existing family and her recognition of her limited resources for providing for another child—might influence her to decide in favor of an abortion.

Fletcher argues that rules for conduct should be flexible. “The situationist is prepared in any concrete case to suspend, ignore, or violate any principle if by doing so he can effect more good than by following it” (1966, p. 34).

Ethical Relativism Ethical relativism assumes that diverse values are basic to human existence. Ethical relativists reject the idea that there is a single correct moral view about subjects as diverse as wearing revealing clothing, masturbation, premarital sex, oral sex, anal sex, contraception, and abortion. One person may believe that premarital sex is unacceptable under any circumstances, whereas another may hold that “being in love” makes it acceptable. Still another person may believe that sex is morally permissible without an emotional commitment. The ethical relativist



How do you make sexual decisions? What value system or systems do you employ?



believes that there is no objective way of justifying one set of moral values over another. In this view, the essence of human morality is to derive one's own principles and apply them according to one's own conscience. Opponents of ethical relativism argue that allowing people free rein to determine what is right or wrong may bring about social chaos and decay.

One form of ethical relativism is *cultural relativism*. From this perspective, what is right or wrong must be understood in terms of the cultural beliefs that affect sexual decision making. In some cultures, premarital sex is tolerated or even encouraged, whereas in others, it is considered immoral.

Hedonism The hedonist is guided by the pursuit of pleasure, not by whether a particular behavior is morally or situationally justified. “If it feels good, do it” expresses the hedonistic ethic. The hedonist believes that sexual desires, like hunger or thirst, do not invoke moral considerations.

Asceticism Religious celibates, such as Roman Catholic priests and Buddhist monks, choose *asceticism* (self-denial of material and sexual desires) in order to devote themselves to spiritual pursuits. Many ascetics in Eastern and Western religions seek to transcend physical and worldly desires.

Utilitarianism Ethical guidelines can be based on principles other than religious ones. The English philosopher John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) proposed an ethical system based on *utilitarianism*—the view that moral conduct is based on that which will bring about “the greatest good for the greatest number” (Mill, 1863). The utilitarian characterizes behavior as ethical when it does the greatest good and causes the least harm. This is not the same thing as freedom of action. Utilitarians may come down hard in opposition to premarital sex and bearing children out of wedlock, for example, if they believe that these behavior patterns jeopardize a nation's health and social fabric. Mill's ethics require that we treat one another justly and honestly, because it serves the greater good for people to be true to their word and just in their dealings with others.

Rationalism Rationalism is the use of reason to determine a course of action. The rationalist believes that decisions should be based on intellect and reason rather than emotions or faith. The rationalist assesses the facts in a sexual situation and then weighs the consequences of various courses of action to make a decision. The rationalist shares with the utilitarian the belief that reasoning can lead to ethical

Real Students, Real Questions

Q *Is a person who takes a vow of chastity, such as a nun, no longer considered a sexual being?*

A A person who takes a vow of chastity only promises not to be a sexually active being. The reason usually involves dedication to values in which self-denial of sexual desires plays a key role, as in a religious tradition. But this doesn't mean that the person is no longer a sexual being. The person remains female or male, and continues to be subject to the sexual drives, sexual health issues, and cultural expectations that affect females and males.



**Table 1.1****Value Systems for Making Sexual Decisions**

System	Core Belief	Example
Legalism	Ethical behavior is derived from an external source, such as a religion.	The Old Testament contains prohibitions against adultery, incest, sexual activity with people of one's own gender, and bestiality.
Situational Ethics	Ethical decision making should be guided by the situation and by genuine love for others.	A woman who has been taught that abortion is the taking of a human life may find herself with limited resources and decide in favor of an abortion.
Relativism	There is no objective way of justifying one set of moral values over another.	Cohabitation is tolerated in some cultures but considered immoral in others.
Hedonism	Pursuit of pleasure is the guide.	Hedonists might argue that sexual desires, like hunger or thirst, do not involve moral considerations.
Asceticism	One denies sexual desires to devote oneself to spiritual pursuits.	Many ascetics in Western and Eastern religions seek to transcend physical and worldly desires.
Utilitarianism	Moral conduct brings about the greatest good for the greatest number.	We should be honest and just because it serves the greater good for people to be true to their word and treat each other justly.
Rationalism	Sexual decisions should be based on intellect and reason, not blind obedience.	The rationalist might decide that the personal consequences of continuing an unhappy marriage outweigh the effects on the family or the community at large.

behavior but is not bound to the utilitarian code that makes choices on the basis of the greatest good for the greatest number. The utilitarian may decide, for example, to prolong an unhappy marriage because of the belief that the greater good of the family and the community is better served by maintaining an unhappy marriage than by dissolving it. The rationalist might decide that the personal consequences of continuing an unhappy marriage outweigh the consequences to the family or the community at large.

These ethical systems represent general frameworks of moral reasoning or pathways for judging the moral acceptability of sexual and nonsexual behavior. Whereas some of us may adopt one or another of these systems in their purest forms, others adopt a system of moral reasoning that involves some combination or variation of these ethical systems. Table 1.1 summarizes some of the value systems in use.

Many students will think critically about which values to apply to a given situation. They may also apply critical thinking to the claims and arguments about human sexuality they come across from authority figures, colleagues, friends, and advertisements. In the following section, we explore the nature of critical thinking.

Thinking Critically about Human Sexuality

We are flooded with so much information about sex that it is difficult to separate truth from fiction. Newspapers, TV shows, popular books and magazines, and the Internet contain one feature after another about sex. Many of them contradict one another, contain half-truths, or draw unsupported conclusions.



Most of us also tend to assume that authority figures such as doctors and government officials provide us with factual information and are qualified to make decisions that affect our lives. But when two doctors disagree on the need for breast surgery, or two officials disagree as to whether condoms should be distributed in public schools, how can both be correct? Critical thinkers never say, “This is true because so-and-so says that it is true.”

To help students evaluate claims, arguments, and widely held beliefs, most colleges encourage critical thinking. The core of critical thinking is skepticism—taking nothing for granted. Critical thinking means being skeptical of things that are presented in print, uttered by authority figures or celebrities, or passed along by friends. Another aspect of critical thinking is thoughtful analysis and probing of claims and arguments. Critical thinking means scrutinizing definitions of terms and evaluating the premises of arguments and their logic. Critical thinkers maintain open minds. They suspend their beliefs until they have obtained and evaluated the evidence.

CRITICAL THINKING

What kinds of intellectual and interpersonal conflicts are likely to be encountered by people who decide that they would like to become critical thinkers?

PRINCIPLES OF CRITICAL THINKING

Here are some principles of critical thinking:

1. *Be skeptical.* Politicians, religious leaders, and other authority figures attempt to convince you of their points of view. Even researchers and authors may hold certain biases. Accept no opinion as fact until you have personally weighed the evidence.
2. *Examine definitions of terms.* Some statements are true when a term is defined in one way but not in another. Consider the maxim, “Love is blind.” If love is defined as head-over-heels infatuation, there may be substance to the statement. Infatuated people tend to idealize loved ones. But if love is defined as deep caring and commitment based on a more realistic (if still somewhat slanted) appraisal of the loved one, then love is not blind—just a bit nearsighted.
3. *Examine the assumptions or premises of arguments.* Consider the statement, “Abortion is murder.” *Webster’s New World Dictionary* defines murder as “the unlawful and malicious or premeditated killing of one human being by another.” The statement is true, according to this dictionary, only if (a) the victim is a human being and (b) the act is unlawful and malicious or premeditated. Many pro-life advocates argue that embryos and fetuses are human beings from the moment of conception. Many pro-choice advocates argue that embryos and fetuses do not become human beings until various stages of development. Thus, the judgment that abortion is murder will rest in part on one’s beliefs as to whether—and when—an embryo or fetus is a human being.
4. *Be cautious in drawing conclusions from evidence.* Research finds that teenagers who listen to rap, hip-hop, pop, and rock music with sexually explicit lyrics—or with lyrics that refer to women as sex objects—are more likely to initiate sexual activity at early ages (Martino et al., 2006). The popular media seem obsessed with the idea that “dirty” songs instigate sex, and lots of it. However, teens who choose to listen to these songs may differ from those who do not in their values, so that they not only spend hours with their iPods blasting sexual lyrics into their ears but also choose to have sex at early ages. The evidence of an association between listening to this music and having sex is open to various interpretations—which brings us to our next principle of critical thinking.
5. *Consider alternative interpretations of research evidence.* For example, teens who dwell on sexual song lyrics may also be more open to sexual activity because they are generally less traditional than teens who (literally) turn these songs off. Correlations or associations between events do not necessarily reveal cause and effect.



A Closer Look

The National Survey of Sexual Health and Behavior: Who Does What with Whom?

You see surveys on sex all the time. They're in *Glamour* and *Cosmopolitan*. They're reported in newspapers and on talk shows. But what are you to believe?

One of the problems with most surveys on sex is the sampling. As we'll see in Chapter 2, if you're trying to report accurately on sex in the United States, you have to give everyone in the country an equal chance of participating. That never happens perfectly. What if you want to interview college students and use listed phone numbers to reach them? In doing so, you've just left out all students who use cell phones only. The researchers who published the National Survey of Sexual Health and Behavior (NSSHB) took measures to prevent that type of thing from happening (Reece et al., 2010), which we'll elaborate on in Chapter 2. All in all, they surveyed 5,865 adolescents and adults, aged 14 to 94, and derived what most researchers believe is a reasonably accurate snapshot of the American population—or at least a

reasonably accurate picture of what people are willing to report.

You'll find a quick overview of some of the researchers' results in Table 1.2. The kinds of sexual behaviors they surveyed are shown across the top. The ages of the respondents are indicted in the column on the left. Respondents are broken down by gender (men and women) as well as by age. Let's take a look at the first sexual behavior in the list, masturbation, and see what we find. For every age group, men are more likely to report masturbating alone in the past year than women are. Why do you think that is so? Also, the incidence of masturbation alone generally rises through the late 20s and then begins to decline. How would you explain that? We'll consider possible explanations in the chapters to come.

The researchers also note the following about their results:

- American adults engage in an enormous variety of sexual behaviors.

- Many older people continue to have enjoyable sex lives.
- Men are most likely to reach orgasm when vaginal intercourse is involved; women are more likely to reach orgasm when a variety of sexual activities are used, including vaginal intercourse or oral sex.
- The percentage of people who have had experience with people of the same gender during their lives is nearly *double* that of people who identify themselves as being gay, lesbian, or bisexual.
- The percentage of adolescents who engage in vaginal intercourse has probably been exaggerated somewhat in the media.

You'll find more on all these topics in the chapters to come.

Table 1.2

Percentage of Americans Performing Certain Sexual Behaviors in the Past Year (N = 5865)

Age Groups		Sexual Behaviors								
		Masturbated Alone	Masturbated with Partner	Received Oral from Women	Received Oral from Men	Gave Oral to Women	Gave Oral to Men	Vaginal intercourse	Received Penis in Anus	Inserted Penis into Anus
14–15	Men	62%	5%	12%	1%	8%	1%	9%	1%	3%
	Women	40%	8%	1%	10%	2%	12%	11%	4%	
16–17	Men	75%	16%	31%	3%	18%	2%	30%	1%	6%
	Women	45%	19%	5%	24%	7%	22%	30%	5%	
18–19	Men	81%	42%	54%	6%	51%	4%	53%	4%	6%
	Women	60%	36%	4%	58%	2%	59%	62%	18%	
20–24	Men	83%	44%	63%	6%	55%	7%	63%	5%	11%
	Women	64%	36%	9%	70%	9%	74%	80%	23%	
25–29	Men	84%	49%	77%	5%	74%	5%	85%	4%	27%
	Women	72%	48%	3%	72%	3%	76%	87%	21%	
30–39	Men	80%	45%	78%	6%	69%	5%	85%	3%	24%
	Women	63%	43%	5%	59%	4%	59%	74%	22%	
40–49	Men	76%	38%	62%	6%	57%	7%	74%	4%	21%
	Women	65%	35%	2%	52%	3%	53%	70%	12%	
50–59	Men	72%	28%	49%	8%	44%	8%	58%	5%	11%
	Women	54%	18%	1%	34%	1%	36%	51%	6%	
60–69	Men	61%	17%	38%	3%	34%	3%	54%	1%	6%
	Women	47%	13%	1%	25%	1%	23%	42%	4%	
70+	Men	46%	13%	19%	2%	24%	3%	43%	2%	2%
	Women	33%	5%	2%	8%	2%	7%	22%	1%	

Source: Center for Sexual Health Promotion. (2011). *National Survey of Sexual Health and Behavior (NSSHB)*. Indiana University, Bloomington: School of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation. <http://www.nationalsexstudy.indiana.edu/graph.html> (Accessed February 22, 2012)



6. *Consider the kinds of evidence on which conclusions are based.* Some conclusions, even seemingly “scientific” conclusions, are based on anecdotes and personal endorsements. They are not founded on sound research.
7. *Do not oversimplify.* Consider the statement, “Homosexuality is inborn.” There is some evidence that sexual orientation may involve inborn predispositions, such as genetic influences. However, biology is not destiny in human sexuality. Gay male, lesbian, and heterosexual sexual orientations appear to develop as the result of a complex interaction of biological and environmental factors.
8. *Do not overgeneralize.* Consider the belief that gay males are effeminate and lesbians are masculine. Yes, some gay males and lesbians fit these stereotypes. However, many do not. Overgeneralizing makes us vulnerable to accepting stereotypes.

Perspectives on Human Sexuality

Human sexuality is a complex topic. No single theory or perspective can capture all its nuances. In this book we explore human sexuality from many perspectives. In this section we introduce a number of them—historical, biological, evolutionary, cross-species, cross-cultural, psychological, and sociocultural. We draw on these perspectives in subsequent chapters.

THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

History places sexual attitudes and behavior in context. It informs us as to whether sexual behavior reflects trends that have been with us through the millennia or the customs of a particular culture and era. History shows little evidence of universal sexual trends. Attitudes and behaviors vary extensively from one time and place to another. Contemporary American society may be permissive when compared to the Victorian and post–World War II eras. Yet it looks staid when compared to the sexual excesses of some ancient societies, such as the ruling class of ancient Rome. History also shows how religion has been a major influence on sexual values and behavior. Let us trace some historical changes in attitudes toward sexuality. We begin by turning the clock back 20,000 to 30,000 years, to the days before written records were kept—that is, to prehistory.

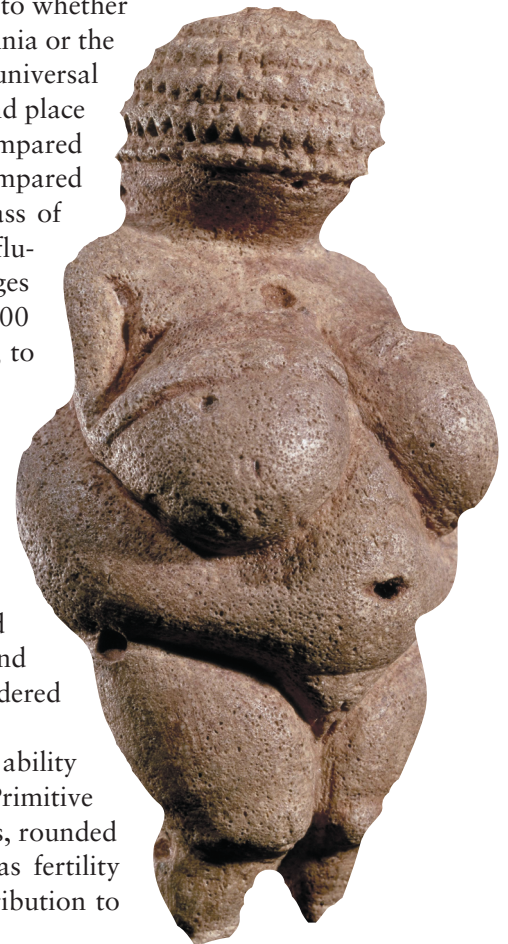
Prehistoric Sexuality: From Female Idols to Phallic Worship

Information about life among our Stone Age ancestors is drawn largely from cave drawings, stone artifacts, and the customs of modern-day preliterate peoples whose existence has changed little over the millennia. From such sources, historians and anthropologists infer a prehistoric division of labor. By and large, men hunted for game, and women tended to remain close to home. Women nurtured children and gathered edible plants and nuts, crabs, and other marine life that wandered along the shore or swam in shallow waters.

Art produced in the Stone Age suggests the worship of women’s ability to bear children and perpetuate the species (Fichner-Rathus, 2013). Primitive statues and cave drawings portray women with large, pendulous breasts, rounded hips, and prominent sex organs. Most theorists regard the figurines as fertility symbols. Stone Age people may have been unaware of the male’s contribution to reproduction.

The “Venus of Willendorf.”

This ancient figurine is believed to be a fertility symbol.



As the glacial sheets of the last Ice Age retreated (about 11,000 BCE) and the climate warmed, human societies turned agrarian. Hunters and gatherers became farmers and herders. Villages sprang up around fields. Men tended livestock. Women farmed. As people grew aware of the male role in reproduction, **phallic worship** (worship of the penis) sprang into being. Knowledge of paternity is believed to have developed around 9000 BCE, resulting from observation of livestock. When people began to observe animals throughout the years, they also began to understand that a predictable period of time elapsed between copulation and the birth of offspring.

The penis became glorified in art as a plough, ax, or sword. **Phallic symbols** played roles in religious ceremonies in ancient Egypt. The ancient Greeks sometimes rendered phalluses as rings, sometimes as necklaces. In ancient Rome, a large phallus was carried like a float in a parade honoring Venus, the goddess of love.

The **incest taboo** may have been the first human taboo. All human societies apparently have some form of incest taboo, but societies have varied in terms of its strictness. Brother–sister marriages were permitted among the presumably divine rulers of ancient Egypt and among the royal families of the Incas and of Hawaii, even though they were generally prohibited among commoners. Father–daughter marriages were permitted among the aristocracy and royalty of ancient Egypt. Incestuous relationships in these royal blood lines may have kept wealth and power, as well as “divinity,” in the family.

The Ancient Hebrews The ancient Hebrews viewed sex, at least in marriage, as a satisfying experience intended to fulfill the divine command to “be fruitful and multiply.” The emphasis on the procreative function of sex led to some interesting social customs. For example, childlessness and the development of a repulsive abnormality, such as a boil, were grounds for divorce. Male–male and female–female sexual behavior were strongly condemned, as they threatened the perpetuation of the family.

The ancient Hebrews believed that sex helped strengthen marital bonds and solidify the family. But it would be inaccurate to ignore the fact that according to the Hebrew Bible, the prophet Abraham had several wives and concubines, and King Solomon had several hundred. In any event, Jewish law legislated the minimum frequency of marital relations, which varied according to the man’s profession and the amount of time spent at home:

Every day for those who have no occupation, twice a week for laborers, once a week for ass-drivers; once every thirty days for camel drivers; and once every six months for sailors.

—Mishnah Ketubot 5:6; Ketubot 62b–62b

According to the Book of Proverbs, a good wife rises before dawn to tend to her family’s needs, brings home food, instructs the servants, tends the vineyards, makes the clothes, keeps the ledger, helps the needy, and works well into the night. Even so, a wife was considered the property of her husband and could be divorced on a whim. A wife could also be stoned to death for adultery, but she might have to share her husband with secondary wives and concubines. Men who consorted with the wives of other men were considered to have violated the property rights of those men and might have to pay for “damages.”

In case the notion that a woman is a man’s property sounds ancient to you, we must note that in many cultures it remains current. For example, in Afghanistan some fathers have given other men their daughters as payment for gambling debts (Bearak, 2006). And Zambian judge Alfred Shilibwa ordered a hotel employee, Obert Siyankalanga, to pay a woman’s husband \$300 in compensation after he

Phallic worship Worship of the penis as a symbol of generative power.

Phallic symbol An image of the penis.

Incest taboo The prohibition against intercourse and reproduction among close blood relatives.



fondled her breasts (“Man pays victim’s husband,” 2000). The woman had been ironing at the time. She explained the scars on Obert’s face and head: “I clobbered him on the head with the iron.” Because Obert was the woman’s supervisor, the judge also convicted him of sexual harassment.

The Ancient Greeks The classical or golden age of Greece lasted from about 500 to 300 BCE. Within this relatively short span lived the philosophers Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle; the playwrights Aristophanes, Aeschylus, and Sophocles; the natural scientist Archimedes; and the lawgiver Solon. Like the Hebrews, the Greeks valued family life, but Greek men also admired the well-developed male body and enjoyed nude wrestling in the arena. Erotic encounters and off-color jokes characterized the plays of Aristophanes and other playwrights. The Greeks held that the healthy mind must dwell in a healthy body. They cultivated muscle and movement along with mind.

The Greeks viewed their gods—Zeus, god of gods; Apollo, who inspired art and music; Aphrodite, the goddess of carnal love whose name is the basis of the word *aphrodisiac*; and others—as voracious seekers of sexual variety. Not only were they believed to have sexual adventures among themselves but they were also thought to have seduced mortals.

Three aspects of Greek sexuality are of particular interest to our study of sexual practices in the ancient world: male–male sexual behavior, pederasty, and



Many Ancient Greek Ceramics Depict Male–Male Sexual Activity. The ancient Greeks believed that males were bisexual. In Homer’s *Iliad*, brought to the silver screen as *Troy*, Achilles is spurred to battle by the killing of his lover Patroclus. The film, however, glossed over this motive by emphasizing the family relationship between the two.

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prostitution. The Greeks viewed people as **bisexual**. Male–male sex was deemed normal and tolerated so long as it did not threaten the institution of the family.

Pederasty means love of boys. Sex between men and prepubescent boys was illegal, but families were generally pleased if their adolescent sons attracted socially prominent mentors. **TRUTH OR FICTION REVISITED:** Men in ancient Greece might take on an adolescent male as a lover and pupil. Pederasty did not impede the boy’s future male–female functioning, because the pederast himself was usually married, and Greeks believed people to be equally capable of male–female and male–male sexual activity.

Prostitution flourished at every level of society. Prostitutes ranged from refined **courtesans** to **concubines**, who were usually slaves. Courtesans could play musical instruments, dance, engage in witty repartee, and discuss politics. They were also skilled in the arts of love. No social stigma was attached to visiting a courtesan. At the lower rungs of society were streetwalkers and brothel prostitutes. The latter were not hard to find: A wooden or painted penis invariably stood by the door.

The women of Athens had no more rights than slaves. They were subject to the authority of their male next-of-kin before marriage and to their husbands afterwards. They received no formal education and were consigned mostly to women’s quarters in their homes. They were chaperoned when they ventured out of doors. A husband could divorce his wife without cause and was obligated to do so if she committed adultery. **TRUTH OR FICTION REVISITED:** Women in the ancient world were treated as property.

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The World of Ancient Rome Much is made of the sexual excesses of the Roman emperors and ruling families. Julius Caesar is reputed to have been bisexual—“a man to every woman and a woman to every man.” Other emperors, such as Caligula, sponsored orgies at which guests engaged in sexual practices including **bestiality** and **sadism**. Sexual excesses were found more often among the upper classes of palace society than among average Romans, however.

Romans disapproved of male–male sexual behavior as a threat to the integrity of the Roman family. The family was viewed as the source of strength of the empire. Although Roman women were more likely than their Greek counterparts to share their husbands’ social lives, they still were the property of their husbands.

Western society traces the roots of many of its sexual terms to Roman culture, as indicated by their Latin roots. **Fellatio**, for example, derives from the Latin *fellare*, meaning “to suck.” **Cunnilingus** derives from *cunnius*, meaning “vulva,” and *lingere*, “to lick.” **Fornication** derives from *fornix*, an arch or vault. The term stems from Roman streetwalkers’ practice of serving their customers in the shadows of archways near public buildings such as stadiums and theaters.

The Early Christians Christianity emerged within the Roman Empire during the centuries following the death of Jesus. Early Christian views on sexuality were largely shaped by Saint Paul and the church fathers in the first century and by Saint Augustine in the latter part of the fourth century. Adultery and fornication were rampant among the upper classes of Rome at the time, and early Christian leaders began to associate sexuality with sin (MacCulloch, 2011).

In replacing the pagan values of Rome, the early Christians, like the Hebrews, sought to restrict sex to marriage. They saw temptations of the flesh as distractions from spiritual devotion. Paul preached that celibacy was closer to the Christian ideal than marriage. He recognized that not everyone could achieve celibacy, however, so he said that it was “better to marry than to burn” (with passion, that is).

Christians, like Jews before them, demanded virginity of brides (MacCulloch, 2011). Prostitution was condemned. Christians taught that men should love their

Bisexual Sexually responsive to either gender.

Pederasty Sexual love of boys.

Courtesan A prostitute—especially the mistress of a noble or wealthy man.

Concubine A secondary wife, usually of inferior legal and social status.

Bestiality Sexual relations between a person and an animal.

Sadism The practice of achieving sexual gratification through hurting or humiliating others.

Fellatio A sexual activity involving oral contact with the penis.

Cunnilingus A sexual activity involving oral contact with the female genitals.

Fornication Sexual intercourse between people who are not married to one another.



wives with restraint, not passion. The goal of procreation should govern sexual behavior—the spirit should rule the flesh. Divorce was outlawed. Unhappiness with one’s spouse might reflect sexual, thus sinful, restlessness. Dissolving a marriage might also jeopardize the social structure that supported the church. Masturbation, male–male sexual behavior, female–female sexual behavior, oral–genital contact, anal intercourse—all were viewed as abominations in the eyes of God, as in Leviticus.

Saint Augustine (353–430 CE) associated sexual lust with the original sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Lust and shame were passed down through the generations. Lust made any sexual expression, even in marriage, inherently evil. Only through celibacy, according to Augustine, could men and women attain a state of grace.

Islam

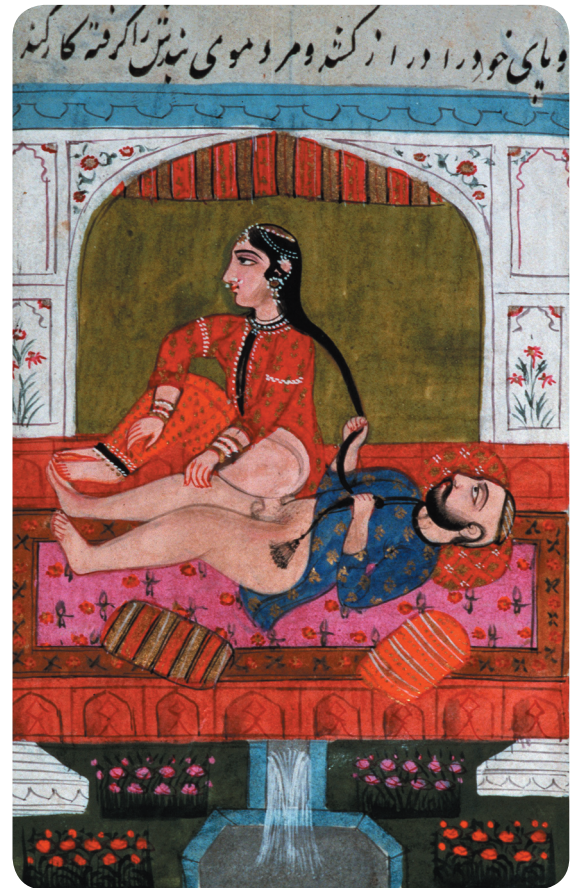
The Seraglio of the sultan of the Ottoman Empire housed about 1,600 virgins, each hoping to be chosen for one night of honor. The sultan makes [the Mormon] Brigham Young, who had only a few dozen wives, look like a piker. (Bentley, 2009)

Islam, the dominant religion in the Middle East, across North Africa and into parts of Southern Asia, was founded by the Prophet Muhammad. Muhammad was born in what is now Saudi Arabia, in about 570 CE. The Islamic tradition treasures marriage and sexual fulfillment in marriage. Premarital sex and adultery invite shame and social condemnation—and, in some fundamentalist Islamic states, the death penalty, by stoning.

Muhammad decreed that marriage represents the road to virtue. Islamic tradition permits a sexual double standard, however. Men under most circumstances may take up to four wives (we saw that the sultan of the Ottoman Empire had a few more), but women are permitted only one husband. Public social interactions between men and women are severely restricted in more conservative Islamic societies. Women are expected to keep their heads and faces veiled in public and to avoid all contact with men other than their husbands.

India Perhaps no culture has cultivated sexual pleasure as a spiritual ideal to the extent of the ancient Hindus of India. From the fifth century CE onward, temples show sculptures of gods, nymphs, and ordinary people in erotic poses. Hindu sexual practices were codified in a sex manual, the *Kama Sutra*, which illustrates sexual positions, some of which would challenge a contortionist. It also holds recipes for alleged aphrodisiacs. This manual is believed to have been written by the Hindu sage Vatsyayana sometime between the third and fifth centuries CE, at about the time that Christianity was ascending in the West.

In its graphic representations of sexual positions and practices, the *Kama Sutra* reflected the Hindu belief that sex was a religious duty, not a source of shame or guilt. Hindu deities were often portrayed as engaging in same-sex as well as male–female sexual activities. In the Hindu doctrine of karma (the passage of souls from one place to another), sexual fulfillment was regarded as one way to become reincarnated at a higher level of existence. Indian society grew more restrictive toward sexuality after about 1000 CE.



An illustration from the *Kama Sutra*. The *Kama Sutra*, an Indian sex manual believed to have been written sometime between the third and fifth centuries CE, contained graphic illustrations of sexual techniques and practices.



The Far East

Second century sex manuals ... describe the beautiful bodies—“supple like grass”—of dancing girls, who “put forth all their charms so that one forgets life and death.” (Bentley, 2009)



In the cultures of the Far East, sexuality was akin to spirituality. To the Taoist masters of China, who influenced Chinese culture for millennia, sex was a sacred duty—a form of worship that led toward harmony with nature and immortality.

TRUTH OR FICTION REVISITED: It is not true that the production of sex manuals originated in modern times. The Chinese culture was the first to produce a detailed sex manual, which came into use about 200 years before the birth of Jesus. The man was expected to extend intercourse as long as possible to absorb more of his wife’s natural essence, or yin. Yin would enhance his own masculine essence, or yang. Moreover, he was to help bring his partner to orgasm so as to increase the flow of energy that he might absorb.

Taoists believed that it was wasteful for a man to “spill his seed.” Masturbation, acceptable for women, was ruled out for men. Sexual practices such as anal intercourse and oral–genital contact (fellatio and cunnilingus) were permissible, so long as the man did not squander yang through wasteful ejaculation. Same-sex activity was not prohibited by Taoist holy writings, but some Taoists frowned on exclusive homosexuality. A parallel to Western cultures was the role accorded women in traditional Chinese society. The “good wife,” like her Western counterparts, was limited to domestic roles.

Christianity in the Middle Ages The Middle Ages span the millennium of Western history from about 476 to 1450 CE. The attitudes of the Roman Catholic Church toward sexuality, largely unchanged since the time of Augustine, dominated medieval thought (Crawford et al., 2011). Yet some currents of change crept across medieval Europe in the social standing of women. The Church had long regarded all women as being tainted by the sin of Eve. But in the Eastern Empire of Byzantium, based in Constantinople, the cult of the Virgin Mary flourished. The ideal of womanhood was in the image of Mary: good, gracious, loving, and saintly. Imported by the Crusaders and others who returned from the East, the cult of the Virgin Mary swept European Christendom and helped elevate the status of women.

There were two conflicting concepts of woman: One was the woman as Eve, the temptress; the other was the woman as Mary, virtuous and pure. Contemporary Western images of women still show the schism between the good girl and the bad girl—the Madonna and the whore.

The Protestant Reformation During the Reformation, Martin Luther (1483–1546) and other Christian reformers such as John Calvin (1509–1564) split off from the Roman Catholic Church and formed their own sects, which led to the development of the modern Protestant denominations. Luther disputed many Roman Catholic doctrines on sexuality. He believed that priests should be allowed to marry and rear children. To Luther, marriage was as much a part of human nature as eating or drinking. Calvin rejected the Roman church’s position that sex in marriage was permissible only for procreation. He believed that sexual expression in marriage also strengthened the marriage bond and helped relieve the stresses of everyday life.

Coming to America Early settlers brought to North America the religious teachings that had dominated Western thought and culture for centuries. Whatever their differences, each religion stressed the ideal of family life and viewed sex outside



of marriage as immoral or sinful. A woman's place, by and large, was in the home and in the fields. Not until 1833, when Oberlin College opened its doors to women, were women permitted to attend college in the United States. (Not until 1920 did women gain the right to vote.)

The Victorian Period The middle and later parts of the nineteenth century are generally called the Victorian period, after Queen Victoria of England. Victoria assumed the throne in 1837 and ruled until her death in 1901. Her name has become virtually synonymous with sexual repression. Victorian society in Europe and the United States, on the surface at least, was prim and proper. Sex was not discussed in polite society. Even the legs of pianos were draped with cloth for the sake of modesty. Many women viewed sex as a marital duty to be performed for procreation or to satisfy their husbands' cravings. Consider the following quotation:

I am happy now that Charles calls on my bed chamber less frequently than of old. As it is, I now endure but two calls a week and when I hear his steps outside my door I lie down on my bed, close my eyes, open my legs and think of England.

—Attributed to Alice, Lady Hillingdon

Women were assumed not to experience sexual desires or pleasures. “I would say,” observed William Acton (1814–1875), an influential English physician, in 1857, “that the majority of women (happily for society) are not much troubled with sexual feeling of any kind.”

It was widely believed among medical authorities in England and the United States that sex drains the man of his vitality. Physicians thus recommended that intercourse be practiced infrequently. The Reverend Sylvester Graham (1794–1851) preached that ejaculation depleted men of “vital fluids” they needed to maintain health and vitality. Graham preached against “wasting the seed” by masturbation or frequent marital intercourse (Haynes, 2012). (How frequent was “frequent”? In Graham's view, intercourse more than once a month could dangerously sap vital energies.) **TRUTH OR FICTION REVISITED:** Graham recommended that young men control their sexual appetites by a diet of simple foods based on whole-grain flours, and invented what we now call the Graham cracker to serve this purpose.

But the behavior of Victorians was not as repressed as advertised. Despite Acton's beliefs, Victorian women did experience sexual pleasure and orgasm. Consider some findings from an early sex survey conducted in 1892 by a female physician, Clelia Duel Mosher. Although her sample was small and nonrandom, 35 of the 44 women who responded admitted to desiring sexual intercourse. And 34 of them reported experiencing orgasm. Women's diaries of the time also contained accounts of passionate love affairs.

Prostitution flourished during the Victorian era. Men apparently thought that they were doing their wives a favor by looking elsewhere. Accurate statistics are hard to come by, but there may have been as many as 1 prostitute for every 12 men in London during the nineteenth century; in Vienna, perhaps 1 for every 7 men.

Same-sex sexual behavior was considered indecent in Victorian society. The celebrated, gay Anglo-Irish novelist and playwright Oscar Wilde—author of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *An Ideal Husband*, and *The Importance of Being Earnest*—was imprisoned after being convicted of “gross indecency.”



Queen Victoria of England. Sexuality may not have been as repressed as advertised during the reign of Queen Victoria.





Foundations of the Scientific Study of Sexuality Against this backdrop of repression, scientists and scholars began to approach sexuality as an area of legitimate scientific study. The English physician Havelock Ellis (1859–1939) published a veritable encyclopedia of sexuality between 1897 and 1910, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*. Ellis drew information from case histories, anthropological findings, and medical knowledge. He argued that sexual desires in women were natural and healthy. He wrote that many sexual problems had psychological rather than physical causes. Gay male or lesbian sexual orientation was a natural variation, Ellis argued, and not an aberration. He treated gay male and lesbian sexual orientations as inborn dispositions, not as vices or character flaws.

The influential German psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840–1902) described case histories of people with sexual deviations in his book, *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886). Cases included sadomasochism (sexual gratification through inflicting or receiving pain), bestiality, and necrophilia (intercourse with dead people). Krafft-Ebing viewed deviations as mental diseases that could be studied and perhaps treated by medical science.

At about the same time, a Viennese physician, Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), was developing a theory of personality that has had an enormous influence on modern culture and science. Freud believed that the sex drive was our principal motivating force.

Alfred Kinsey (1894–1956), an Indiana University zoologist, conducted the first large-scale studies of sexual behavior in the 1930s and 1940s. Kinsey conducted detailed interviews with nearly 12,000 people across the United States. The results of his surveys were published in two volumes, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (Kinsey et al., 1948) and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (Kinsey et al., 1953). These books represent the first scientific attempts to provide a comprehensive picture of sexual behavior in the United States.

The books made for dry reading. They were filled with statistical tables rather than racy pictures or vignettes. Nevertheless, they became best-sellers, exploding on a public that had not yet learned to discuss sex openly. Their publication unleashed the dogs of criticism. Kinsey's work had some methodological flaws—especially in its selection of participants—but much of the criticism branded it immoral and obscene. Many newspapers refused to report the results of his survey on female sexuality. A congressional committee in the 1950s claimed that Kinsey's work undermined the moral fiber of the nation, rendering it more vulnerable to a Communist takeover. Despite all the brouhaha, Kinsey and his colleagues made sex research a scientifically respectable field of study and helped lay the groundwork for discussing sexual behavior openly.

The Sexual Revolution The period of the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s is often referred to as the *sexual revolution*. Dramatic changes occurred in American sexual attitudes and practices during the “Swinging Sixties.” Our society was on the threshold of major social upheaval, not only in sexual behavior but also in science, politics, fashion, music, art, and cinema. The so-called Woodstock generation, disheartened by commercialism and the Vietnam War, tuned in (to rock music on the radio), turned on (to drugs), and dropped out (of mainstream society). The heat was on between the hippies and the hardhats. Long hair became the mane of men. Bell-bottomed jeans flared out. Films became sexually explicit as censorship crumbled. Critics seriously contemplated whether the pornography “classic” *Deep Throat* had deep social implications. Hard rock music bellowed the message of rebellion and revolution.


The sexual revolution gained momentum from a timely interplay of scientific, social, political, and economic forces. The war (in Vietnam), the bomb (fear of the nuclear bomb), the pill (the introduction of the birth control pill), and the mass



media (especially television) were four such forces. The pill lessened the risk of unwanted pregnancy, permitting young people to engage in recreational or casual sex. Pop psychology movements, such as the Human Potential Movement of the 1960s and 1970s (the “Me Decade”), spread the message that people should get in touch with and express their genuine feelings, including their sexual feelings. “Doing your own thing” became one catchphrase. “If it feels right, go with it” became another. The lamp was rubbed. Out popped the sexual genie.

The sexual revolution was tied to social permissiveness and political liberalism. The media dealt openly with sex. Popular books encouraged people to explore their sexuality. Film scenes of lovemaking became so commonplace that the movie rating system was introduced to alert parents.

Gay Activism Some say gay activism began in 1969, with the gay “rebellion” against police discrimination at the gay bar, the Stonewall Inn, in Manhattan. Gay activism mushroomed during the sexual revolution. Not only did gays become more voluble in demanding equal rights, but they also began gay parades in major cities, such as the annual parades in San Francisco and New York’s Greenwich Village. In the early 1980s, gay people also built social institutions to tackle the problem of HIV/AIDS, which afflicted gay males disproportionately. Today gay activism is centered around the issue of gay marriage, which we will discuss further in Chapter 10.

Sex Research During the sexual revolution, sexually explicit questionnaires proliferated in popular magazines, interviewers posed sexually explicit questions by telephone and in person, and some pioneers, including William H. Masters and Virginia Johnson, observed people engaging in sexual activity in the laboratory. Shere Hite published controversial books based on magazine surveys, but her popularity fell when it became clear that 3,000 magazine readers did not represent the country, or even all readers of the magazine. Morton Hunt conducted a telephone survey financed by *Playboy* in the 1970s, and he claimed to find a populace more sexually liberal than in Kinsey’s day. However, he, like Shere Hite, had a relatively low response rate. In the 1960s, Masters and Johnson were condemned by many as destroying the moral fabric of the nation—a complaint similar to those leveled earlier against Kinsey. Today, research on sexual behavior continues, with more valid methods of sampling the population and a largely jaded citizenry. 

CRITICAL THINKING

What, then, does history tell us about sex? Is there a universal standard for defining sexual values, or are there many standards?

 **Watch the Video**
Research Methods in Sexuality:
 Michael Bailey’s Laboratory
 on **MyDevelopmentLab**



The Legacy of Stonewall.

A month after Stonewall, the first gay-pride march was held. The Stonewall incident, in which police arrested gays for simply being at the Inn, unleashed a series of uprisings and mass actions. A provocative slogan came into use: “We’re here. We’re queer. Get used to it.”

Are today's young people more or less liberal in the expression of their sexuality than people in earlier generations?



Recent Trends More teenagers are sexually active today, and at younger ages, than they were a couple of generations ago (Russell et al., 2012). In addition to premarital sex, two other features of the sexual revolution have become permanent parts of our social fabric: the liberation of female sexuality and a greater willingness to discuss sex openly. Countless pornography websites populate the Internet and can be accessed by children. As late as the early 1960s, men's magazines might reveal models' breasts, and nudist magazines might show some more. Today, however, with multiple websites offering the opportunity to download videos of celebrities such as Paris Hilton and Kim Kardashian engaging in sexual activity, pornography has nearly reached the status of wallpaper.

In sum, all societies have some form of an incest taboo. Most societies place a value on procreative sex within the context of an enduring relationship, usually in the form of marriage. Marriage provides security for children, maintains or increases the population, and institutionalizes the orderly transfer of property from generation to generation. Other sexual practices—masturbation, promiscuous sex, male–male sexual behavior, female–female sexual behavior, prostitution, polygamy, and so on—have been condemned in some societies, tolerated by others, and encouraged by still others.

THE BIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

The biological perspective focuses on the roles of genes, hormones, the nervous system, and other biological factors in human sexuality. Sex, after all, serves the biological function of reproduction. We are biologically endowed with structures that make sexual behavior possible—and, for most people, pleasurable.

Study of the biology of sex informs us about the mechanisms of reproduction as well as of the mechanisms of sexual arousal and response. We learn that orgasm is a spinal reflex as well as a psychological event.

Biological researchers have made major strides in assisting infertile couples to conceive, for example, through laboratory-based methods of fertilization. Knowledge of biology has furthered our ability to overcome sexual problems.

THE EVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVE

Species vary not only in their physical characteristics but also in their social behavior, including their mating behavior. Scientists look to **evolution** to help explain such variability (Buss & Schmitt, 2011). The English naturalist Charles Darwin (1809–1882) showed that current species of animals and plants evolved from other life-forms

Evolution The development of a species to its present state, which is believed to involve adaptations to its environment.




through **natural selection**, or “survival of the fittest.” In each species, individuals vary, and some are better adapted to their environments than others. Better-adapted members are more likely to survive to reproduce and transmit their traits to succeeding generations. They are not necessarily the strongest or fleetest of foot, although these traits are adaptive for some species and enhance their reproductive success.

New variations in species can also be introduced through random genetic changes called **mutations**. Although mutations occur randomly, they are subject to natural selection. Adaptive mutations enhance reproductive success. As more members of the species come to possess these traits, the species changes.

Traits are transmitted by units of heredity called **genes**. Traits are determined by single genes or combinations of genes that offspring inherit from their parents. Genes are segments of **chromosomes**, which are composed of **deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA)**. Each human cell normally contains a complement of 46 chromosomes, which are arranged in 23 pairs. Each pair of chromosomes consists of 1,000 or so genes. A child normally inherits one member of each pair from each parent. Each child inherits half of his or her genes from each parent. The particular combinations of genes that one inherits account for whether one has blue eyes or brown eyes, light or dark hair, and arms or wings.

Some scientists suggest that there is also a genetic basis to social behavior, including sexual behavior, among humans and other animals (Buss & Schmitt, 2011). If so, we may carry traits that helped our prehistoric ancestors survive and reproduce successfully.


Does biology govern sexual behavior? Although the sexuality of other species is largely governed by biological processes, culture and experience also play vital roles in human sexuality (Petersen & Hyde, 2010). *Human* sexuality involves a complex web of biological, psychological, and cultural factors. 

The Evolutionary Perspective and Erotic Plasticity Consider the concept of “erotic plasticity” (Baumeister, 2000), which addresses the fact that in response to various social and cultural forces, people show different levels of sex drive and express their sexual desires in a variety of ways. There is evidence that women show greater erotic plasticity than men do (Baumeister, 2000; Yost & Thomas, 2011). For example, (1) individual women show greater variation than men in sexual behavior over time; (2) women seem to be more responsive than men to most specific cultural factors, such as cultural permissiveness or restraint; and (3) men’s sexual behavior is more consistent with their sexual attitudes than women’s. Are evolutionary, biological forces an important factor in the greater female erotic plasticity?

Altruism There is a tendency to think of adaptive traits as somehow more “worthy,” “good,” or “admirable” than less adaptive traits. But evolution is not a moralistic enterprise. A trait either does or does not enhance reproductive success. It is not good or bad in itself. It is apparently adaptive for the female of one species of insect to eat the male after mating. “Dad” then literally nourishes his offspring during the period of gestation. In evolutionary terms, his “altruism”—his personal sacrifice—is adaptive if it increases the chances that the offspring will survive and carry his genes. In other species, it may be adaptive for fathers to “love them and leave them”—that is, to mate with as many females as possible and abruptly abandon them to “plant their seed” elsewhere.

TRUTH OR FICTION REVISITED: Shortly after inseminating a female, the male redback spider does a somersault into the female’s mouth and becomes her after-sex meal. Females pause in their sexual activity after “taking in” their partners. Thus, their partner’s sacrifice improves the chance that his own sperm will fertilize her eggs before another male can have at her.

Natural selection The evolutionary process by which adaptive traits enable members of a species to survive to reproductive age and transmit these traits to future generations.

 **Watch the Video**
Evolution and Sex: Michael Bailey
on **MyDevelopmentLab**

Mutation A random change in the molecular structure of DNA.

Genes The basic units of heredity, which consist of chromosomal segments of DNA.

Chromosomes The rodlike structures that reside in the nuclei of every living cell and carry the genetic code in the form of genes.


DNA Deoxyribonucleic acid—the chemical substance whose molecules make up genes and chromosomes.



CRITICAL THINKING

The biological, evolutionary, and cross-species perspectives may offer some insights into what kinds of sexual behavior are “natural.” If a sexual behavior pattern is judged to be natural, does that mean that it is right or good? Explain.

 **Watch the Video**
Mating Trick
on **MyDevelopmentLab**

Gender Differences in Preferred Number of Sex Partners Some evolutionary psychologists argue that men are naturally more promiscuous than women because they are the genetic heirs of ancestors whose reproductive success was related to the number of women they could impregnate (Buss & Schmitt, 2011). Women, by contrast, can produce only a few offspring in their lifetimes. Thus, the theory goes, they have to be more selective with respect to their mating partners. Women’s reproductive success is enhanced by mating with the fittest males—not with any Tom, Dick, or Harry who happens by. From this perspective, the male’s “roving eye” and the female’s selectivity are embedded in their genes. 

THE CROSS-SPECIES PERSPECTIVE

The study of other animal species places human behavior in broader context. A surprising variety of sexual behaviors exists among nonhumans. There are animal examples, or analogues, of human male–male sexual behavior, female–female sexual behavior, oral–genital contact, and oral–oral behavior (i.e., kissing). Foreplay is also well known in the animal world. Turtles massage their mates’ heads with their claws. Male mice nibble at their partner’s necks. Most mammals use only a rear-entry position for copulation, but some animals, such as apes, use a variety of coital positions.

Cross-species research reveals an interesting pattern. Sexual behavior among “higher” mammals, such as primates, is less directly controlled by instinct than it is among the “lower” species, such as birds, fish, or lower mammals. Experience and learning play more important roles in sexuality as we travel up the evolutionary ladder.

SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

Sociological perspectives, like the historical perspective, provide insight into the ways in which cultural institutions and beliefs affect sexual behavior and people’s sense of morality. Interest in the effects of culture on sexuality was spurred by the early-twentieth-century work of Margaret Mead (1901–1978) and Bronislaw Malinowski (1884–1942).

In *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* (1935), Mead laid the groundwork for recent psychological and sociological research challenging gender-role stereotypes. In most cultures characterized by a gender division of labor, men typically go to business or to the hunt, and—when necessary—to war. In such cultures, men are perceived as strong, active, independent, and logical. Women are viewed as passive, dependent, nurturing, and emotional. Mead concluded that these stereotypes are not inherent in our genetic heritage. Rather, they are acquired through cultural expectations and socialization. That is, men and women learn to behave in ways that are expected of them in their particular culture.

In 1951, Clellan Ford, an anthropologist, and Frank Beach, a psychologist, reviewed sexual behavior in almost 200 preliterate societies around the world. They found great variety in sexual customs and beliefs. They also found some fairly common threads. Kissing was quite common although not universal. The Thonga of Africa did not practice kissing. When witnessing European visitors kissing each other, members of the tribe commented that they could not understand why Europeans “ate” each other’s saliva and dirt. The frequency of sexual intercourse also varies from culture to culture, but intercourse is relatively more frequent among young people everywhere.

Societies differ in their attitudes toward childhood masturbation. Some societies, such as the Hopi Native Americans of the southwest United States, ignore it. Trobrianders encourage it. Other societies condemn it.

Societies differ widely in their sexual attitudes, customs, and practices. The members of all human societies share anatomic structures and physiological capacities for sexual pleasure, however. The same hormones flow through their arteries. Yet their sexual



practices, and the pleasure they reap or fail to attain, may set them apart. If human sexuality were determined exclusively by biology, we might not find such diversity.

PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

Psychological perspectives focus on the many psychological influences—perception, learning, motivation, emotion, personality, and so on—that affect our sexual behavior and our experience of ourselves as female or male. Some psychological theorists, such as Sigmund Freud, focus on the motivational role of sex in human personality. Others focus on how our experiences and mental representations of the world affect our sexual behavior.

Sigmund Freud and Psychoanalytic Theory Sigmund Freud, a Viennese physician, formulated a grand theory of personality termed **psychoanalysis**. Freud believed that we are all born with biologically based sex drives that must be channeled through socially approved outlets if family and social life are to carry on without undue conflict.

Freud proposed that the mind operates on conscious and unconscious levels. The conscious level corresponds to our state of present awareness. The unconscious mind refers to the darker reaches of the mind that lie outside our direct awareness. The ego shields the conscious mind from awareness of our baser sexual and aggressive urges by means of **defense mechanisms** such as **repression**, or motivated forgetting of traumatic experiences.

Although many sexual ideas and impulses are banished to the unconscious, they continue to seek expression. One avenue of expression is the dream, through which sexual impulses may be perceived in disguised, or symbolic, form. The therapists and scholars who follow in the Freudian tradition are quite interested in analyzing dreams, and the dream objects listed in Table 1.3 are often considered sex symbols.

Psychoanalysis The theory of personality originated by Sigmund Freud, which proposes that human behavior represents the outcome of clashing inner forces.

Defense mechanisms In psychoanalytic theory, automatic processes that protect the ego from anxiety by disguising or ejecting unacceptable ideas and urges.

Repression The automatic ejection of anxiety-evoking ideas from consciousness.

Table 1.3

Dream Symbols in Psychoanalytic Theory

Symbols for the Male Genital Organs

airplanes	fish	neckties	tools	weapons
bullets	hands	poles	trains	
feet	hoses	snakes	trees	
fire	knives	sticks	umbrellas	

Symbols for the Female Genital Organs

bottles	caves	doors	ovens	ships
boxes	chests	hats	pockets	tunnels
cases	closets	jars	pots	

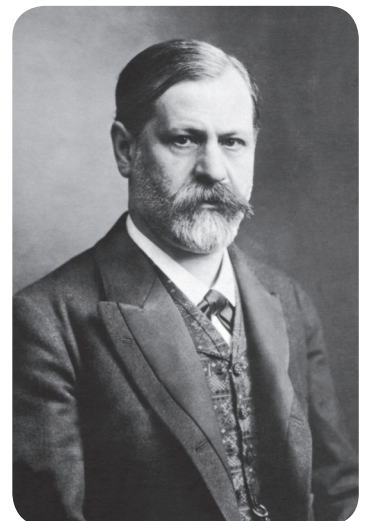
Symbols for Sexual Intercourse

climbing a ladder	flying in an airplane
climbing a staircase	riding a horse
crossing a bridge	riding an elevator
driving an automobile	riding a roller coaster
entering a room	walking into a tunnel or down a hall

Symbols for the Breasts

apples	peaches
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Freud theorized that the content of dreams symbolized urges, wishes, and objects of fantasy that we would censor in the waking state.



How might a psychoanalyst interpret this dream image?



A World of Diversity

An “Honor Killing” in Germany

Hatun Surucu, 23, was killed on her way to a bus stop in Berlin-Tempelhof by several shots to the head and upper body, fired at point-blank range. Months before, she had reported one of her brothers to the police for threatening her. Three of her five brothers were tried for murder. According to the prosecutor, the oldest (age 25) acquired the weapon, the middle brother (age 24) lured his sister to the scene of the crime, and the youngest (age 18) shot her.

Hatun Surucu had “dishonored” her family. She grew up in Berlin as the daughter of Turkish Kurds. When she finished eighth grade, her parents took her out of school. Shortly after that she was taken to Turkey and married to a cousin. Later she separated from her husband and returned to Berlin, pregnant. At age 17 she gave birth to a son. She moved into a women’s shelter and completed the work

for her middle-school certificate. Later she finished a vocational-training program to become an electrician. She put on makeup, wore her hair unbound, went dancing, and adorned herself with rings, necklaces, and bracelets. Then her life was cut short.

Evidently, in the eyes of her brothers, Hatun Surucu’s capital crime was that, living in Germany, she had begun living like a German. One brother noted that she had stopped wearing her head scarf, that she refused to go back to her family, and that she had declared her intent to “seek out her own circle of friends.” Often in such cases it is the father of the family who decides about the punishment, but Seyran Ates, a Turkish-German lawyer, reports cases in which the mother has a leading role—mothers who were forced to marry forcing the same fate on their daughters. Necla Kelek, a Turkish-German author, explained, “The mothers are looking for solidarity by demanding that their daughters submit to the same hardship and suffering.” By disobeying them, the daughter calls into question her mother’s life—her silent submission to the ritual of forced marriage.

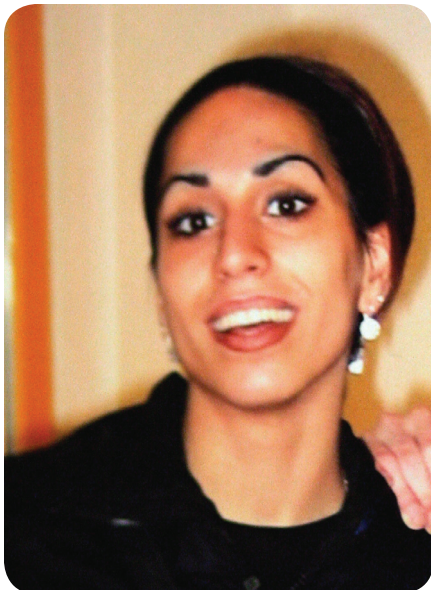
Many Germans were made aware of the parallel Muslim world arising in their midst primarily thanks to three women Muslim authors: Seyran Ates, Necla Kelek, and Serap Cileli. Ates and Kelek narrowly escaped Hatun Surucu’s fate, and Serap Cileli, when she was 13 years old, tried to kill herself to escape her first forced marriage. Later she was taken to Turkey and married against her will, then she returned to Germany with two children from this marriage and took refuge in a women’s shelter to escape her father’s violence.

Seyran Ates estimates that perhaps half of young Turkish women living in Germany are forced into marriage every year. In the wake of these forced

marriages often come violence and rape; the bride has no choice but to fulfill the duties of the marriage arranged by her parents and her in-laws.

There have been 49 known “honor crimes” during the past nine years in Germany. Perhaps the murder of Hatun Surucu never would have made the headlines at all but for another piece of news that stirred up the press. Just a few hundred yards from where Surucu was killed, at the Thomas Morus High School, three Muslim students openly declared their approval of the murder. Shortly before that, the same students had bullied a fellow pupil because her clothing was “not in keeping with the religious regulations.”

Politicians and religious scholars of all faiths are right in pointing out that there are many varieties of Islam, that Islamism and Islam should not be confused, and that there is no line in the *Koran* that would justify murder. However, disregard for women’s rights—especially the right to sexual self-determination—is an integral component of almost all Islamic societies. Islam needs something like an Enlightenment—only by sticking hard to their own Enlightenment, with its separation of religion and state, can the Western democracies persuade their Muslim residents that human rights are universally valid. “We Western Muslim women,” Seyran Ates says, “will set off the reform of traditional Islam, because we are its victims.”



Hatun Surucu

CRITICAL THINKING

The Muslim author Seyran Ates states that “human rights are universally valid.” What human rights is she speaking about? Is she correct? Support your view.

Which institution has a greater right to govern people’s attitudes and behavior: A nation or a religion? Explain your view.



TRUTH OR FICTION REVISITED: To a psychoanalyst, dreams of airplanes, bullets, snakes, sticks, and similar objects may indeed symbolize the male genitals. But this is the case according to psychoanalytic theory, and not necessarily supported



by research evidence. To his credit, Freud himself maintained skepticism about the importance of dream symbols. He once remarked, “Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar.”

Freud introduced us to new and controversial ideas about ourselves as sexual beings. For example, he originated the concept of **erogenous zones**—the idea that many parts of the body, not just the genitals, are responsive to sexual stimulation.

One of Freud’s most controversial beliefs was that children normally harbor erotic interests. He believed that the suckling by the infant in the oral stage was an erotic act, and he believed the same about the anal bodily experimentation through which 2-year-olds find pleasure in the control of their sphincter muscles in the process of elimination. He theorized that it was normal for children to progress through stages of development in which the erotic interest shifts from one erogenous zone to another, as, for example, from the mouth or oral cavity to the anal cavity. According to his theory of **psychosexual development**, children undergo five stages of development: oral, anal, phallic, latency, and genital, which are named according to the main erogenous zones of each stage.

Freud believed that it was normal for children to develop erotic feelings toward the parent of the other sex during the phallic stage. These incestuous urges lead to conflict with the parent of the same sex. In later chapters we will see that these developments, which Freud termed the **Oedipus complex**, have implications for the assumption of gender roles and sexual orientation.

Learning Theories To what extent does sexual behavior reflect experience? Would you hold the same sexual attitudes and do the same things if you had been reared in another culture? We think not. Even within the same society, family and personal experiences can shape unique sexual attitudes and behaviors.

Behaviorists such as John B. Watson (1878–1958) and B. F. Skinner (1904–1990) emphasized the importance of rewards and punishments in the learning process. Children left to explore their bodies without parental condemnation will learn what feels good and tend to repeat it. The Trobriand child who is rewarded for masturbation and premarital **coitus** through parental praise and encouragement will be more likely to repeat these behaviors than the child in a more sexually restrictive culture, who is punished for the same behavior. When sexual behavior (like masturbation) feels good, but parents connect it with feelings of guilt and shame, the child is placed in conflict and may vacillate between masturbating and swearing off it. If, as young children, we are severely punished for sexual exploration, we may come to associate sexual stimulation in general with feelings of guilt or anxiety. Can such early learning experiences set the stage for sexual problems or dysfunctions in adulthood?

Cognitive Views Cognitive psychologists emphasize the importance of cognitive activity (problem solving, decision making, expectations, and so on). They also recognize that people learn intentionally and by observing others. *Observational learning* refers to acquiring knowledge and skills through observing others. Observational learning includes seeing models in films or on television, hearing about them, and reading about them. According to **social–cognitive theory**, children acquire the gender roles deemed appropriate in a society through reinforcement of gender-appropriate

Erogenous zones Parts of the body, including but not limited to the sex organs, that are responsive to sexual stimulation.

Psychosexual development In psychoanalytic theory, the process by which sexual feelings shift from one erogenous zone to another.

Oedipus complex In psychoanalytic theory, a conflict of the phallic stage in which the boy wishes to possess his mother sexually and perceives his father as a rival in love.

Behaviorists Learning theorists who argue that a scientific approach to understanding behavior must refer only to observable and measurable behaviors.

Coitus (co-it-us or co-EET-us) Sexual intercourse.

Social–cognitive theory A cognitively oriented learning theory in which observational learning, values, and expectations play key roles in determining behavior.



Acquisition of Gender Roles. According to social–cognitive theory, children learn gender roles by means of reinforcement of certain behavior patterns and by observing the gender-related behaviors of their parents, peers, and other role models in media such as TV, films, and books.



behavior and through observing the gender-role behavior of their parents, their peers, and other models on television, in films, in books, and so on.

FEMINIST THEORY

The Greek philosopher Aristotle is said to have described a female as a deformed male. We can only guess at the number of objectionable beliefs expressed in this description, such as seeing the male as the ideal, focusing on the differences rather than the similarities between men and women, and the implicit right of men to hold power over women.

Feminism and **feminist theory** are born of protest against ideas such as those of Aristotle's—ideas that remain with us today in many if not most parts of the world (Petersen & Hyde, 2010). Definitions of *feminism* and of *feminist theory* are controversial, but it is clear enough that feminist theory focuses on the subordination of women to men; analyzing the relationships between sexism, heterosexism (prejudice or discrimination against homosexuals by heterosexuals), racism, and class oppression; and exploring means of resistance—on individual and societal levels (Petersen & Hyde, 2010).

Among other things, feminist theory challenges:

- Traditional views of men as breadwinners and women as homemakers
- Traditional views of men as political policymakers, especially since those policies affect women and children
- Traditional views of men as sexual “aggressors” and women as sexual “gatekeepers”
- Traditional gender roles that view men as objective and rational, and women as emotional and irrational

Some feminists challenge the very concepts of femininity and masculinity because their existence tends to suggest that there is some sort of biological or “actual” basis to the distinction (Shields & Dicicco, 2011). They argue, instead, that femininity and masculinity might be purely social constructions that have the effect of giving women second-class citizenship—or, in many historic eras and parts of the world, no citizenship whatsoever.

In terms of topics most relevant to this book, we will find feminists asserting that men have no right to control women's bodies—for example, that abortion is the personal choice of a woman; that women have as much right as men to decide whether or not to engage in sexual activity, and with whom; that there are few if any gender differences in mental abilities, such as those used in math and science; and that most medical research has been conducted by men for men, with men as subjects.

Although the extent and nature of gender differences remain controversial, we can note that many traditions that subjugate women are falling by the wayside, at least in developed nations. Most Western women, for example, are now in the workforce. As a result, many men now share in child rearing and housekeeping with female partners. In the United States, as many women as men are pursuing careers in traditionally male domains, such as business, law, and medicine (Kimmel et al., 2012). Many women now feel free to initiate sex and relationships.

QUEER THEORY


The word *queer* was initially used as an insult to describe homosexuals. After approximately two centuries, the term became gradually replaced by the word *gay*. However, homosexuals have reappropriated the word *queer* as a sign of pride, as shown by the title of the former TV show, *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*. As one

Feminist theory A theory that challenges acceptance of the male as the norm, traditional gender roles, and male oppression of females.




result of this reappropriation, a widely cited theory of the psychology and sociology of gender roles and sexual orientation is termed **queer theory** (Hegarty, 2011).

Queer theory challenges a number of commonly held assumptions about gender and sexuality, such as the assumptions that heterosexuality is normal and superior to homosexuality (Semp, 2011). Queer theory also challenges the assumption that people are naturally divided into heterosexuals and homosexuals (Downing & Gillett, 2011).

According to queer theory, the concepts of heterosexuality and homosexuality are social constructs that ignore commonly experienced mismatches among people's anatomic sex, society's gender roles, and individuals' sexual desires (Downing & Gillett, 2011). Queer theory asserts that human sexuality has always been more varied than those in power—particularly male heterosexuals—are willing to admit. They point to historical examples such as ancient Greek bisexuality and to current **homophobia** as evidence. We will revisit concepts of queer theory in later chapters, particularly the chapters on gender and sexual orientation. 

MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES ON HUMAN SEXUALITY

Given the complexity and range of human sexual behavior, we need to consider multiple perspectives to understand sexuality. Each perspective—historical, biological, cross-species, sociological, psychological, feminist, and queer—has something to teach us. Let us venture a few conclusions based on our overview of these perspectives. First, human sexuality appears to reflect a combination of biological, social, cultural, and psychological factors that interact in complex ways. Second, there are few universal patterns of sexual behavior, and views on what is right and wrong show great diversity. Third, although our own cultural values and beliefs may be deeply meaningful to us, they may not indicate what is normal, natural, or moral in terms of sexual behavior. The complexity of human sexuality—a complexity that causes it to remain somewhat baffling even to scientists—adds to the wonder and richness of our sexual experience.

 **Watch the Video**
The Basics: Sex and
Gender Differences
on **MyDevelopmentLab**

Queer theory A theory that challenges heteronormativity and heterosexism.

Homophobia Hatred of homosexuals.

Real Students, Real Questions

Q *If there are so many ways of looking at sex, how can you tell what is the right way of thinking about things? It makes it hard to make decisions.*

A Yes, it can be hard to make sexual decisions, but it doesn't have to be! If the decisions are informed decisions, if they are consistent with your values, and—most important—if they are *your* decisions, you can be quite comfortable with them. Do not allow yourself to be pressured by someone else; if you're pressured and you go along with the pressure, it's not you making the decision. This textbook will suggest things to consider when making decisions about dozens of sexual topics. But in the end, the decisions have to be your decisions. What is right for someone else might not be right for you. One more thing: We don't know anyone who makes the right decision about every issue all the time. Be stubborn about matters of sexual health, but if you err in a judgment about another person, know that you're not alone. We've "been there."



Chapter Review

✓ [Study and Review on MyDevelopmentLab

LO1 Define the science of human sexuality

Human sexuality concerns the ways in which we experience and express ourselves as sexual beings. The study of human sexuality draws on the expertise of anthropologists, biologists, medical researchers, sociologists, psychologists, and other scientists.

LO2 Define the value systems people use in making sexual decisions

Along with accurate knowledge about human sexuality, our values inform our sexual decisions. Value systems include legalism, situational ethics, ethical relativism, hedonism, asceticism, utilitarianism, and rationalism.

LO3 Explain how you can become a critical thinker

Critical thinking is a skeptical approach to evaluating arguments, widespread beliefs, and evidence. Critical thinkers examine definitions of terms and the premises of arguments.

LO4 Describe the historical perspective on human sexuality

The historical perspective suggests that there are few universal sexual trends. Ancient Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans dwelled in male-oriented societies that viewed women as property. Repressive Victorian sexual attitudes gave way to the sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s.

LO5 Describe the biological perspective on human sexuality

The biological perspective focuses on biological sexual processes such as genetic, hormonal, and neural factors. Evolutionary theory suggests that social behaviors that enhance reproductive success may be subject to natural selection. The cross-species perspective reveals the variety of sexual behaviors among nonhumans.

LO6 Describe the evolutionary perspective on human sexuality

Evolutionary theory has been active in studying the areas of mate selection and aggression—including sexual aggression. The evolutionary perspective suggests that social behaviors that enhance reproductive success may be subject to natural selection.

LO7 Describe the cross-species perspective on human sexuality

The cross-species perspective reveals the variety of sexual behaviors among nonhumans. Studying the behavior of other species may

suggest that certain kinds of behaviors are “natural” in that other species do not plan and evaluate sexual behavior in the way that humans do. (Question: Can we equate “natural” with “good”—especially when it comes to humans?)

LO8 Describe sociological perspectives on human sexuality

The sociological perspective studies ways in which cultural beliefs affect sexual behavior and attitudes.

LO9 Describe psychological perspectives on human sexuality

Psychological perspectives focus on the processes of perception, learning, motivation, emotion, and personality that affect gender and sexual behavior. The theory of psychoanalysis proposes that biologically based sex drives come into conflict with social codes. Learning theories focus on factors such as rewards, punishments, and observational learning.

LO10 Discuss feminist theory

Feminist theory challenges traditional views of men as breadwinners and women as homemakers; of men as political policymakers, especially since those policies affect women and children; of men as sexual “aggressors” and women as sexual “gatekeepers”; and traditional gender roles that view men as objective and rational, and women as emotional and irrational.

LO11 Discuss queer theory

Queer theory challenges heteronormativity—the viewpoint that heterosexuality is normal. According to queer theory, *heterosexuality* and *homosexuality* are social constructs that ignore commonly experienced mismatches among people’s anatomic sex, society’s gender roles, and individuals’ sexual desires.

LO12 Explain why it is useful to look upon human sexuality from multiple perspectives

Given the complexity and range of human sexual behavior, we need to consider multiple perspectives to understand sexuality. Based on our overview of these perspectives, we may conclude that human sexuality reflects a combination of biological, social, cultural, and psychological factors that interact in complex ways. Second, there are few universal patterns of sexual behavior, and views on what is right and wrong show great diversity.



Test Your Learning

1. Critical thinking involves all of the following *except*
 - (a) skepticism.
 - (b) challenging tradition.
 - (c) evaluating the premises of logic.
 - (d) blindly following authority figures.
2. Stone Age art suggests that people worshiped
 - (a) women's ability to bear children.
 - (b) a scientific approach to human sexuality.
 - (c) bisexuality in men.
 - (d) men's ability to father children.
3. The ancient _____ were first to produce a sex manual.

(a) Greeks	(c) Chinese
(b) Romans	(d) Indians
4. According to the text, _____ challenged the prevailing British view by arguing that sexual desires in women were natural and healthy.
 - (a) Havelock Ellis
 - (b) Sylvester Graham
 - (c) Sigmund Freud
 - (d) Richard von Krafft-Ebing
5. A controversial Freudian belief is that
 - (a) children normally harbor erotic interests.
 - (b) children ignore unacceptable impulses.
 - (c) childhood is an important time of life.
 - (d) children seek pain and avoid pleasure.
6. Masters and Johnson are best known for using _____ in their research on human sexual response.
 - (a) correlation coefficients
 - (b) cross-cultural methods
 - (c) the laboratory-observation method
 - (d) the survey
7. Queer theory opposes
 - (a) heterosexism.
 - (b) use of the word *queer*.
 - (c) activism.
 - (d) challenging prevailing views of gender and sexuality.
8. According to _____ theory, children acquire the gender roles deemed appropriate in a society through reinforcement and observational learning.
 - (a) evolutionary
 - (b) social-cognitive
 - (c) feminist
 - (d) psychoanalytic
9. *Psychopathia Sexualis* was written by
 - (a) Havelock Ellis.
 - (b) Sylvester Graham.
 - (c) Sigmund Freud.
 - (d) Richard von Krafft-Ebing.
10. According to queer theory,
 - (a) there is no such thing as homosexuality.
 - (b) all heterosexuals are prejudiced.
 - (c) everybody is bisexual.
 - (d) current categories of sexual orientation do not adequately describe all people.

Answers: 1. d; 2. a; 3. c; 4. a; 5. a; 6. c; 7. a; 8. b; 9. d; 10. d



My Life, My Sexuality

Thinking Critically about Sexual Advice on the Internet: Are There Any Quick Fixes?

Explore this **My Life, My Sexuality** feature by scanning this QR code with your mobile device. If you don't already have one, you may download a free QR scanner for your device wherever smartphone apps are sold. You can also view this feature in MyDevelopmentLab, along with an accompanying critical thinking assignment

The Internet would appear to have all the advice anyone would need on almost any topic. Sex is certainly no exception; sex, in fact, is the most commonly surfed topic on the Internet. But how can you safely bring sexual information on the Internet into your life? How can you enhance your life and at the same time protect your sexuality, your health, and your relationships? Scan the code to go online and find advice on how to sift the "chaff from the wheat" and make the most of what you find on the Internet—safely.