

Human Sexuality – Unit II

J.R. Jones

Spring 2011

Development of Sexuality - Childhood and Adolescence

The concept of childhood sexuality may be something of a misnomer. A better way to conceive of what's going on might be to think of it in terms of childhood *sensuality and curiosity*. Children are apt to do what feels good. And children are naturally curious about a number of things including their own bodies and those of others. As adults we may label certain activities as sexual, but children don't often perceive of what they're doing as sexual. Many of these behaviors are [simply another form of play](#), nothing more. Children have little conception of procreation, they're not out to entice or seduce, and they're not aware that what they are doing is sexual. They're simply exploring different forms of stimulation. When parents object to these behaviors what they're really objecting to is their own interpretation of the events.

Infancy: First two years. There is evidence of sexually orientated behavior such as rubbing or thrusting genital area against soft objects. Other signs include male erection, vaginal lubrication, as well as signs of orgasm. However, infants are too young to confirm that these experiences are sexual in nature. In addition, many activities have sensual components such as breast feeding; bathing; cleaning; applying various lotions, ointments, or powders; and toilet training.

Freud was the first to point out the significance of toilet training as the first case wherein the wishes of child and parent are in conflict. Until this point the child is encouraged in nearly all of his or her endeavors. When baby breast feeds, reaches for things, eats solid food, crawls, stands, walks, talks, and so forth the parents encourage each of these steps. But baby wants to keep right on enjoying the erotic stimulation that accompanies defecation whenever and wherever, just on impulse. Parents want baby to reign in this behavior and limit its expression. So training must begin as soon as baby is old enough to understand that neither they nor the behavior are bad, but that there are social norms for proper time and place. They must also be able to understand that other slightly older children have successfully toilet trained and are role models. Timed too early or too late and the process can become a major struggle of wills that can damage the parent-child relationship.

Children: Age two through puberty. This is when one learns to *express affection* by way of touching, hugging, and kissing. Warm pleasurable contact with parents (caregivers) greatly contributes to a person's later ability to engage in, and enjoy, sexual relationships. Such interactions also contribute to later success as a parent ([Harlow and Harlow, 1962](#)). And more physical affection in childhood rearing practices is tied to less violence in adulthood (Prescott, 1975).

[Childhood Masturbation](#) - This is characterized by more systematic and rhythmic genital manipulation than occurs during infancy. Males are more likely to learn about it from older friends (may even get 'how to' tips from others). Females are more likely to accidentally self-discover various behaviors. Respecting privacy and announcing before entering a child's room may make children more comfortable. If it becomes an issue, parents need to address proper time and place considerations just as they would in regard to disrobing. Generally children are quick to pick up on the idea that is as not something to be done openly in public. In the U.S. it is not encouraged, and often expressly discouraged. However, children are naturally curious and making too much out of it can actually increase interest.

TABLE 12.1 Percentage of Mothers Who Reported Observing Sexual Behavior in Their Children at Least Once in the Preceding 6-Month Period

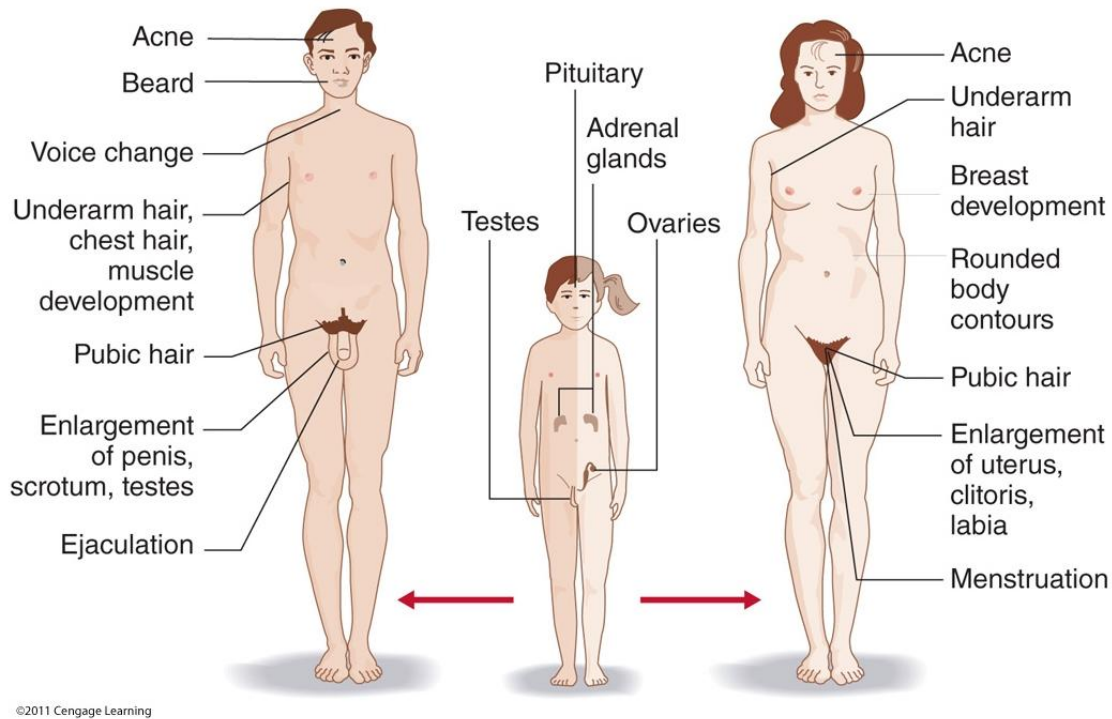
Observed Behavior	Males, Age (in Years)			Females, Age (in Years)		
	2-5	6-9	10-12	2-5	6-9	10-12
Touches sex parts in public	26.5	13.8	1.2	15.1	6.5	2.2
Touches sex parts at home	60.2	39.8	8.7	43.8	20.7	11.6
Touches other child's sex parts	4.6	8.0	1.2	8.8	1.2	1.1
Touches adult's sex parts	7.8	1.6	0.0	4.2	1.2	0.0
Touches breasts	42.4	14.3	1.2	43.7	15.9	1.1
Shows sex parts to children	9.3	4.8	0.0	6.4	2.4	1.1
Shows sex parts to adults	15.4	6.4	2.5	13.8	5.4	2.2
Masturbates with hand	16.7	12.8	3.7	15.8	5.3	7.4
Masturbates with toy/object	3.5	2.7	1.2	6.0	2.9	4.3
Talks about sex acts	2.1	8.5	8.9	3.2	7.2	8.5
Puts mouth on breasts	5.7	0.5	0.0	4.3	2.4	0.0
Knows more about sex	5.3	13.3	11.4	5.3	15.5	17.9

SOURCE: Adapted with permission from "Normative Sexual Behavior in Children: A Contemporary Sample," by W. Friedrich et al., *Pediatrics*, Vol. 101, p. e9, Copyright 1998.

Childhood Sex Play - This occurs most commonly between ages 4 to 7. Kinsey, et al. (1948 & 1953) found around 50% of all children had some such experience by age 12. Later research (Greenwald & Leitenberg, 1989; Kolodny, 1980) found even higher incidence, near 61% and 75% respectively. Often this is just a matter of comparing anatomy. And the children are focusing more on the play aspects rather than the sexual aspects of such experiences. Again a 'forbidden' aspect may actually stimulate more curiosity.

Sexual Identity - By age 8 or 9 children start working on their specific gender roles. At this stage they generally start playing fairly exclusively with same sex children. Sex play decreases, but they ask a lot of technical questions (Where do babies come from?) and have a high awareness concerning their own bodies. If sex play does persist during this period there may be a transitional same sex incident. This should not be confused with any potential adult homosexual tendencies.

Adolescence: Begins with physical changes at puberty and lasts through the development of gender identity and accompanying social role over all of the teen years. Modern Western society allows a lot more post-puberty adjustment time than other societies.



Puberty - Onset is two years earlier for females (age 10-12) than males (age 12-14). The *hypothalamus* triggers puberty by causing the *pituitary* to release gonadotropins (FSH and LH) into the bloodstream, which in turn stimulate the adrenal glands and gonads. In females the ovaries increase estrogen production, and eventually ovulation begins, as does production of progesterone. Early on, as estrogen production increases initial breast development (breast buds) mark the beginning of maturation. As breasts continue to develop the vaginal pH changes from alkaline to acidic and menstruation begins (menarche). In males the testes increase testosterone production and begin production of sperm. In addition, the seminal vesicles and prostate begin functioning and ejaculation becomes possible. Other developments include the enlargement of external genitalia, development of secondary sexual characteristics, and general growth spurt toward adult height and weight.

European statistics show a steady decrease in the age of menarche from around 17 in 1850 to 13 in 1950. That trend has slowed considerably since 1950, with relatively modest changes. In the United States and other developed countries the average age of menarche is now 12.43 years. However, research has found that 15% of white and 48% of African American females are now beginning to develop secondary sexual characteristics (breast buds) by age eight (Herman-Giddens, 1997). The result is that the time from initial breast development to menarche has increased from 18 months to nearly three years over the last few decades. Finally, there is evidence of a difference based upon ethnicity as African American females generally [reach menarche earlier](#) than either white or Hispanic females.

TABLE 12.2 Age at Menarche (in Years) for Selected Percentiles of U.S. Girls

	Percentile				
	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%
Ages by race					
White	11.32	11.90	12.55	13.20	13.78
African American	10.52	11.25	12.06	12.87	13.60
Hispanic American	10.81	11.49	12.25	13.01	13.69
Overall median age	11.11	11.73	12.43	13.13	13.75

SOURCE: Adapted with permission from "Age at Menarche and Racial Comparisons in U.S. Girls," W. Chumlea et al., *Pediatrics*, Vol. 111, pp.110–113, Copyright 2003.

Rigorous physical training can delay onset of puberty, especially in females. For females body fat generally increases from 1/6 to 1/4 of total body weight during puberty. And it appears that a minimum percentage of body fat may be required to initiate menstruation (Frisch & McArthur, 1974).

Tanner Stages: Puberty consists of a series of predictable events, and the sequence of changes in secondary sexual characteristics has been categorized by several groups. The staging system utilized most frequently is that published by Marshall and Tanner, commonly referred to as the Tanner Stages.

Female - Breast Development

- Stage 1 - Prepubertal.
- Stage 2 - Breast bud stage with elevation of breast and papilla; enlargement of areola.
- Stage 3 - Further enlargement of breast and areola; with no separation of their contour.
- Stage 4 - Areola and papilla form a secondary mound above level of breast.
- Stage 5 - Mature stage: projection of papilla only, related to recession of areola.

Male - Development of External Genitalia

- Stage 1 - Prepubertal.
- Stage 2 - Enlargement of scrotum and testes; scrotum skin reddens and changes in texture.
- Stage 3 - Enlargement of penis (length at first); further growth of testes.
- Stage 4 - Increased size of penis with growth in breadth and development of glans; testes and scrotum larger, scrotum skin darker.
- Stage 5 - Adult genitalia.

Male and Female - Pubic Hair

- Stage 1 - Prepubertal (can see velus hair similar to abdominal wall).
- Stage 2 - Sparse growth of long, slightly pigmented hair, straight or curled, at base of penis or along labia.
- Stage 3 - Darker, coarser and more curled hair, spreading sparsely over junction of pubes.
- Stage 4 - Hair adult in type, but covering smaller area than in adult; no spread to medial surface of thighs.
- Stage 5 - Adult in type and quantity, with horizontal distribution ("feminine").

Male and Female - Growth Rate

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Stage 1 - Female: 5-6cm/year. | Male: 5-6cm/year. |
| Stage 2 - Female: 7-8cm/year. | Male: 5-6cm/year. |
| Stage 3 - Female: 8cm/year. | Male: 7-8cm/year. |
| Stage 4 - Female: 7cm/year. | Male: 10cm/year. |
| Stage 5 - Female: Little increase after 16 years. | Male: Little increase after 17 years. |

Adolescent Sexual Behavior: Although these behaviors stem from physical activities learned during childhood, a whole *new level of expression* becomes attached to them. How these behaviors are perceived, and whether they are accepted, by adults varies widely across cultures. [South Pacific Islanders](#) generally are quite permissive regarding adolescent sexual behavior, and also observation of adult sexual behavior. Some cultures in parts of Africa and Asia consider childhood and adolescent sexual behavior necessary for the development of normal adult sexual activity. However, widespread Western influence via media and exposure to visitors has caused a decreasing acceptance of such permissive standards.

Double standard exists encouraging males to make sexual conquests early on, with peer approval often a more important factor than the sexual activity itself. In contrast, females are encouraged to be sexually attractive, but to remain virgins for as long as possible. Whatever a young woman does can have negative connotations, she can be labeled 'just a tease' or 'easy.' This double standard can extend to females defining personal identity and worth to whom they're dating. In some cases they may make themselves subordinate by hindering their own performance, and avoid achieving better grades or athletic accomplishments than their boyfriends. Fortunately there is some indication that this confusing double standard has been lessening since the late 1980s.

Petting or Making Out - Defined as any of a number of interpersonal sexual activities, but not intercourse itself. Note that oral-genital stimulation has increased threefold from Kinsey, et al. (1948, 1953) research to recent research conducted by the early 1990s. Cunnilingus (oral contact with the female genitals) is engaged in more frequently than fellatio (oral contact with the penis). Frequently there can be a contest between males and females with control of sexual activity defining relationship roles. Mutual partnership and shared decisions are best for development of longer-term relationships. Making out can allow the individuals to learn about their own personal preferences, those of the other person, and techniques that may be applied in subsequent relationships. Since the 1990s both sexes have become more prone to long term affectionate relationships as the basis of sexual activity rather than transient encounters.

Intercourse - Kinsey, et al. (1948, 1953) reported 20% of females and 45% of males had had intercourse by age 19. By the mid 1990s research showed 2/3 of both males and females had had intercourse by age 18. Although this statistic appears to be leveling off, the age of first intercourse continues to drop. And there is an important correlation, the lower the age of first intercourse the greater the number of sexual partners over the lifespan (and more partners increases risk of exposure to STIs and AIDS). For men first time most likely due to curiosity or perceived readiness for sex (50%), next being either affection for partner (25%) or peer pressure (25%). For women first time most likely due to affection for partner (around 40%), then curious or perceived readiness for sex (24%), with peer pressure playing smaller role (around 15%).

TABLE 12.3 Percentage of Adolescents Who Reported Experiencing Coitus by Age 19

Study	Females (%)	Males (%)
Kinsey et al. (1948, 1953)	20	45
Sorenson (1973)	45	59
Zelnick & Kantner (1977)	55	No males in survey
Zelnick & Kantner (1980)	69	77
Mott & Haurin (1988)	68	78
Forrest & Singh (1990)	74	No males in survey
Sonenstein et al. (1991)	No females in survey	79
Centers for Disease Control (1996)	66 ^a	67 ^a
Centers for Disease Control (2000)	66 ^a	64 ^a
Centers for Disease Control (2002)	60 ^a	61 ^a
Centers for Disease Control (2006)	62 ^a	64 ^a
Centers for Disease Control (2008a)	66 ^a	63 ^a

^aPercentages reporting having had intercourse by their senior year (usually age 17 or 18).

Despite knowing risks of HIV and AIDS most teenagers do not take preventative precautions. Part of this is the misconception of invulnerability that young frequently have, the basis for many impulsive and risky behaviors. Another factor is that they're less likely to take precautions if already using oral contraceptives or implants.

Homosexuality - Overall about 10% of adolescents experience a same sex encounter. Often this is part of general sexual curiosity and not necessarily a marker for adult homosexuality. Those who clearly define themselves as homosexual are often outcasts both among peers and family. This can add all the more confusion to an already difficult period of life adjustment, while at the same time decreasing sources of social support.

Teen Pregnancy - In the United States 375,000 babies are born to unmarried teens every year. Teens are at a greater risk for complications during every stage of pregnancy than are women in their twenties. These include anemia, pre-eclampsia (toxemia), hypertension, hemorrhage, miscarriage, and death. Pregnant teens are also less likely practice safe sex (since they're already pregnant) putting themselves and their babies at risk for STIs. Teen pregnancy can also seriously impact educational, employment, and financial opportunities. And with less education, life experience, and financial resources teens aren't as well equipped as parents, so their children are disadvantaged. Despite the same frequency of intercourse in six Western nations the U.S. had a teen pregnancy rate twice that of the next highest (England) and six times that of the lowest (Sweden). The reason is simply a matter of sex education and availability of contraception.

Sex Education: The problem used to be that parents opposed sex education in schools, yet took no responsibility to teach it at home. It is still the case that many parents do not provide adequate advice and education about sex to their children. However, recent polls have shown that 93% of adults support sex education in high school, 84% support it in middle or junior high school. Yet a small but well organized and vocal minority opposing sex education still seems to be in control, with many schools completely omitting sex education classes. Along these same lines the federal government has been promoting abstinence only programs to the exclusion of any alternatives. And those programs have a notoriously poor record of providing accurate information on contraception and protection from STIs.

To be effective a *program of sex education* is needed, beginning early in school before children enter into sexual relationships. Information needs to be clear and precise, but matched to age of recipients. Even younger children can benefit, as it may make identifying cases of abuse easier. Subsequent benefits include a proven record for reduction of teenage pregnancies, and greater likelihood that precautions to prevent spread of STIs and AIDS will be taken.

Although it is often claimed that sex education will increase sexual activity of children by those who oppose it, the majority of research in this area shows that this is not the case. The bottom line is that *kids are already having sexual relationships*, and beginning their adolescent sex lives at an increasingly younger age. So they need adequate and accurate information so as to make good decisions.

Development of Sexuality - Adults

Much of what is discussed regarding the development of sexuality in adulthood is tied to lifestyle. People differ in what lifestyle best suits their interpersonal and sexual needs. Of particular interest is whether or not one chooses to remain single, cohabitate, or marry. And the capacity to maintain stable sexual relationships is central to the sexual development of many adults. As people mature both what they need, and what they are getting, out of a relationship may change. Sometimes this results in unhappy marriages or divorce, in other cases a redefining of the relationship and the roles of those involved. During one's senior years sexual desire does not necessarily disappear. However, the capacity for certain sexual activities may change, and adjustments to one's sex life may be necessary.

Single Living: Being single is far more common and acceptable than it has ever been. In the United States 44.4% of the population over age 15 are single. For people in their 20s the proportion who have never married has increased dramatically since 1970. And for those in the 30 to 34 age group 25% of women and 33% of men have never married. And whether temporary (hoping to get married) or permanent (no intention of getting married) most single people are quite happy.

There are a number of reasons as to why the number of single people has increased. There has been a general tendency for people to marry at a later age. Part of this may reflect a trend toward smaller families, allowing people to marry and start raising a family later in life. And more people, especially more women, are now putting their educational and career objectives ahead of marriage. Along with this there is an increase in the number of women who do not need to depend on marriage for economic stability. Other factors include higher divorce rates and an increase in the number of people who choose not to marry at all.

Single people may live alone and remain celibate or they may actively engage in any number of arrangements with other people. Some may be involved with numerous partners, while others may opt for a serious committed relationship, or a series of such relationships. Most research shows that while singles feel their sex lives are more exciting, married people actually experience more sexual activity and satisfaction.

Over 40% of single adults in the United States visit the more than 1000 internet sites designed for singles each month. Most of these people are college educated, higher income people. Those 50 and older are now the fastest growing segment of the population using internet dating services.

Cohabitation: Living together and having a sexual relationship without being married. These are unmarried couples living in the same household in committed relationships. Also referred to as domestic partnerships. In the United States there were 5.5 million unmarried couples living together as of 2000. About 25% of people in their mid-20s cohabitate at some point. Nearly half of those cohabitating for the first time expect to marry their partner. Cohabitation generally lasts for less than two years (33% cohabitate for 2 years, 10% for 5). Like married couples, cohabitating couples tend to be similar in ethnicity, SES, and education. However, these differences are often greater than those found for married couples.

Advantages of Cohabitation - Couples prefer the informality of living together, and staying together, because they want to rather than as a result of the binding power of a legal contract. Couples may not feel as pressured to take on the new and demanding roles of wife and husband. As a result the relationship is less likely to produce any sort of "identity crisis". There is less expectancy or demand to have children. And another advantage is that there is neither the complications nor the stigma of breaking up as with a marital divorce.

Disadvantages of Cohabitation - Disapproval of parents or other family members can place considerable emotional strain on one or both partners. Some couples may have difficulty renting or buying property together. Cohabiting individuals are less likely to remain monogamous. Inherently more instability in the relationship since there is less investment and it is easier to break up. Marriages preceded by cohabitation are 50% more likely to eventually divorce (except for couples in which the man she lived with and married was her only sexual partner). And those who marry after having a child while cohabitating have lower marital satisfaction.

Marriage: Although the proportion of married couples in the United States has declined considerably during the last few decades, approximately 96% of adults eventually marry (many more than once). Overall, married people are happier and healthier than unmarried people. However, those in distressed marriages may be worse off than those who remain single or divorce. And there are changes in the marital patterns of American society, with postponement of marriage until later in life, divorce, and interracial marriage all now fairly common. Still further changes appear to be on the horizon as same-sex marriage becomes more socially acceptable and legally sanctioned.

Interracial Marriage - Until 1967 miscegenation (sex between races) and interracial marriage were both illegal in a number of states. Interracial marriages have increased from 1% of all marriages in 1970 to 5% in 2000. In 1970 only 1 out of 100 children were of mixed race. In the 21st century that figure has risen to 1 out of 19. Younger people are generally more accepting of interracial couples, and approximately 60% of young adults have dated someone of another race.

Same-Sex Marriage - Until 2003 a number of U.S. states still had sodomy laws banning many forms of sexual expression even between consenting adults. In essence these laws were an affirmation of heterosexual vaginal intercourse as the only acceptable form of sexual activity. Another legally sanctioned form of discrimination against homosexuals still exists in the U.S. where many states, as well as the federal government, refuse to recognize the right of same-sex couples to marry. A number of other nations have legalized same-sex marriages: Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, South Africa, and Spain (also Mexico City). Yet in the United States only Massachusetts (2004), Connecticut, Iowa, Vermont, Maine, and New Hampshire extend the right of full legal marriage to same-sex couples. That means only a small percentage of the estimated 600,000 gay and lesbian couples in the U.S. can legally marry. Marriage provides a considerable number of legal and personal benefits related to taxation, Social Security, pensions, inheritance, immigration status, insurance, and child custody. Marriage also provides next of kin status for hospital visitation, medical decisions, and funeral arrangements. The primary arguments against same-sex marriage are generally moral or religious claims that it will somehow adversely affect heterosexual marriage. Yet Massachusetts, where same-sex marriage is legal, has the lowest divorce rate in the country. Kentucky and Arkansas, where there is strong opposition to same-sex marriage, have the highest.

Changing Expectations and Marital Satisfaction - Couples now expect sexual, emotional, social, and spiritual needs to be satisfied by marriage. More people now believe the main purpose of marriage is mutual happiness and fulfillment, not producing children. A number of factors affect marital satisfaction. Children often cause a great deal of change in the marital relationship. Time has to be split between spouse and children, as new roles of mother and father are taken on. Data taken from 90 different studies indicate a 42% drop in marital satisfaction with the birth of the first child, and smaller drops with additional children. And lack of support from extended family or the community can strain a couple's resources. So the idea of having children to save a troubled marriage is not a good plan. Finally, people live longer now, requiring couples to continually readjust to changing individual needs.

Predicting Marital Satisfaction - Certain patterns are strong indicators of marital satisfaction. Taken together the following have proven to be better than 90% accurate in predicting whether a couple will or will not separate.

- Facial expressions of disgust, fear, or misery
- High levels of heart rate
- Defensive behaviors such as making excuses and denying responsibility for disagreement
- Verbal expressions of contempt by the wife
- "Stonewalling" by the husband (showing no response when his wife expresses her concerns)
- A ratio of at least five positive interactions to each negative one

The last one, that 5 to 1 ratio, is the most critical. It's a better predictor than how often a couple fights, whether they are sexually or socially compatible, or financial issues. In essence, as long as the good outweighs the bad marital satisfaction will be high.

Since women typically begin discussions regarding problems in a marriage their approach is important. Those that raise issues in a calm and diplomatic manner tend to have happier and more stable marriages. The same applies for men who take heed of their wife's concerns and suggestions. These two often go together, with husbands being more responsive to a wife's calm approach and wives being more inclined to use a calm approach if the husband has generally been responsive.

Sexual Behavior within Marriage - More sexual interaction and wider range of activities than in the past. In the United States the time spent in foreplay has risen, as has the frequency of oral sex since the 1950s. Most of the data indicate slightly greater sexual satisfaction for married people as opposed to single people. For men whether single, cohabitating, or married there is little difference regarding experiencing orgasm with their partners. But for women the more stable and long-term the relationship the more likely they are to experience orgasm with their partner. Despite that, women are still less likely to experience orgasm than their husbands and generally report lower levels of sexual satisfaction.

On the other hand, it is not uncommon for married couples to go for long periods with little or no sexual activity, even those who are relatively young (between 25 and 55). Other obligations, such as work, social life, and children may overshadow sexual activities. DINS - Dual Income, No Sex. And for some sex may never have been a high priority. Either way, lack of sex does not necessarily imply an unsatisfactory marriage. Couples may still enjoy the

stability, companionship, intimacy, shared interests and experiences, family ties, and mutual friends that marriage can provide even without a great deal of sexual activity.

Extramarital Relationships: Sexual interactions by a married person with someone other than his or her spouse.

Consensual Extramarital Relationships- Sexual relationships occurring outside the marriage, but with the consent of one's spouse. **Swinging** is the term used for the practice of married couples exchanging partners for sexual interaction. These are generally recreational, non-emotional encounters intended to provide variety and allow for the fulfillment of sexual fantasies. Swingers are typically middle class, middle aged, suburban couples. In an **open marriage** spouses are free to have intimate relationships with other people as well as the marital partner. However, these relationships may be emotionally intimate as well sexual. **Polyamory** is the term for multiple concurrent emotionally committed relationships. This may entail trios, groups of couples, communal families, or other such relationships. All parties are fully aware of, and consenting about, who's doing what with whom. The Netherlands now legally recognizes polyamorous unions.

TABLE 13.3 Percentage of Population in 2005 Global Sex Survey That Say They Have Had at Least One Extramarital Affair

	Extramarital Affair (%)
Israel	7
Poland	10
Spain	10
Germany	11
Hong Kong	11
Ireland	12
United Kingdom	14
China	15
Greece	15
India	15
Australia	16
Thailand	16
United States	17
Canada	18
Japan	21
Global percentage	22
Czech Republic	24
Portugal	24
France	25
Italy	26
South Africa	26
Sweden	26
Chile	30
Netherlands	31
Finland	36
Vietnam	36
Iceland	39
Norway	41
Denmark	46
Turkey	58

SOURCE: Durex (2006).

Nonconsensual Extramarital Relationships - Sexual relationships occurring outside the marriage without the consent (or presumably the knowledge) of one's spouse. Common terms include cheating; adultery; infidelity; being unfaithful;

philandering; having an affair; and playing, messing, or fooling around. Compared to other countries the United States has a relatively conservative rate of extramarital affairs. The 1994 NHLS study found 25% of men and 15% of women were involved in extramarital activities while married. More recent polls show increases for men and women under 35 and over 60, with greater increases for women.

Personal characteristics are more indicative of whether or not someone will have an affair than are characteristics of the relationship they are in. Those most likely to have extramarital affairs are generally younger. People between 18 and 30 are twice as likely to have an affair as those over 50. Substance abuse, more permissive sexual attitudes, and a high interest in sex were all correlated with higher incidence of extramarital affairs. Other common motives include desire for excitement or variety, to reestablish a sense of autonomy, to confirm one is still sexually desirable to others, dissatisfied with one's marriage, or unavailability of sex within one's marriage. Statistically men are more likely to have extramarital affairs, but when matched for sexual attitudes and interest men and women were equally likely to do so. In other words, the kind of attitudes that result in extramarital affairs may simply be more typical of the masculine role, but women who share those attitudes are just as likely to have affairs.

Other factors include the simple availability of potential partners with whom to have an extramarital affair. Living in a large city, jobs that entail a lot of traveling, and more people of both sexes now in the workplace all provide ample opportunity. And now the internet may also provide an outlet for many to develop intimate and emotionally laden relationships. These can readily develop further, into romantic liaisons. Less than one half of all adults would not consider an intense internet relationship to be an affair.

The impact of affairs varies. However, affairs that involve strong emotional attachment more likely lead to divorce. Often, the reason for the emotional involvement was dissatisfaction with the marriage prior to the affair. Research also shows that marriages do better when the unfaithful spouse discloses his or her actions, as opposed to the spouse discovering the affair. In some cases an affair can result in a couple reassessing their marriage, and resolving sources of discord and dissatisfaction, ultimately improving the relationship.

Divorce: Although 96% of adults in the United States marry at some point, divorce is a common outcome. One study found 43% of first marriages ended within 15 years. One in four marriages ended in divorce in 1950. That was down to roughly one in two by 1977. Since then the divorces rate has leveled off and remained steady. Most of those who divorce remarry, about half of all marriages involve at least one previously divorced partner.

Reasons for Divorce - Infidelity is the most commonly reported cause. Other commonly cited causes are lack of communication, emotional distress, incompatibility, personality clashes, sexual dissatisfaction, and growing apart. Lifestyle factors such as drinking and drug abuse also lead to divorce. Divorce occurs in cases of mental and physical abuse as well. Higher rates of divorce are probably due to a number of less specific reasons as well. People have higher expectations for marital and sexual fulfillment. And so they may be less willing to stay in unsatisfying marriages, especially now that a no-fault divorce can be relatively easy to obtain. Another factor that is seldom cited is the fact that people are living longer than in the past. Over the years people may change quite a bit, and it can be difficult for one or both partners to adapt. This was not as much of an issue in the past. War, injury, illness, childbirth often cut marriages short. Now those factors play a lesser role and divorce has become the only way out. The alternative may be spending 50 to 60 years with someone you no longer care for all that much.

Sexuality and Aging: Older individuals are not without sex, despite what many may believe. About half of those over 60 are still sexually active, engaging in sexual activity at least once a month. Significant decreases for those who have continued to be sexually active are generally not apparent until after age 74, with many still active into their 80s and beyond. There is a correlation between sexual activity as a young adult and in later years. Those still active in their senior years were more likely consistently sexually active all their lives. And yes, people may begin new sexual relationships even when in their later years. However, sexually active older adults are fairly likely to engage in unprotected sex (61% in one study). Of interest will be how the aging of the population changes the way we look at sex and aging.

Capacity for Sexual Activity - When it comes to sexual activity in the elderly the crucial factor is one's general level of health. Regular exercise, healthy diet, optimal weight, and no more than moderate use of alcohol help to maintain sexual desire and response. Sexual relationships may even improve over time. In later years couples may have more time for intimacy. They may rediscover or redefine their sexual and affectionate relationship. But, older couples also may have to adjust their sexual activities to compensate for some of the changes that occur with aging. Many are still open to experimentation in developing new strategies to keep their sex lives exciting including viewing sexually

explicit materials, fantasy, manual stimulation, oral sex, vibrators, and so forth. So don't think sex among the elderly is necessarily dull.

The Double Standard - How men and women are viewed and what is expected of them differs not just for younger people, but across the lifespan. It is not uncommon for older men to still be considered attractive, while youth is critical for females to be considered attractive. Consider that 30% of movie roles go to men over 40, whereas only 9% go to women over 40. And it is still more socially acceptable for older men to be involved with considerably younger women than it is for older women to be involved with considerably younger men.

Widowhood - Although possible at any age, in developed countries widowhood is more likely to occur among the elderly. The ratio of widows to widowers is 4.5 to 1. On average men die 8 years earlier than women. (Greene & Field, 1997). Women accustomed to expressing their sexuality exclusively within marriage find themselves suddenly alone. And older men tend to often seek out younger women. That makes it extremely difficult for older women to find companionship.

Sexual Behaviors

There are a variety of behaviors that are sexual in nature, that express or communicate something about an individual's sexuality. Sometimes they even take the form of behaviors that tell us something about ourselves, allowing us to get in touch with our own bodies or secret desires. They provide a means through which we can learn about each other and ourselves.

Celibacy: Also referred to as abstinence, there are two forms. It can be *complete*, meaning no masturbation or interpersonal sexual contact. Or it can be *partial*, just no interpersonal sexual contact. The *conscious decision* to be celibate is an expression of sexuality, that one has no place for sex or sexual relationships in one's life. And it is not the same as wanting to be in a sexual relationship, but simply not being in one. Someone who is more or less ready to take the next promising opportunity to enter into a sexual relationship that comes along is not really practicing celibacy. Celibacy entails passing on just that kind of opportunity. Many people may spend a part of their life celibate, often for particular reasons. One may choose to be celibate for a limited time frame, such as 'until I finish school next spring'. Others may choose celibacy for an indeterminate period dependent upon other life events, such as 'until I find someone with whom I'm willing to start a long-term committed relationship'. While others decide upon a life of celibacy; perhaps connected to religious devotion, perhaps because they cannot accept their sexual orientation, or perhaps because sex just doesn't interest them.

Why choose celibacy? *Religious* based celibacy is usually aimed at redirecting sexual energy into spiritual life and/or humanitarian service. This is along the lines of what Freud meant by his conception of sublimation of the libido. Currently popular are decisions to remain celibate *until marriage* (or other long-term monogamous relationship), usually to avoid teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. And there is a long-standing tradition of chastity/virginity as something special to bring into a relationship. It may also allow time to work out questions about *sexual identity, roles, preferences, or orientations*. And for some *sex just isn't a major priority* in life, just as some people don't care to drink. Again, there's also Freud's idea of sublimation. The energy and resources that might have gone into a single sexual relationship can be spent on a number of other pursuits including personal reflection, self-discovery, hobbies, favorite pastimes, friendships, education, and career. It also removes the sexual complications from friendships and other relationships. At times one may well want or need to get out of 'the game,' or not be ready to re-enter it. Celibacy may also be chosen as part of *medical recovery* from a variety of conditions (why risk it?). It is often advised for those in *recovery from drug abuse*, as the tensions of a relationship may lead to a relapse.

Disadvantages include lack of physical intimacy, loneliness, isolation, as well as possibly increasing the awkward and frightening aspects of getting back into 'the game.' Re-entering the dating game can be difficult after a long period of celibacy, just as it is for someone just out of a long-term relationship.

Erotic Dreams: Kinsey reports nearly all males and 2/3 of females, often with accompanying erection / vaginal lubrication. Nocturnal orgasm (with or without emission for men) can also occur for both sexes. A product of unconscious processes, they can reveal things about one's self. One also might try to set the stage by reading certain books or viewing movies before going to sleep. And it is also possible to take control of one's dreams and direct the action (lucid dreaming).

Erotic Fantasies: Recent research review indicates 95% of both men and women report having sexual fantasies (the 5% who don't are all in this class and so have no accounts to offer). Those with more sexual experience also had more frequent and more explicit fantasies (correlation, not causality - can't say what leads to what). For both men and women the content is most commonly (70-75% of individuals) intercourse with a loved one. Beyond these, men are more likely than women to also have fantasies about intercourse with strangers or multiple partners (of the other sex). Most common purpose cited by both men and women was to facilitate sexual arousal. Especially for women, erotic fantasies can also provide safe opportunities to explore new areas of expression and possible sex roles. Male sexual fantasies focus more on the sexual behaviors themselves (action). For women the focus is more on the emotional aspects of the situations (feelings - often elements of romance). Here again is the opportunity to learn something about one's self, and perhaps to try and incorporate some aspects of these fantasies into one's own sex life.

Disadvantage most commonly cited (20% of individuals) was some degree of shame or guilt about their sexual fantasies.

Related to this are *internet romances*, which may well be based wholly or in part upon fabrications. People can share fantasies with others, but in so doing may totally misrepresent who they are in actuality. It's not really suggested to

meet someone from the internet with whom you're sharing a fantasy. It may well be disappointing. And in some cases, it may be dangerous to do so. Best bet is to at least talk over the phone before arranging a real life meeting (the voice may tip you off that teenage 'Rebecca' is actually a 54 year old trucker from Midland, Texas who's real name is Frank).

Masturbation: Also referred to as autoeroticism, self-stimulation. Negative attitudes towards masturbation have been common, particularly male masturbation. Recall that the Judaic-Christian religious tradition held that sex was only for reproduction. And along with that came the idea that one should not waste one's semen. A male masturbating to orgasm was not attempting to reproduce and so was wasting semen. Other negative attitudes stem from the concept of *vital fluids* (promoting life and providing energy) that dominated much of western medicine until the 19th century. It was believed that semen was a product of the blood. On this view masturbation (also termed self-abuse) would drain the body of vital fluids and have an adverse effect on health and well being. Nocturnal emissions were thought to be equally damaging. Modern medicine has since revealed these assumptions to be false. There is no evidence that masturbation or nocturnal emissions have any negative impact on health.

One theory from the 19th century associated masturbation with high levels of stimulation in general, including a spicy diet. Graham and Kellogg both independently promoted bland diets to curtail masturbation, from which came graham crackers and corn flakes. Once again, there is no medical evidence supporting these assumptions either.

More men than women masturbate on a regular basis. Women tend to do so more in their 20s than in their teens. Masturbation is most common among white, college-educated people living with a sexual partner. It is less frequent among African Americans and Hispanics, with Hispanic women having the lowest frequency of masturbation.

Techniques - Both sexes may rub genitalia against something soft such as bedding or pillows. Men generally grasp the shaft of the penis and use up and down motions of differing pressures, rhythms, and tempos to provide stimulation. Women most commonly stimulate the clitoris indirectly, through the clitoral hood. Only some women, not all, use vaginal insertion as part of their method. Vibrators are used by 53% of women and 45% of men in solo or partnered activity. Indeed, many couples incorporate vibrators into their sex play. Other [devices](#) include dildos or various sizes and shapes, ben-wa balls, and the iBuzz.

Purposes - It provides pleasurable stimulation and can be a means to both arousal and orgasm, by itself or in conjunction with further sexual behaviors. It can serve as a means of relieving sexual tension. It can also be used as a means to explore one's individual erotic experience and to learn about one's touching preferences, information that can add to one's overall sexual practices. Along the same lines, it can provide a means to control one's sexual response (timing and stamina). Some men use it specifically before anticipated intercourse both to get the first 'quick' orgasm out of the way and to reduce sperm levels. Obviously there is some logic here. Premature ejaculation is most problematic the first time around and the first ejaculate after a few days without any sexual behavior generally does have a higher sperm count. Of course, to the latter point it must be added that it only takes one of the little guys to get the job done. So in and of itself masturbation is not a particularly effect means of birth control. Another purpose is simply to keep the system up and running, particularly for older individuals who for one reason or another are not able to engage in other sexual behaviors. And it's also cited as a sleep aid (a role played by intercourse as well).

Disadvantages include feelings of shame or guilt as there is still a certain cultural stigma surrounding the practice. This doesn't curtail the practice, but affects its acceptance as a form of sexual behavior. In reality masturbation is not a problem unless one is doing it so often that it interferes with normal living (including sexual relations with one's sexual partner). Along with this is, it can be problematic if done at inappropriate times or in inappropriate places. In this sense it's not really different from a number of other behaviors that are not particularly problematic unless they become compulsive or addictive responses.

Interpersonal contacts are necessary for a number of sexual behaviors. Although pleasurable in and of themselves, many of these may serve as a prelude to some form of intercourse. In general, women prefer some amount of *foreplay* activity, then activity that produces a *climax* (with or without orgasm), and then *afterplay* (cuddling, fondling, etc.). On the other hand, [men](#) prefer limited foreplay, an activity that produces a climax (with orgasm), and have little desire for afterplay (perhaps partly due to the refractory period men need between orgasms). Of course, interpersonal contact involves finding someone. So that means some form of dating, which can be a difficult task for many. That may be even more the case given the current emphasis on political correctness and fears of being misinterpreted as sexually harassing. One concept to be clear on is that there is a difference between the friendly versus the relentless pursuit of an eligible individual.

Kissing: There is a high degree of innervation of the mouth area (lips, teeth, gums, tongue). There are high concentrations of sensory neurons that contribute to the pleasurable aspects of certain behaviors that promote survival such as suckling, eating, and drinking. And there are high concentrations of motor neurons allowing for control of these behaviors, and the control necessary for the production of speech. As a result, kissing can entail rather elaborate variations and produce a good deal of pleasurable sensations.

Touching: Tactile stimulation appears to be a necessity for normal physical and mental (especially emotional) stability. And there's a difference between tactile stimulation under one's own control and that controlled by another. Anticipation and surprise can enhance the experience. Some forms of tactile stimulation are not particularly effective unless initiated by another, which is why you can't tickle yourself.

Various forms of touching can serve communicative functions, act as a means of bonding, and play a role in developing trust and understanding. However, some individuals severely limit who is allowed to touch them in order to command respect. Certain areas are particularly sensitive to tactile stimulation and referred to as *erogenous zones*. The mouth area is one of these (hence kissing), as is the neck and shoulders, and the earlobes. The breasts are another location where tactile stimulation can be particularly arousing (biological necessity so females will breast feed young). Note that the sensitivity of the breasts may vary considerably from one encounter to the next, as it is often tied to a woman's monthly cycle. Tactile stimulation of the genitals is also particularly arousing and can in and of itself produce orgasm. Other areas of note are the anus, inner thighs, and the feet.

Oral-Genital Stimulation: Both areas are highly innervated and are primary erogenous zones. Preferences vary and it can be performed individually (one partner stimulating the other) or simultaneously (mutual giving and receiving of stimulation, 69). Technical names are *cunnilingus* for oral stimulation of the vulva, and *fellatio* for oral stimulation of the penis. Note that a couple should have some plan in advance regarding fellatio, as to what to do about [ejaculation](#). At the very least, and as a common courtesy, the recipient should let the other person know when that point is soon to be reached. Oral-Genital stimulation is [most commonly practiced by white, college educated couples](#).

In the past these practices were not encouraged for a certain reasons. They don't play into the sex solely for reproduction scheme (unless part of foreplay perhaps). Often they were equated with homosexuality, even if performed by heterosexual couples. Modern research indicates that the practice of oral-genital stimulation has nothing particularly to do with homosexual tendencies. There were also sanitary/hygiene concerns. Normal bathing by modern standards, however, provides adequate cleanliness. On the other hand, any cuts or open sores can allow for the transmission of some STIs via oral-genital contact.

Anal Stimulation: The high concentration of sensory and motor neurons about the muscles of the anus necessary for control can also provide sensual stimulation. The most common practice is rubbing around the anus or finger insertion, which can occur in conjunction with other behaviors including vaginal intercourse. Other behaviors include anilingus (which entails licking around the area of the anus and commonly referred to as rimming), insertion of various objects into the anus, and anal intercourse. Older research estimated approximately 10-25% of the U.S. population had some experience with penile-anal intercourse (most being heterosexual couples). A 2003 study found 32% of college women had had anal intercourse. The Global Sex Survey (2005) found that 35% of respondents had experience with anal sex worldwide. However, that same study revealed that 47% of those from the U.S. and 41% of those from Canada had had anal sex.

In the past these practices were not encouraged because they too didn't play into the sex solely for reproduction scheme (unless part of foreplay perhaps). Often they were equated with homosexuality, even if performed by heterosexual couples. Modern research indicates that anal stimulation has nothing particularly to do with homosexual tendencies.

Dangers - There are a number of legitimate health concerns. Any form of insertion (finger, penis, object) needs to be slow and gentle with the accompanying use of lubricants. If not, there is the risk of *hemorrhaging* blood vessels in and around the anus. There is also a problem with naturally occurring *colon bacteria*, so anything that's had contact with the anus needs to be washed before it has contact with the vagina to prevent possible infection. Oral stimulation of the anus (anilingus or 'rimming') can also result in the transmission of these bacteria. And among sexual behaviors, penile-anal intercourse has the highest rate of HIV transmission.

Penile-Vaginal Intercourse: Also known by a number of other names, in science common terms include copulation and coitus. The term intromission is used for the initial entry of the penis into the vagina. One study put the [U.S.](#)

[national average](#) at once a week for about 30 minutes total time per episode (Robins & Godbey, 1998). The Global Sex Survey (2005) more recently put the estimate at about twice that frequency.

TABLE 8.3 Frequency of Sex in Selected Countries

Country	Frequency of Sex per Year
Greece	138
Croatia	134
Bulgaria	127
United States	113
South Africa	109
Canada	108
Germany	104
China	96
India	75
Japan	45

SOURCE: Global Sex Survey, 2005.

Survey of Male Sexual Practices

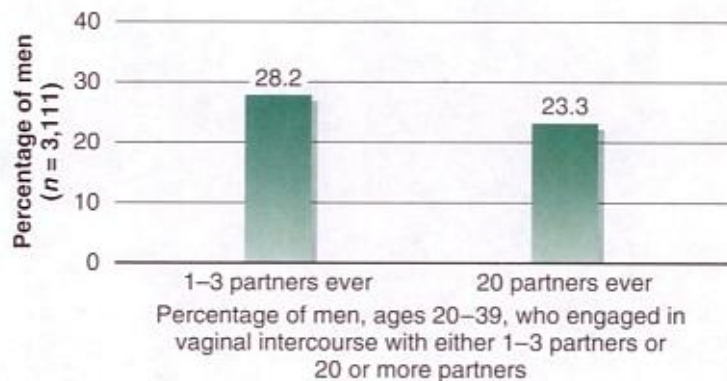
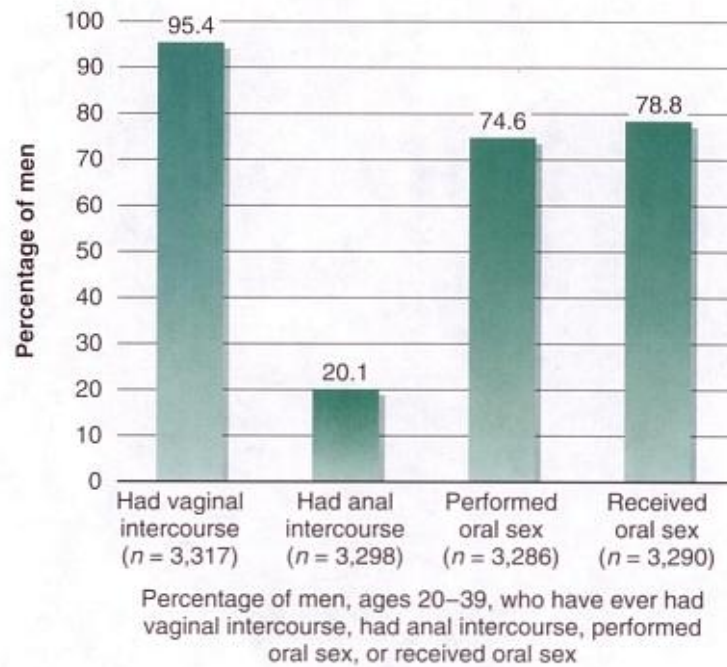


TABLE 8.2 Top 15 Reasons College Women and Men Give for Having Sex

	Women	Men
1.	I was attracted to the person.	I was attracted to the person.
2.	I wanted to experience the physical pleasure.	It feels good.
3.	It feels good.	I wanted to experience the physical pleasure.
4.	I wanted to show my affection to the person.	It's fun.
5.	I wanted to express my love for the person.	I wanted to show my affection to the person.
6.	I was sexually aroused and wanted the release.	I was sexually aroused and wanted the release.
7.	I was horny.	I was horny.
8.	It's fun.	I wanted to express my love for the person.
9.	I realized I was in love.	I wanted to achieve an orgasm.
10.	I was "in the heat of the moment."	I wanted to please my partner.
11.	I wanted to please my partner.	The person's physical appearance turned me on.
12.	I desired emotional closeness (i.e., intimacy).	I wanted the pure pleasure.
13.	I wanted the pure pleasure.	I was in "the heat of the moment."
14.	I wanted to achieve an orgasm.	I desired emotional closeness (i.e., intimacy).
15.	It's exciting, adventurous.	It's exciting, adventurous.

Positions for intercourse vary quite a bit and provide for different forms of expression, exchanging lead roles, varying degrees of control, face-to-face contact, freedom to explore other areas of stimulation during intercourse, and so forth. The three most popular positions are the same for both men and women, though the order of preference differs (Elliot & Brattley, 1997). **Men** prefer the woman on top, then the [man on top](#), then [rear-entry](#) ('doggie' style). Women prefer the [man on top](#), then the woman on top, then [rear-entry](#) ('doggie' style). Note that health issues may also play a role in determining what positions are used. In the later stages of pregnancy the rear-entry ('doggie' style) position may be the most comfortable. And the man on top position can put a good deal of physical stress on the man (doing push-ups while having sex). For him this can add to pre-existing sexual performance problems as well as putting considerable stress on the cardio-vascular system.

Sodomy: A broad and ambiguous legal term for sexual practices other than heterosexual vaginal intercourse such as oral-genital stimulation and anal intercourse. In the United States there have been various laws banning these practices across all 50 states. Although seldom enforced (especially in cases involving mutually consenting adults) they were still on the books and upheld as a matter of states' rights by the U.S. Supreme Court as recently as 1986. In essence these laws were an affirmation of heterosexual vaginal intercourse as the only acceptable form of sexual activity. However, the U.S. Supreme Court finally declared these laws were a violation of one's constitutionally guaranteed right to privacy in 2003.

Gay Men: Most frequently engaged in behaviors are fellatio, mutual masturbation, and then anal intercourse (in that order).

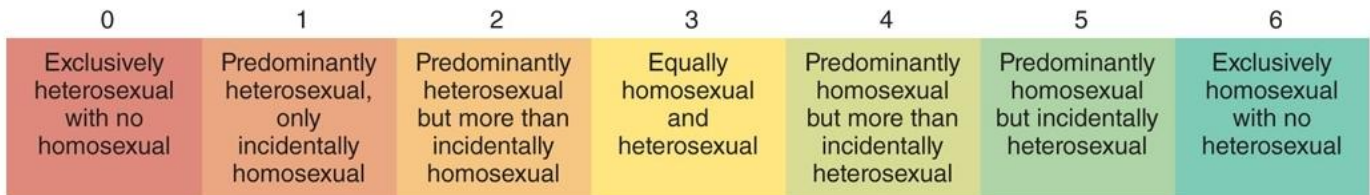
Lesbian Behaviors: There are some rather specific behavior patterns, a hallmark being more all-over body stimulation and response. Lesbian sexual episodes are generally longer and have a higher frequency of female orgasm than heterosexual episodes. A common practice is rubbing the genitals together or against other body parts (tribadism). Contrary to popular belief dildos are seldom employed. Only 2% of lesbian couples use them with any frequency, so the penis is not missed.

Final Notes: Psychologically what's important is the *content of the experience*, both behaviorally and emotionally. It's not the sexual acts themselves, but our responses to them that we actually learn and derive pleasure from the most. Along with this are the relationships that we form in conjunction with sexual behaviors. An important aspect of the human condition is a natural curiosity and sense of exploration that drives, and is satisfied by, sexual behaviors.

Sexual Orientation

Sexual Orientation refers to sexual attraction to one's own sex (homosexual) or the other sex (heterosexual). Heterosexual, bisexual, and homosexual are the general terms used to identify sexual orientation. However, some individuals may also be classified as asexual, having little or no sexual interest in other people. In this section we will dispense with a discussion of heterosexual orientation, also referred to as straight. Heterosexuality is the prime focus in most discussions of gender roles, sexual development and behaviors, as well as attraction and relationships. So in that sense heterosexuality is already covered. The term sexual orientation is preferred to that of sexual preference, as the latter term implies a conscious decision or choice has been made. Whatever the factors determining sexual orientation, whether psychosocial, environmental, or biological most modern research suggests that individuals seem to have little choice when it comes to whom they are sexually attracted toward.

Asexuality: Some people simply do not experience sexual attraction. Not the same as celibacy, which can be a choice by someone who nevertheless still experiences sexual attraction. Asexuality is not a choice, but an intrinsic part of a person's psychological makeup. A British study found 1% of those surveyed were asexual. Another study found that better than 70% of those identifying themselves as asexual had never engaged in intercourse, but did masturbate. Although asexual persons have no interest in partnered sexual expression they are still interested in friendship, companionship, and affection.



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Bisexuality: Individuals whose sexual attraction, arousal, or experiences are not exclusive to the same or other sex. They enjoy and engage in sexual activity with members of both sexes. Bisexuality is represented on the Kinsey continuum as the range from 2 to 4. Other people are often confused regarding bisexuals because they commonly assume someone is either gay or straight based on the sex of a person's current partner. In addition, even those who consider themselves to be exclusively homosexual or heterosexual may at times harbor an attraction to someone not typical of their orientation. In general women are more likely to feel sexual attraction to both sexes. One study found that among heterosexuals women were 27 times more likely than men to express moderate or greater attraction to persons of their own sex. In the United States 11% of women, compared to 6% of men, reported at least one same-sex encounter in addition to other-sex relationships. Another study found that the higher a heterosexual woman's sex drive, the more likely she was to feel sexual attraction to either sex. Higher sex drives in straight or gay men, as well as lesbians, lead to higher but exclusive attraction to one sex or the other.

Types of Bisexuality - The most logical conclusion is that there may be different types of bisexuality. Some may best be classified as having a *real orientation*. They are born with, or acquire early in life, a natural attraction to both sexes. Some people may display a *transitory orientation* as a result of particular circumstances. These are cases of temporary involvement by people who are actually heterosexual or homosexual. For example, children in boarding schools restricted to one gender may engage in homosexual activities at the time, never to do so again. And some may have a *transitional orientation*. In these cases there is variation in one's same-sex / other-sex attraction and involvement at different times or in different situations. Their orientation goes in one direction for a time, and is fairly stable, and then it changes. This has also been termed sexual fluidity. So in some cases it may be that sexual orientation reflects patterns over time. And there is evidence to suggest that women are more sexually fluid and show more transitional patterns than men. One study of women over a ten-year period found nearly two thirds of those originally identifying themselves as lesbian, bisexual, or other had changed their sexual identity at least once.

Homosexual Denial - An attempt to deny an exclusively homosexual orientation to avoid being identified as homosexual. Both heterosexuals and homosexuals may have issues with bisexuals. Heterosexual often view them in much the same way as they view homosexuals, if they're intolerant of one they're intolerant of both. And gay men and lesbians sometimes view the bisexual as someone who really is homosexual but lacks the courage to identify him or

herself as such. Often bisexual individuals who associate with the gay/lesbian community as well as with the heterosexual mainstream find themselves shifting social identities. And the attempt to bridge both worlds with a single identity can be a source of stress and discomfort in both social areas.

Homosexuality: A person whose primary erotic, psychological, emotional, and social orientation is towards members of the same sex. Homosexuality is represented on the Kinsey continuum as the range from 5 to 6. The NHSLS survey found 2.8% of men and 1.4% of women in the United States identified themselves as homosexual (1994). These percentages are actually lower than those found by the earlier Kinsey studies (1948, 1953). However, at the time of those earlier studies even a slight degree of same-sex attraction may have resulted in someone being classified as homosexual. Interestingly the ratio of homosexual men to women (approximately 2:1) is fairly stable across studies.

Gay - A homosexual, particularly a homosexual man. *Lesbian* - A female homosexual. These are the terms commonly accepted by both the heterosexual and homosexual communities. Of course, there are also a number of pejorative terms as well stemming from a long history of social intolerance of homosexuality.

Determinants of Homosexuality: Both psychosocial and biological theories have been proposed as the source of one's sexual orientation. Many early theories were based on the idea that homosexuality represented some sort of deviance from the norm. Until 1973 it was considered a mental disorder in the United States. Part of that perspective included looking for possible psychological or sociological causes as well as treatments that might cure the condition. Current theories focus less on psychosocial factors and more on environmental (including prenatal environment) and biological factors. This perspective tends to view homosexuality as something people are born with, part of an overall range of variability similar to many other traits.

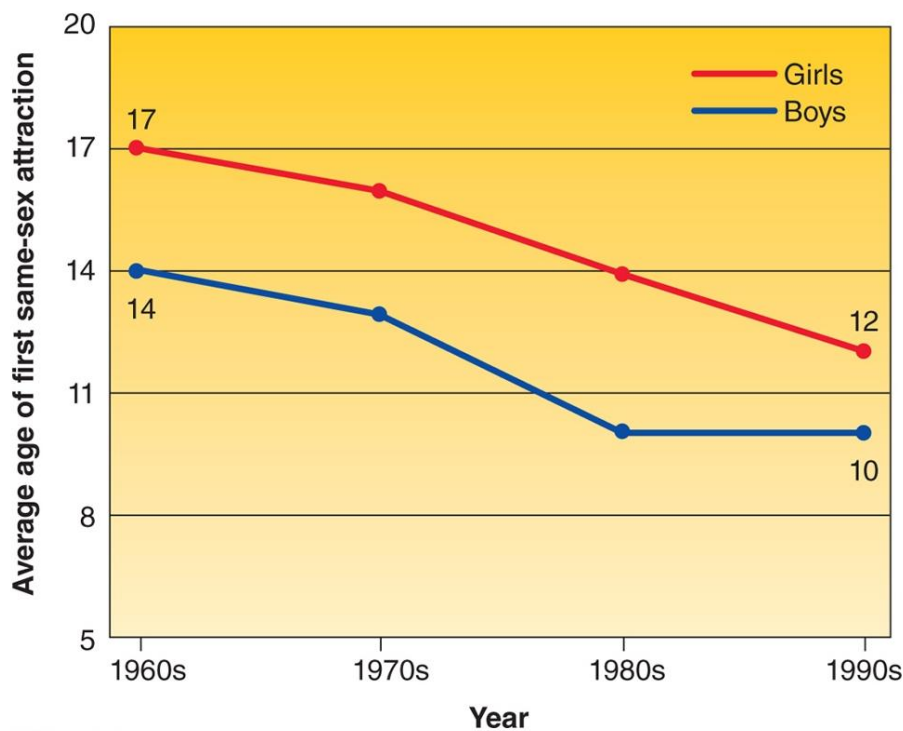
Psychosocial theories generally look to some kind of experience that affected the homosexual's psychological and social development.

- *"By Default" Theory* - Inability of heterosexuals to attract persons of the opposite sex, lack of satisfactory heterosexual experiences, or unpleasant heterosexual experiences leads people to choose homosexuality. In other words, homosexuality is the alternative they are left with. On this view, given an opportunity to pursue a satisfying heterosexual relationship they would. However, neither a lack of heterosexual experience or unpleasant heterosexual relationships seem to be specifically related to homosexuality. Nor is it the case that a large number of homosexuals change their sexual orientation once it is firmly established.

- *Seduction and Contagion Myths* - Being seduced by an older homosexual or inspired by a homosexual role model, teacher, or older friend leads one to become homosexual. The roughly 36% of Americans who object to gay men and lesbians teaching in schools probably believe this. In fact, evidence suggests that homosexuality is established early in life as part of gender identity, before most children start school. And most people (heterosexual or homosexual) have their first sexual encounters with people close to their own age.

- *Freud's Theory* - Freud believed that during the phallic stage (ages 3 to 6) children have sexual desires towards the other sex parent. Boys want to have all of their mother's attentions, including sexual relations. Girls recognize they don't have penises and come to envy, and then desire their father's. In both cases the same-sex parent is seen as a rival, and a threat. To reduce this threat, they come to identify with the same-sex parent and come to view him or her as a role model. This marks the beginning of what Freud termed the latency stage, lasting from age 6 until the onset of puberty. However, if for some reason the same-sex parent is unavailable or isn't a particularly good role model the child may remain overly attached to the other-sex parent and adopt his/her sexual orientation. In other words, a boy who has a poor relationship with his father and an overly close relationship with his mother may become homosexual. In actuality this period from age 6 to puberty does seem to be when children learn what it means to be a man or a woman as far as social roles and expectations. However, that doesn't necessarily extend to 'learning' one's sexual orientation. And there are no clear statistics linking the lack of same-sex parents with homosexuality. Besides, lack of a same-sex parent doesn't preclude other family and friends from filling that role.

- *Modern Approach* - It should be noted that as society has become more open about sexuality the age at which individuals recognize their homosexual orientation has decreased by nearly four years for boys, and five for girls. This lends further support to the idea that sexual orientation isn't the result of any particular kind of experiences but rather a more basic element of personality present early in development. The general approach taken by contemporary therapy is not aimed at changing or trying to 'cure' homosexual patients. Instead, therapists try to help them find how to love, live, and work in a considerably hostile society. At the same time advocacy groups are trying to generate greater acceptance of alternative lifestyles.



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Biological theories generally look to some physical basis of sexual orientation. However, they may cite evidence that doesn't directly point to a specific cause as well.

- *Other Animals* - Homosexual activity is by no means uniquely human.
- *Environmental Stressors* - A by John B. Calhoun study using rats and begun in 1954 pointed to overcrowding in urban environments as source of stress that could lead to homosexuality, among a number of other predominately maladaptive behaviors. The rats were given unlimited food, water, and bedding materials. Free from disease and predators there was nothing to limit their population growth, except the finite amount of space they had to live in. Over a series of such experiments as the population increased certain dominant rats secured ample exclusive space, while the others were forced to crowd together. Aggression, hypersexual activity, homosexuality, and finally asexuality developed. And rates of infant mortality rose drastically as females abandoned their young, often at birth. Obviously a number of these activities are related to limiting the population. However, subsequent research looking at the dynamics of this situation determined that a large part of these reactions was due to the animals having little control over their environment or the number of interactions with others. And not all of them changed that drastically. Those that secured their own exclusive space fared reasonably well for quite some time. Some adapted in different ways, such as only moving around to feed and so forth when most of the others were asleep. Overall, it would seem that human beings would find ways to adapt to crowded urban environments as well. So ultimately it is unlikely that human sexuality is in any great degree due to urban living. Remember also that it has existed in numerous cultures throughout human history, long before urban cities developed.

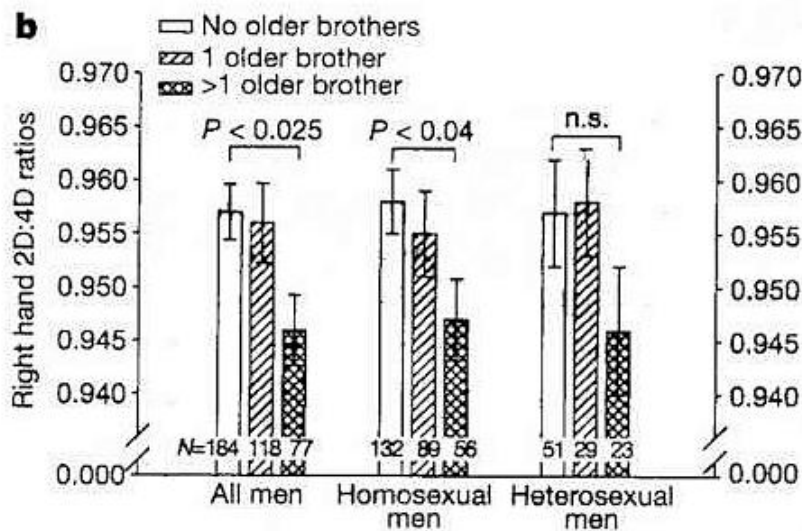
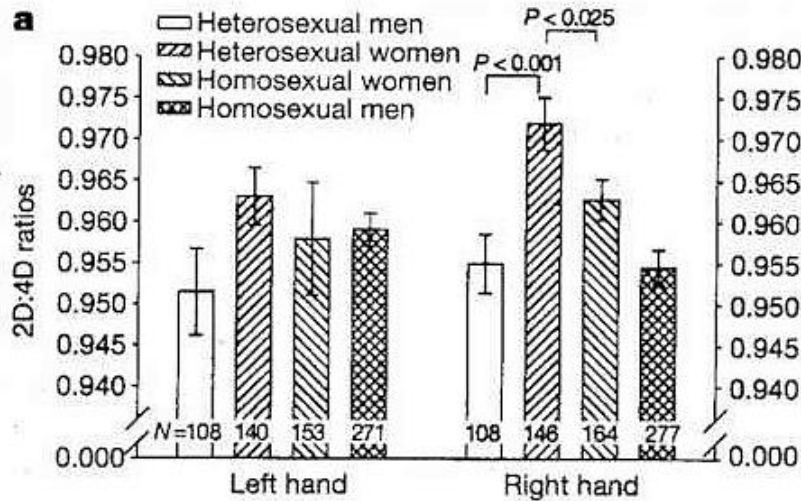
- *Gender Non-Conformity* - The extent to which an individual conforms to stereotypic characteristics of masculinity and femininity during childhood is linked to homosexuality. Of course, this does not refer to occasional instances in certain circumstances. But individuals that simply refuse to conform to almost any gender specific norms may be biologically disposed to same-sex attraction. And this may be due to factors such as prenatal hormone exposure, insensitivity to prenatal hormones, or patterns of brain organization.

- *Twin Studies* - Identical twins are more likely to both be homosexual than are fraternal twins. An Australian study in 2000 found if one male identical was homosexual there was a 20% chance that his twin also was, compared to 0% of male fraternal twins. For females, if one identical twin was homosexual there was a 24% chance her twin was also, compared to 10.5% for female fraternal twins. This provides evidence of a genetic component, as identical twins share the same genetic makeup. But, the strength of that component has yet to be determined.

- *Hormones* - Adult hormone levels seem to be more or less irrelevant to human sexual orientation. However, fetuses are sensitive to levels of sex hormones during a critical period beginning around six weeks after conception. Imbalances occurring during this time period could contribute to homosexuality. Androgenized females and androgen insensitive males are the extreme examples.

- *Birth Order* - For males, birth order seems to make a difference. Previous male siblings increase the likelihood of homosexuality beginning with the third and subsequent male offspring. It seems that the mother becomes increasingly sensitive to the testosterone produced by successive male fetuses, generating a kind of immune response. That, in turn, influences prenatal differentiation of the brain.

- *Finger Length Ratio* - Another finding is that fetal sex hormone levels affect the ratio between the index (2D) and ring (4D) fingers, particularly on the right hand. For women these fingers are typically close to the same length, and the ratio is near one. For men the index finger is generally shorter than the ring finger, and the ratio is less than one. Lesbians often display the masculine pattern, a ratio significantly less than one. Overall, there are not significant differences between heterosexual and homosexual men, with one exception. The ratio has been found to be significantly more masculinized (less than for heterosexuals) for homosexual men with two or more older brothers.



- *Handedness* - Possibly related to homosexuality is handedness. Recall that males typically tend to have a higher degree of left-brain lateralization, one of the effects of prenatal exposure to testosterone. Brain lateralization is also tied to handedness. Research has found that homosexuals are more likely to be **left-handed** than heterosexuals. Beyond that, gay men are also more likely to be left-handed than lesbians.

- *Stress Hormones* - Prenatal exposure to maternal stress hormones has also been linked to a higher incidence of homosexual offspring. Environmental stressors such as overcrowding could result in the production of maternal stress hormones, serving as kind of an ecological contraceptive for the next generation.

- *Brain and Genetic Factors* - Anterior hypothalamus (influences sexual behavior) is half as large in homosexual men than heterosexual.

- *Implications* - If homosexuality is shown to be biologically caused, what then? Will people accept that homosexuality is just a natural part of a person's makeup? Will they view homosexuality as something people are born with, part of an overall range of variability similar to many other traits? Or will homosexuals be labeled as genetically

or biologically "defective?" Could we end up with prenatal screening tests for homosexuality as there are for a number of other conditions? That could lead to hormone therapies or other interventions to prevent homosexuality, or perhaps induce it. And what about abortion? Someone could opt to terminate a pregnancy on the basis of the fetus' eventual sexual orientation.

Attitudes Regarding Homosexuality: In general attitudes regarding homosexuality have not been favorable.

- *Religion (Judeo-Christian / Islamic)* - Homosexuality viewed negatively, "you shall not lie with a man as one lies with a female, it is an abomination" (Leviticus 18:22). Sexual interactions are for procreation not pleasure, and that means heterosexual only.

- *Sin to Sickness* - Belief that homosexuals were sinners was eventually replaced by labeling them "sick individuals". Cures ranged from castration, lobotomy, electro-convulsive shock, aversion therapy, hormone treatments, drug therapies, hypnosis, and psychological therapy. The reality is that there really is nothing wrong with the psychological functioning of homosexual individuals. "Homosexuals that have come to terms with their homosexuality and do not regret their orientation function effectively are not more distressed psychologically than heterosexuals." (Bell & Weinberg, 1978)

- *Homophobia* - Irrational fear of homosexuality in others or within one's self. It may also take the form of self-loathing because one harbors homosexual tendencies. Homophobia lends itself to prejudice and discrimination. And homophobia can also restrict the lives of heterosexuals. For example, nipple stimulation (for a male) or allowing the female to take the lead in a heterosexual encounter might be considered homosexual tendencies. As such they would not be acceptable.

- *Homohatred* - Negative, hostile attitudes toward homosexuality. May lead to hate crimes and violence. In the U.S. prior to 2009 there were still 19 states without laws specific to hate crimes based upon sexual orientation. It took federal legislation to ban sexually motivated hate crimes nationwide.

- *Heterosexism* - Beliefs that deny, stigmatize, and/or denigrate non-heterosexual behavior.

- *Examples* - Jerry Falwell believed that AIDS was a form of judgment by God upon society, and homosexuals in particular. In Latin America and East Asia the role an individual plays in a homosexual relationship affects how the individual is viewed. The insertive partner maintains manhood, while receptive partner is considered homosexual and inferior. Homosexuality is illegal in 70 U.N. countries. [Middle Eastern](#) nations maintain particularly harsh penalties.

- *Motivating Factors* - Aggression against homosexuals may be the result of repressed homosexual tendencies. Some may view homosexuality as a threat, a temptation to act on repressed homosexuality. Also some gay males share characteristics with women, to some considered the "inferior sex." Those with that view may see gay men as somehow diminishing their ideal of "male superiority." Of course, there is the standard of simply not tolerating those who are different, whatever the difference. And that is all the more likely to translate into action when those that are different are also in the minority. The key is to get people to realize that homosexuality is not the problem, but misguided attitudes about it.

- *Media* - Homosexuality has become more visible. Movies, television shows, talk shows, news programs and magazines have portrayed homosexual situations. Examples: Philadelphia, My Best Friend's Wedding, Birdcage, Broke Back Mountain, In and Out, Zoseanne, Ellen, Spin City, All My Children, Will and Grace.

Lifestyles

- *Self-Acknowledgement* - Acknowledging, accepting, openly expressing one's homosexuality.

	Female	Male
College	37%	13%
High school	46%	50%
Junior High	6%	20%
Grade School	11%	17%

Source: Elliott & Brantley, 1997

- *Self-Acceptance* - Overcoming negative and homophobic societal views. Problems may arise with individuals whose families are very rigid, moralistic and stereotyped. Suicidal rates increase in gay youths.

- *Disclosure* - Deciding whether to be open or secretive. Concealment can intensify isolation and personal loneliness.

Passing-appearing to be heterosexual and avoiding presenting oneself as homosexual. Can cause an individual to lose custody of a child during a divorce. Many homosexuals avoid telling their family about their orientation.

Homosexuals with from ethnic groups with traditional values are more likely to stay in the closet with their families and community, than to face isolation from their families and heritage.

- *Gay and Lesbian Relationships* - Heterosexual couples are more traditional in the gender-role expectations than homosexual couples. Most heterosexual couples as well as homosexual believe that the most important aspect in a relationship is "being able to talk about my their most intimate feelings". Gay men are more likely to have more sexual partners than lesbians. They engage in more sex that is casual. Lesbians associate emotional closeness with sex more so than men. There tends to be less sexual exclusivity among gay men.

- *Family Life* - Homosexuals also form family units. In many cases gay men adopt or arrange for a surrogate mother. And U.S. census data show a third of lesbian couples have children. In most cases at least one partner of the couple is the biological mother of the children. They either are artificially inseminated or chose a man to aid them in procreation. Ongoing research since 1980 shows no differences in terms of general development, self-esteem, gender-related problems, gender role adoption, or sexual orientation between these children versus those raised by single parents or heterosexual couples. The biggest problems these children have stem from hassles involving other children, and sometimes the parents of other children, regarding their parent's sexual orientation.

Gay Movements

- *Stonewall* became a historical event in the development of the rights of homosexuals. (Stonewall, 1960s Police raid a gay bar, a riot ensued.) This incident served as a catalyst for the formation of gay rights.

- *Modifications of consensual sex and civil rights laws* are seen as essential to providing homosexual people with same protection as heterosexuals. "There is no room in American medicine or American life for discrimination against people because of their sexual orientation. Gays and lesbians are part of the American family." Al Gore, 1997.

Support

www.activistssandiego.org/support.html

www.nerdworld.com

www.rainbowquery.com

www.psychology.ucdavis.edu/rainbow.html

Interpersonal Attraction and Love

Initial Attraction: A number of factors are involved when it comes to what first prompts an attraction to someone. Most of these are not particularly rational, and in many cases they may reflect the underlying biology involved in selecting a potential mate. Eventually other factors may become more important in maintaining a relationship, but in the beginning we may not know all that much about the other person's inner self.

Proximity: There must be some actual exposure, or we simply wouldn't know they existed. Celebrities are present all over the media so we may come to like them, but this isn't really an interpersonal relationship. In psychology we're talking about people who are actually close by in our environment. People with whom we have frequent contact, we tend to get used to them being around, and we tend to develop an attraction to them just due to this *mere exposure* effect.

Appearance: The actual physical appearance of an individual has a great deal to do with whether or not we develop an initial attraction to them. Some of the most salient and desirable characteristics include the following:

Youth - American culture is particularly youth orientated, but across most cultures youth is considered attractive, perhaps playing a larger role in the assessment of women.

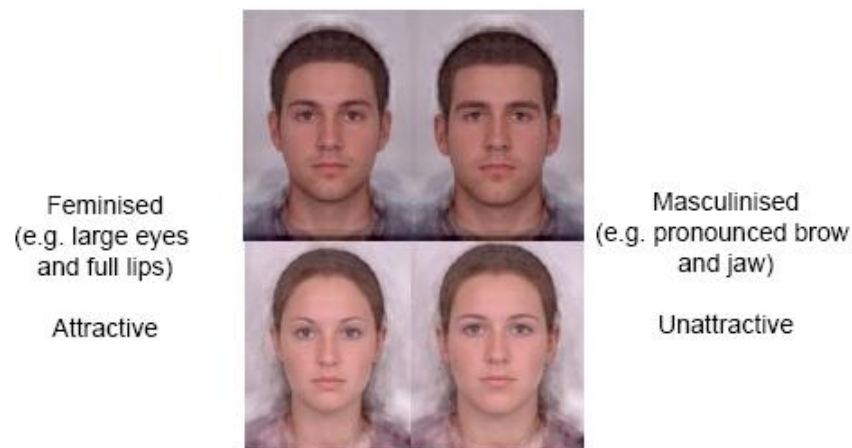
Health - Does the individual appear physically fit and active, will they contribute to healthy offspring?

Height - Being taller is generally advantageous. In many societies height conveys respects and authority.

Weight - In modern culture the media sets the standards, with slimmer being advantageous most of the time. But are the current media standards portraying healthy individuals? Is too thin actually healthy? And note that in certain settings above average height and weight both can command greater authority.

Masculinity/Femininity - In general people are attracted to feminine features more than masculine. Studies have shown that a more feminine appearance conveys a sense that the person can be trusted, is more reliable, and so perhaps would be a better mate choice when it comes to raising children (Feingold, 1990; Perrett, et al., 1998). On the other hand, when women are near ovulation their preferences may shift to exaggerated masculine features that may reflect better health and strength, advantageous traits for offspring. Chimpanzees will often mate with the leader of the troop for these reasons. But the same chimpanzees will also carry on relationships with other less dominant males as well, possibly because they provide more long-term security.

Exaggerated sex-typicality and facial attractiveness



Perrett et al. (1998) found that men and women preferred feminised versions of male and female faces

Other Physical Elements - Hair, Eyes, Smile/Teeth are the most commonly cited.

Hygiene - It's important to look and smell clean, to have a clear complexion, clean clothes.

Dress - Provides a great deal of information regarding social status and values. Clothes also serve different purposes such as those worn for seeking a job, for exercise, and those designed for seduction.

Way a Person Moves - Some people carry themselves well, and may appear confident, graceful, of high status, more intelligent, or sensual based on how they move. Subtle body language cues often reflect the individual's personal confidence and sense of ease.

Personality: Generally we look for people that will provide some type of entertainment value. So people who impress us as having a sense of *humor*, *intelligence*, a general *good nature*, or a certain willingness to try new things have greater initial attraction. But the value of some of these characteristics may not be appreciated when it comes to initial attraction. These are the things we come to learn as we develop relationships.

Is It Mutual: Most people want to be liked. So we tend to like those that we perceive like us. As a result of that perception we may in turn act in more likeable ways and pursue a more intimate relationship (Curtis & Miller, 1986).

Aliveness: Initially we often prefer someone more like ourselves than those who are not. Common interests provide a basis for interaction. This is even more of a factor in longer-term relationships, with total opposites rarely making it over the long term. An error occurs in that people often focus on a few prominent differences and don't realize overall similarities. So a relationship between a right-wing Christian man and a left-wing Jewish woman is seen as two very opposite people. In reality they may have much in common as well, such as growing up in the same part of the country, being from families with similar SES, both being interested in politics, and having met while going to the same college. As a couple they have come to share a great number of experiences as well, which generally causes people to become more alike.

TABLE 7.1 Percentage of Couples in Various Types of Relationships That Are Homophilous for Age, Educational Status, and Religion

Type of Homophily	Type of Relationship			
	Marriage (%)	Cohabitation (%)	Long-Term Partnership (%)	Short-Term Partnership (%)
Age (defined as difference of no more than 5 years in partners' ages)	78	75	76	83
Educational status (defined as difference of no more than one educational category ^a)	82	87	83	87
Religion (defined as having same affiliation)	72	53	56	60

^aCategories: Less than high school, high school graduate, vocational training, 4-year college degree, postgraduate

SOURCE: Adapted from Laumann et al. (1994).

TABLE 7.2 Noncohabitational Sexual Partnerships by Race and Sex

Race	Percentage of Same-Race Partnerships	
	Men (%)	Women (%)
White	92	87
African American	82	97
Hispanic American	54	65

SOURCE: Laumann et al. (1994).

Change: Have no false illusions. It's very unlikely you're going to succeed in making large-scale changes in another individual. It is a mistake to engage in activities that you do not enjoy in order to meet people and form relationships. This is especially the case if you then expect them to give up those activities once you've formed a relationship. A far better plan is to do things you enjoy. Then you'll meet people with similar likes and interests. Anticipating that certain changes will need to be made for a relationship to endure is a poor basis for establishing a relationship. It's not that people cannot change, but it is a difficult process that requires time and resources. Much of what has been studied in psychology points to a resistance to change, and the tendency to find ways to justify current actions and to avoid change. The individual really needs to be self-motivated in order to go through the difficult process of change. A related finding is that under duress or frustration most creatures (animals as well as humans) will quickly fall back on previous behavior patterns if more newly acquired ones fail to achieve success.

Longer Term Relationships: In the majority of cases the principle factor maintaining relationships is that both parties see themselves as gaining something from the relationship.

Reciprocity - A sense of both giving and receiving something from the relationship. There is more than one form of this.

Social Exchange Theory - More of an economic sense of reciprocity. One performs a sort of cost/benefit analysis when deciding whether to enter into a relationship, to objectively assess an ongoing relationship, and in deciding to terminate a relationship. If the perceived benefits do not outweigh real or potential costs the relationship is no longer pursued. While in any relationship both parties give and receive, social exchange theory posits that one or both parties keep track. I'll cook, if you handle the laundry, and we'll equally divide other tasks. There's kind of a sense of *compensation* here, of paybacks. You get what you cannot provide for well yourself in exchange for providing to the other person(s) what you have expertise in. This gives rise to *comparison levels* of assessment (What am I getting in this relationship and at what cost? Can I renegotiate? What might I gain from leaving and entering into a different relationship?).

Equity Theory - More of a concept of fairness here, that all parties involved are getting and receiving equally. Neither party has the sense of being taken advantage of, nor of taking advantage. When this is the case there is more of a sense of *mutual respect and liking* and a stronger emotional bonding. This leads to mutual satisfaction with the relationship.

Biochemistry: The intense passion that is characteristic of the initial phase of romantic relationships appears to be tied to increased levels of the neurotransmitters norepinephrine, dopamine, and phenylethylamine (PEA) in the brain. These are the same neurotransmitters involved in the euphoria produced by certain drugs such as amphetamines. Over time the degree to which these substances are released decreases, as does the intensity of the passion experienced. In relationships that endure other neurotransmitters come into play, particularly endorphins. Endorphins provide a sense of calm well being when we are with a loved partner. In addition, the neuropeptide oxytocin is secreted by the hypothalamus during cuddling and physical intimacy. Oxytocin may be involved in various forms of bonding, and in the development of mutual trust.

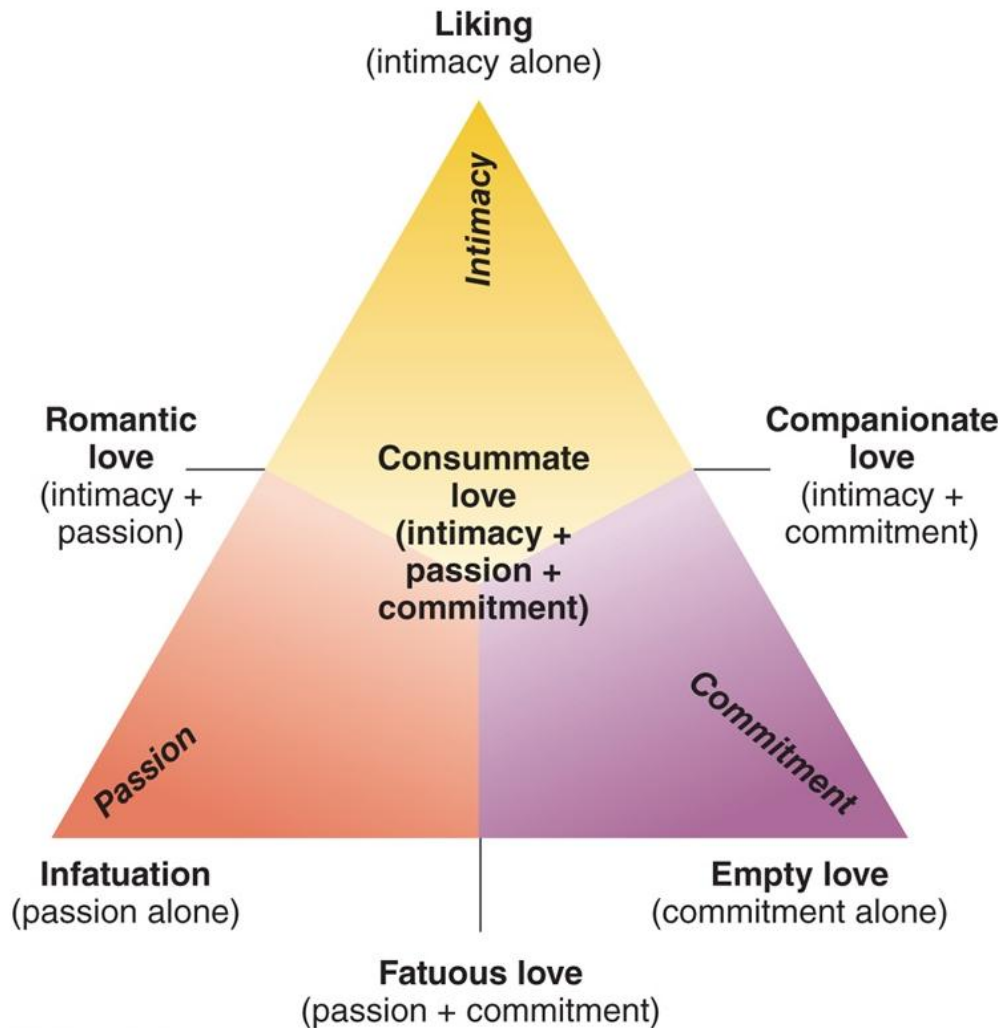
Love: Different forms of love form the basis for the majority of our long-term relationships, especially those we perceive as being personally valuable. We may have a long-term relationship with someone, but it need not be of real personal value (such as having the same boss for 10 years). Our more meaningful relationships such as close friendships, mates, and family carry some element of love.

Triangular Theory of Love - Different forms of love are due to varying amounts of at least three separate components.

Intimacy (cognitive, emotional, and/or physical)

Passion (Level of intensity, physical arousal, emotional longing)

Commitment (Devotion, loyalty, trust, obligation)



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Forms of Love: There are a number of personally meaningful relationships based on different forms of love. Some are more long lasting than others.

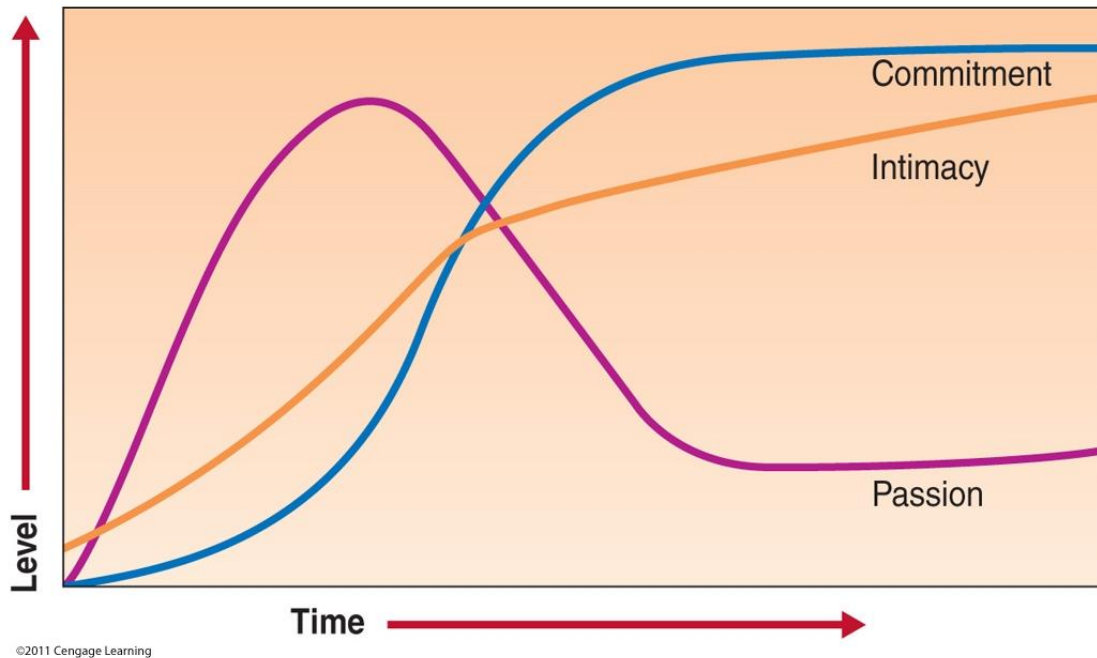
Lust - Intimacy (emotional and physical) / Passion (high intensity and physical arousal) / Commitment (little of this element). Relationships may be very transient as little is truly invested.

Infatuation (Puppy Love) - Intimacy (none, very little is shared) / Passion (high levels of intensity, arousal, and longing; but only by one of the parties) / Commitment (devotion, but only by one party). Overall these relationships tend to be transient due to it being completely one-sided with very little chance of it ever being reciprocated, could be to a celebrity or a person actually known.

Romantic Love - Intimacy (cognitive and emotional, but not necessarily physical) / Passion (intensity and emotional longing) / Commitment (can be a great deal of devotion and loyalty). This is arguably a culture artifact of the late Middle Ages and Renaissance, from the concepts of chivalry. There are few great works devoted to this concept from earlier times, despite there being many tragedies, comedies, and heroic epics. Generally the romance is never consummated physically, and it may or may not be shared by both parties. It is not the reality but the illusion, mystery, and fantasy that are important. Without actually consummation these can endure for a great amount of time. Another

factor involves demonstration of the depth of feeling, devotion, and willingness to sacrifice.

Passionate Love - Intimacy (especially emotional and physical) / Passion (high intensity, physical arousal, and emotional longing) / Commitment (although devoted, little basis established for loyalty, trust, or obligation). This form of love combines elements of lust and romantic love. It is very intense, involving, and consuming. It is very difficult to sustain this level of intensity on a day-to-day basis over a long period of time. So the lust element declines. Reality replaces mystery and illusion lessening the romantic element. After approximately six months the relationship is going to change, with either higher levels of commitment and cognitive intimacy replacing declines in passion and leading to companionate love, or declines in passion simply resulting in the eventual dissolution of the relationship. If the relationship does develop into companionate love the high-energy elements can be rekindled from time to time (romantic getaways, experiments, and so forth).



Companionate Love - Intimacy (especially cognitive and emotional) / Passion (based more on emotion than intense physical arousal) / Commitment (strong on devotion, loyalty, trust, and obligation). Here one establishes a long-term partnership in order to share ideas, feelings, and experiences. One does not just stumble into this kind of a relationship; most commonly companionate love evolves out of either deep friendship or passionate love.

A question arises regarding passionate love. Is the goal always for these relationships to evolve into companionate love? People often enter into passionate relationships with people that they don't see as potential life partners. The reason for this may well be to avoid feeling really bad when the relationship ends, as eventually will have to happen. Some people see themselves as too young for that sort of commitment at the time. Others know they will also have to keep educational, career, and other options open (be able to relocate and so forth). Yet they desire to be in a love-based relationship, but simply to enjoy it for the moment, for what it's worth at the time.

Deep Friendship - Intimacy (cognitive and emotional, but not particularly physical) / Passion (little of this element except perhaps an emotional need to stay in contact) / Commitment (devotion, loyalty, trust, and obligation all present). Much like companionate love, but without physical intimacy. For most of us there are maybe five or so long term best friends that we develop this sort of relationship with over the course of our lives.

Family Love / Commitment - Intimacy (cognitive and emotional to some degree, little physical) / Passion (little of this element except perhaps an emotional need to stay in contact) / Commitment (can vary greatly from being very high on devotion, loyalty, trust, and obligation to cases of nothing more than a certain sense of obligation). Parents may make large personal sacrifices for their offspring, siblings or cousins may become very close and form deep friendships, parents and offspring may develop deep friendship later in life. On the other hand, disagreements about life decisions may stain relationships between family members, sibling rivalries may prevent any real friendships from ever developing, and the mere lack of contact may prevent the formation of strong bonds (most commonly the case for relatives outside the immediate family such as aunts, uncles, cousins, in-laws, etc.). In these latter cases it may be that one only has a feeling of respect and obligation, just gets used to the presence of particular family members, or really has nothing more than a socially mandated feeling of obligation to family members. In some cases no ties are ever

formed or they are completely severed.

Functional / Convenient Love - Intimacy (may serve to fill a gap cognitively, emotionally, or physically) / Passion (little of this element) / Commitment (little in terms of devotion, but perhaps a degree of loyalty, trust, or obligation). These are relationships we form because they serve a purpose or fill some need. Drinking buddies, the bowling team, people to go out dancing with, people to go to a ball game with, the weekly poker game group, people we debate politics or other issues with, and so forth. And along these same lines would be 'friends with benefits.' In these relationships sex is simply what the individuals do together, although they may enjoy each others company to a certain degree as well.

Dysfunctional / Blind / Obsessional Love - Intimacy (little cognitive, more emotional or physical) / Passion (can be very intense, may or may not involve physical arousal, emotional passion is usually present) / Commitment (devotion, loyalty, and trust may all be high; but may reverse if perceived as not reciprocated). These are twisted variants of other sorts of love. Examples include abusive relationships, one-sided affairs, scorned former-lovers, stalkers, and so forth. A restraining order is not a good sign of a healthy relationship!

Development of Intimate Relationships: There are a few basic steps that need to take place in order to establish a healthy intimate relationship.

Individual Security / Self Acceptance - One needs to have a sense of their own worth and identity, and to be happy with it, in order to bring something into a relationship. This also allows one to determine what they want from a relationship. One needs to command some measure of respect in a relationship, and a basis of self-worth in order to feel comfortable about accepting benefits afforded by a relationship. Without this element relationships tend to lack reciprocity and can become empty, one-sided, abusive, and may give rise to feelings of being trapped. Mutual respect and the sharing of cognitive and emotional experiences come from both parties having something vital to contribute to the relationship.

Inclusion and Feedback - Actions taken to acknowledge or recognize another person, whether initially or well into a relationship, always are necessary. One needs to show some interest in the other person to get things started, as well as later to convey a sense of being in a relationship. Likewise, the other person needs to respond back, to provide feedback. Without this it really isn't a relationship, just sharing time and space

Emotional Investment - Care, trust, loyalty. These kinds of emotions need to be expressed somehow as they are what make for an intimate relationship. People need to show empathy and compassion, share their thoughts and feelings, and feel free to confide in each other (without fear it will be on CNN within the hour). In addition, demonstrations of affection are needed along with a certain degree of fun. Both of these serve to convey to the other person that one enjoys being in the relationship.

Sexuality - The addition of this element changes the nature of the relationship. This is what separates deep friendships or family ties from romances and love affairs. However, the latter cannot be established or maintained without the other elements.

Homosexual Relationships: Contrary to earlier research and many anecdotal accounts, current research points to homosexuals as wanting the same type of long-term intimate relationships as heterosexuals. Perhaps part of the reason homosexuals, particularly gay men, frequently had more transient sexual encounters in the past was the need for secrecy. It's hard to hide a long-term committed relationship. With the greater openness now afforded those with homosexual orientations comes the opportunity for them to establish and maintain long-term, intimate relationships.

Jealousy: Avoid creating situations of competition. Quite simply people have other commitments, interests, and companions. If they don't, they probably aren't that much fun to be around. Odds are you wouldn't be in a relationship with them. One must be able to accept that one may not always be at the top of the list. Now if one is never on the top of the list that's a different story, the relationship may be lacking reciprocity. But it's important to understand that other things may sometimes take priority. The element of individual security comes into play here. If you have your own individual commitments, interests, and companions that sometimes take priority; then it's a lot easier to deal with this situation when it occurs for the other person in your relationship.