

Sex, Love, and Romance

Chapter 8



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SEXUALITY AS SHAPED BY CULTURE

- *Sexual scripts*—repertoire of sexual acts that is organized by a particular social group,
 - the rules or guidelines for expected behavior,
 - the expected punishments for violating the rule
 - operates at societal, interactional and individual levels

SEXUALITY AS SHAPED BY CULTURE

- There is tremendous variability in cultural scripts about sex, love, and romance.
 - In the U.S., people believe love is necessary for marriage, but in most of the world, marriages are arranged by family members—romantic love may be viewed as destructive or irrelevant.



ADOLESCENT SEXUALITY

- During the past 40 years there have been large changes in patterns of sexual behaviors among adolescents:
 - More teens are having sex outside of marriage;
 - Greater increase for girls;
 - First intercourse is occurring at an earlier age (between 16 and 18 in most countries).



ADOLESCENT SEXUALITY

- For both boys and girls, one of the strongest predictors of sexual activity is the *perceived* level of sexual activity of their friends (DiBlasio & Benda, 1992; Furstenberg, Moore & Peterson, 1986; Miller et al., 1997).



ADOLESCENT SEXUALITY

- Parents have some influence on teens' sexual behavior (Miller et al., 1997).
 - In urban African American teens, girls' delaying of first intercourse was related to time spent with their mother and boys' was related to time with their father (Ramirez-Valles, Zimmerman, & Juarez, 2002).



ADOLESCENT SEXUALITY

- Both African American and white girls who feel close to their parents and talk to them about sex engage in less sexual behavior than girls who do not (Murry-McBride, 1996).



ADOLESCENT SEXUALITY

- Teens are particularly vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) because they tend to have more partners and are inconsistent in using protection.



ADOLESCENT SEXUALITY

- Among teens in developed countries, the main reason for not using protection is that safer sex is inconsistent with the romantic, spontaneous sex of scripted fantasies.



ADOLESCENT SEXUALITY

- College students underestimate their HIV risk because they use inaccurate decision rules (Malloy et al., 1997).
 - Many believe it is okay to have unprotected sex with someone they know well and like (Williams et al., 1992).
 - They may judge their risk of HIV infection based on their partners' appearance.
 - While they may use condoms for first-time sex with a new partner, they believe when they are in a relationship they do not have to worry about protection from STDs (Hammer et al., 1996; Misovich, Fisher & Fisher, 1997).



EXPERIENCING SEXUALITY

- In a study of 1,600 American college students, women reported more guilt and less pleasure about first sexual intercourse than men.
- When asked to rate the pleasure of their first intercourse on a 1 to 7 scale, women gave it an average score of 2.95 (Sprecher, Barbee & Schwartz, 1995).



EXPERIENCING SEXUALITY

- *Masturbation*—stimulating one’s own genitals (*self-pleasuring, self-gratification*)
 - Only about 42% of women in a national study reported they had ever masturbated, compared to virtually all the men (Laumann et al., 1994).



EXPERIENCING SEXUALITY

- In a study of married women aged 18 to 30, those who had experienced orgasm through self-gratification had more orgasms with their partners, greater sexual desire, more rapid arousal, higher self-esteem, and greater marital satisfaction than those who had not (Hurlbert & Whittaker, 1991).

LESBIAN & BISEXUAL WOMEN



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- About 60% of Americans believe sexual relations between two same-sex adults are always or almost always wrong (Hyde & DeLamater, 2003).



LESBIAN & BISEXUAL WOMEN

- Bisexuals may feel they fit in with neither gay nor straight culture. They may be accused by the gay community of wanting to avoid the stigma of homosexuality and of using cross-sex relationships to hide from their own homosexuality (Ault, 1996; Rust, 1993; 2000).



LESBIAN & BISEXUAL WOMEN

- *Coming out*—accepting homosexuality as part of one’s identity
 - Gay, bisexual, and lesbian adolescents are at higher risk for low self-esteem, emotional isolation, poor school performance, dropping out, etc.
 - The suicide rate for lesbian and gay youths is two to three times higher than for other adolescents (Black & Underwood, 1998).



LESBIANS & Latina/o Culture

- Latina lesbians are more likely to remain in the closet than white lesbians because most members of their ethnic group strongly disapprove of lesbians. However, families who become aware of a daughter's lesbianism are unlikely to openly reject or disown her (Castaneda, 2000).



LESBIANS & African-American Culture

- African American families typically give strong support to their members in their struggles with racism, but may not have the same perspective about heterosexism.



Lesbian & Asian Culture

- Within Asian cultures, being a lesbian is viewed as a rejection of women's most important role, that of wife and mother.

ROMANTIC LOVE & SEXUAL PLEASURE

- An analysis of 34 teen romance novels showed that they portrayed girls' sexuality as dangerous until it was channeled into heterosexual pairing. Girls' bodies were the site of a struggle for control among boyfriends, themselves, and parents. Girls appeared passive; they responded to boys' cues but never took the lead themselves (Christian-Smith, 1994).

ROMANTIC LOVE & SEXUAL PLEASURE

- Romance novels almost never depict use of condoms.
- In a study of female college students, those who read the most romance novels had the most negative attitudes and intentions about condom use (Diekman, McDonald, & Gardner, 2000).

ROMANTIC LOVE & SEXUAL PLEASURE

- Studies show that, at least among young, predominantly white college students, men are more likely to believe true love comes only once, lasts forever, and overcomes obstacles such as religious differences. They are more likely to believe in love at first sight and to be “game players,” enjoying flirtation and pursuit.

ROMANTIC LOVE & SEXUAL PLEASURE

- Men report falling in love earlier in a new relationship. They also feel more depressed, lonely, and unhappy after a breakup and are less likely to initiate the breakup than their female partners. Women are more likely to report feeling joy or relief after breaking up (Choo, Levine, & Hatfield, 1997)

ROMANTIC LOVE & SEXUAL PLEASURE

- *Token resistance*—when a woman in a dating situation wants to respond positively to a man's sexual initiative, but still feels she ought to say no when she actually intends to have sex.



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ROMANTIC LOVE & SEXUAL PLEASURE

- Society does not give women the same permission to be fully sexual that it gives men, which may lead women to experiencing less sexual joy—they may be sexually passive while men are expected to be aggressive, or believe that women should focus entirely on their partner's pleasure.



SEXUALITY IN SOCIAL CONTEXT

- ***Female genital mutilation (female circumcision)***—common practice in at least 28 African countries and parts of Asia and the Middle East
 - ***Clitoridectomy***—removal of part or all of the clitoris
 - ***Excision***—cutting away the clitoris plus part or all of the inner lips of the vulva
 - ***Infibulation***—excision plus sewing the outer lips of the vulva together to cover the urinary and vaginal entrances, leaving only a small opening for the passage of urine and menstrual blood

SEXUALITY IN SOCIAL CONTEXT

African American



Photo courtesy of Digital Vision.

- Behaviorally, African American women are more conservative in some ways than white women—less likely to masturbate or to engage in oral sex (Hyde & DeLamater, 2003).



SEXUALITY IN SOCIAL CONTEXT

Latina/o American

- *Machismo*—Hispanic men are expected to show their manhood by being strong, demonstrating sexual prowess, and asserting their authority and control over women
- *Marianismo*—Hispanic women are expected to be sexually pure and controlled, submissive, and subservient



SEXUALITY IN SOCIAL CONTEXT

Asian- American

- In Asian cultures, the public expression of sexuality is suppressed, and sexual matters are rarely discussed. Yet sexuality is viewed as a healthy and normal part of life.



SEXUALITY IN SOCIAL CONTEXT

- Slang words for sexual intercourse (*ramming, banging, nailing*) suggest that it is something violent and mechanical done to women rather than a mutual pleasure.
- Negative language about women and sexual acts probably encourages both women and men to view women and their sexuality negatively.



SEXUALITY IN SOCIAL CONTEXT

- *Sexual double standard*—women are severely sanctioned for any sexual activity outside of heterosexual marriage, while for men such activity is expected and tolerated
 - *Madonna/whore dichotomy*—women are seen as either pure, virginal, and “good” or as a whore—sexual, dangerous and inherently “bad”

SEXUALITY IN SOCIAL CONTEXT



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- ❑ Sex education does not seem to help girls and women give voice to their own desire.
- ❑ Programs present heterosexual marriage as the sole place for sexual expression.

SEXUALITY IN SOCIAL CONTEXT



- At best, girls are taught that they should avoid being victims—of teen pregnancy, STDs, or selfish males.
 - They also learn that “good girls just say no” to sex. Nowhere do they hear the suggestion that girls and women might enjoy or seek out sexual activity.

SEXUALITY IN SOCIAL CONTEXT



- Because society constructs sexuality in terms of the presumably dangerous and uncontrollable urges of boys and men, girls and women are assigned the role of keeping everything under control by wanting only romance, never sex (Tolman & Brown, 2001)



VIOLENCE IN CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS

- Although women and men report similar rates of aggression, their motives tend to be different.
 - Men are more likely to say they aggress in order to intimidate and frighten a partner and control the relationship, while women say they do so in self-defense or because they lost control of themselves (Campbell, 1992).

VIOLENCE IN CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS

- Women are three to four times as likely to sustain major emotional trauma and serious physical injuries due to dating violence than are men (Makepeace, 1986; Sugarman & Hotaling, 1989).

VIOLENCE IN CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS

- Studies of women who are in ongoing abusive relationships, compared to those who are not, show that they have more traditional attitudes toward women's roles and more romantic attitudes about love (Follingstad et al., 1992).

VIOLENCE IN CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS

- *Rape*—sexual penetration without the person's consent, obtained through force or threat of harm, or when the person is incapable of giving consent

VIOLENCE IN CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS

- *Sexual assault/sexual coercion*—includes other kinds of unwanted sexual contact, such as groping and fondling



VIOLENCE IN CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS

- *Acquaintance rape*—
sexual assault by a dating
partner or someone known
to the victim