Truth? Fiction?

T / F? Knowing enough about the biology of sex will enable you to make the right sexual decisions.

T / F? The books on sex that you find in bookstores are written by respected authorities.

T / F? In ancient Greece, a mature man would take a sexual interest in an adolescent boy, often with the blessing of the boy’s parents.

T / F? Throughout most of human history, women were considered to be the property of their husbands.

T / F? The production of illustrated sex manuals originated in modern times.

T / F? The graham cracker came into being as a means for helping young men control their sexual appetites.

T / F? Female redback spiders eat their mates after they have been inseminated.

T / F? Trobrianders consider their children old enough to engage in sexual intercourse when they are . . . old enough.

T / F? In our dreams, airplanes, bullets, snakes, sticks, and similar objects symbolize the male genitals.
What Is Human Sexuality?

Preview

**What Is Human Sexuality?**
- The Study of Human Sexuality
- Sexuality and Values
- Value Systems for Making Responsible Sexual Decisions

**Thinking Critically about Human Sexuality**
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We are about to embark on the study of human sexuality. But why, you may wonder, do we need to study human sexuality? Isn’t sex something to do rather than to talk about? Isn’t sex a natural function? Don’t we learn what we need to know from personal experience or from our parents or our friends?

Yes, we can learn how our bodies respond to sexual stimulation—what turns us on and what turns us off—through personal experience. But personal experience teaches us little about the biology of sexual response and orgasm. Nor does experience inform us about the variations in sexual behavior that exist around the world, or in the neighborhood. Experience does not prepare us to recognize the signs of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or to evaluate the risks of pregnancy. What many of us learned about sex from our parents can probably be summarized in a single word: “Don’t.” The information we received from our friends was probably riddled with exaggeration and even lies. Many young people today do receive accurate information through sex education courses in the schools, but they are usually taught about STIs and contraception, not about sexual techniques.

You may know more about human sexuality than your parents or grandparents did at your age, or do today. But how much do you really know? What, for example, happens inside your body when you are sexually aroused? What causes erection or vaginal lubrication? Can people who are paralyzed from the neck down become erect or lubricated? What factors determine a person’s sexual orientation? What are the causes of sexual dysfunctions? How do our sexual responsiveness and interests change as we age? Can you contract a sexually transmitted infection and not know that you have it until you wind up sterile? Can you infect others without having any symptoms yourself?

These are just a few of the issues we will explore in this book. Much of the information we present was discovered in recent years. It is almost as new to us as it may be to you. We also expect to debunk some common but erroneous ideas about sex that you may have picked up before you began this course. Before we proceed further, let us define our subject.
What Is Human Sexuality?

**Question: What is human sexuality?** This is not a trick question. Consider the meaning, or rather meanings, of the word sex. The word derives from Latin roots meaning “to cut or divide,” signifying the division of organisms into male and female genders. One use of the term sex, then, refers to our gender, or state of being male or female. The word sex (or sexual) is also used to refer to anatomic structures, called sex (or sexual) organs, that play a role in reproduction or sexual pleasure. We may also speak of sex when referring to physical activities involving our sex organs for purposes of reproduction or pleasure: masturbation, hugging, kissing, sexual intercourse, and so on. Sex also relates to erotic feelings, experiences, or desires, such as sexual fantasies and thoughts, sexual urges, or feelings of sexual attraction to another person.

We usually make our usage of the term “sex” clear enough in our everyday speech. When we ask about the sex of a newborn, we are referring to anatomic sex. When we talk of “having sex” (a rather ugly phrase, because it implies that we engage in sexual activity as we “have” a ham sandwich), we generally mean the physical expression of erotic feelings. The term gender refers to the state of being male or female, as in gender identity and gender roles.

The term sexual behavior refers to physical activities that involve the body in the expression of erotic or affectionate feelings. Sexual behavior may or may not involve reproduction. Masturbation, for example, is sexual behavior that is performed for pleasure, not reproduction. Kissing, hugging, manual manipulation of the genitals, and oral–genital contact are all sexual behaviors that can provide sensual stimulation, even though they do not directly lead to reproduction. They may also be used as forms of foreplay, which leads to coitus, which can lead to reproduction.

We can now define human sexuality as the ways in which we experience and express ourselves as sexual beings. Our awareness of ourselves as females or males is part of our sexuality, as is the capacity we have for erotic experiences and responses. Our sexuality is an essential part of ourselves, whether or not we engage in sexual intercourse or sexual fantasy or even if we lose sensation in our genitals because of injury.

The Study of Human Sexuality

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

Science provides us with information, but it cannot make sexual decisions for us. In making sexual decisions, we also consider our values. **Question: How do our values come into play in determining our sexual choices and behavior?** The Declaration of Independence endorsed the fundamental values of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”—not a bad beginning. Our religious traditions also play a prominent role in shaping our values, as we see in the following section.
Sexuality and Values

Our society is pluralistic. It embraces a wide range of sexual attitudes and values. Some readers may be liberal in their sexual views and behavior. Others may be conservative or traditional. Some will be staunchly pro-choice on abortion, others adamantly pro-life. Some will approve of premarital sex for couples who are dating casually. Others will hold the line at emotional commitment. Still others will believe that people should wait until marriage.

Because we encourage you through the course of this text to explore your own values about the issues we discuss, let us reveal two values that guided our writing:

1. **Sexual knowledge and critical thinking skills are of value because they allow us to make informed sexual decisions.** Your authors admit that they hold different values about a number of the issues we discuss. Therefore, we—your authors—do not try to persuade readers to adopt a particular stance concerning issues raised in the textbook. We present opposing points of view on controversial matters such as abortion and the distribution of condoms in schools. We hope that readers will critically consider their preconceptions and that the views they form will be their own.

2. **Students should take an active role in enhancing their health.** In this text we will urge you, for example, to examine your bodies for possible abnormalities, to see your physician when you have questions about painful menstruation or other physical complaints, to become sensitive to the signs of STIs, to get good prenatal care, and so forth.

People’s sexual attitudes, experiences, and behaviors are shaped to a large extent by their cultural traditions and beliefs. Now let us consider the various value systems that people draw upon in making sexual decisions.

Value Systems for Making Responsible Sexual Decisions

Making choices is deeply intertwined with our sexual experience. Although sex is a natural function, the ways in which we express our sexuality are matters of personal choice. We choose how, where, and with whom to become sexually involved. We face a wide array of sexual decisions: Whom should I date? When should my partner and I become sexually intimate? Should I initiate sexual relations or wait for my partner to approach me? Should my partner and I practice contraception? If so, which method? Should I use a condom to protect against sexually transmitted infections (or insist that my partner does)? Should I be tested for HIV (the virus that causes AIDS)? Should I insist that my partner be tested for HIV before we engage in sexual relations?

**Question:** What kinds of value systems do people have? We all have unique sets of moral values—as Americans, as members of one of America’s hundreds of subcultures, as individuals. No single value system defines us all. Indeed, the world of diversity in which we live is a mosaic of different moral codes and cultural traditions and beliefs.

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

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

> And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that
> committeth adultery with his neighbor's wife, both the adulterer and the adul-
> teress shall surely be put to death. . . . And if a man lie with mankind, as with
> womankind, both of them have committed abomination: they shall surely be
> put to death; . . . And if a man lie with a beast, he shall surely be put to death;
> and ye shall slay the beast. . . . And if a man shall take his sister, . . . and see her
> nakedness, and she sees his nakedness: it is a shameful thing; and they shall be
> cut off in the sight of the children of their people. . . .

Leviticus also proscribes intercourse during menstruation.

Many religious followers today accept the moral codes of their religions as a mat-
ter of faith and commitment, not necessarily because they can logically or rationally
derive them from contemporary societal needs. Some people find it reassuring to be
informed by religious authorities or scripture that a certain course of action is right
or wrong. Others, however, take a more liberal view. They say that the Bible was
inspired by God but that it was written or transcribed by fallible humans and is sub-
ject to various interpretations. They may also assert that the Bible reflects the social
setting of the time in which it was written, not just divine inspiration. At a time of
burgeoning population growth in many parts of the world, biblical
injunctions to be fruitful and multiply may no longer be socially and
environmentally sound. Prohibitions, such as that against coitus dur-
ing menstruation, may have been based on prescientific perceptions of
danger. Liberal people may thus view religious teachings as a general
framework for decision making rather than as a set of absolute rules.

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

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

**Ethical Relativism** Ethical relativism assumes that diverse values are
fundamental to human existence. Ethical relativists reject the idea
that there is a single correct moral view. One person may believe that

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*What Role Is Played by Our Values in Making Responsible Sexual Decisions?* In making decisions
about sexual behavior, people consider not only
their knowledge of biology and sexuality but also
their values. There are a variety of value systems,
some of which are based on religion and some, like
utilitarianism, which are not.
premarital sex is unacceptable under any circumstances, whereas another may hold that “being in love” makes it acceptable. Still another person may believe that premarital sex is morally permissible without an emotional commitment between the partners. The ethical relativist believes that there is no objective way of justifying one set of moral values over another. In this view, the essence of human morality is to derive one’s own principles and apply them according to one’s own conscience. Opponents of ethical relativism argue that allowing people free rein to determine what is right or wrong may bring about social chaos and decay.

One form of ethical relativism is cultural relativism. From this perspective, what is right or wrong must be understood in terms of the cultural beliefs that affect sexual decision making. In some cultures, premarital sex is tolerated or even encouraged, whereas in others it is considered immoral. Cultural relativism, like ethical relativism, does not ascribe moral superiority to one cultural tradition over another.

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

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

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

**Rationalism** Rationalism is the use of reason to determine a course of action. The rationalist believes that decisions should be based on intellect and reasoning, rather than emotions or strict obedience to a particular faith. The rationalist assesses the facts in a sexual situation and then logically weighs the consequences of courses of action to make a decision. The rationalist shares with the utilitarian the belief that reasoning can lead to ethical behavior. The rationalist is not bound, however, to the utilitarian code that makes choices on the basis of the greatest good for the greatest number. The utilitarian may decide, for example, to prolong an unhappy marriage because of the belief that the greater good (of the family and the community) is better served by maintaining an unhappy marriage than by dissolving it. The rationalist might decide that the personal consequences of continuing an unhappy marriage outweigh the consequences to the family or the community at large.

These ethical systems represent general frameworks of moral reasoning or pathways for judging the moral acceptability of sexual and nonsexual behavior. Whereas some of us may adopt one or another of these systems in their purest forms, others adopt a system of moral reasoning that involves some combination or variation of these ethical systems. Some also shift from one ethical system to another from time to time, sometimes reasoning legalistically and sometimes adopting a more flexible situationist approach.
Review: What Is Human Sexuality?

Reflect
Which value system or systems guide your ethical decision making? Is it one of those discussed in the chapter, or is it another? How did you develop your system of values?

Critical Thinking
Is it possible to have a legalistic value system yet make decisions based on the situation?

1. We define human ________ as the ways in which we experience and express ourselves as sexual beings.
2. ________ inform us about the physiological mechanisms of sexual arousal and response.
3. ________ examine how our sexual behavior and attitudes are shaped by perception, learning, thought, motivation and emotion, and personality.
4. ________ theorists examine relationships between sexual behavior and religion, race, and social class.
5. ________ systems provide a framework for judging the moral acceptability of sexual options.
6. The ________ approach formulates ethical behavior on the basis of a code of moral laws derived from an external source, such as the creed of a religion.
7. Fletcher argued that sexual decision making should be based on the context of the ________ faced by the individual.
8. Ethical ________ reject the idea that there is a single correct moral view.
9. The ________ is guided by the pursuit of pleasure.
10. The self-denial of material and sexual desires is termed ________.
11. Mill’s system is based on ________, or “the greatest good for the greatest number.”
12. ________ teaches that sexual decisions should be based on intellect and reasoning, rather than emotions or religious obedience.

Many students will not only be making sexual decisions. They will also be deciding what kind of value system to use in making these decisions. One tool they can use in deciding is critical thinking. The following section describes what is meant by critical thinking and applies it to issues concerning human sexuality.

Thinking Critically about Human Sexuality

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

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

To help students evaluate claims, arguments, and widely held beliefs, most colleges encourage critical thinking. Question: What is critical thinking? The core of critical thinking is skepticism—not taking things for granted. Critical thinking means being skeptical of things that are presented in print, uttered by authority figures or celebrities, or passed along by friends. Another aspect of critical thinking is thoughtful analysis and probing of claims and arguments. Critical thinking requires willingness to challenge the conventional wisdom and common knowledge that many of us
take for granted. It means scrutinizing definitions of terms and evaluating the premises of arguments and their logic. It also means finding reasons to support your beliefs, rather than relying on feelings. When people think critically, they maintain open minds. They suspend their beliefs until they have obtained and evaluated the evidence.

Principles of Critical Thinking

Critical thinkers maintain a healthy skepticism. They examine definitions of terms, weigh premises, consider evidence, and decide whether arguments are valid and logical. Here are some principles of critical thinking:

1. **Be skeptical.** Politicians, religious leaders, and other authority figures attempt to convince you of their points of view. Even researchers and authors may hold certain biases. Accept nothing as true until you have personally weighed the evidence.

2. **Examine definitions of terms.** Some statements are true when a term is defined in one way but not in another. Consider the maxim, “Love is blind.” If love is...
2. Avoid books that make extravagant claims. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. No method helps everyone who tries it. Very few methods work overnight. Yet people want the instant cure. The book that promises to enable you to reach orgasm in five minutes will probably outsell the book that says it can take up to half an hour or more and still remain within normal limits. The book that advertizes 302 sexual techniques may sound more useful than the book that advertizes 151 techniques. Responsible helping professionals do not make lavish claims.

3. Check authors' educational credentials. Be suspicious if the author's title is just “Dr.” and is placed before the name. The degree could be a phony doctorate bought through the mail. It could be issued by a religious cult rather than a university or professional school. It is better if the “doctor” has an Ph.D., Psy.D., M.D., or Ed.D. after her or his name, rather than “Dr.” in front of it.

4. Check authors' affiliations. There are no guarantees, but helping professionals who are affiliated with colleges, universities, clinics, and hospitals may have more to offer than those who are not. The Web site of the author of The Complete Idiot's Guide to Amazing Sex states that she holds a B.S. and an M.S. from Ivy League universities but says nothing about education and training in the area of human sexuality. (Having noted that, her book is not bad, but her “credentials” alone are irrelevant to expertise in human sexuality.)

5. Consider authors' complaints about the conservatism of professional groups to be a warning. Do the authors boast that they are ahead of their time? Do they berate professional organizations in the area of human sexuality as being pigheaded or narrow minded? If so, be suspicious. Most helping professionals and other scientists are open minded. They just ask to see evidence before they jump on the bandwagon. Enthusiasm is no substitute for research and evidence.

6. Check the evidence reported in the book. Bad books usually make extensive use of anecdotes. Anecdotes are unsupported stories or case studies about fantastic results with one or a few individuals. Responsible helping professionals check the effectiveness of techniques with large numbers of people. They carefully measure the outcomes. They use qualified language. For example, they say “It appears that . . .” or “It may be that . . .”

7. Check the reference citations for the evidence. Legitimate research is reported in the journals you will find in the reference section of this book. These journals mainly report research methods and outcomes that seem to be scientifically valid. If there are no reference citations in the book you are considering, or if the list of references seems suspicious, you should be suspicious, too.

8. Ask your instructor for advice. Ask for advice on what to do, whom to talk to, what to read.


10. Stop by and chat with your professor. Talk to someone in your college or university health center.

defined as head-over-heels infatuation, there may be substance to the statement. Infatuated people tend to idealize loved ones. But if love is defined as deep caring and commitment based on a more realistic (if still somewhat slanted) appraisal of the loved one, then love is not so much blind as a bit nearsighted.

3. Examine the assumptions or premises of arguments. Consider the statement, “Abortion is murder.” Webster's New World Dictionary defines murder as “the unlawful and malicious or premeditated killing of one human being by another.” The statement is true, according to this dictionary, only if the victim is a human being (and if the act is unlawful and malicious or premeditated). Most pro-life advocates argue that embryos and fetuses are human beings. Most pro-choice advocates claim that they are not. So the argument that abortion is murder rests in part on the premise that the embryo or fetus is a human being.

4. Be cautious in drawing conclusions from evidence. In Chapter 14 we shall discuss research findings that show that married people who cohabited before marriage are more likely to eventually get divorced than are those who didn’t cohabit first. It may seem at first glance that cohabitation is a cause of divorce. However,
married couples who cohabit before marriage may differ from those who do not in ways other than choosing cohabitation—which brings us to our next suggestion for critical thinking.

5. Consider alternative interpretations of research evidence. For example, cohabiters who later get married may be more likely to eventually get divorced because they are more liberal and less traditional than married couples who did not cohabit before marriage. Eventual divorce would then be connected with cohabitation but would not be caused by cohabitation.

6. Consider the kinds of evidence upon which conclusions are based. Some conclusions, even seemingly “scientific” conclusions, are based on anecdotes and personal endorsements. They are not founded on sound research.

7. Do not oversimplify. Consider the statement, “Homosexuality is inborn.” There is some evidence that sexual orientation may involve inborn predispositions, such as genetic influences. However, biology is not destiny in human sexuality. Gay male, lesbian, and heterosexual sexual orientations appear to develop as the result of a complex interaction of biological and environmental factors.

8. Do not overgeneralize. Consider the belief that gay males are effeminate and lesbians are masculine. Yes, some gay males and lesbians fit these stereotypes. However, many do not. Overgeneralizing makes us vulnerable to accepting stereotypes.

The nearby “Closer Look” applies critical thinking to the selection—and rejection!—of off-the-shelf books on human sexuality.

### Review: Thinking Critically about Human Sexuality

**Reflect**

Who are the authority figures in your own life? Have others encouraged you to follow the demands of authority figures without examining them critically? How do you feel about this?

**Critical Thinking**

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

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<th>Reflect</th>
<th>Critical Thinking</th>
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<tr>
<td>13. The core of critical thinking is ___________; that is, not taking things for granted.</td>
<td>14. Critical thinkers do not accept arguments just because they are made by ___________ figures.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Critical thinkers pay close attention to the definitions of ___________ used in arguments.</td>
<td>16. Critical thinkers are cautious in drawing ___________ from evidence.</td>
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Perspectives on Human Sexuality

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

The Historical Perspective

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

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

Art produced in the Stone Age, some 20,000 years ago, suggests the worship of women’s ability to bear children and perpetuate the species (Fichner-Rathus, 2004). Primitive statues and cave drawings portray women with large, pendulous breasts, rounded hips, and prominent sex organs. Most theorists regard the figurines as fertility symbols. Stone Age people may have been unaware of the male’s contribution to reproduction.

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

The penis became glorified in art as a plough, an ax, or a sword (Friedman, 2001). *Phallic symbols* played roles in religious ceremonies in ancient Egypt. The ancient Greeks sometimes rendered phallicus as rings and sometimes as necklaces. In ancient Rome, a large phallus was carried like a float in a parade honoring Venus, the goddess of love.

The *incest taboo* may have been the first human taboo. All human societies apparently have some form of incest taboo (Harris & Johnson, 2003; Whitten, 2001). Societies have varied in terms of its strictness, however. Brother–sister marriages...
were permitted among the presumably divine rulers of ancient Egypt and among the royal families of the Incas and of Hawaii, even though they were generally prohibited among commoners. Father-daughter marriages were also permitted among the aristocracy and royalty of ancient Egypt. Incestuous relationships in these royal blood lines may have kept wealth and power, as well as “divinity,” in the family.

The Ancient Hebrews  The ancient Hebrews viewed sex, at least sex in marriage, as a fulfilling experience intended to fulfill the divine injunction to “be fruitful and multiply.” The emphasis on the procreative function of sex led to some interesting social customs. For example, childlessness and the development of a repulsive abnormality, such as a boil, were grounds for divorce. Male-male and female-female sexual behavior were strongly condemned, as they threatened the perpetuation of the family. Adultery, too, was condemned—at least for a woman. Although the Hebrew Bible (called the Old Testament in the Christian faith) permitted polygamy, the vast majority of the Hebrews were monogamous.

The ancient Hebrews approved of sex within marriage not simply for procreation but also for mutual pleasure and fulfillment. They believed that sex helped strengthen marital bonds and solidify the family. Jewish law even legislated the minimum frequency of marital relations, which varied according to the man’s profession and the amount of time he spent at home:

Every day for those who have no occupation, twice a week for laborers, once a week for ass-drivers; once every thirty days for camel drivers; and once every six months for sailors. (Mishna Ketubot 5:6; Ketubot 62b–62b)

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

In case the notion that a woman is a man’s property sounds ancient to you, we must note that in many cultures it remains current enough. For example, in the year 2000, Zambian judge Alfred Shilibwa ordered a hotel employee, Obert Siyankalanga, to pay a woman’s husband $300 in compensation after he slipped his hand into the woman’s blouse and fondled her breasts (“Man pays victim’s husband,” 2000). The woman, a hotel employee named Bertha Kosamu, had been ironing at the time. She explained the scars on Obert’s face and head: “I clobbered him on the head with the iron.” There is one contemporary ring to the story: Because Obert was Bertha’s supervisor, the judge also found him guilty of sexual harassment.

The Ancient Greeks  The classical or golden age of ancient Greece lasted about 200 years, from about 500 BCE to 300 BCE. Within this relatively short span lived the philosophers Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle; the playwrights Aristophanes, Aeschylus, and Sophocles; the natural scientist Archimedes; and the lawgiver Solon. Like the Hebrews, the Greeks valued family life. But Greek men also admired the well-developed male body and enjoyed nude wrestling in the arena. Erotic encounters and

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**Truth? Fiction? Revisited**

It is true that Greek men might take on an adolescent male as a lover and pupil.

All in all, the women of the ancient world—and more recent times—were treated as chattels; that is, as property.

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**Polygamy** The practice of having two or more spouses at the same time. (From the Greek roots meaning “many” [poly-] and “marriage” [gamos].)

**Monogamy** The practice of having one spouse. (From the Greek mono-, meaning “single” or “alone.”)
off-color jokes characterized the plays of Aristophanes and other playwrights. The Greeks held that the healthy mind must dwell in a healthy body. They cultivated muscle and movement along with mind.

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

Three aspects of Greek sexuality are of particular interest to our study of sexual practices in the ancient world: male–male sexual behavior, pederasty, and prostitution. The Greeks viewed men and women as bisexual. One of their heroes, Hercules, is said to have ravished 50 virgins in a night. Nevertheless, he also had affairs with men. Male–male sex was deemed normal and tolerated so long as it did not threaten the institution of the family.

Pederasty means love of boys. Sex between men and prepubescent boys was illegal, however. Families were generally pleased if their adolescent sons attracted socially prominent mentors. Pederasty did not impede the boy’s future male–female functioning, because the pederast himself was usually married, and Greeks believed people equally capable of male–female and male–male sexual activity.

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

As in many Middle Eastern countries even today, women held low social status. The women of Athens had no more rights than slaves. They were subject to the authority of their male next-of-kin before marriage and to their husbands afterwards. They received no formal education and were consigned mostly to women’s quarters in their homes. They were chaperoned when they ventured out of doors. A husband could divorce his wife without cause and was obligated to do so if she committed adultery. The legal and social rights of women in ancient Athens were similar to those of their contemporaries in Babylonia and Egypt and among the ancient Hebrews.

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

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

Western society traces the roots of many of its sexual terms to Roman culture, as indicated by their Latin roots. Fellatio, for example, derives from the Latin fellare, meaning “to suck.” Cunnilingus derives from cunnus, meaning “vulva,” and lingere, “to lick.” Fornication derives from fornicis, an arch or vault. The term stems from Roman streetwalkers’ practice of serving their customers in the shadows of archways near public buildings such as stadiums and theaters.
The Early Christians  Christianity emerged within the Roman Empire during the centuries following the death of Jesus. Early Christian views on sexuality were largely shaped by Saint Paul and the church fathers in the first century and by Saint Augustine in the latter part of the fourth century. Adultery and fornication were rampant among the upper classes of Rome at the time, and early Christian leaders began to associate sexuality with sin.

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

Christians, like Jews before them, demanded virginity of brides. Masturbation and prostitution were condemned (Allen, 2000; Laqueur, 2003). Early Christians taught that men should love their wives with restraint, not passion. The goal of procreation should govern sexual behavior—the spirit should rule the flesh. Divorce was outlawed. Unhappiness with one’s spouse might reflect sexual, thus sinful, restlessness. Dissolving a marriage might also jeopardize the social structure that supported the church.

Saint Augustine (353–430 CE) associated sexual lust with the original sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. According to Augustine, lust had transformed the innocent procreative instinct, instilled in humanity by God, into sin. Following their fall from grace, Adam and Eve cloaked their nakedness with fig leaves. Shame entered the picture. To Augustine, lust and shame were passed down from Adam and Eve through the generations. Lust made any sexual expression, even intercourse in marriage, inherently evil. Only through celibacy, according to Augustine, could men and women attain a state of grace.

Nonprocreative sexual activity was deemed most sinful. Masturbation, male–female sexual behavior, female–female sexual behavior, oral–genital contact, anal intercourse—all were viewed as abominations in the eyes of God (Laqueur, 2003; Stengers et al., 2001). To the Jews, sex within marriage was a natural and pleasurable function. To the early Christians, however, sexual pleasure, even within marriage, was stained by the original sin of Adam and Eve. But marital sex was deemed less sinful when practiced for procreation and without passion.

Sexuality and Eastern Religions  Islam, the dominant religion in the Middle East, was founded by the Prophet Muhammad. Muhammad was born in Mecca, in what is now Saudi Arabia, in about 570 CE. The Islamic tradition treasures marriage and sexual fulfillment in marriage. Premarital intercourse invites shame and social condemnation—and, in some fundamentalist Islamic states, the death penalty.

The family is the backbone of Islamic society. Celibacy is frowned upon. Muhammad decreed that marriage represents the only road to virtue. Islamic tradition permits a sexual double standard, however. Men may take up to four wives, but women are permitted only one husband. Public social interactions between men and women are severely restricted in more conservative Islamic societies. Women are expected to keep their heads and faces veiled in public and to avoid all contact with men other than their husbands.

In the cultures of the Far East, by contrast, sexuality was akin to spirituality. To the Taoist masters of China, who influenced Chinese culture for millennia, sex was a sacred duty—a form of worship that led toward harmony with nature and immortality.
The Chinese culture was the first to produce a detailed sex manual, which came into use about 200 years before the birth of Jesus. The man was expected to extend intercourse as long as possible to absorb more of his wife’s natural essence, or yin. Yin would enhance his own masculine essence, or yang. Moreover, he was to help bring his partner to orgasm so as to increase the flow of energy that he might absorb. (Her pleasure was incidental.)

Taoists believed that it was wasteful for a man to “spill his seed.” Masturbation, acceptable for women, was ruled out for men. Sexual practices such as anal intercourse and oral–genital contact (fellatio and cunnilingus) were permissible, so long as the man did not squander yang through wasteful ejaculation. Another parallel to Western cultures was the role accorded women in traditional Chinese society. The “good wife,” like her Western counterparts, was limited to domestic roles.

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

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

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

Two conflicting concepts of women came to dominate medieval thought: one, woman as Eve, the temptress; the other, woman as Mary, virtuous and pure. Contemporary Western images of women still show the schism between the good girl and the bad girl—the Madonna and the whore. Part of the fascination of the rock star Madonna is that she combines the name of the Virgin Mary and crucifixes with an open display of undergarments and simulated lovemaking on the stage and in her videos.

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

The Victorian Era  Early settlers brought to the New World the religious teachings that had dominated Western thought and culture for centuries. Whatever their differences, each religion stressed the ideal of family life and viewed sex outside of marriage as immoral or sinful. A woman’s place, by and large, was in the home and in the fields. Not until 1833, when Oberlin opened its doors to women, were women permitted to attend college in the United States. (Not until the 20th century did women gain the right to vote.)

The middle and later parts of the 19th century are generally called the Victorian period, named after Queen Victoria of England. Victoria assumed the throne in 1837 and ruled until her death in 1901. Her name has become virtually synonymous with sexual repression. Victorian society in Europe and the United States, on the surface at least, was prim and proper (Horowitz, 2002). Sex was not discussed in polite society. Even the legs of pianos were draped with cloth for the sake of modesty. Many women viewed sex as a marital duty to be performed for procreation or to satisfy their husbands’ cravings. Consider the following quotation:

I am happy now that Charles calls on my bed chamber less frequently than of old. As it is, I now endure but two calls a week and when I hear his steps outside my door I lie down on my bed, close my eyes, open my legs and think of England. (Attributed to Alice, Lady Hillingdon, wife of the Second Baron Hillingdon)

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

It was widely believed among medical authorities in England and the United States that sex drains the man of his natural vitality. Physicians thus recommended that intercourse be practiced infrequently, perhaps once a month or so. The Reverend Sylvester Graham (1794–1851) preached that ejaculation deprived men of the “vital fluids” they need to maintain health and vitality. Graham preached against “wasting the seed” by masturbation or frequent marital intercourse (Laqueur, 2003; Stengers et al., 2001). (How frequent was “frequent”? In Graham’s view, intercourse more than once a month could dangerously deplete the man’s vital energies.) Graham recommended that young men control their sexual appetites by a diet of simple foods based on whole-grain flours.

It appears, though, that the actual behavior of Victorians was not as repressed as advertised. Despite the belief in female sexual anesthesia, Victorian women did experience sexual pleasure and orgasm. Consider some findings from an early sex survey conducted in 1892 by a female physician, Clelia Duel Mosher. Though her sample was small and nonrandom, 35 of the 44 women who responded admitted to desiring sexual intercourse. And 34 of them reported experiencing orgasm. Women’s diaries of the time also contained accounts of passionate love affairs.
Prostitution flourished during the Victorian era. Men apparently thought that they were doing their wives a favor by looking elsewhere. Accurate statistics are hard to come by, but there may have been as many as 1 prostitute for every 12 men in London during the 19th century; in Vienna, perhaps 1 for every 7 men.

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

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

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

Alfred Kinsey (1894–1956), an Indiana University zoologist, conducted the first large-scale studies of sexual behavior in the 1930s and 1940s. Kinsey had been asked to teach a course on marriage. When researching the subject matter, Kinsey found that little was known about sexual practices in American society. He thus embarked upon an ambitious research project, conducting detailed interviews with nearly 12,000 people across the United States. The results of his surveys were published in two volumes, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (Kinsey et al., 1948) and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (Kinsey et al., 1953). These books represent the first scientific attempts to provide a comprehensive picture of sexual behavior in the United States.

The books made for dry reading. They were filled with statistical tables rather than racy pictures or vignettes. Nevertheless, they became best-sellers, exploding on a public that had not yet learned to discuss sex openly. Their publication—especially the book on female sexuality—unleashed the dogs of criticism. Kinsey’s work had some methodological flaws—especially in its selection of participants—but much of the criticism branded it immoral and obscene. *The New York Times* refused to run advertisements for the 1948 volume on male sexuality. Many newspapers refused to report the results of his survey on female sexuality. A congressional committee in the 1950s claimed that Kinsey’s work undermined the moral fiber of the nation, rendering it more vulnerable to a Communist takeover. Despite all the brouhaha, Kinsey and his colleagues made sex research a scientifically respectable field of study and helped lay the groundwork for discussing sexual behavior openly.

*The Sexual Revolution*  The period of the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s is often referred to as the sexual revolution (Allyn, 2001; Kamen, 2002). Dramatic changes occurred in American sexual attitudes and practices during the “Swinging Sixties.” When folksinger Bob Dylan sang “The Times They Are A-Changin’,” our society was
on the threshold of major social upheaval, not only in sexual behavior, but also in science, politics, fashion, music, art, and cinema. The so-called Woodstock generation, disheartened by commercialism and the Vietnam War, tuned in (to rock music on the radio), turned on (to drugs), and dropped out (of mainstream society). The heat was on between the hippies and the hardhats. Long hair became the mane of men. Bell-bottomed jeans flared out. Films became sexually explicit. Critics seriously contemplated whether the pornography “classic” *Deep Throat* had deep social implications. Hard rock music bellowed the message of rebellion and revolution.

No single event marked the onset of the sexual revolution. There was no charge up a sexual San Juan Hill. Social movements often gain momentum from a timely interplay of scientific, social, political, and economic forces. The war (in Vietnam), the bomb (fear of the nuclear bomb), the pill (the introduction of the birth control pill), and the mass media (especially television) were four such forces. The pill lessened the risk of unwanted pregnancy for young people. It permitted them to engage in recreational or casual sex, rather than procreative sex. Pop psychology movements, like the Human Potential Movement of the 1960s and 1970s (the “Me Decade”), spread the message that people should get in touch with and express their genuine feelings, including their sexual feelings. “Doing your own thing” became one catchphrase. “If it feels right, go with it” became another. The lamp was rubbed. Out popped the sexual genie.

The sexual revolution was tied to social permissiveness and political liberalism. In part reflecting the times, in part acting the catalyst, the media dealt openly with sex. Popular books encouraged people to explore their sexuality. Film scenes of lovemaking became so commonplace that the movie rating system was introduced to alert parents. More teenagers are sexually active today, and at younger ages (Henshaw, 2003). In addition to premarital sex, two other features of the sexual revolution have become permanent parts of our social fabric: the liberation of female sexuality and a greater willingness to discuss sex openly. For example, in 1998 TV networks broadcast President Bill Clinton’s grand jury testimony, with explicit references to oral sex with White House intern Monica Lewinsky, during daytime hours.

What, then, does history tell us about sex? Is there a universal standard for defining sexual values, or are there many standards? All societies have some form of an incest taboo. Most societies have placed a value on procreative sex within the context of an enduring relationship, usually in the form of marriage. Marriage provides security for children, maintains or increases the population, and ensures the orderly transfer of property from generation to generation.

Other sexual practices—masturbation, promiscuous sex, male–male sexual behavior, female–female sexual behavior, prostitution, polygamy, and so on—have been condemned in some societies, tolerated by others, and encouraged by still others.
Some historians argue that the pagan “degradations” of Rome led to its demise—a “purer” Rome might otherwise still bestride the earth. They warn that the “excesses” of our own sexual revolution may also bring us down. Rome, however, suffered from the administrative difficulties of tending to a far-flung empire. Rome was besieged by “barbarians” in the outposts and, eventually, at the city gates. In fact, the civilizations of ancient Greece and Rome maintained their prominence for hundreds of years. When we consider their contributions to Western art, philosophical thought, and the languages we speak, we may question whether they fell at all.

The Biological Perspective

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

Study of the biology of sex informs us about the mechanisms of reproduction. It informs us of the mechanisms of sexual arousal and response. Biology teaches us that erection occurs when the penis becomes engorged in blood. We learn that vaginal lubrication is the result of a “sweating” action of the vaginal walls. We learn that orgasm is a spinal reflex as well as a psychological event.

Biological researchers have made major strides in assisting infertile couples to conceive, for example, through laboratory-based methods of fertilization. Knowledge of biology has furthered our understanding of sexuality and our ability to overcome sexual problems. To what extent does biology govern sexual behavior? Is sex controlled by biological instincts? Or are psychosocial factors, such as culture, experience, and decision-making ability more important? Although the sexuality of other species is largely governed by biological processes, culture and experience play vital roles—and in some cases, the more central roles—in human sexuality. Human sexuality involves a complex interaction of biological and psychosocial factors.

The Evolutionary Perspective

Species vary not only in their physical characteristics but also in their social behavior, including their mating behavior. Scientists look to the process of evolution to help explain such variability. **Questions:** What is evolution? How might the sexual behavior of various species, including our own, be influenced by evolutionary forces?

The English naturalist Charles Darwin (1809–1882) is considered the founder of the modern theory of evolution. He believed that animal and plant species were not created independently, but evolved from other life-forms through natural selection, or “survival of the fittest.” In each species, some individuals are better adapted to their environments than others. Better-adapted members are more likely to survive to reproduce. Therefore, they are also more likely to transmit their traits to succeeding generations. The fittest members of a species produce the greatest number of surviving offspring. They are not necessarily the strongest or fleetest of foot, although these traits are adaptive for some species and enhance their reproductive success.

When environmental conditions change, natural selection favors members of a species who possess traits that help them adapt. These forms of the species proliferate, eventually replacing forms that fail to survive and reproduce. Species that lack forms that possess adaptive traits eventually become extinct.

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

**Natural selection** The evolutionary process by which adaptive traits enable members of a species to survive to reproductive age and transmit these traits to future generations.
Darwin was too early—the technology of his day did not allow him to find the microscopic structures that transmit traits from generation to generation. We know now that traits are transmitted by units of heredity that we call genes. Traits are determined by the combinations of genes that offspring inherit from their parents.

Genes are segments of chromosomes, which are composed of DNA (Plomin & Crabbe, 2000). The chemical structure of genes provides genetic instructions. Each human cell normally contains a complement of 46 chromosomes, which are arranged in 23 pairs. Each human chromosome consists of more than 1,000 genes. A child normally inherits one member of each pair of chromosomes from each parent. So each offspring inherits 50% of his or her genes from each parent. The particular combinations of genes that one inherits from one’s parents account for whether one has blue eyes or brown eyes, light or dark hair, and a wide range of other characteristics.

New variations in species are introduced through random genetic changes called mutations. Mutations occur randomly but are subject to natural selection. Some mutations are adaptive and enhance reproductive success. As more members of the species come to possess these traits, the species as a whole changes in form.

In recent years, some scientists—including evolutionary psychologists—have suggested that there is a genetic basis to social behavior, including sexual behavior, among humans and other animals (Bruene & Ribbert, 2002; Fisher, 2000; McAndrew, 2002). This theory proposes that dispositions toward behavior patterns that enhance reproductive success—as well as physical traits that do so—may be genetically transmitted (Cory, 2002). If so, we may carry traits that helped our prehistoric ancestors survive and reproduce successfully, even if these traits are no longer adaptive in modern culture (Plomin, 2002). “Modern culture”—dating, say, from classical Greece—is but a moment in the lifetime of our species.

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

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

Some evolutionary psychologists argue that men are naturally more promiscuous than women because they are the genetic heirs of ancestors whose reproductive success was related to the number of women they could impregnate (Bjorklund & Kipp, 1996; Buss, 1994). Women, by contrast, can produce only a few offspring in their lifetimes. Thus, the theory goes, they have to be more selective with respect to...
their mating partners. Women’s reproductive success is enhanced by mating with the fittest males—not with any Tom, Dick, or Harry who happens by. From this perspective, the male’s “roving eye” and the female’s selectivity are embedded in their genes (Townsend, 1995). Evolutionary psychology theory is also sometimes drawn upon to explain why the incidences of infanticide and sexual abuse of children are higher in stepfamilies than in families where everyone is genetically related (Daly & Wilson, 1998).

To some evolutionary psychologists, human beings are like marionettes on strings being tugged by invisible puppet masters—their genes. Genes govern the biological processes of sexual maturation and the production of sex hormones. Hormones, in turn, are largely responsible for regulating the sexual behavior of other animal species. Extending evolutionary psychology to human behavior sparks considerable controversy, however. Critics contend that learning, personal choice, and sociocultural factors may be more important determinants of human behavior than heredity (Hyde & Durik, 2000).

The Cross-Species Perspective

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

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

The Cross-Cultural Perspective

Question: What is the role of the cross-cultural perspective? The cross-cultural perspective, like the historical perspective, provides insight into the ways in which cultural beliefs affect sexual behavior and people’s sense of morality. Unlike historians, who are limited in their sources to the eyewitness accounts of others and the shards of information that can be gleaned from fading relics, anthropologists can observe other cultures firsthand. Interest in the cross-cultural perspective on sexuality was spurred by the early-twentieth-century work of the anthropologists Margaret Mead (1901–1978) and Bronislaw Malinowski (1884–1942).

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

Analogue  Something that is similar or comparable to something else.

Copulation  Sexual intercourse. (From the Latin copulare, meaning “to unite” or “to couple.”)
cultural expectations and socialization. That is, men and women learn to behave in ways that are expected of them in their particular culture.

Malinowski lived on the Trobriand island of Boyawa in the South Pacific during World War I. There he gathered data on two societies of the South Pacific, the Trobrianders and the Amphett islanders. The Amphett islanders maintained strict sexual prohibitions, whereas the Trobrianders enjoyed greater freedom. Trobrianders, for example, encouraged their children to masturbate. Adolescents were expected to have multiple sex partners until they married. Malinowski found Trobrianders to be less anxiety-ridden than Amphett islanders. He attributed the difference to their sexual freedom, thus making an early plea to relax prohibitions in Western societies.

Cross-Cultural Commonalities and Differences in Sexual Behavior In 1951, Clellan Ford, an anthropologist, and Frank Beach, a psychologist, reviewed sexual behavior in preliterate societies around the world, as well as in other animals. They found great variety in sexual...
were one society that did not practice kissing. Upon witnessing two European visitors across the cultures they studied, although not universal. The Thonga of Africa customs and beliefs among the almost 200 societies they studied. They also found some fairly common threads. Ford and Beach reported that kissing was quite common across the cultures they studied, although not universal. The Thonga of Africa were one society that did not practice kissing. Upon witnessing two European visitors kissing each other, members of the tribe commented that they could not understand why Europeans “ate” each other’s saliva and dirt. The frequency of sexual intercourse also varies from culture to culture, but intercourse is relatively more frequent among young people everywhere.

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

Eighty-four percent of Ford and Beach’s (1951) preliterate cultures practiced polygamy. The researchers concluded that monogamy was relatively uncommon. More common is the form of polygamy called polygyny, in which men are permitted to have more than one wife. Similarly, Frayser (1985) found that polygyny was practiced by the great majority (82%) of societies in her cross-cultural sample. In

Polygyny

A form of marriage in which a man has two or more wives. (From the Greek gyne, meaning “woman.”)
many cultures, a man’s number of wives is an emblem of his wealth and status. Nevertheless, monogamy is more prevalent worldwide. Few societies have the oversupply of women that universal polygyny would entail (Harris & Johnson, 2003; Whitten, 2001). Rarer still is polyandry, a practice that permits women to have more than one husband. Frayser (1985) found polyandry in only 2% of societies she studied. In fraternal polyandry, the most common form of polyandry, two or more brothers share a wife, and all dwell in the same household (Harris & Johnson, 2003; Whitten, 2001).

Polygyny has a long tradition in Western culture. King Solomon was reputed to have 700 wives. Polygyny was practiced in the 19th-century United States by an early leader of the Mormon church, Brigham Young, and some of his followers.

The cross-cultural perspective illustrates the importance of learning in human sexual behavior. Societies differ widely in their sexual attitudes, customs, and practices. The members of all human societies share the same anatomic structures and physiological capacities for sexual pleasure, however. The same hormones flow through their arteries. Yet their sexual practices, and the pleasure they reap or fail to attain, may set them apart. If human sexuality were predominantly determined by biology, we might not find such diversity.

**Psychological Perspectives**

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

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

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

Although many sexual ideas and impulses are banished to the unconscious, they continue to seek expression. One avenue of expression is the dream, through which sexual impulses may be perceived in disguised, or symbolic, form. The therapists and scholars who follow in the Freudian tradition are quite interested in analyzing dreams, and the dream objects listed in Table 1.1 are often considered sexual symbols.

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

One of Freud’s most controversial beliefs was that children normally harbor erotic interests. He believed that the suckling of the infant in the oral stage was an
erotic act. So too was anal bodily experimentation through which children learn to experience pleasure in the control of their sphincter muscles and the processes of elimination. He theorized that it was normal for children to progress through stages of development in which the erotic interest shifts from one erogenous zone to another, as, for example, from the mouth or oral cavity to the anal cavity. According to his theory of psychosexual development, children undergo five stages of development: oral, anal, phallic, latency, and genital, which are named according to the predominant erogenous zones of each stage. Each stage gives rise to certain kinds of conflicts. Moreover, inadequate or excessive gratification in any stage can lead to fixation in that stage and the development of traits and sexual preferences characteristic of that stage.

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

**Learning Theories** To what extent does sexual behavior reflect experience? Would you hold the same sexual attitudes and do the same things if you had been reared in another culture? We think not. Even within the same society, family and personal experiences can shape unique sexual attitudes and behaviors. Whereas psychoanalytic theory plumbs the depths of the unconscious, learning theorists focus on environmental factors that shape behavior.

**Behaviorists** such as John B. Watson (1878–1958) and B. F. Skinner (1904–1990) emphasized the importance of rewards and punishments in the learning process. Skinner termed events that increase the frequency or likelihood of behavior reinforcements. Children left to explore their bodies without parental condemnation will learn what feels good and tend to repeat it. The Trobriand child who is rewarded

**TABLE 1.1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbols for the Male Genital Organs</th>
<th>Symbols for the Female Genital Organs</th>
<th>Symbols for Sexual Intercourse</th>
<th>Symbols for the Breasts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>airplanes</td>
<td>bottles</td>
<td>climbing a ladder</td>
<td>apples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fish</td>
<td>caves</td>
<td>flying in an airplane</td>
<td>peaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neckties</td>
<td>doors</td>
<td>riding a horse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tools</td>
<td>ovens</td>
<td>riding an elevator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weapons</td>
<td>ships</td>
<td>riding a roller coaster</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bullets</td>
<td>hats</td>
<td>walking into a tunnel or down a hall</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hands</td>
<td>poles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feet</td>
<td>snakes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hoses</td>
<td>trees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fire</td>
<td>sticks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knives</td>
<td>umbrellas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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


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

**Fixation** In psychoanalytic theory, arrested development, which includes attachment to objects of an earlier stage of psychosexual development.

**Oedipus complex** In psychoanalytic theory, a conflict of the phallic stage in which the boy wishes to possess his mother sexually and perceives his father as a rival in love. (The analogous conflict for girls is the Electra complex.)

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

---

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

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

Modeling  Acquiring knowledge and skills by observing others.

for masturbation and premarital coitus through parental praise and encouragement will be more likely to repeat these behaviors than the child in a more sexually restrictive culture, who is punished for the same behavior. When sexual behavior (like masturbation) feels good, but parents connect it with feelings of guilt and shame, the child is placed in conflict and may vacillate between masturbating and swearing off it. If, as young children, we are severely punished for sexual exploration, we may come to associate sexual stimulation in general with feelings of guilt or anxiety. Such early learning experiences can set the stage for sexual problems or dysfunctions in adulthood.

Social–learning theorists also use the concepts of reward and punishment, but they emphasize the importance of cognitive activity (anticipations, thoughts, plans, and so on) and learning by observation. Observational learning, or modeling, refers to acquiring knowledge and skills through observing others. Observational learning involves more than direct observation of other people. It includes seeing models in films or on television, hearing about them, and reading about them. According to social–learning theory, children acquire the gender roles deemed appropriate in a society through reinforcement of gender-appropriate behavior and through observing the gender-role behavior of their parents, their peers, and other models on television, in films, in books, and so on.

Psychological theories shed light on the ways in which sexuality is influenced by rewards, punishments, and mental processes such as fantasy, thoughts, attitudes, and expectations. Sigmund Freud helped bring sexuality within the province of scientific investigation. He also helped make it possible for people to recognize and talk about the importance of sexuality in their lives. Critics contend, however, that he may have placed too much emphasis on sexual motivation in determining behavior and on the role of unconscious processes.

The Sociocultural Perspective: The World of Diversity

Sexual behavior is determined not only by biological and psychological factors, but also by social factors. Social factors contribute to the shaping of our sexual attitudes, beliefs, and behavior. Anthropologists contribute to our understanding of cross-cultural variance in sexuality. Question: What is the role of sociocultural theorists?

Sociocultural theorists focus on differences in sexuality among the subgroups of a society, as defined, for example, by differences in religion, race/ethnicity, country of origin, socioeconomic status, marital status, age, educational level, and gender. Such a society is the United States.

Consider the issue of the numbers of sex partners people have. Table 1.2 reports the results of a national survey concerning the number of sex partners people report having since the age of 18. It considers the factors of sex, age, marital status, level of education, religion, and race/ethnicity (Laumann et al., 1994). For example, males report having greater numbers of sex partners than females do. One male in three (33%) reports having 11 or more sex partners since the age of 18, as compared with fewer than one woman in ten (9.2%). Throughout the text, we shall be focusing on gender differences and why men seem generally more likely than women to seek a wide range of sexual experience.

Consider age. The numbers of sex partners rises with age into the 40s. As people age, they have more opportunity to accumulate life experiences, including sexual
experiences. But then the numbers of partners fall off among respondents in their 50s. Older respondents entered adulthood prior to the sexual revolution and were thus exposed to more conservative sexual attitudes. We shall find this sort of age difference, or age gradient, throughout the text as well.

Level of education is also connected with sexual behavior. Generally speaking, education appears to be a liberalizing influence. Therefore, it is not surprising that people with some college education, or who have completed college, are likely to have more sex partners than those who attended only grade school or high school.

If education is a liberating influence on sexuality, conservative religious experience is apparently a restraining factor. In Table 1.2, those who report no religion and liberal Protestants (e.g., Methodists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and United Church of Christ) report higher numbers of sex partners than do Catholics and conservative Protestants (e.g., members of Baptist Churches, Pentecostal Churches, Churches of Christ, and Assemblies of God).

Ethnicity is also connected with sexual behavior. Throughout the text, our coverage of diversity will address differences between European Americans, African Americans, Latino and Latina Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans. The research findings listed in Table 1.2 suggest that European Americans and African Americans have the highest numbers of sex partners. Latino and Latina Americans are mostly Catholic, and Catholicism, as noted, tends to restrain sexual behavior. Asian Americans would appear to be the most sexually restrained ethnic group. However, as noted in the footnote to the table, the sample sizes of Asian Americans and Native Americans may be too small to draw accurate conclusions.

The sociocultural perspective informs us of the relationship between sexuality and one’s social group within a society. Sociocultural theorists view sexual behavior as occurring within a sociocultural system. They study the ways in which the values, beliefs, and norms of a group influence the sexual behavior of its members. To a certain extent, we share attitudes and behavior patterns with people from similar backgrounds. Even so, not all Protestants or all members of a given ethnic group act or think alike.

Gender Roles Sociocultural theorists also study gender roles. In Western cultures, men have traditionally been expected to be the breadwinners, whereas women have been expected to remain in the home and rear the children. Traditional gender roles also define sexual relations. Men are expected to be assertive; women, compliant. Men are to initiate romantic overtures. Women are to perform a “gatekeeping” role and determine which advances they will accept. Today, many of these traditions have fallen by the wayside. Most women today are members of the workforce. Many are pursuing careers in traditionally male domains, such as law, medicine, and engineering. Some women command naval vessels. Others pilot military helicopters. Yet even women who become presidents and vice presidents of corporations are still burdened with the bulk of household chores. Sexual practices are also changing to some degree. More women today initiate dates and sexual interactions than was the case in past generations.

Multiple Perspectives on Human Sexuality

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Characteristics</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
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<th>5–10</th>
<th>11–20</th>
<th>21+</th>
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<td>19.5</td>
<td>20.9</td>
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<td>16.6</td>
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<td>36.4</td>
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<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
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<td>18–24</td>
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<td>32.1</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>2.8</td>
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<td>25–29</td>
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<td>25.3</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>9.9</td>
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<td>30–34</td>
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<td>35–39</td>
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<td>50–54</td>
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<tr>
<td>Never married (not cohabiting)</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>12.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Never married (cohabiting)</td>
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<td>37.3</td>
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<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
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<td>Less than high school</td>
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<td>36.0</td>
<td>18.6</td>
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<td>High school graduate</td>
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<td>30.2</td>
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<td>Some college</td>
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<td>29.4</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>9.3</td>
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<td>Advanced degree</td>
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<td>26.3</td>
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<td><strong>Religion</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal, moderate Protestant</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>8.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conservative Protestant</td>
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<td>20.4</td>
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<td>27.2</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>22.7</td>
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<td>16.7</td>
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<td><strong>Race/Ethnicity</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>European American</td>
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<td>26.2</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
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<td>18.0</td>
<td>34.2</td>
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<td>Latino and Latina American</td>
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<td>35.6</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American*</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American*</td>
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<td>27.5</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


†National Health and Social Life Survey, conducted by a research team centered at the University of Chicago.

*These sample sizes are quite small.
Review: Perspectives on Human Sexuality

Reflect
Throughout much of history, women were considered to be the property of their fathers and then their husbands. Are their “remnants” of this belief in people from your own ethnic background? Explain.

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

17. __________ informs us as to whether sexual behavior reflects trends that have been with us through the millennia or the customs of a particular culture and era.
18. History shows (A great deal of or Little?) evidence of universal sexual trends.
19. The art of the __________ Age suggests that people worshiped women’s ability to bear children and perpetuate the species.
20. In ancient Rome, a large __________ was carried like a float in a parade honoring Venus, the goddess of love.
21. Brother-sister marriages were permitted among the presumably divine rulers of ancient __________.
22. The ancient Hebrews (Approved or Disapproved?) of sex within marriage for the purpose of pleasure.
23. The ancient Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans, viewed a wife as the __________ of her husband.
24. The ancient Greeks viewed men and women as being (Heterosexual, Homosexual, or Bisexual?).
25. Early __________ began to associate sex with sin.
26. __________ culture first produced a detailed sex manual.
27. The ancient Hindus of India created the sex manual known as the Kama __________.
28. Although prostitution flourished, sexuality was generally repressed during the __________ era in the West, which was named after the Queen of England.
29. During the 19th century, the Viennese physician, Sigmund __________, wrote that the sex drive was our principal motivating force.
30. Alfred __________ conducted the first large-scale studies of sexual behavior in the United States.
31. The __________ perspective focuses on the roles of genes, hormones, and the nervous system in human sexuality.
32. According to the __________ perspective, the fittest members of a species produce the greatest number of surviving offspring.
33. Sexual behavior among “higher” mammals, such as primates, is (More or Less?) directly controlled by instinct than it is among the “lower” species, such as birds or fish.
34. Mead and Malinowski are major contributors to the __________ perspective.
35. According to __________ theory, dreams of airplanes, bullets, snakes, sticks, and similar objects may symbolize the male genitals.
36. __________ such as Watson and Skinner emphasized the importance of rewards and punishments in our learning about “proper” sexual behavior.
37. Social-__________ theorists emphasize the importance of acquiring sexual knowledge and skills through observing others.
38. __________ theorists focus on differences in sexuality among the subgroups of a society, as defined, for example, by differences in religion, race/ethnicity, income, age, education, and gender.
The term *human sexuality* refers to matters of gender, sexual behavior, sexual feelings, and the biology of sex. Human sexuality concerns the ways in which we experience and express ourselves as sexual beings. The study of human sexuality draws upon the expertise of anthropologists, biologists, medical researchers, sociologists, psychologists, and other scientists.

Along with accurate knowledge about human sexuality, our values inform our sexual decisions. People tend to draw on value systems including legalism (as in deriving what is right and wrong from within a religious tradition), situational ethics, ethical relativism, hedonism, asceticism, utilitarianism ("the greatest good for the greatest number"), and rationalism.

Critical thinking is a skeptical approach to evaluating claims, arguments, and widely held beliefs. Principles of critical thinking include examining definitions of terms, examining the assumptions or premises of arguments, being cautious in drawing conclusions from evidence, considering alternative interpretations of evidence, and avoiding oversimplification and overgeneralization.

History places our sexual behavior in the context of time. History shows little evidence of universal sexual trends. There is evidence of prehistoric worship of generative power in women and men. Jews and Christians have emphasized the role of sex as a means of propagation and have generally restricted sex to the context of family life. The ancient Greeks and Romans dwelled in male-oriented societies that viewed women as chattel. Some Eastern civilizations equated sexual pleasure with religious experience and developed sex manuals. Repressive Victorian sexual attitudes gave way to the sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s in the West.

The biological perspective focuses on the role of biological processes, such as genetic, hormonal, and neural factors, in explaining sexual behavior. Knowledge of biology helps us understand how our bodies respond to sexual stimulation and enables us to enhance our sexual health.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recite</th>
<th></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1. What is human sexuality?</strong></td>
<td>The term <em>human sexuality</em> refers to matters of gender, sexual</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>behavior, sexual feelings, and the biology of sex. Human</td>
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<td>sexuality concerns the ways in which we experience and express</td>
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<td>ourselves as sexual beings. The study of human sexuality draws</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>upon the expertise of anthropologists, biologists, medical</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>researchers, sociologists, psychologists, and other scientists.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2. How do our values come into play in determining our sexual choices and behavior?</strong></td>
<td>Along with accurate knowledge about human sexuality, our values inform our sexual decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. What kinds of value systems do people have?</strong></td>
<td>People tend to draw on value systems including legalism (as in</td>
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<td></td>
<td>deriving what is right and wrong from within a religious tradition), situational ethics, ethical relativism, hedonism, asceticism, utilitarianism (“the greatest good for the greatest number”), and rationalism.</td>
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<td><strong>4. What is critical thinking?</strong></td>
<td>Critical thinking is a skeptical approach to evaluating claims,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>arguments, and widely held beliefs. Principles of critical</td>
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<td></td>
<td>thinking include examining definitions of terms, examining the</td>
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<td>assumptions or premises of arguments, being cautious in drawing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>conclusions from evidence, considering alternative interpretations of evidence, and avoiding oversimplification and overgeneralization.</td>
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<td><strong>5. What is the role of the historical perspective on human sexuality?</strong></td>
<td>History places our sexual behavior in the context of time. History shows little evidence of universal sexual trends. There is evidence of prehistoric worship of generative power in women and men. Jews and Christians have emphasized the role of sex as a means of propagation and have generally restricted sex to the context of family life. The ancient Greeks and Romans dwelled in male-oriented societies that viewed women as chattel. Some Eastern civilizations equated sexual pleasure with religious experience and developed sex manuals. Repressive Victorian sexual attitudes gave way to the sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s in the West.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>6. What is the role of the biological perspective?</strong></td>
<td>The biological perspective focuses on the role of biological</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>processes, such as genetic, hormonal, and neural factors, in</td>
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<td></td>
<td>explaining sexual behavior. Knowledge of biology helps us</td>
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<td></td>
<td>understand how our bodies respond to sexual stimulation and</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>enables us to enhance our sexual health.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. What is evolution? How might the sexual behavior of various species, including our own, be influenced by evolutionary forces?</td>
<td>Evolution is the development of species by means of the natural selection of adaptive traits. Organisms tend to inherit traits that allow their ancestors to reach the age of sexual maturity and reproduce. Evolutionary psychology proposes that dispositions toward social behavior (including sexual behavior) that enhance reproductive success—as well as physical traits—may be genetically transmitted.</td>
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<td>8. What is the role of the cross-species perspective?</td>
<td>The study of other animal species reveals the variety of sexual behaviors among nonhumans. For example, there are animal analogues of male–male sexual behavior, female–female sexual behavior, oral sex, and foreplay. We find that experience and learning play more important roles in sexuality as we travel up the evolutionary ladder.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. What is the role of the cross-cultural perspective?</td>
<td>This perspective, like the historical perspective, provides insight into the ways in which cultural beliefs affect sexual behavior and people’s sense of morality. Anthropologists observe other cultures firsthand when possible. Cross-cultural evidence challenges the notion of the universality of gender-role stereotypes. All cultures apparently place some limits on sexual freedom, but some are more permissive than others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. What do psychological perspectives have to offer?</td>
<td>Psychological perspectives focus on the processes of perception, learning, motivation, emotion, and personality that affect gender and sexual behavior in the individual. Sigmund Freud formulated the theory of psychoanalysis, which proposes that biologically based sex drives come into conflict with social codes. Erogenous zones shift through the process of psychosexual development, and defense mechanisms keep threatening ideas and impulses out of conscious awareness. Learning theorists focus on the roles of rewards, punishments, and observational learning on sexual behavior.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. What is the role of sociocultural theorists?</td>
<td>Sociocultural theorists focus on differences in sexuality among the groups within a society, as defined, for example, by differences in religion, race, country of origin, socioeconomic status, age, educational level, and gender. Education, for example, appears to be a sexually liberating experience.</td>
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