

# Chapter 2: Contents of Sexuality: Culture, History, and Religion

## Learning Objectives

### Human Sexual Nature in Context

- Describe the sexual triangle model of human sexuality.
- Relate the sexual behavior of the bonobo chimps to human sexual behavior.
- Identify unique traits of human sexuality and how culture influences them.

### Sex Since the Beginning of Time

- Explain how sex, history, and religion are intertwined.
- Outline the changes in human sexuality over the past century, including the concept of sexual identity.

### Sexual Cultures and Norms

- Explain what sexual culture means and how it organizes sexual behavior.
- Recognize how sexual norms influence group acceptance of individuals.
- Compare and contrast cultural relativism, cultural chauvinism, and sexual chauvinism.
- Describe the continuum of approving and disapproving cultures around the world.
- Define sexual unlearning.

### Sexuality and the Great World Religions

- Define religious identity in relation to sexual behavior.
- Compare and contrast how the great world religions view sexuality.

### Spirituality and Sexual Behavior in the United States

- Explain how different religions shape sexual attitudes in the United States through symbolic boundaries.

### Religion and Sexual Well-Being

- Explain how spirituality and sexual individuality can be compatible.

## Chapter Outline

### Chapter 2: Contents of Sexuality, Culture, History, and Religion

<b>Learning Objectives 2.1</b>	<b>Discussion Topic 2.1</b> <b>Discussion Topic 2.2</b> <b>Discussion Topic 2.3</b>
<b>Learning Objectives 2.2</b>	<b>Discussion Topic 2.4</b> <b>Discussion Topic 2.5</b> <b>Discussion Topic 2.6</b>
<b>Learning Objectives 2.3</b>	<b>Discussion Topic 2.7</b> <b>Discussion Topic 2.8</b> <b>Discussion Topic 2.9</b>
<b>Learning Objectives 2.4</b>	<b>Discussion Topic 2.10</b> <b>Discussion Topic 2.11</b>
<b>Learning Objectives 2.5</b>	<b>Discussion Topic 2.12</b>

#### I. Human Sexual Nature in Context

##### A. The Sexual Triangle: Species, Culture, and Individual

- There is general agreement that sexuality is a common denominator among all humans and that the human sexual experience has unique aspects.
- Emotional bonding, which may occur when people look into each other's faces during sexual intercourse, leading to lifelong adult relationships, is a distinctive aspect of human sexuality (Diamond, 1997). This unique trait comes from the combination of three elements: our species, culture, and individuality.
- Humans are one of the two species believed to pursue sex for fun and pleasure, as well as for **procreation**, the conception of offspring. The other species that seems to enjoy sex almost as much as humans do is our close relative, the bonobo chimpanzee.

##### B. Sexuality Among the Bonobo

- Chimpanzees are the species most like humans, sharing more than 98% of human genes, and scientists believe that the sexual behavior of the bonobo chimps is most like human

sexual behavior.

- Bonobos are peaceable and they are **matriarchal**, meaning that females dominate and organize the group, controlling males to share food resources and cooperating to protect the group, one of the many traits of the bonobo that make them unusual.
- The female bonobo is sexually active and attractive to mates *year round*, but she conceives and bears only one offspring every 5 or 6 years. Research reveals then, that sexual pleasure is a larger motivator for sex among the bonobo than is procreation. In fact, 75% of all bonobo sexual behavior is nonreproductive.
- Bonobo sexual behaviors include the only nonhuman examples of face-to-face genital sex, tongue kissing, and oral sex known in the wild. They also engage in manual sex, rubbing genitals, grinning and squealing as if in delight; and sexual behavior between individuals of the same sex is common. However, the average bonobo sexual episode lasts only 13 seconds!
- Humans differ from the bonobo in the absence of an estrus period among females, commonly known as “being in heat.” **Estrus** is the recurring time when a female ovulates and is most receptive to becoming pregnant.

### C. Human Sexual Nature as Expressed Through Culture

- Culture is such a distinctly human creation that it gives people a sense of group cohesion, shared meaning and identity, and also establishes standards for acceptable behavior, called **norms**.
- Sex is an integral part of culture because it, too, connects people—to their bodies, to institutions such as the family, to nature, and to the past.
- Among the characteristics that make us uniquely human, all of the following are especially important for a discussion of sexuality:
  - At birth, our brains are not fully developed; they develop quickly in the first 3 years of life, as we learn culture.
  - We have larger brains in terms of body weight than other species at maturity.
  - We learn verbal language and symbols in context to represent the language of our group.
  - Through language we create and share culture.
  - We create and use tools that allow human groups to adapt to diverse environments.
  - We each have a unique sense of self within the context of our culture.
  - We have a sense of finite time and thus have knowledge of our own mortality.
  - We have deeply held beliefs about ultimate concerns, especially the meaning of life, death, and immortality, which are the basis of culture and religion.
- What makes this list of traits so powerful when it comes to human sexual expression is

what we might call the distinct *human package for evolution*: the human brain, language, and culture.

- This blend of biology (nature) and culture (nurture) working together to produce sexual behavior is **human sexual nature**.
- As our brains evolved to enable us to connect emotionally with other humans, especially lovers, human sexuality enhanced **pair bonding**, the sexual and romantic association between two people.
- Consider how the following characteristics have evolved out of culture to uniquely express human sexual nature:
  - We engage in sex not only for reproduction, but also for pair bonding and pleasure.
  - We reach puberty and develop sexual maturity very slowly, in the context of cultures.
  - We form nuclear families, composed of parents and offspring, and multigenerational extended families, including grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins.
  - We forbid sex within family units, through the **incest** taboo, a cultural and/or social prohibition against sexual relations between relatives.
  - We form social institutions, including government, family, and religion, to affirm our sense of group norms, membership, and sexual regulation.
- It is uniquely human for two people to express mutual sexual pleasure and love by communicating *emotional satisfaction* with their intimate partners. Some researchers believe that emotional satisfaction may allow for the creation of lifelong bonds through attraction, as well as nesting (Buss, 1994; Meston & Buss, 2009). *Nesting* here means that females do not just want to procreate; they want to mate with the person who will provide strong genes for their offspring

## II. Sex since the Beginning of Time

- Archeologists in Europe have found evidence that humans began to communicate through art, ritual, music, and perhaps dance and religious ceremonies between 30,000 and 40,000 years ago.
- Cave paintings, carvings, statues, and tools from this period give us a glimpse into just how long sexual pleasure has been part of human sexual nature.

### A. Prehistoric Sex and Communication

- Sexual diversity is represented in how the prehistoric cave paintings depict human same-sex activities, sexual interactions with animals, payment for sex, and the combination of pain and pleasure in diverse human sexual interactions.
- Scientists believe that prehistoric people's art directly connects sex with **spirituality**, a

person's inner sense of deep belief in an ultimate reality.

- Some prehistoric images seem to suggest a burning desire to capture the power or miracle of sex, including the power to procreate, as seen in the painting of female genitals in Chauvet Cave. Additionally, numerous prehistoric Venus-type statues have been found in Europe that seems to inspire and capture the power of female fertility.

## B. A Brief History of Sex and Civilization

- Since ancient times, human sexual nature has been expressed in diverse ways. In fact, civilization itself has been shaped by **sexual culture**, which encompasses the distinct shared sexual meanings and practices of a group.
- The rise of civilization and diverse forms of sexuality is linked to the **great world religions** of Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam, all of which have many followers, are global, and have roots in traditional holy texts and moral principles.
- Asian Civilization—Beginning several thousand years ago, Asian civilizations evolved complex sexual cultures that celebrated fertility and pleasure, as well as procreation through marriage. Ancient myths, ritual, and social hierarchy were part of these sexual patterns. After the 5th century BCE, the spread of Hinduism and Buddhism to China, Korea, and Japan led to diverse belief systems, including varied notions of sex and love, among the cultures that blossomed there.
- Ancient Greece, Rome, and Christianity—The Greeks practiced a complex form of sexuality and love that included sexual pleasure but tempered it with restraint. Their sexual culture was ideally democratic, but male power was a significant element of their tradition. Too much sex was considered bad for health, but in general, sex was a natural, positive function of human life in ancient Greece.
  - The Greeks accepted same-sex relations, but because all Greeks had to marry, homosexuality was not an exclusive sexual practice for them. Young men in their late teens had sexual relations with older males to achieve masculinity and honor as well as to cultivate self-discipline and leadership.
  - The Roman Empire kept many of the Greek traditions, including its gods and religious beliefs and sexual practices, at least at first. As the power of Rome declined, however, same-sex relationships eventually were discouraged.
  - Christians had definite ideas about sexual relations and marriage that conflicted with Roman views. From 500 to 1500 CE, Christianity strongly influenced Western civilization and sexual practice. Certain sex-negative ideas were introduced during this time, such as views about sin and the dangers of the female body, including female pollution. During this time women were excluded from Church leadership. Also, some sexual behaviors were regarded as sinful and worthy of severe

punishment. Oral and anal sex, sex with animals, and sex between people of different cultures were all labeled as *sodomy*, meaning “unnatural sex,” but in actuality the label was applied to any sexual act that went against the norm.

- Islamic Civilization—Muslims professed values of male sexual honor, female virginity before marriage, gender segregation, and the sexual purity of children. In some Islamic groups there was also a sexual practice not unlike the ancient Greeks of older males having relationships with younger males to inspire masculinity and honor. Muslims believed that it was a husband’s duty to pleasure his wife sexually, but in European sexual relationships, sexual pleasure centered on the man.
- Western Europe from the Crusades to the 19th Century—The Christian knights associated with the Crusades evolved a new sexual and romantic code called **chivalry**, which focused on purity of heart and body, chastity for females, and honor in war. Sexual virtue was of supreme importance during the Middle Ages. Men had valor, which was the male form of sexual virtue, and women were virgins before marriage, which was the female form of virtue. By the 18th century, reason and science were being applied to nature, human society, art, government, and even sexuality. As sexual mores and laws began to evolve into the modern period, there emerged a flowering of sexual expression and sexual diversity.
- The Victorian Era and Sexual Identity—During the Victorian era, the accepted view was that sex should be private, hidden from and emotionally suppressed in children, and never mentioned in polite society. The genders were highly polarized, as expressed in male and female sexuality. Many forms of sexuality unfolded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, including sexual degeneration, (identified with homosexuality) and perversion (associated with medical conditions such as fetishism). The most important new concept during this time was **sexual identity**, defined as the self-identification by an individual as heterosexual, bisexual, or homosexual. The concept of *homosexuality* as a distinctive sexual orientation of individuals attracted to others of the same gender emerged first, followed in 1889 by the concept of *heterosexuality* as an identity.
- 20th-Century Sexuality—Egalitarian gender roles and **companionate marriage**—the cultural idea that a man and woman are not just sex partners but also social and intellectual companions and equals for life—increasingly became the middle-class ideal. Gradually the ideal expanded to all social classes and ethnic groups, and would later include gay and lesbian couples. Religious control over marriage and sex was declining but still highly influential. After World War II, intense compression of gender stereotypes of masculinity and femininity occurred and dampened some of the sexual and gender freedom that prevailed in the war years. The 1960s ushered in the second wave of feminism, as well as the sexual revolution that is identified with the baby boomers, the generation born between 1946 and 1963. Contraceptives, especially the

birth control pill, became readily available in 1963, followed by an increase in recreational sex. More women began to choose to delay or to avoid having children. In the 1970s, the gay liberation movement, an organized effort to end the criminalization of homosexual behavior in the United States, gained momentum. Now there were more casual same-sex activities than ever before, later followed by notions of social and legal recognition of same-sex relationships.

### III. Sexual Cultures and Norms

#### A. Sexual Norms and Sexual Socialization

- A **sexual norm** is the standard of sexual behavior expected of people in a particular role, relationship, and situation.
- Training people from infancy to adulthood to follow these expectations is the process of **sexual socialization**, the application of the culture's blueprints to sexual feelings, thoughts, and behaviors as people grow up.
- One sexual norm that is common in cultures other than the United States is **polygamy**, a practice that allows men to have multiple wives.
- Placing behavior in context is known as **cultural relativism**.
- **Cultural chauvinism** is when one group judges another's behaviors against its own standards, and usually finds them inferior. Chauvinism may be responsible for some of history's greatest conflicts, when nations have gone to war over hatred, greed, differences in religious or national belief or creed, and then have been able to impose their own sexual norms on the conquered people.
- **Sexual chauvinism**, the belief that one's sexual culture is superior to others, continues to be a global problem when it comes to sexual well-being. For example, in some cultures, adolescents may be regarded as sexually mature and given the benefits of comprehensive sexual education, while in other cultures they may be denied sex education, contraceptives, and even effective information about sexually transmitted disease prevention.

#### B. Sex Approving and Sex Disapproving Cultures

- Researchers have categorized a *spectrum of cultures* into societies that range from being **sex-approving** to **sex-disapproving** when it comes to sexual attitudes and behavior.
- A classic study found that children in the United States were less knowledgeable about sexuality than children in Australia, Sweden, and England (Goldman & Goldman, 1982). And advanced industrial societies that have extensive sexuality education

programs, such as Denmark, tend to have more accepting attitudes about having sex before marriage or casual sex.

- Cultural context influences **sexual individuality**, defined as the expression of the self's most basic sexual needs and attractions, and based in human body and anatomy, DNA, hormones, orientations, fantasies, feelings, behaviors, and relationships.

#### C. Sexual Unlearning

- In sex-approving cultures, young people tend to learn about sexuality by observation, and then exploration.
- In sex-disapproving cultures, another pattern exists, often connected to the kind of taboos you have read about. Children may learn at an early age that certain behaviors, such as running around nude, are okay, only to find out when they're older that those behaviors are now tabooed for them, and so they must unlearn them. This pattern of sexual socialization is called **sexual unlearning**.

### IV. Sexuality and the Great World Religions

- Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, the great world religions, are important to sexuality because they influence guidelines for behaviors that people consider wrong or immoral within their own group or other groups. Often these behaviors are considered taboos. Many cultures' most deeply held guidelines and sexual taboos stem from their spirituality or religions.
- Traditionally, a number of religious groups have primarily communicated *negative* sexual attitudes, norms, and taboos, rather than discussing the *positive* elements of sexual well-being with their followers.

#### A. Sex, Religion, and Reality

- A core belief of many world religions is that human sexuality is divinely inspired and created, rather than a product of human design, such as family planning or social attitudes.
- Sexual scientists are coming to see just how much religion can influence social and cultural systems of beliefs, norms, and rules that are the blueprint for people's social behavior in general and their sexuality in particular.
- When it comes to reality beliefs and sex, one thing that differentiates religions and cultures is whether they believe in a single god or in many gods.
- The worship of many gods is called **polytheism**. Hinduism and Buddhism are generally



regarded as polytheistic religions. Generally they are more sex-approving than sex-disapproving.

- By contrast, a belief in one God is called **monotheism**. Christianity, Judaism, and Islam are monotheistic religions that go back thousands of years.
- Whether a culture is polytheistic or monotheistic is important in shaping people's sense of reality as a community, and probably their sense of approving or disapproving sex, at least to some extent.
- While spirituality is the inner sense of an individual, **organized religion** means sharing practices of worship with others and belonging to a faith-based group, both of which create shared social experiences. Belonging to a church can provide some people with a social community of economic, social, and psychological support, especially in times of need, and this may outweigh their beliefs and many other social connections, whether it is gender, age, ethnicity, or social class.
- Shared beliefs and behaviors create a **religious identity**, which is the social expression of an individual's faith in the context of one's community and nation. Sometimes a religious identity, such as Catholic or Protestant, may actually influence how people vote in elections, raise their families, and follow sexual taboos or beliefs.
- In some Christian communities, living up to sexual taboos and norms can become such a profound pressure that people will even devise ways to hide or shield what they actually do in private, such as hiding the fact that they may use pornography.

## B. Sex in the World Religions

- Religious belief and practice continue to be among the most powerful forces that shape sexuality globally.
- Hinduism—Hinduism is highly diverse with many spiritual practices, including yoga. Its teachings include many things about sex, pleasure, relationship formation, and sex education. Through its ancient holy text, the Kama Sutra, Hinduism directs men and women to pleasure each other and shows them how to do it with remarkable illustrations of real sexual techniques and positions. Hindu tradition is exceptional in its acceptance of pleasure and sexuality.
- Buddhism—Buddhism advocates intense self-effort toward greater consciousness, and is generally tolerant of many forms of sexuality. It combines qualities of being practical, scientific, psychological, and egalitarian that are reflected in its sexual norms.
- Judaism—As the Jewish tradition has evolved, differences in religious practices have created three main branches: Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform or Liberal. The former group conforms to the Torah more strictly than the other two groups. Reform Judaism has implemented reforms, including less stringent dietary rules, recognition of

women as rabbis, and greater acceptance of sexual pleasure. Reform Judaism is becoming more open to same-sex relationships, and some Reform congregations welcome all people regardless of sexual orientation. Orthodox Judaism and, for the most part, Conservative Judaism remain opposed to homosexuality.

- Islam—In the context of marriage, the Quran specifies that procreation is of central importance. Though men are allowed to have up to four wives, the Quran tells spouses to pleasure each other, and if a man fails in this duty, his wife may divorce him. Also, marriage is the only lawful context for sexual relations between men and women, and a woman can be put to death for adultery or for engaging in premarital sex.
- Christianity—In general, Christianity has long reflected deep concerns about sexuality. Genesis, the first book of the Bible, tells about the loss of innocence after eating forbidden fruit and the recognition of nudity as a moment of sexual awakening. Christians were expected to remain celibate or virginal for life, to resist sin and temptation. Some men even castrated themselves, cutting off their genitals to avoid sinning. These practices, known as *sexual renunciation*, were so widespread that the pope at the time, as head of the Roman Catholic Church, forbade self-castration out of the fear that too many men would not reproduce and Christianity would vanish.

## V. Spirituality and Sexual Behavior in the United States

- Christianity has been the dominant religion and a key source of attitudes toward sexuality in the United States from the time Europeans, the Puritans, first settled here.
- The Puritans were a Christian sect renowned for having very prudish sexual practices.
  - Although they were a positive influence on colonial economics, literature, and politics, the Puritans are widely believed to have made the United States into a prudish, uptight, and sex-disapproving society.
  - But although they held such beliefs and taboos, they also appeared to have enjoyed mutual sexual pleasure in their intimate relationships and marriages.
- **Puritanism**, the morally upright and socially strict beliefs and practices of the Puritans, certainly has been a factor in how American society has framed the discussion about such topics as nudity, premarital sex, extramarital sex, virginity, and pornography.
- There has long been tension in the United States between identifying itself as a Christian country and priding itself on the separation of church and state, with the right to worship any religion freely. The tension is expressed as a **symbolic boundary** that divides people with respect to “good” versus “bad” attitudes and behaviors. The different ways in which different religious groups in the United States regard sex have resulted in a number of symbolic boundaries. Divorce, for example, was once a widely shared symbolic boundary that was condemned all across Christian churches. Another symbolic boundary that

continues to divide the culture and Christian groups dramatically is homosexuality.

## VI. Religion and Sexual Well-Being

- Religious leaders have rarely, if ever, discussed how to be sexual or how to achieve sexual well-being.
- **Radical inclusion** is a new sexual and cultural norm that grants everyone the right to be a member of a religious community, regardless of skin color, gender, sexual identity, or any other characteristic.

### Key Terms

**Procreation**—conception of offspring

**Matriarchal**—type of social system in which females are dominant

**Estrus**—the recurring time when a female ovulates and is most receptive to becoming pregnant

**Norms**—cultural rules about acceptable behavior

**Human sexual nature**—the combination of human culture and human nature working together to produce sexual behavior

**Pair bonding**—the sexual and romantic association between two individuals

**Incest taboo**—social or cultural prohibition against sex between close family members

**Spirituality**—an individual's inner sense of having deep values, a spiritual path, or belief in an ultimate reality.

**Sexual culture**—distinct shared sexual meanings and sexual practices of a group

**Great world religions**—religions that have huge followings around the world, have roots in traditional holy texts, and moral principles, and have changed the course of history

**Chivalry**—a code of Christian knights that focused on purity of heart and body, chastity for females, and honor in war

**Sexual identity**—self-identification as heterosexual, bisexual, or homosexual

**Companionate marriage**—the cultural idea that a man and woman are not just sex partners but also social and intellectual companions and equals for life

**Sexual norm**—a cultural standard of sexual behavior expected of people in a particular role, relationship, and situation

**Sexual socialization**—the application of a culture's blueprints to sexual feelings, thoughts, and behaviors

**Polygamy**—marriage between one man and more than one woman at the same time

**Cultural relativism**—the viewing of people's attitudes and behavior in the context of their own culture

**Cultural chauvinism**—the belief that one's cultural norms are superior to the norms of another's group

**Sexual chauvinism**—the belief that one’s sexual culture is superior to others

**Sex-approving**—culturally supportive of positive attitudes toward sexual expression and behavior

**Sex-disapproving**—generally negative cultural attitudes toward sexual expression and behavior

**Sexual individuality**—the unique expression of an individual’s most basic sexual needs and attractions, based on the individual’s body and anatomy, DNA, hormones, orientations, fantasies, feelings, behaviors, and relationships

**Sexual unlearning**—the process of unlearning something about sexuality that may have been learned at a very young age

**Polytheism**—belief in multiple gods and spirits

**Monotheism**—belief in one God

**Organized religion**—sharing practices of worship with others and belonging to a group that is based on shared beliefs and practices

**Religious identity**—the social expression of an individual’s faith in the context of community and nation

**Puritanism**—the morally upright and socially strict beliefs and practices of the Puritans

**Symbolic boundary**—divides people according to their religious beliefs about what are “good” and “bad” sexual behaviors

**Radical inclusion**—a new sexual and cultural norm that grants everyone the right to be a member of a religious community, regardless of skin color, gender, sexual identity, or any other characteristic

## Discussion Topics

### Discussion Topic 2.1: Culture and Bonding

Have students discuss to what extent human culture affects individual ways of bonding between people? How does this play into the Sexual Triangle?

### Discussion Topic 2.2: Bonobos and Sex

The text points out human sexual behavior is most similar to the bonobo, one of the great apes. The argument is that few species have sex face to face and that also both species use sex as a pair bonding mechanism. Based on the text what other similarities exist between these two species?

### Discussion Topic 2.3: Nature and Nurture

What are some ways that we see nature and nurture interact in a romantic, companionate, or

passionate way? Other than procreation, what other evolutionary mechanisms does sexuality serve?

#### **Discussion 2.4: Prostitution**

Prostitution is known as the “world’s oldest profession.” The text notes that early cave drawings connote sex for payment. Even the Adelle penguin trades sex for rocks. Discuss with students advantages and disadvantages that can be found on the female side with trading sex for goods and / or status.

#### **Discussion 2.5: Chivalry and Virtue**

The 18th and 19th centuries introduced the ideas of virtue and chivalry. In general, do you think these ideas favor males or females? How do strong connotations of sex role stereotypes affect views of appropriate sexual behavior? With the advent of Rosie the riveter in the 1950’s do we see sexual attitudes become weaker or stronger? Why?

#### **Discussion 2.6: Norms of Homosexuality over Time**

This chapter discusses attitudes towards sexual behavior through the ages. It also denotes the historical changes in attitude toward homosexuality, showing that this has been in and out of fashion off and on. What are some of the influences that affect homosexuality if it is perceived as socially normative?

#### **Discussion 2.7: Cultural and Sexual Chauvinism**

Discuss with students the difference between cultural and sexual chauvinism. Based on the way the text describes cultural chauvinism, do you think it is the same thing that most people think of when they hear the term “chauvinism”?

#### **Discussion 2.8: Sex Approving or Disapproving over Time in the US**

We’ve already discussed how times have changed with regard to attitude towards sex. Do students think that the US has made any gains from being a more sex approving society? How are attitudes toward nudity tied to attitudes about sex?

#### **Discussion 2.9: Taboo**

What are some of the taboos that we see in the US? Ask if students from other cultures feel

comfortable talking about what taboos exist in their culture. Are there any universal taboos?

### **Discussion 2.10: Socially Desirable Responding**

Chapter one discussed survey data and one of the issues was that people respond in a socially desirable manner. To what extent do you believe that people “lie” when asked about their religious behaviors like “Do you often go to church?” and to what extent do you believe people “lie” about their sexual behavior (for example “what is the number of sexual partners you’ve had?”) How does this relate to sexual norms within a religious context?

### **Discussion 2.11: Buddhist Thinking and Sexuality**

Buddhism advocates intense self-effort toward greater consciousness, and is generally tolerant of many forms of sexuality. It combines qualities of being practical, scientific, psychological, and egalitarian that are reflected in its sexual norms. How does this relate to the Kama Sutra?

### **Discussion 2.12: Religion as a Divider**

The text argues that symbolic boundaries like divorce and homosexuality often serve to divide people in the US. Do you agree? What other factors may be actually causing a divide?

## **Polling Questions**

### **Polling 2.1: Pair Bonding and Sex**

Bonobo sexual behaviors include the only nonhuman example of face-to-face genital sex, tongue kissing, and oral sex known in the wild. How many of you have used sex to cement a bond between yourself and your partner?

### **Polling 2.2: Ethnic Identity and Sex**

Do you think that someone’s ethnic identity affects his or her sexual behavior? Do you think that your ethnic identity affects your sexual behavior?

### **Polling 2.3: Trading Sex for Goods and Services**

How many of you think that having sex with a man after a nice dinner is the same as receiving money for sex? How many of you have had sex with someone because they had bought you

expensive things?

### **Polling 2.4: Chivalry and Virtue**

The 18th and 19th centuries introduced the ideas of virtue and chivalry. In general, do you think these ideas favor males or females?

### **Polling 2.5: Sexual Chauvinism over Time**

How many of you agree with the statement “males today are less chauvinistic than they were 20 years ago”? How many of you agree with the statement “Males of my father’s age tend to be chauvinistic towards women”?

### **Polling 2.6: Sex Approving or Disproving?**

Do you think the US is a sex approving or sex disapproving culture? Do you think it has become more approving in your lifetime? Do you think it will continue to become more accepting or will it swing back to become more disapproving?

## **Activities**

### **Activity 2.1: Bonobos and Sex**

There are several videos on YouTube as well as at the BBC (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature/life/Bonobo>) that look at sexual activity in Bonobos. Sex is being used to make peace, gain status, and bond with mates. This is a great way to illustrate the many uses of sex.

### **Activity 2.2: Sex Depicted in Art over Time**

Place students in small groups. Assign them a time period (you can either follow the time period in the text or make up your own). Then have each group perform research on artistic portrayals (can be drawing, painting, literature, dance or any other medium) of sexuality / fertility in that time period. If you have a small enough class you can even have them present their findings to the class, otherwise you can have them write a short wiki or paper as a group.

### **Activity 2.3: Cultural Sexual Norms over Time**

Place students in small groups. Assign them a time period (you can either follow the time period in the text or make up your own). Then have each group perform research on connotations of sexuality / fertility in that time period. If you have a small enough class you can even have them present their findings to the class, otherwise you can have them write a short wiki or paper as a group.

#### **Activity 2.4: Sex Approving or Disproving Cultures**

Place students in small groups. Assign them a country. Have each group investigate if they think that culture is sex approving or sex disapproving. What evidence can they find to support their views? If you have a small enough class you can even have them present their findings to the class, otherwise you can have them write a short wiki or paper as a group.

#### **Activity 2.5: Religiosity and Sex**

Have students fill out the following survey, then ask them to discuss how religious beliefs affect their sexual attitudes. You can even ask students to debate “Does religious identity necessarily affect sexual behavior?” This can be done as an in-class demonstration or as a discussion board topic.

#### **What Are Your Attitudes About Human Sexual Nature? (Page 35)**

Think about human sexuality as described within the sexual triangle in Figure 2.1: species culture, and individuality. Following are several statements that reflect different attitudes about sex. For each statement, indicate how much you agree or disagree with that statement. Some of the items refer to a specific sexual relationship, while others refer to general attitudes and beliefs about sex. Whenever possible, answer the questions with your current partner in mind. If you are not currently with anyone, answer the questions with your most recent partner in mind. If you have never had a sexual relationship, answer in terms of what you think your responses would most likely be.

For each statement:

- A = Strongly agree with the statement
- B = Moderately agree with the statement
- C = Neutral—neither agree nor disagree
- D = Moderately disagree with the statement
- E = Strongly disagree with the statement



## **Permissiveness**

I do not need to be committed to a person to have sex with him/her.

Casual sex is acceptable.

I would like to have sex with many partners.

One-night stands are sometimes very enjoyable.

It is okay to have ongoing sexual relationships with more than one person at a time.

Sex as a simple exchange of favors is okay if both people agree to it.

The best sex is with no strings attached.

Life would have fewer problems if people could have sex more freely.

It is possible to enjoy sex with a person and not like that person very much.

It is okay for sex to be just good physical release.

## **Birth Control**

Birth control is part of responsible sexuality.

A woman should share responsibility for birth control.

A man should share responsibility for birth control.

## **Communion**

Sex is the closest form of communication between two people.

A sexual encounter between two people deeply in love is the ultimate human interaction.

At its best, sex seems to be the merging of two souls.

Sex is a very important part of life.

Sex is usually an intense, almost overwhelming, experience.

## **Instrumentality**

Sex is best when you let yourself go and focus on your own pleasure.

Sex is primarily the taking of pleasure from another person.

The main purpose of sex is to enjoy oneself.

Sex is primarily physical.

Sex is primarily a bodily function, like eating.

(Source: [www.thefreelibrary.com/The1brief1sexual1attitudes1scale.-a0143064921](http://www.thefreelibrary.com/The1brief1sexual1attitudes1scale.-a0143064921))

## **Activity 2.6: The Kama Sutra**

Have students look at a copy of the Kama Sutra, either in groups or individually. How does this text tie in with Buddhist teachings of greater consciousness? How does it affect sexual norms for Buddhists? Students can either present findings in class, write a short paragraph on their findings, or use this as a discussion board topic.

### **Activity 2.7: Sex & Gender**

#### **Discovering Psychology: Updated Edition**

Part of the series “Discovering Psychology: Updated Edition”, this clip looks at how gender roles reflect social values (<http://www.learner.org/resources/series138.html>) or through the McGraw Hill Higher Education General Resources for Students and Faculty Annenberg / CPB projects link (<http://www.mhhe.com/socscience/psychology/psychonline/general.html>)

### **Internet Resources**

[http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/evolution/library/07/3/1\\_073\\_03.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/evolution/library/07/3/1_073_03.html)

PBS Evolution series on Bonobs and Chimpanzees. Includes current research as well as video.

<http://www.awf.org/content/general/detail/3495>

Bonobo research and conservation site. Includes current research as well as video.

<http://www.anth.ucsb.edu/projects/human/evpsychfaq.html>

The Evolutionary Psychology FAQ.

[http://homepage.psy.utexas.edu/homepage/group/busslab/db\\_publications.htm#interviews](http://homepage.psy.utexas.edu/homepage/group/busslab/db_publications.htm#interviews)

Homepage for Dr. David Buss.

<http://www.toddkshackelford.com/>

Homepage for the Evolutionary Psychology Lab and Dr. Todd Shackelford.

<http://www.bga.org/>

The Behavior Genetics Association homepage.

<http://www.mhhe.com/socscience/psychology/psychonline/general.html>

McGraw Hill Higher Education General Resources for Students and Faculty.

<http://www.apa.org/>

The APA website.

<http://www.apa.org/topics/sexuality/index.aspx>

APA site for research on sexuality

## The Ten-Minute Test

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Answer the questions below utilizing the following terms:

Procreation

Norms

Pair bonding

Matriarchal

Spirituality

Companionate marriage

sexual identity

Sexual individuality

Symbolic boundary

Sexual culture

1. It is estimated that 95% of all human sex is for recreation, not \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Bonobo are peaceable and they are \_\_\_\_\_, meaning that females dominate and organize the group, controlling males to share food resources and cooperating to protect the group, one of the many traits of the bonobo that make them unusual.
3. Standards for acceptable behavior are called \_\_\_\_\_.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ is the sexual and romantic association between two people.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ is a person's inner sense of deep belief in an ultimate reality an individual's inner sense
6. Civilization itself has been shaped by \_\_\_\_\_ which encompasses the distinct shared sexual meanings and practices of a group.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ is the self-identification by an individual as heterosexual, bisexual, or homosexual.
8. The cultural idea that a man and woman are not just sex partners but also social and intellectual companions and equals for life is known as \_\_\_\_\_.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ is the expression of the self's most basic sexual needs and attractions, and based in our body and anatomy, DNA, hormones, orientations, fantasies, feelings, behaviors, and relationships.

10. \_\_\_\_\_ often divides people with respect to “good” versus “bad” attitudes and behaviors.

### **Answers to the Ten-Minute Test**

1. procreation
2. matriarchal
3. norms
4. pair bonding
5. spirituality
6. sexual culture
7. sexual identity
8. companionate marriage
9. sexual individuality
10. symbolic boundary