**Chapter 1**

**Sexuality in Perspective**

**Lecture Outline**

**Are You Curious?**

Questions are posed regarding sex in other cultures, same-gender sexuality in other species, and sexual behavior in relation to social class.

**I. Sex and Gender**

* Sometimes the word *sex* is used ambiguously. In some cases it refers to being male or female, and sometimes it refers to sexual behavior or reproduction.
* To remove—or at least reduce—this ambiguity, *sex* will be used in this book in contexts referring to sexual anatomy and sexual behavior, and the term **gender** will be used to refer to being male or female or some other gender such as trans.
* Almost all the research that we discuss in this book has been based on an assumption of the **gender binary**, the idea that there are only two genders, male and female. In the chapter “Gender and Sexuality,” we consider some of the contemporary research on people who are outside the gender binary.
* A biologist might define **sexual behavior** as “any behavior that increases the likelihood of gametic union [union of sperm and egg].”
* The noted sex researcher Alfred Kinsey defined sex as behavior that leads to orgasm.
* Sexual behavior is defined in this book as *behavior that produces arousal and increases the chance of orgasm*.

**II. The History of Understanding Sexuality: Religion and Science**

* The ancient Greeks openly acknowledged both heterosexuality and homosexuality in their society and explained the existence of the two in a myth in which the original humans were double creatures with twice the normal number of limbs and organs; some were double males, some were double females, and some were half male and half female.
* Fifteenth-century Christians believed that “wet dreams” (nocturnal emissions) resulted from intercourse with tiny spiritual creatures called *incubi* and *succubi*, a notion put forth in a papal bull of 1484 and a companion book, the *Malleus Maleficarum* (“witch’s hammer”); the person who had wet dreams was considered guilty of sodomy as well as witchcraft.
* Over the centuries, Muslims have believed that sexual intercourse is one of the finest pleasures of life, reflecting the teachings of the great prophet Muhammad.
* People of different religions hold different understandings of human sexuality, and these religious views often have a profound impact.
* It was against this background of religious understandings of sexuality that the scientific study of sex began in the 19th century—although, of course, religious notions continue to influence our ideas about sexuality.
* A major advance in the scientific understanding of the psychological aspects of human sexuality came with the work of the Viennese physician Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), founder of psychiatry and psychoanalysis.
* It is important to recognize the cultural context in which Freud and the other early sex researchers crafted their research and writing. They began their work in the Victorian era, the late 1800s, both in the United States and in Europe.
* Norms about sexuality were extraordinarily rigid and oppressive.
* Certainly traces of these Victorian attitudes remain with us today. Yet at the same time the actual sexual behavior of Victorians was sometimes in violation of societal norms.
* An equally great—though not so well known—early contributor to the scientific study of sex was Henry Havelock Ellis.
* He believed that women, like men, are sexual creatures. A sexual reformer, he believed that sexual deviations from the norm are often harmless, and he urged society to accept them.
* Richard von Krafft-Ebing, whose special interest was “pathological” sexuality, coined the concepts of sadism, masochism, and pedophilia, and the terms *heterosexuality* and *homosexuality* entered the English language in the 1892 translation of his book *Psychopathia Sexualis*.
* One other early contributor to the scientific understanding of sexuality deserves mention: the German Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935). He founded the first sex research institute and administered the first large-scale sex survey, obtaining data from 10,000 people on a 130-item questionnaire.
* He was himself both homosexual and a transvestite and, in fact, he introduced the term *transvestite*.
* The scientific study of sex has not emerged as a separate, unified academic discipline like biology or psychology or sociology. Rather, it tends to be interdisciplinary—a joint effort by biologists, psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, and physicians.

**III. The Media**

* American adolescents spend 11 hours per day with some form of mass media.
* The average American’s views about sexuality are likely to be much more influenced by the mass media than by scientific findings.
* Communications theorists have formulated several theories about how the media can influence us.
* **Cultivation theory** focuses on the notion that people begin to think that what they see on television and in other media really represents the mainstream of what happens in our culture.
* According to **framing theory**, the media draw attention to certain topics and not to others, suggesting how we should think about or frame the issues.
* **Social cognitive theory** is a broad theory in psychology, and it is discussed in detail in the chapter “Theoretical Perspectives on Sexuality.” Social cognitive theory applied to the media analyzes how the media influence our behavior, thoughts, and affect (emotions) through processes such as modeling, imitation, and identification.
* Another important process in media theories is **selectivity**, which refers to the principle that people select and pay attention only to certain media and their messages, and not to others.
* According to **reinforcing spiral theory**, our social identities and ideologies predict our media use (consistent with selectivity) and, in turn, media use affects our identity and beliefs.
* According to the **differential susceptibility model**, not everyone reacts the same way to the same media exposure.
* The Internet is a powerful mass media influence. Computer and Internet use is spreading more rapidly than any previous technology, and today 89 percent of U.S. adults use the Internet (98 percent for those between 18 and 29 years of age).

**IV. Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Sexuality**

* Humans are a cultural species. Although some other species are capable of learning from others, humans are unique in the way that cultural learning accumulates over time.
* Cultural psychologists define **culture** as the part of the environment created by humans, including the set of meanings that a group adopts. These meanings facilitate social coordination, clarify where boundaries between groups lie, and make life seem predictable.
* Cultural psychologists have documented that cultures tend to have one of three main themes: individualism, collectivism, or honor.
  + **Individualistic cultures** stress independence and autonomy and the individual rights of people.
  + **Collectivistic cultures** emphasize interdependence and connections among people.
  + **Honor cultures** stress “face”—that is, individuals’ reputation and the respect or honor that people show toward others.
* **Ethnocentrism** tends to influence our understanding of human sexual behavior.
* The major generalization that emerges from cross-cultural studies is that all societies regulate sexual behavior in some way, though the exact regulations vary greatly from one culture to the next.
* Apparently no society has seen fit to leave sexuality totally unregulated, perhaps fearful that social disruption would result. As an example, **incest taboos** are nearly universal.
* Romantic sexual kissing might seem to be the most basic of sexual behaviors, but it is not found in all societies.
* Cunnilingus (mouth stimulation of the female genitals) is fairly common in our society, and it occurs in a few other societies as well, especially in the South Pacific.
* Inflicting pain on the partner is also a part of the sexual technique in some societies.
* The frequency of intercourse for married couples varies considerably from one culture to the next.
* Very few societies encourage people to engage in sexual intercourse at particular times. Instead, most groups have restrictions that forbid intercourse at certain times or in certain situations.
* Attitudes toward **masturbation**, or sexual self-stimulation of the genitals, vary widely across cultures. Some societies tolerate or even encourage masturbation during childhood and adolescence, whereas others condemn the practice at any age.
* Societies differ considerably in their rules regarding premarital sex. Extramarital sex is complex and conflicted for most cultures. Extramarital sex ranks second only to incest as the most strictly prohibited type of sexual contact.
* A wide range of attitudes toward same-gender sexual expression—what many in the United States call homosexuality—exists in various cultures.
* Although there is wide variation in attitudes toward homosexuality and in same-gender sexual behavior, two general rules do seem to emerge.
* Same-gender sexuality is found universally in all societies.
* Same-gender sexual behavior is never the predominant form of sexual behavior for adults in any of the societies studied.
* In the United States and other Western nations, we hold an unquestioned assumption that people have a sexual identity, whether gay, lesbian, bisexual, or heterosexual.
* Our society’s standards are in the minority in one way: In most cultures, a plump woman is considered more attractive than a thin one.
* A poor complexion is considered unattractive in the majority of human societies.
* There are large variations in sexual behavior within our culture. Some of these subcultural variations can be classified as social-class differences and some as ethnic differences.
  + Some social-class variations in sexuality have been found. At the same time, there are some social-class similarities.
* The U.S. population is composed of many ethnic groups, and there are some variations among these groups in sexual behavior.
* These variations are a result of having different cultural heritages, as well as of current economic and social conditions.
* When studying ethnic-group variations in sexuality, it is important to keep in mind two points:
  + There are ethnic-group variations, but there are also ethnic-group similarities. The sexuality of these groups is not totally different.
  + Cultural context is the key.
* The sexuality of African Americans is influenced by many of the same factors influencing the sexuality of Euro-Americans, such as the legacies of the Victorian era and the influence of the Judeo-Christian tradition. In addition, at least three other factors act to make the sexuality of Blacks somewhat different from that of Whites:
* The African heritage
* The forces that acted upon Blacks during slavery
* Current economic and social conditions
* When referring to Latin Americans, or **Latinos**, some now prefer the term **Latinx** to get away from the gender designations while also including people outside the gender binary.
* In traditional Latin American cultures, gender roles are sharply defined. Such roles are emphasized early in the socialization process for children.
* The gender roles of traditional Latinx culture are epitomized in the concepts of *machismo* and *marianismo*.
* ***Familismo*** is another important aspect of Latinx culture. This cultural value emphasizes the importance of family—nuclear and extended—in matters such as support, loyalty, solidarity, and family honor.
* Several core Asian values persist in the United States and doubtless affect sexual expression. Among the core values that are relevant to sexuality are the following:
* *Collectivism.* Others’ needs, especially those of the family, should be considered before one’s own.
* *Conformity to norms.* The individual should conform to the expectations of the family and society.
* *Emotional control.* Emotions should not be openly expressed.
* American Indians, like other U.S. ethnic groups, are diverse among themselves, as a result of the different heritages of more than 500 tribes.
  + Popular media over the last century have presented American Indian men as noble savages who are both exotic and erotic.
  + American Indian women have been less visible in popular media.
  + Today there is great pressure in American Indian youth culture to have sex.
  + Many national sex surveys have such small samples of American Indians that statistics for this group are not reliable.
* Although it is common to think of people falling into one of the four ethnic groups discussed here, there is increasing recognition that many people do not fit into these neat categories. Instead, they are biracial or multiracial, with ancestors from two or more races.
* **Racial microaggressions** are subtle insults directed at people of color, often done nonconsciously. Members of ethnic minorities in the U.S. experience them frequently, and they can be a source of stress.
* In understanding human sexuality, cross-cultural data are important for two basic reasons:
* First, they give us a notion of the enormous variation that exists in human sexual behavior, and they help people put our own standards and behavior in perspective.
* Second, these studies provide impressive evidence concerning the importance of culture and learning in the shaping of the sexual behavior; they show people that human sexual behavior is not completely determined by biology or drives or instincts.

**V. Cross-Species Perspectives on Sexuality**

* Masturbation is found among many species of mammals, particularly among the primates.
* Observations of other species indicate that the basic mammalian heritage is bisexual, composed of both heterosexual and homosexual elements.
* Female primates engage in sexual signaling to males—in effect, flirting.
* The general trend, as we move from lower species such as fish or rodents to higher ones such as primates, is for sexual behavior to be more hormonally (instinctively) controlled among the lower species and to be controlled more by the brain (and therefore by learning and social context) in the higher species.
* Environmental influences are much more important in shaping primate—especially human—sexual behavior than they are in shaping the sexual behavior of other species.
* There is little in human sexuality that is completely unique to humans, except for elaborate, complex cultural influences. In other respects, we are on a continuum with other species.
* Animals sometimes use sexual behavior for nonsexual purposes.
* Sexual behaviors can symbolize an animal’s rank in a dominance hierarchy.
* Humans, just like members of other species, can use sex for a variety of nonsexual purposes.

**VI. The Sexual Health Perspective**

* **Sexual health** is a social and political movement that is gaining momentum worldwide. Although many discussions of sexual health are actually about sexual disease, such as HIV infection, sexual health is a much broader concept that involves a vision of positive sexual health.
* With the growth of the sexual health movement, the concept of **sexual rights** has also come to center stage; in fact, the term is used in the WHO definition. The idea here is that all human beings have certain basic, inalienable rights regarding sexuality, just as in America’s Declaration of Independence, in which the writers asserted that all people have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

**Lecture Extension**

**Thinking Sociologically About Sexuality**

Because classes in human sexuality are often offered as interdisciplinary courses, it is sometimes difficult to ascertain the foundations students may have in the different disciplines involved. The field most often unknown to students prior to college is sociology. This introductory chapter provides an excellent opportunity to acquaint students with some of the fundamental tenets of this academic subject. As behaviors related to sexuality are often the most regulated in any society, sexual norms are of particular interest to sociologists. Identify for students the following:

* *Norms:* the expected behaviors in a given society
* *Sanctions:* positive or negative reactions to an actor’s behavior that operate in accordance with norms
* *Sociological imagination:* C. Wright Mills’ (1959) term for analyzing the prevailing norms and social issues of a given social structure from a sociohistorical perspective

Ensure that students understand the connections of norms and sanctions with regard to the text coverage of ethnocentrism.

Discuss with students the challenging role of the sociologist as a somewhat dispassionate observer of humans and the societies in which they live, as well as the ways in which societies co-exist. The task from this perspective is to consider the ways in which geography and social forces have influenced human behavior. In other words, what factors shaped the direction in which a specific society moved to adopt the particular norms that it did?

Mills, C. *The sociological imagination.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1959.

**Lecture and Discussion Ideas**

**Critical Thinking:** How is critical thinking defined? Why is it important to build your critical thinking skills?

**Developing Critical Thinking Skills:** Give examples of a value judgment and an objective statement concerning sexuality. What are some examples of an opinion, a biased statement, and a stereotype regarding sexuality? Discuss how these can be identified.

**Sex Research Devalued:** Why has sex research been devalued in both the academic and scientific community and in society as a whole?

**Diversity Among Ethnic Groups:** You should consider socioeconomic status while studying diverse ethnic groups (as well as Whites). For example, Latinos consist of diverse subgroups (such as Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Cuban American, Guatemalan, and Salvadoran) that may have significantly different experiences and values from each other. Similarly, Asian Americans encompass numerous subgroups, including Japanese American, Chinese American, Korean American, Hmong, and Vietnamese. Among all groups, the degree of assimilation is important.

**Limited Ethnic Research:** Discuss why little research has been conducted with ethnic groups.

**Ethnocentrism:** What is ethnocentrism? Think of at least three examples of American ethnocentrism. What are the consequences of the ethnocentrism in your examples? Who gets hurt by ethnocentrism? Of all the countries in the world, whose ethnocentrism is most problematic and why?

**Gay/Lesbian Research:** Discuss why current gay/lesbian research has moved away from the “origins” of homosexuality. What are the methodological and political limits on conducting research on homosexuality?

**Kinsey’s Research and Family Values**: Some researchers have argued that Kinsey’s empirical data were more important than the theory, methodology, and other underpinnings of the study. One significant finding, for example, was that 37 percent of the U.S. males that he surveyed had had some homosexual experience. Surveys of females found that they masturbated; like men, had homosexual relations; and engaged in premarital and extramarital sexual relationships. These findings were considered a moral outrage at the time. In the 1950s, critics complained that such findings were disruptive of traditional values about marriage and the family. Do you think this is because his research focused on female sexuality and homosexual behaviors?

**Feminist Scholarship:** Discuss the validity of the main tenets of feminist research. These include: (1) gender is significant in all aspects of social life; (2) the female experience of sex has been devalued; (3) power is a critical element in male/female relationships; (4) traditional empirical research needs to be combined with qualitative research and interpretative studies; and (5) ethnicity is important. The second and third propositions may generate considerable discussion.

**The Definition of Sex and Gender:** How do the very specific and purposeful definitions for sex and gender differ from the ways in which these terms are used in contemporary U.S. parlance?

**Our Body and Gender:** What is the relationship between our body and gender? Does one grow out of the other? Are they related at all? Can you think of any examples of possible true differences between men and women that are simply exaggerated by gender? Can you think of any examples of possible true differences that are ignored by society or reversed by gender roles?

**Sexuality Across History**: Why is it important to study sexuality across history, cultures, and species? In other words, what can studying sexuality in this way tell us about ourselves and about sexuality?

**Historicity:** What does it mean to say someone is thinking ahistorically? What are the dangers of doing so? What are the benefits of knowing history when studying sexuality?

**Revealing a Society’s Sexual Culture:** Pretend that you are studying the sexual culture of a society unknown to you. If you could ask only three things, what would be the most important questions to ask? In other words, what three questions may be the most revealing about any society’s sexual culture? Why?

**Changing Norms:** Within a culture, sexual norms and behaviors change considerably over time. How have Western sexual norms and behaviors changed? Can you give some examples of both positive and negative changes? Do you all agree on the changes? Do you all agree regarding which changes are positive and which are negative? How do you decide if the changes are negative or positive? Are some changes both positive and negative?

**Human Rights:** These rights include:

* Right to teach and learn about sex
* Right to respect people’s bodies
* Right to be sexually active or not
* Right to choose when and how to have children or not
* Right to pursue sexual pleasure in a safe and satisfying way

Do you think that in the U.S. we support these rights? Starting at what age? Should the U.S. be doing a better job at protecting these rights?

**Sex and Human Rights:** Sexual rights are an integral part of human rights. What is your opinion on this topic?

**Defining Sexual Behavior:** Define sexual behavior and discuss the effects of nature versus nurture on sexual behavior.

**What Is “Real” Sex?:** People in the United States have changing views about what they consider to be “sex” acts. In the late 1990s, for instance, only about 40 percent said that oral-genital sex was “real sex.” Ten years later, the number had increased to 70 percent. Today, 80 percent of people say that anal sex is “real sex.” What kinds of things do you consider to be included under “sex”? Do you think this definition varies with age? Gender? Ethnicity?

Fundamental Elements of Sexual Well-Being: Discuss the four elements that are fundamental to achieving sexual well-being: pleasure, protection, focus, and purpose in life. Share your opinion about each element. Which of them is the most important for you? Why?

**Sex as a Disease?:** Doctors in the 19th century, and well into the 20th century, tended to see sex as a disease to be cured or a problem to be fixed, never as something positive. However, they saw only patients with unusual sexual behaviors who came to their clinics. They did not observe “normal” people because they never came to their clinics. Because they worked only with people who sought treatment, they saw their sexual symptoms as the norm, not the exception. How much do you think that has changed today? Do you think people routinely talk to their medical doctor about their sex lives? What issues might this “keeping sex in the closet” raise for people today?

**Changing Views on Masturbation:** Discuss the changing views on masturbation as an element in treatment programs from Krafft-Ebing to Masters and Johnson to current views.

**Changing Views of Female Sexuality:** Discuss the changing views of female sexuality from Krafft-Ebing to Masters and Johnson. Contrast with feminist perspectives on sexuality.

**Changing Views on Homosexuality:** Discuss the changing views on homosexuality, including the work of Ulrichs, Kertbeny, Hirschfeld, Ellis, Kinsey, Hooker, and Foucault. Contrast with Krafft-Ebing and Freud.

**Polling Questions**

**Polling 1:** **Let’s Talk About Sex**

How many of you are comfortable talking about sex and sexual relations with your boyfriend/girlfriend and close friends?

Research shows that when people are comfortable talking about sex and actual sexual relations, they express their own desires better, they use less risky behavior when having sex, they know how to deal with sexual aggression better, and they form better relationships.

**Polling 2: What Is Sex?**

How many of you consider oral sex to be “sex”?

How many of you consider anal sex to be “sex”?

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**Polling 3: Kinsey’s Research and Family Values**

Some researchers have argued that Kinsey’s empirical data were more important than the theory, methodology, and other underpinnings of the study. One significant finding, for example, was that 37 percent of the U.S. males that he surveyed had had some homosexual experience. In the 1950s, critics complained that such findings were disruptive of traditional values about marriage and the family.

How many of you agree that knowing what people actually do sexually undermines “family values”?

**Polling 4: Calderone and Birth Control**

In the last election, access to birth control was a highly publicized issue. How many of you feel that people should have access to birth control?

How many of you have visited Planned Parenthood since you started college?

Calderone opposed the medical establishment for blocking distribution of birth control information to all people in the United States who went into doctor’s offices in the 1950s and 1960s. She founded Planned Parenthood and felt that everyone had a right to birth control and family planning information, though many male doctors disagreed with her at the time. In the 2012 election, this became an issue as some wanted to defund Planned Parenthood and limit access to birth control.

**Polling 5: Doctors and Sex**

Females in the class only: How many of you have talked to your doctor about sex?

Males in the class only: How many of you consider anal sex to be “sex”?

How many of you ask your friends about or do Internet research on sex?

Doctors in the 19th century, and well into the 20th century, tended to see sex as a disease to be cured or a problem to be fixed, never as something positive. However, they saw only patients with unusual sexual behaviors who came to their clinics. They did not observe “normal” people because they never came to their clinics. Because they worked only with people who sought treatment, they saw their sexual symptoms as the norm, not the exception. How much do you think that has changed today? Do you think people routinely talk to their medical doctor about their sex lives? What issues might this “keeping sex in the closet” raise for people today?

**Polling 6: Masturbation**

How many of you consider masturbation to be “normal”?

How many of you would say that you masturbate fairly regularly?

Krafft-Ebing specialized in the treatment of what was then called *sexual mania.* He was particularly known for treating masturbation. Some of his patients truly felt that they were subhuman “monsters” because they could not control their sexual urges, some of which, including masturbation, are today considered normal.

**Polling 7: Participatory Action Research**

Participatory action research (PAR) is a relatively new social method of gathering and using information that involves strong community participation. Rather than a set of procedures for collecting information, PAR involves the people who are affected most directly by issues in the community in the effort to apply the research to their benefit. This approach to sex research also helps to motivate greater community participation in the study, whether it concerns sex education, date rape, coming out as homosexual, or being sexually active in a community that discourages sex outside of marriage.

Do you think a community-based way of conducting research yields good data?

**Polling 8: Sexually Transmitted Infections**

Healthy sexuality is a right, not a privilege. In this new perspective, when people feel secure in their bodies, identities, and health, their sexual well-being improves, in spite of poverty.

Do you think STIs are a common problem at this university?

Do you think people on campus are routinely screened for STIs?

How many of you are routinely tested for STIs?

**Activities**

*Note to the instructor:* Any classroom activity requires careful ethical reflection by the instructor before assigning the exercise. Some of these principles parallel those in human subject research. Students should have a basic right to privacy about their own sexuality. They should not be coerced into revealing private information if it is identifiable.

**Introductory Activity:** Have students make a list of sexual topics that they think might be covered during the entire course. Ask them to shout out their topics. You can list each topic on the board or have students write them up. Note the degree to which students use the word “sex” or “sexual” (e.g., do they say “dysfunctions” or “sexual dysfunctions”). Note any topics that students might be forgetting—or topics/words that they might be avoiding. After you have a good list, ask students to indicate what emotions might arise when discussing these topics. List these emotions on the board and analyze the emotions listed. Note that two people can have different emotions to the same topic. Explain to the class how this can make a class in human sexuality challenging.

**Values Clarification:** This exercise is not particularly tied to the content of this chapter, but it is an excellent exercise to use in the first week or two of class. The exercise has two goals: (1) to help students clarify their own values about sexuality and (2) to provide a context in which you can convey to students that you respect their values even if they are different from your own. The exercise will work in a class of up to about 50 students, but beyond that it would need to be modified.

Before class, post eight signs at intervals around the walls of the classroom. Each sign has the name of one of the characters listed in Handout 3: Values Clarification.

At the beginning of class, explain to students that they are going to participate in a values clarification exercise. They should take out a piece of paper and draw a series of stair-steps on it, going from the top left corner to the bottom right corner, and they should have eight steps. Label the top step Most Admired and the bottom step Least Admired. Explain that you are going to read brief vignettes about each of eight characters. The students’ task is to rank the characters from the one they most like or admire to the one they least like or admire. Read the description of each character to the class in Handout 3: Values Clarification.

Once they have completed the task, tell them to go stand next to the sign of the person they most admire. Have students from each cluster build the case for why their character is most admirable. After each group has made its arguments, have the groups argue back and forth about why their choice is better. Then have students switch and stand next to the sign of the person they least like or admire. Repeat the process of having each group build the case for its choice and then arguing with other groups. [Tip: If there is not enough diversity in the choices of most/least admired, you can ask students to stand by the name of their second-most/least admired individual.]

Finally, have all students return to their seats and reflect on what they learned from the exercise. This reflection phase is essential after any group discussion exercise, because otherwise some students may miss the point and think that they wasted class time. For this exercise, students should bring up points such as “I didn’t realize there was so much diversity of opinion in our class.” You can then sum up by saying explicitly that you respect and value the diversity of opinion.

**Assessing Sexual Attitudes and Behaviors:** This is a survey that can—with care—be used to give your students a sense of their classmates’ attitudes and behaviors. Use Handout 1: Assessing Sexual Attitudes and Behaviors. (With Chapter 3 you can administer the survey a second time to illustrate the test–retest method.)

Sex Research: Divide the class into groups of five. Ask each group to research either Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Magnus Hirschfeld, Havelock Ellis, Sigmund Freud, Margaret Mead, Alfred Kinsey, Mary Calderone, Masters and Johnson, or Michele Foucault. Based on their research and the information given in the text, ask them to talk about their chosen personality and the individual’s research for 15 minutes, giving as much detail as they can. This will give them a clearer picture of sex research and its evolution through the years.

**Researchers Role-Playing Panel:** Ask students to role-play a panel discussion consisting of important sex researchers. The researchers they could portray might include Hirschfeld, Krafft-Ebing, Ellis, Freud, Kinsey, Hooker, and Masters and Johnson. Ask each to make a 3-minute statement of their most important research findings. The class can ask questions of the panel.

**The Cooperative Classroom and Sex Research Pioneers:** Ask students to form small groups and assign each group a particular figure from the science segment of this chapter. Have the groups briefly report back during the following class period with information on each of these historical figures.

**Taking Action:** Working with your Student Health Center, have students conduct research to create a quick facts pamphlet about human sexuality that is supported by research. Be sure to also include a myths section that has been “passed” as scientific. As a service to their peers at their campus, have them pass these out in the student union or on the quad.

**Moral Values:** Have students write their own response to the following question, then discuss their responses in groups or as a class. Do you feel the moral values and principles about sex taught to you as you were growing up still apply to your life now as an independent adult? If so, are you comfortable with them? If not, how have you and your values changed? Why?

**Personal Reflections:** Have students anonymously answer the questions in Handout 2: Personal Reflections on Learning. Introduce them to the concept of agents of socializationand ask those who are comfortable with disclosing their answers to provide examples of how agents of socialization transmit cultural norms from one generation to the next.Point out also that socialization does not always completely constrain the individual by offering examples of social change and instances in which norms have been adapted to meet new social needs.

**The Meaning of Sex:** Ask students to consider: Is all sexual behavior in animals for reproductive purposes? Is all sexual behavior in humans for reproductive purposes? What other meanings does sex sometimes have in a culture? As a class, brainstorm a list of all the possible things/emotions/purposes for which sex could be used.

*Note to the instructor*: In brainstorming, make sure to include that sex could be used for recreation, love, money, experience, trickery, therapy, violence, achievement, chase or game, rebellion, conformity, performance, giving, or taking.

**Sexual Literacy Programs:** Start by placing students in small groups. Tell them that in becoming sexually literate, one can develop healthy and positive attitudes in one’s thinking, communication, and lifestyle that will result in satisfying sexual relationships. Knowing this, how would they design a program for freshman students that would promote sexual literacy? Give the class 20 minutes in their groups to discuss, and then have each group share with the class their proposal.

You may want to incorporate the “Are you Sexually Literate?” Mini Quiz as a starting point.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Anal sex can make you pregnant.

2. \_\_\_\_\_ Humans are the only species that have sexual pleasure and orgasms.

3. \_\_\_\_\_ In some cultures, extramarital relationships are considered positive.

4. \_\_\_\_\_ You can become gay if you have close contact with gays.

5. \_\_\_\_\_ Too much sexual pleasure can make you mentally lazy.

6. \_\_\_\_\_ Kissing does not spread AIDS.

7. \_\_\_\_\_ In some cultures, women may have multiple husbands at the same time.

8. \_\_\_\_\_ In some countries, sexuality is becoming a human right in the 21st century.

9. \_\_\_\_\_ Religious people don’t have fun in their sex lives.

10. \_\_\_\_\_ Homosexuality is legal in all countries.

11. \_\_\_\_\_ Condoms cannot prevent the spread of sexually transmitted infections.

12. \_\_\_\_\_ You can deliver a baby through your navel if really necessary.

13. \_\_\_\_\_ You can have good sex if you learn how to enjoy your sexual fantasies.

14. \_\_\_\_\_ One of the keys to a healthy life is to have a happy relationship.

15. \_\_\_\_\_ Masturbation started as a disease but is used as therapy for some people.

16. \_\_\_\_\_ Until sometime in the 20th century, being fat was considered sexually attractive in women and men.

17. \_\_\_\_\_ People are having children and getting married younger than ever in the United States.

18. \_\_\_\_\_ Science has proved there is a gay brain.

19. \_\_\_\_\_ It is always better to live together before you get married, to see if it works.

20. \_\_\_\_\_ In some cultures, a woman’s crushed foot is considered intensely sexually attractive.

ANSWERS to “Are You Sexually Literate?”

1. F

2. F

3. T

4. F

5. F

6. T

7. T

8. T

9. F

10. F

11. F

12. F

13. T

14. T

15. T

16. T

17. F

18. F

19. F

20. T

What is your degree of sexual literacy at this point? Grade yourself using this scale:

18–20 correct: You are a champion of sexual literacy!

14–17 correct: You are sexually literate to a high degree and are fairly comfortable with these issues.

0–13 correct: You may learn many enjoyable things in this course.

9 or fewer correct: Welcome to the human sexuality course. Like many people, you have a lot to learn about how to attain sexual well-being.

**What Are the Prevailing U.S. Sexual Norms?:** Post signs, around the room, titled with various topics related to sexuality, such as circumcision, personal hygiene, menstruation, age, kissing, other cultures and their sexual behaviors, intercourse, and more. Have students gather in small groups to consider the norms associated with each topic, word, or phrase. As they discuss, they can write the norms on the signs. After allowing sufficient time for the signs to fill with comments, bring the groups back together as a class. Mediate a discussion with students on the themes that seem to be present on these message boards, and be prepared to introduce illustrations from other cultures that offer a contrast to those messages written by the students. For example, when addressing the issue of circumcision, students often post only comments related to male circumcision. This provides an excellent avenue for addressing the issue of female circumcision.

**Sexual Liberation:** Many people in the United States believe their culture to be one in which sexual liberation is the norm. Split the class into groups and ask them to each write a definition of sexual liberation. Have each group share its definition with the class and reach a group consensus. What would true liberation look like? Is America sexually liberated according to the class definition? What would have to change to enhance our liberation?

*Note to the instructor*: Most students will see liberation as the freedom to say “yes.” A definition should ideally include the freedom to say “yes” or “no” without repercussions either way.

**Timelines:** For a research paper, ask each student to connect the scientific thinking about sex in their decade to broader cultural and world events. For example: What was the political climate when the Kinsey results were made public? Describe the social and political forces during the time that Freud was writing.

**Variation:**Assign students a particular culture and have them address a specific sexual norm from that society.

**Ethnic Stereotypes:** Sexual stereotypes often interfere with knowledge about diverse ethnic groups. Because students are often unwilling to begin a discussion of ethnic stereotypes for fear of appearing prejudiced, pass out 3 × 5 cards and ask them to anonymously identify the various ethnic stereotypes regarding sexuality. Discuss the available research regarding the stereotypes and the function these stereotypes play in justifying discrimination.

**Critical Thinking Skills:** Other cultures think differently about some issues. Explain to the students that, in the Netherlands, most parents believe that their children, in late adolescence, will start having sex with a boyfriend or girlfriend. Dutch parents believe that the important thing is that their adolescent use contraception and be safe. Many are accepting if these sexual activities occur in their home, where the youth are safe. Ask students how this approach differs from the typical one in the United States. Would we be better off following the Dutch model, or are U.S. practices the best? How does knowing about this other culture help us to think critically about practices in our own culture?

**Religious Panel:** Invite a panel of campus or community religious leaders to discuss the relationship between religious values and the scientific study of human sexuality. How does science affect religious thinking? What happens when religious beliefs and scientific conclusions clash? Subjects may include masturbation, premarital sex, gender roles, transsexuality, and homosexuality.

**Freud’s Perspective vs. Modern Theory:** In the 20th century, sex researchers grew to reject many of Freud’s ideas and his methodology. They critiqued the idea that sex was a disease and began to see themselves as part of a positive movement to reform the place of sexuality in society to make people healthier (Irvine 2000). They saw sex as a measure of social progress and compared acceptance of sexual diversity to inventions such as the telephone and radio. Ask students to write down two ways they feel these assumptions have changed modern behaviors and perspectives. You can then read their anonymous answers to the class.

**Fun with History:** Ask students to visit the Internet to learn more about the historical relationship between sex and some of today’s popular foods. Bring your students a snack of graham crackers. As they are munching, ask if any of them are familiar with the purported health benefits of graham crackers. Explain the history of Dr. Graham and Dr. Kellogg, their relationship to the disease of masturbation, and all the possible ailments you might be saving them from by feeding them graham crackers.

**Health Considerations:** Against 19th-century beliefs on masturbation, Havelock Ellis argued against that it had no ill health effects. Why has morally proscribed behavior—such as masturbation—often been seen to have dangerous health consequences? Today, some continue to link morally proscribed behavior to negative health consequences, such as homosexuality and AIDS. From a public health point of view, what are the consequences of viewing health problems as moral problems?

**Homosexuality: Nature or Nurture?:** Have students read “Can Psychiatrists Really ‘Cure’ Homosexuality?” at <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=homosexuality-cure-masters-johnson> (Maier 2009) and then answer the following questions:

1. Based on the readings, are sex drives all biology or nature, or do they get shaped to some extent by or expressed due to societal forces?

2. Do you personally think males and females differ when it comes to the issue of what makes them heterosexual? Why or why not?

3. Do the same arguments apply to what makes people gay? Why or why not?

**LGBTQA:** Contact your university’s LGBTQA organization(s) or the student diversity office and see if a representative can come speak to the class. Students often find how the campus is approaching diversity to be interesting. Representatives can usually discuss the law as well as university policy with the class and are trained to answer questions.

**Film Analysis:** *Kinsey* (2004) is a biographical drama starring Liam Neeson as Alfred Kinsey. It is 1 hour, 58 minutes and rated R Watch as a class and discuss.

**Kinsey and Masters & Johnson: The Science of Sex:** You can show your class the movie *Kinsey* (described above) and follow with a 60**-**minute biopic piece on Masters and Johnson called *Masters & Johnson: The Science of Sex* from the biography channel.

**Daytime Talk Shows:** Ask students to watch a talk show on a sexual topic and to respond.

**Sex and Popular Culture:** Ask students to describe recent talk shows that included a sex expert. What was the role of the expert on the show? What have students learned from talk shows?

**Advice Column Activity 1:** Ask students to bring in clippings from “Dear Abby,” “Annie’s Mailbox,” “Ask Beth,” and other newspaper and magazine advice columnists. Distribute them to students in small groups. How prevalent are questions about sexuality and relationships? What biases, assumptions, and norms are being reinforced by the columnists’ responses? How do the columnists utilize social science research?

**Advice Column Activity 2:** Read several questions or letters sent to advice columnists to your class. Ask students to write their own “advice” column in response. Have students read some of their advice aloud to the class. Ask for the basis of their advice.

**Suggested Media**

Scientists Study the Healing Power of Sex—*TODAY Show*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=epeBwd_R7pk>

Your Body During Sex—BUZZFEED

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mWWl6L1QeO8>

The story of Dr. William Masters and Virginia Johnson: When TV was black-and-white and attitudes toward sex were, too, Masters and Johnson’s book, *Human Sexual Response*, helped fuel the sexual revolution. But, as Martha Teichner reports, they have their own explosive story as well. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U8BlIJVagJ0>

*Changing Our Minds: The Story of Dr. Evelyn Hooker* (1991, 75 minutes, VHS, Frameline Distribution). A documentary about Dr. Evelyn Hooker, who spoke out against “treating” homosexuals in the 1950s. She conducted a scholarly study comparing the psychological profiles of gay and nongay men, finding that there was no difference between them.

*Masters of Sex* (2013–Present; 4 seasons; TV series; Showtime). Drama about the pioneers of the sciences of human sexuality, whose research touched off the sexual revolution.

*Sex and the Scientist* (1989, 86 minutes, VHS, Indiana University Audio Visual Center). Chronicles the life of Alfred Kinsey. Includes interviews with Clyde Martin, Wardell Pomeroy, and Paul Gebhard.

*The Science of Sex Appeal* (2009; Documentary; 1 hour, 26 minutes; available online at [www.discovery.com](http://www.discovery.com)). Discovery Channel TV-documentary that examines sex appeal through scientific lenses. The website breaks the documentary into short video clips, so this is ideal for showing in class.

**Internet Resources**

**APA**

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

**APA Site for Research on Sexuality**

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

**Association for Psychological Science (APS)**

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

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

<http://www.cdc.gov>

An excellent site for information and research on several health-related topics, including sexual assault, sexually transmitted diseases, and the Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

**Go Ask Alice**

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

This site is a well-researched and operated question and answer service dealing with sexual and health issues. It is directed by the Columbia University Health Education Program.

**The Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction**

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

Founded in 1947, The Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction is a private, not-for-profit corporation affiliated with Indiana University. The mission of the Kinsey Institute is to promote interdisciplinary research and scholarship in the fields of human sexuality, gender, and reproduction. The site has current research as well as video links.

**National Sexuality Resource Center**

<http://cregs.sfsu.edu>

Part of the Human Sexuality Studies Program at San Francisco State University: “Creating new dialogues between the public, researchers, and community advocates to strengthen informed responses to critical sexual and social issues.”

**Additional Readings**

Allen, J. A., Allinson, H. E., Clark-Huckstep, A., Hill, B. J., Sanders, S. A., & Zhou, L. (2107). *The Kinsey Institute: The first seventy years.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press. The book looks at the work Alfred Kinsey began over 70 years ago and how the institute continued to make an impact on understanding human sexual expression. Over 65 images of Kinsey and the institute’s collection are included.

Bullough, V. L. (1994). *Science in the bedroom: A history of sex research.* New York: Basic Books. A comprehensive history of sex research of the 20th century.

Garton, S. (2004). *Histories of sexuality: Antiquity to sexual revolution.* New York: Routledge. A comprehensive historical review of major figures, from Havelock Ellis to Alfred Kinsey, and an exploration of such topics as the “invention” of homosexuality in the 19th century and the rise of sexual sciences in the 20th century.

Maier, T. (2009). *Masters of sex.* New York: Basic Books. An unprecedented look at Masters and Johnson and their pioneering work together that highlights interviews with both.

Meezan, W., & Martin, J. I. (Eds.). (2006). *Research methods with gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender populations.* New York: Harrington Park Press. Discusses the unique issues in sexuality-related research among gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender populations and provides suggestions for doing this research.

Melancon T. (Ed.). (2015). *Black female sexualities*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press. Twelve original essays reveal the diverse ways black women perceive, experiences, and represent sexuality.

Staples, R. (2006). *Exploring Black sexuality.* Boulder, CO: Rowman & Littlefield. A distinguished Black sexologist explores the sexual mores, folkways, and values among African Americans.

Wyatt, G. (1997). *Stolen women: Reclaiming our sexuality and taking back our lives.* New York: Wiley. Discusses sociocultural influences, such as slavery and institutionalized racism, on the expression of sexuality among African American women.

**Resources Available Within Connect**

In addition to reading assignments and quizzes, you will find the following chapter resources within McGraw-Hill Education’s digital learning platform, Connect.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Chapter** | **Title** | **Learning Objective** |
| 1 | NewsFlash: Portrait of a Sex Researcher | Recall the contributions of key sex researchers. |
| 1 | NewsFlash: Irish Voters Opt for Marriage Equality, Make History | Describe unique traits of human sexuality and how culture influences them. |

**Handout 1: Assessing Sexual Attitudes and Behaviors**

*(Page 1 of 2)*

How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_ years.

What is your marital status? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your academic classification (e.g., freshman, sophomore, etc.)? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your gender (male, female, trans, other)? \_\_\_\_\_

***Attitudes***

Use the following scale to indicate how positively or negatively you feel about the listed sexual behaviors:

1 Strongly Disapprove

2 Disapprove Somewhat

3 Neither Approve nor Disapprove

4 Approve Somewhat

5 Strongly Approve

\_\_\_\_\_ Premarital sex when the couple is officially engaged

\_\_\_\_\_ Premarital sex when the couple is in love

\_\_\_\_\_ Premarital sex when the couple is casually acquainted

\_\_\_\_\_ Male masturbation

\_\_\_\_\_ Female masturbation

\_\_\_\_\_ Hooking up

\_\_\_\_\_ Same-gender sex (homosexuality)

\_\_\_\_\_ Extramarital sex

\_\_\_\_\_ Legal gay marriage

\_\_\_\_\_ Cunnilingus (oral sex performed on a female)

\_\_\_\_\_ Fellatio (oral sex performed on a male)

\_\_\_\_\_ Anal sex

*(Page 2 of 2)*

***Behaviors***

Have you ever engaged in (hetero) sexual intercourse? Yes No (Circle one)

How many partners have you had sexual intercourse with? \_\_\_\_\_ (Fill in)

At what age did you begin masturbating? \_\_\_\_\_ (Fill in)

Have you ever engaged in fellatio? Yes No (Circle one)

Have you ever engaged in cunnilingus? Yes No (Circle one)

Have you ever engaged in anal sex? Yes No (Circle one)

Have you ever had sex with someone of your own gender? Yes No (Circle one)

What is your sexual identity? (Circle one) Heterosexual

Bisexual

Gay/Lesbian/Queer

Undecided/Questioning

**Handout 2: Personal Reflections on Learning**

Throughout our lives, we learn about sexuality from many different agents of socialization, including family, friends, the media, schools, religion, and more. Write down at least one thing that you have learned from each of the sources below.

Family

Friends

Media

School

Religion

Laws and government

Personal experience

**Handout 3: Values Clarification**

*(Page 1 of 2)*

The characters are as follows:

**Valerie** is a junior in college. She has decided to remain a virgin until she gets married. She is bright, good-looking, dates frequently, is very affectionate, enjoys kissing and petting, but always makes it very clear to her dates that she won’t have intercourse with them.

**Drew** is a college senior. He is good-looking and fun, and women find him attractive. He shows his dates a good time, taking them to dinner at a nice place. He enjoys sex and prefers that his dates go to bed with him, which they almost invariably do. He prefers to date a woman no more than three or four times. He is known on campus for his success with women, and he enjoys this reputation and is self-confident.

**Jennifer** is 40 and in sales. She loves her husband and they have a good marriage. But she enjoys men and sex, so when she is on business trips or at conventions, she often goes to bed with one of the men there. She feels somewhat guilty about these flings and keeping them a secret from her husband, but she is afraid to tell him because he would be hurt and might leave her.

**Michael** is 35, a lawyer, and gay. He has been living with Josh for 8 years. They have a monogamous relationship and are happy and satisfied with each other, but Michael has resisted the idea of getting married because of how it might affect how he is viewed in his career. When Michael was in college, he had several relationships with women, but he found them unsatisfying. Later, he experimented with same-sex sexuality. He met Josh, they fell in love, and have happily been together ever since.

**Kevin** is a junior in college. He is 5′7″ tall and average looking. He goes out with women two or three times a month, but he has never asked a woman to go to bed with him. He finds the aggressive ways men treat women to be objectionable. As a result, he is a 21-year-old virgin and is becoming concerned about his total lack of sexual experience. He’s not sure he wants to wait until marriage, but he never feels right about making a move.

**Sara** is a junior in college. She has been going with Eric for about a year, and they have discussed the possibility of marriage sometime in the future, but probably not until Eric has completed medical school and Sara has gotten her master’s degree in social work. A month ago, Sara discovered that she was pregnant. She and Eric discussed the matter and decided that she would have an abortion because their relationship was not yet stable enough to get married, and a baby would interfere with their plans for further education and good careers. Last week she had the abortion.

*(Page 2 of 2)*

**Sonia** is a first-year graduate student and is bisexual. She dated men in high school but found her friendships with women to be more fulfilling. In college she experimented with same-sex relationships but continued to be attracted to men as well. Now, when she is looking for a romantic partner, their gender is not a factor. She only pays attention to their overall attractiveness and personality.

**José** is 30 and an accountant. He and his wife believe that they are soul mates and have a very happy marriage. They also enjoy dating other people and don’t think that humans are built for monogamy. They have an open relationship and they frequently have other partners or date other polyamorous couples. While they do not have a say in their spouse’s other relationships, they remain honest with each other about their other partners.