

Robert Crooks   Karla Baur   Laura Widman

*Fourteenth Edition*

# OUR SEXUALITY

Fourteenth Edition

# Our Sexuality

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Robert Crooks  
Karla Baur  
Laura Widman



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With sadness we dedicate this 14th edition to  
Robert Crooks,  
who passed away at the end of the last revision.

*Our Sexuality* was his brilliant inspiration,  
and thousands of students have benefited  
from his commitment to this text.



# About the Authors

The integration of psychological, social, and biological components of human sexuality in this textbook is facilitated by the blending of the authors' academic and professional backgrounds.

**Robert Crooks** had a Ph.D. in psychology. His graduate training stressed clinical and physiological psychology. Sociology served as his minor throughout his graduate training. His involvement with teaching human sexuality classes at university, college, and medical school spanned over two decades. In addition, Bob and his wife, Sami Tucker, developed and implemented training programs in order for Kenyans to provide HIV/AIDS peer educator interventions in their communities.

**Karla Baur** has retired as co-author after 13 editions. During her professional life she earned a master's degree in clinical social work and had a private practice, specializing in couples and sex therapy. She taught human sexuality and female sexuality courses at Portland Community College, Portland State University, and Clark College. At Oregon Health Sciences University she taught human sexuality courses and coached medical students in taking sexual histories with patients. She has been certified as a sex educator, therapist, and sex therapy supervisor by the American Association of Sex Educators, Counselors, and Therapists. Karla also trained HIV/AIDS prevention peer educators in Bob's program in Kenya.

**Laura Widman** has a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology and postdoctoral training in HIV/STD prevention. She is currently an Associate Professor of Psychology at North Carolina State University. She has an active program of research focused on adolescent sexuality, with a particular interest in developing and testing technology-based programs to reduce HIV/STDs and improve the sexual health of youth. Laura has authored more than 50 manuscripts and book chapters, and she has presented her work to national and international audiences. She has taught undergraduate courses in human sexuality using the *Our Sexuality* textbook for over 10 years. She is delighted to be joining the authorship team to contribute to the 14th edition of this book.

Laura was invited to join *Our Sexuality* as author subsequent to Bob Crooks' death. Cengage is extremely fortunate to find Laura. She is skillfully and enthusiastically carrying the spirit of *Our Sexuality* forward while further improving it with new expertise and perspective.





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# Preface

*Our Sexuality*, now in its 14th edition, provides students with an engaging, personally relevant, politically astute, and academically sound introduction to human sexuality. The textbook's comprehensive integration of biological, psychological, behavioral, cultural, and political aspects of sexuality has been consistently well received in each previous edition.

## New in This Edition

### ACROSS CHAPTERS:

- We have added over 900 new references to the 14th edition. These highlight the most cutting-edge science and the latest developments in politics and pop culture related to human sexuality.
- Every chapter includes updated terminology, examples, and photos. We paid special attention to using language that is inclusive and adding more images that represent people of diverse race/ethnicities, genders, and sexual orientations.
- We have streamlined some of the material to make the text as digestible as possible.
- New Critical Thinking Questions and Authors' File quotes have been added throughout.

### CHAPTER 1: PERSPECTIVES ON SEXUALITY

- New section addressing terminology related to gender and sexual diversity
- Expanded research on LGBTQ issues
- Updated information on sex in the media, including the role of new media in sexual expression
- Several new figures

### CHAPTER 2: SEX RESEARCH: METHODS AND CHALLENGES

- Reorganized flow of information
- New study examples for each research method

- New section on qualitative research
- New information about social desirability bias in sex research
- Updates to Internet-based research methods

### CHAPTER 3: FEMALE SEXUAL ANATOMY AND PHYSIOLOGY

- Updated discussion on the role of pornography in women's views of their labia
- New data on pubic hair grooming
- Updated data and screening recommendations for breast, ovarian, and cervical cancer
- Expanded data on hormone replacement therapy

### CHAPTER 4: MALE SEXUAL ANATOMY AND PHYSIOLOGY

- New information on penis size
- Updated statistics and current medical recommendations on circumcision
- Updated data and screening recommendations for penile and prostate cancer

### CHAPTER 5: GENDER ISSUES

- Significant updates to flow of information and terminology used throughout the chapter
- Expanded discussion of gender diversity and terms that expand beyond the gender binary
- Updated information on sex differentiation of the brain
- Clarification of transitioning and gender confirmation surgery
- Heavily revised section on gender role formation
- New information on how the media, including social media and access to the Internet, impact gender roles

## CHAPTER 6: SEXUAL AROUSAL AND RESPONSE

- Updated information on the links between sexual arousal and the use of alcohol, tobacco (including through vaping), prescription drugs, and birth control
- Extensive update about the role of hormones in sexual behavior
- New studies comparing the experience of orgasm between men and women

## CHAPTER 7: LOVE AND COMMUNICATION IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

- New section on the pop-culture book, *Five Love Languages* by Dr. Gary Chapman
- Extensive updates to the sections on interracial marriage and same-sex marriage
- New discussion of the research bias toward cisgender heterosexual couples in the literature on love and communication
- New section describing how the Internet has changed who we fall in love with
- Updated research on casual sex and “hook-ups”
- New information on strategies for sustaining long-term relationships
- Updated “Let’s Talk About It: Consent for Everyone!” box

## CHAPTER 8: SEXUAL BEHAVIORS

- Expanded information about sexual fantasy
- Greater attention to sexual behaviors among sexual minority people
- Updated statistics on masturbation
- Updated statistics on the prevalence and frequency of partnered sexual activity
- Revised section on Kink behaviors

## CHAPTER 9: SEXUAL ORIENTATIONS

- New vocab terms: mostly straight, mostly gay/lesbian, LGBTQ, internalized homophobia, and heteronormative
- Updated discussion on the complexity and ambiguity of defining sexual orientation based on sexual behavior, sexual/romantic attraction, and choice of identity labels
- Expanded information about bisexuality
- Extensive updates based on the Supreme Court ruling on same-sex marriage in 2015

- Greater emphasis on sexual identity development in youth
- Revamped “Let’s TALK about it: Guidelines for Coming Out” box
- New figures

## CHAPTER 10: CONTRACEPTION

- Updated information on the effectiveness of birth control and rates of unplanned pregnancy
- Expanded section on access to contraception in the United States
- Updated information about currently available contraceptives
- Updated data about global use of contraception
- Revised section on fertility awareness methods with inclusion of new terms: two day method and symptothermal method
- New section about the way technology is impacting accessibility and decision making around contraceptives

## CHAPTER 11: CONCEIVING CHILDREN: PROCESS AND CHOICE

- Childfree added as a new vocab word with discussion around the growing number of people who chose not to have children
- Updated statistics on infertility
- New information on the fertility treatments: current options, cost, and ethical/legal issues to consider
- Extensive updates on rates of abortion and state abortion restrictions
- Updated statistics on maternal and infant mortality

## CHAPTER 12: SEXUALITY DURING CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE

- Updated research on childhood sexuality
- New statistics on pubertal timing in adolescence
- Revised discussion on the sexual double-standard as it relates to sexual behavior among youth
- Updated information about sexting
- New section on the unique challenges that LGBT youth face regarding sexual development
- New section discussing the way the Internet is changing adolescent relationships
- Updated information on adolescent pregnancy
- Updated information on the role of parents and schools as potential sex educators

## CHAPTER 13: SEXUALITY AND THE ADULT YEARS

- New Census data on single, cohabitating, and married adults
- New figure on changes in the median age of first marriage over time in the United States
- New sections on same-sex marriage and interracial marriage
- Updated section on consensual nonmonogamy and open relationships
- Updated statistics on divorce
- Revised section on same-sex relationships among older adults

## CHAPTER 14: SEXUAL DIFFICULTIES AND SOLUTIONS

- Revised terminology and statistics based on DSM-5 criteria for sexual disorder diagnosis
- New discussion of the research bias towards cisgender heterosexual individuals in the literature on sexual difficulties and solutions
- Revised section on desire discrepancy in couples
- Updated information on faking orgasms
- New section on sexual addiction
- Updated information on the origins of sexual difficulties and the known effectiveness of sexual treatments
- New section on sensate focus for gay and lesbian couples

## CHAPTER 15: SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

- Less emphasis on specific medical treatments for each STI
- Greater emphasis on STI testing, with added information on where students can get tested
- Updated statistics on the incidence or prevalence of each STI
- Updated information on HPV vaccine recommendations, especially for boys
- Heavily updated section on HIV/AIDS, with new information about current prevention approaches
- New figure on the HIV testing and cascade of care
- New focus on the problem of HIV and STI stigma. This is incorporated throughout the chapter and also added as a new section entitled “Be Mindful of Stigma”
- New “Let’s TALK about it: Telling a Partner” box

## CHAPTER 16: ATYPICAL SEXUAL BEHAVIOR

- Heavily revised chapter with new terminology and statistics based on DSM-5 categorization of paraphilic behavior
- Updated information on sexual sadism and sexual masochism
- New tips for responding to unwanted sexual exposure
- New section on pedophilia
- Updated information on the causes of atypical sexual behavior
- New vocab words: pedophilia and telephone scatologia
- New table summarizing the eight most common paraphilias identified in the DSM-5

## CHAPTER 17: SEXUAL COERCION

- Reorganized and heavily updated content
- New section on sexual consent
- New section on the #MeToo movement
- Updated statistics on the prevalence of sexual assault, sexual harassment, and child sexual abuse
- Greater attention to male victims of sexual assault
- New information on the Catholic Church sexual abuse scandal
- New “Your sexual health: Preventing and coping with sexual assault” box

## CHAPTER 18: SEX FOR SALE

- New information on how pornography has evolved with developments in online technologies
- Updated information on feminist pornography
- Updated statistics on pornography consumption
- New section on child pornography
- Updated research on the potential benefits and harms of pornography, with new information on how pornography may impact adolescent sexual development
- Revised information on the laws surrounding sex work around the world
- New “Sex and Politics: FOSTA-SESTA: The Politics of Sex Work” box
- Heavily updated section on sex trafficking

## Other Continuing Features

- **A personal approach.** Users of the textbook have responded favorably to our attempts to make the subject human and personal, and in this fourteenth edition we have retained and strengthened the elements that

contributed to this approach and expanded coverage of the impact that political decisions and policies have on individuals and groups.

- **Authors' files.** One of the most popular features of *Our Sexuality* has been the incorporation of voices of real people through the use of authors' files. These quotations—taken from the experiences and observations of students, clients, and colleagues—are woven into the text but set apart in conversation bubbles. Each chapter opens with an authors' file quotation illustrating an important concept pertinent to that chapter.
- **Nonjudgmental perspective.** Consistent with our personal focus, we have avoided a prescriptive stance on most issues introduced in the textbook. We have attempted to provide information in a sensitive, nonsexist, inclusive, nonjudgmental manner that assumes the reader is best qualified to determine what is most valid and applicable in their own life.
- **Psychosocial orientation.** We focus on the roles of psychological and social factors in human expression, reflecting our belief that human sexuality is governed more by psychological factors than by biological determinants. At the same time, we provide the reader with a solid basis in the anatomy and physiology of human sexuality and explore new research pertaining to the interplay of biology, psychology, and social learning.
- **Critical Thinking Questions,** many of which are new to this edition, appear in the margin. These questions are designed to help students apply their knowledge and experience while developing their own outlook. Each question encourages students to stop and think about what they are reading, in an attempt to facilitate higher-order processing of information and learning.
- **Sexuality and Diversity discussions,** integrated throughout the textbook, deal with topics such as ethnic variations in gender roles, female genital cutting, cultural variations in sexual arousal, ethnic variations in intimate communication, cross-cultural issues in preselecting a baby's sex, the clash between sex therapy practices and cultural values, AIDS in Africa, and cultural values that punish women who have been raped. Many of these Sexuality and Diversity discussions have been revised, expanded, and updated for the fourteenth edition.
- **At a Glance tables** designed to present important information in summary form. Examples of this feature

include tables that summarize sex research methods, factors involved in typical and atypical prenatal differentiation, major physiological changes during the sexual response cycle, information to consider when choosing a birth control method, and features of common sexually transmitted infections.

- **Pedagogy.** Individuals learn in different ways. We therefore provide a variety of pedagogical aids to be used as the student chooses. Each chapter opens with an outline of the major topic headings, complete with **chapter opening questions** that focus attention on important topics. **Key words** are boldfaced within the text, and a pronunciation guide follows selected key words. A **running glossary** in the text margin provides a helpful learning tool. Each chapter concludes with a **Summary** in outline form for student reference. A complete **Glossary** as well as a complete **Bibliography** are provided at the end of the textbook.

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This detailed manual provides course guidelines, in-class exercises, video clips, and chapter objectives to assist instructors in teaching the course. The Instructor's Manual for *Our Sexuality* has been thoroughly updated for the new edition.

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# Prologue

Throughout this textbook we discuss sexual attitudes, ideals, and behaviors of the past and present. We highlight similarities and differences in the Western world and beyond and emphasize the controversies inherent in sexual issues.

Finding one's way through the complex and conflicting perspectives related to human sexuality is both a personal and a societal challenge. We would like to open *Our Sexuality* with the Declaration of Sexual Rights, adopted by the World Association of Sexology,\* as possible unifying guidelines:

Sexuality is an integral part of the personality of every human being. Its full development depends upon the satisfaction of basic human needs such as the desire for contact, intimacy, emotional expression, pleasure, tenderness, and love.

Sexuality is constructed through the interaction between the individual and social structures. Full development of sexuality is essential for individual, interpersonal, and societal well-being.

Sexual rights are universal human rights based on the inherent freedom, dignity, and equality of all human beings. Since health is a fundamental human right, so must sexual health be a basic human right. In order to assure that human beings and societies develop healthy sexuality, the following sexual rights must be recognized, promoted, respected, and defended by all societies through all means.

Sexual health is the result of an environment that recognizes, respects, and exercises these sexual rights:

1. **The right to sexual freedom.** Sexual freedom encompasses the possibility for individuals to express their full sexual potential. However, this excludes all forms of sexual coercion, exploitation, and abuse at any time and in any situation in life.
2. **The right to sexual autonomy, sexual integrity, and safety of the sexual body.** This right involves the ability to make autonomous decisions about one's sexual life within a context of one's own personal and social ethics. It also encompasses control and enjoyment of our own bodies free from torture, mutilation, and violence of any sort.
3. **The right to sexual privacy.** This involves the right for individual decisions and behaviors about intimacy as long as they do not intrude on the sexual rights of others.
4. **The right to sexual equity.** This refers to freedom from all forms of discrimination regardless of sex, gender, sexual orientation, age, race, social class, religion, or physical and emotional disability.
5. **The right to sexual pleasure.** Sexual pleasure, including autoeroticism, is a source of physical, psychological, intellectual, and spiritual well-being.
6. **The right to emotional sexual expression.** Sexual expression is more than erotic pleasure or sexual acts. Individuals have a right to express their sexuality through communication, touch, emotional expression, and love.
7. **The right to sexually associate freely.** This means the possibility to marry or not, to divorce, and to establish other types of responsible sexual associations.
8. **The right to make free and responsible reproductive choices.** This encompasses the right to decide whether or not to have children, the number and spacing of children, and the right to full access to the means of fertility regulation.
9. **The right to sexual information based upon scientific inquiry.** This right implies that sexual information should be generated through the process of unencumbered and yet scientifically ethical inquiry, and disseminated in appropriate ways at all societal levels.
10. **The right to comprehensive sexuality education.** This is a lifelong process from birth throughout the life cycle and should involve all social institutions.
11. **The right to sexual health care.** Sexual health care should be available for prevention and treatment of all sexual concerns, problems, and disorders.

\*Originally declared at the 13th World Congress of Sexology, 1997, Valencia, Spain. Revised and approved by the General Assembly of the World Association for Sexology (WAS) on August 26, 1999, during the 14th World Congress of Sexology, Hong Kong, and People's Republic of China. Reprinted with permission.



## CHAPTER 1

# Perspectives on Sexuality

### **Sexual Intelligence**

What are the components of sexual intelligence?

### **A Psychosocial Orientation**

What does it mean to take a psychosocial approach to the study of human sexuality?

### **Diversity in Human Sexuality**

Why is it important to be inclusive when accounting for human sexuality?

What factors contribute to diversity and similarity of sexual attitudes and behaviors within the United States?

How have conversations around gender and sexual diversity changed over time?

### **Our Cultural Legacy: Sex for Procreation and Rigid Gender Roles**

What importance do the historical themes of sex for procreation and male/female gender roles have today?

### **Sexuality in the Western World: A Historical Perspective**

How did the legacies of sex for procreation and rigid gender roles develop through Western history?

What major scientific development has helped separate sexual pleasure from reproduction?

### **The Media and Sexuality**

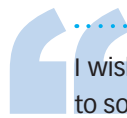
How has the media reflected and influenced sexual norms?

Compared with other mass media, what elements are unique to sexuality on the Internet?

### **Sexuality: Where the Personal Is Political**

How can something as personal as sexuality be “political”?

Rawpixel.com/Shutterstock.com



I wish I'd had this course and read this book when I was younger. It's not always easy to sort out what to do or not do sexually, who to do it with, why and when to have sex. Sometimes, even what is sex? (Authors' files)

## Sexual Intelligence

### sexual intelligence

Self-understanding, interpersonal sexual skills, scientific knowledge, and consideration of the cultural context of sexuality.

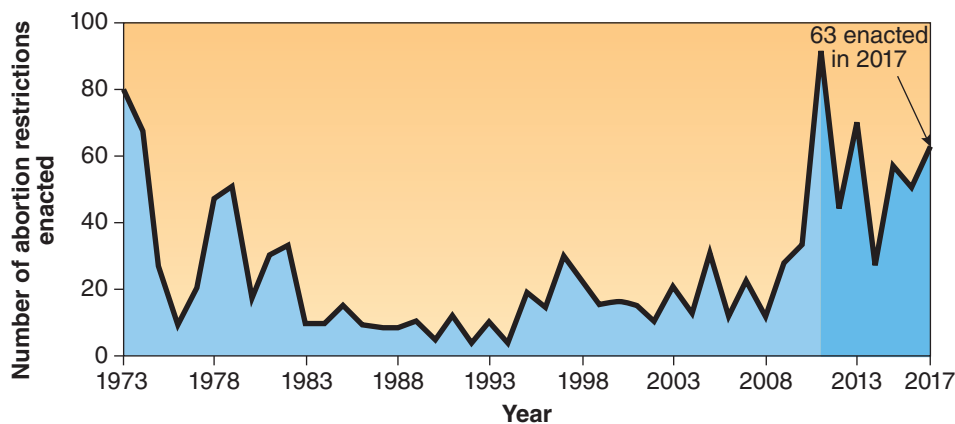
Sexuality has multiple dimensions that affect us throughout our lives. A main goal of this textbook is to help you increase your personal understanding of those dimensions by increasing your **sexual intelligence**. Sexual intelligence has four components: self-understanding about sexuality, interpersonal sexual skills, accurate scientific knowledge, and consideration of the cultural and political contexts surrounding sex. The first component, *self-understanding about sexuality*, means learning more about yourself as a sexual being. What are your personal attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and values when it comes to sexuality and sexual relationships? Where did these attitudes and values come from? We hope this textbook will help you answer these questions.

The second component of sexual intelligence is having *interpersonal sexual skills*. You do not need to be sexually active to have strong interpersonal skills when it comes to sexuality. These skills include the ability to talk openly about sexuality and sexual health, to be assertive about your personal sexual limits and desires, and to be responsive to the sexual limits and desires of any sexual partners that you may have. These skills and abilities can help you make responsible and satisfying decisions about sexual behavior based on your personal values.

The third component of sexual intelligence is having an *accurate scientific knowledge* about sexuality. Sexual science is a relatively young field. However, great leaps in research-based knowledge over the last century allow us to know facts such as what happens to our bodies during sexual arousal and how to enhance pleasure, how to best protect ourselves from sexually transmitted infections, and what factors help create satisfying long-term relationships. Despite significant gains in the scientific understanding of sexuality, many people still maintain myths and inaccuracies about sex.

The fourth component of sexual intelligence is the *critical consideration of the cultural and political contexts* surrounding sexual issues. Cultural norms—including norms within our friend

groups, families, communities, and broader society—influence our desires, shape our sexual attitudes, and impact our sexual behavior. There are also political and economic factors that determine some of the choices we may or may not be allowed to make regarding sexuality. When it comes to sexuality, the phrase “the personal is political” is very fitting. For example, the content of school-based sex education can vary widely based on the laws of each state (discussed in Chapter 12). Politics and economics also play a big role in access to contraception (discussed in Chapter 10), access to abortion (discussed in Chapter 11; see ● Figure 1.1), and the regulation of sex work (discussed in Chapter 18).



● **Figure 1.1** Between 1973 (when *Roe v. Wade* was passed) and 2017, nearly 1,200 abortion restrictions were enacted. One-third of those were enacted between 2010-2017. Since 2017 the number of restrictions has continued to grow rapidly.

SOURCE: Guttmacher (2017).

Throughout this textbook, we strive to provide opportunities for you to explore and develop the four aspects of sexual intelligence. At the end of the day, the final expert on your sexuality is you. We welcome you to this textbook and to your human sexuality class!

## A Psychosocial Orientation

To assist you on your journey to greater sexual intelligence, this textbook takes a **psychosocial** approach, reflecting our view that psychological factors (emotions, attitudes, motivations) and social conditioning (the process by which we learn our social groups' expectations and norms) have a crucial impact on sexual attitudes, values, and behaviors. *Our Sexuality* also covers the crucial biological foundations of human sexuality, including the roles of hormones and the nervous system, the biological components of sexual orientation, theories about the role of genetic selection through thousands of years of human evolution, and the impact of specific genetic variables on an individual. The term *biopsychosocial* describes the integration of these three dimensions (biological, psychological, and social).

We may not always be aware of the extent to which our sexual attitudes and behaviors are shaped by society in general and by the particular social and cultural groups to which we belong (Twenge et al., 2015). The subtle ways we learn society's expectations regarding sexuality often lead us to assume that our behaviors or feelings are biologically innate, or natural. However, an examination of sexuality in other periods of Western history or in other societies (or even in different ethnic, socioeconomic, and age groups within our own society) reveals a broad range of acceptable behavior. What we regard as natural is clearly relative. "Aspects of sexuality that are influenced by culture include values, such as decisions regarding appropriate sexual behaviors, suitable partner or partners, appropriate age of consent, as well as who is to decide what is appropriate. Sociocultural beliefs across the globe influence the answers to each of these questions and in many cases these characteristics are seen as integral to culture" (Heinemann et al., 2016, p. 144).

While there is a great diversity of sexual expression throughout the world, all societies have rules regulating the conduct of sexual behavior. "Every society shapes, structures, and constrains the development and expression of sexuality in all of its members" (Beach, 1978, p. 116). Knowledge about the impact of culture and individual experience can make it easier to understand and make decisions about sexuality. Therefore, the major emphasis in *Our Sexuality* will be on the psychosocial aspects of human sexuality. We hope this approach serves as an asset to you not only in this course, but also during the rest of your life.

### psychosocial

A combination of psychological and social factors.



This lead sculpture entitled "Desire" by Aristide Maillol is on display at the Orsay museum in Paris, France. Displays of human sexuality are common in artwork across the centuries.

# Diversity in Human Sexuality

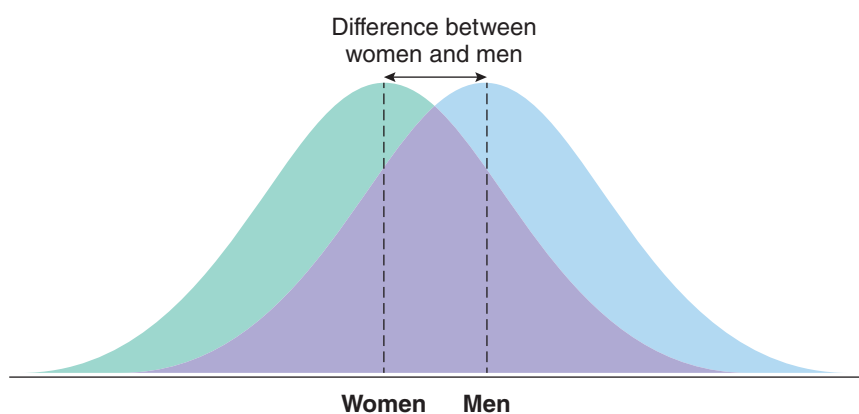
Few topics generate as much attention and evoke as much pleasure and distress as the expression and control of human sexuality. In a sexuality class, students represent a diversity of ages, racial and ethnic backgrounds, religious traditions, gender expressions, sexual orientations, sexual interests, and liberal and conservative attitudes. Students' sexual experiences also vary; some students have had no sexual partners, while others have had many partners. Some have had only brief relationships, and some have had long-term partnerships and marriages. Students' sexual choices and experiences also vary greatly in the degree of pleasure or distress that accompanies each situation. With this in mind, we have attempted to bring an inclusive philosophy to our textbook. This textbook is meant to serve as an opportunity for learning and self-exploration for *all* students, regardless of prior sexual experiences, sexual orientation, gender expression, religious or political views, or current relationship status.

*Our Sexuality* also explores the sexual attitudes and behaviors of people in many places around the globe, though much of the focus is on individuals within the United States. Individuals of many ethnic and religious groups have made their homes in the United States, resulting in a wide range of sexual values and behaviors here. An ethnic group typically shares a common historical ancestry, religion, and language, yet there is always variance within the ethnic groups. Educational level and socioeconomic status are also crucial in influencing sexual attitudes and behaviors.

It should be stressed that differences between groups are generalities, not universal truths; even within groups, great diversity exists (Greenwood et al., 2016). For example, Asian Americans include individuals from China, Hong Kong, Japan, Vietnam, the Pacific islands, and many other places (Brotto et al., 2005). Similarly, Muslims in the United States originate from more than 60 countries, and Hispanic Americans come from 22 different countries. Many of these subgroups consider themselves culturally

distinct from one another. In spite of the within-group differences, when research looks at patterns, some between-group differences emerge. For example, Hispanic culture, on the whole, often endorses sexual exploration for men but places a high value on chastity before marriage for women (Deardorff et al., 2010). However, for nearly every sexual attitude, belief, and behavior we will discuss throughout this textbook, there are more differences *within* groups than differences *between* groups. For instance, while Hispanic culture as a whole might place a high value on chastity before marriage for women, the attitudes of individual Hispanic people vary dramatically on this issue. See ● Figure 1.2.

The degree of *acculturation*—that is, replacing traditional beliefs and behavior patterns with those of the dominant culture—also creates differences within subcultures. Recent immigrants to the United States tend to be close to the traditional values of their places of origin, but most individuals whose families have lived in North America for several generations are well assimilated.



● **Figure 1.2** When we consider differences between groups, it is important to remember there is usually more variation *within* a group than between any two groups. For example, in this graph, the dotted lines represent differences in the average frequency of masturbation for women and men. On average, there is a gender difference that shows women tend to masturbate less than men (average effect size difference  $d = .53$ , Peterson & Hyde, 2011). However, the curved lines around each dotted line represent a normal distribution of scores for women and men. Some women masturbate a lot whereas others rarely or never masturbate. Similarly, there is wide variation in the frequency with which different men masturbate. So by looking at any given person, even if you know their gender, you would not be able to tell very much about their personal experience with masturbation.

# Let's TALK about It

## A Child–Parent Sex Talk

To expand your understanding of your attitudes and experiences related to sexuality, you might consider interviewing your parents about their experiences and beliefs if you have not already had this type of conversation.

“WHAT?!? Talk to my parents about sex?!?”

The following ideas and suggestions may make this endeavor seem less daunting.

“But my parents would never answer any questions about sex.”

You might be quite surprised by how open your parents are to your interest. The tell-the-children-when-they-ask parenting approach is common. Plus, you can test the waters first: Start with a low-key question, and if they respond with a direct or an indirect “I don’t want to talk about it,” stop the interview and change the subject.

The first step is to pick your interviewee. You may feel most comfortable beginning with a grandparent or another relative instead of a parent. Find a time when you will not be rushed and a place that will be private. (Alternatively, you can use e-mail, a phone call, or texts to get the conversation started; you might also find that several shorter conversations work best for you.) A possible way to begin is, “I’m



Getty Images/Hulton Archive/Getty Images

**The father–son “sex talk” scenes in the film *American Pie* depict the awkwardness that parents and children often experience when they discuss sexuality.**

taking a human sexuality class, and it made me wonder if you had any sex education in school.”

Now you have broken the ice, and if you have had a good reception, you can ask specifics about your interviewee’s sexual education. Be sure to encourage elaboration after each question, and don’t rush to the next one: “What types of things did you learn about sex in school? What did you learn outside of school—from friends, your parents, books? What did your religion teach you? What sorts of bad information did you get about sex? What do you wish someone had told you?”

If things are rolling along, you might ask more personal questions: “How did you feel about your body changing from a child to a teenager? How quickly did you mature compared with your classmates? Did you know about menstruation/ejaculation before you experienced it? Who was your first crush? What do you wish you had known as a child or young adult that you know now? What do you think was easier, and what was more difficult, about sexuality for your generation than for mine?”

If your interview has come this far, you probably have a greater understanding and appreciation for the important aspects of your interviewee’s life and, hopefully, of your own. So, who’s next?

A factor that blurs differences between racial/ethnic groups is that a significant, and ever-increasing, proportion of the U.S. population is multiracial; that is, some people have descended from two or more racial/ethnic groups. Race and ethnicity are rarely simple, nonoverlapping classifications. “People all over the world have engaged in various degrees of mixing, particularly in the United States. . . . There is no way to look at every person and determine their exact racial background” (Wyatt, 1997, p. xv). The merging of ethnicity will likely increase over time in the United States because attitudes in each younger generation have become more accepting of interracial dating (Allen, 2017). For example, in 2017, 39% of Americans reported that interracial marriage was a good thing for society, up from 24% in 2010 (Pew Research Center, 2017).

Further, the sexual attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs about sexuality and gender often vary widely within the same religious groups. For example, although the



Featureflash Photo Agency/Shutterstock.com

Model Paige Butcher and Actor Eddie Murphy have been together since 2012. Interracial relationships have become more common in the United States over the last 40 years.

traditional Roman Catholic view condemns sexual activity that does not potentially lead to procreation (the bearing of children), the attitudes and behaviors of American Catholics vary greatly on issues such as contraception, abortion, and homosexuality, often disagreeing with the long-standing tenets of the Church. One illustration of this conflict is that 98% of sexually experienced Catholic women have used contraception (Jones & Dreweke, 2011). Further, fundamentalist Christians, who claim to interpret the Bible literally, differ greatly in their views about sexuality from Christians who do not ascribe to literal biblical interpretation. For example, fundamentalist Christianity typically holds that sexual intercourse before marriage is sinful, and people who belong to this group may oppose the use of birth control, whereas liberal Christianity emphasizes caring in a relationship and appreciates how contraception can help to facilitate sexual intimacy. Similarly, Orthodox Jews have much more conservative views regarding sexuality and gender roles than do Reform Jews. For example, Orthodox Judaism forbids sexual intercourse during menstruation, whereas Reform Judaism allows for individual preferences.

Fundamentalists—whether Christian, Muslim, Jewish, or other religious groups—are far more restrictive of sexual behavior and roles for men and women than are their more-liberal counterparts. Over the last two decades, extreme fundamentalism in these religions has increased and fundamentalists have engaged in political activism in conflicts over sexual and gender-role issues, often following cultural traditions rather than religious teachings (Artyk, 2008; Correa et al., 2008). These aspects of diversity in sexual beliefs, values, and behaviors are part of the psychosocial orientation of this textbook.

## A Note about Inclusive Terminology

One way we strive to accurately represent the diversity of human sexuality is by being mindful of the terms and examples we use to describe differing gender identities and sexual orientations throughout this textbook. We strive to do this in a way that is sensitive and inclusive. Research on gender identity and sexual orientation has exploded in recent years (e.g., Mueller et al., 2017; Reisner et al., 2016; van Anders, 2015) alongside a rapidly changing sociopolitical landscape. We have entire chapters devoted to in-depth discussions of gender (Chapter 5), sexual behavior (Chapter 6), and sexual orientation (Chapter 7), but these important aspects of sexuality are also woven throughout each chapter of this textbook. We have attempted to use language that reflects our current understanding of these aspects of human sexuality. For instance, when writing about components of sexuality that are largely biological in nature (i.e., anatomy), we intentionally use biological terms (i.e., male and female) in an effort to distinguish between biological sex and gender (e.g., man, woman, transgender, genderfluid). Yet it is also difficult, if not impossible, to fully disentangle aspects of biological sex from gender, which has resulted in some scholars preferring the term “gender/sex” instead of using these as separate words (Hyde et al., 2019). We have not found a perfect solution for our choice of words throughout the textbook. In many places we continue to refer to “men” and “women” in binary terms, in part because this most accurately reflects the methodology of the research



we are referencing. We acknowledge that at times this language may be exclusionary, limited, or otherwise problematic. Discourses in this area are quickly evolving and, thus, the language used throughout this textbook may become outdated. We hope these issues spark thoughtful critique and discussion.

## Our Cultural Legacy: Sex for Procreation and Rigid Gender Roles

We now turn to a discussion of the past to better understand current sexual attitudes, values, and practices in modern times. In the Western world, there are two broad themes that have significantly shaped societal expectations surrounding the purpose of sexual behavior and expectations for male and female sexuality: the belief that procreation is the only legitimate reason for sexual expression and the value of rigid distinctions between traditional male and female gender roles. We review these themes in the following two sections.

### Sex for Procreation

Historically in North America the idea that procreation was the only legitimate reason for sexual activity was prevalent. Contemporary Roman Catholic doctrine and some pro-life organizations continue to hold the belief that the only moral sexual expression occurs within marriage primarily for purposes of procreation while also strengthening the marriage bond. For example, the American Life League, a Catholic pro-life education organization, maintains that people should not use contraception because “birth control leads to a state of mind that treats sexual activity as if it has nothing to do with procreation. Sexual activity becomes a recreational activity, birth control becomes a recreational drug and babies become ‘accidents’ or burdens to be eliminated” (American Life League, 2011a, p. 1). In this view, when a couple has sexual intercourse, they have committed themselves to any resultant pregnancy.

Sexual behaviors that provide pleasure without the possibility of procreation—such as masturbation, oral sex, anal intercourse, and sex between same-sex partners—have been viewed at various times as immoral, sinful, perverted, or illegal. In fact, oral sex and anal sex remained illegal in 10 states until 2003, when the Supreme Court overturned the laws forbidding those behaviors. The Court determined that the constitutional right to privacy protects private sexual contact between consenting adults.

Today, most North Americans do not believe that sexual activity is primarily for procreation, and people vary widely in their beliefs about which sexual activities constitute “having sex” (Sewell & Strassberg, 2015). While many people think having sex exclusively



As seen in *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, intergenerational conflicts can arise as the younger generation in immigrant families becomes more “Americanized.”

If you overheard someone say, “I had sex last night,” what *specific behaviors* would you think had happened?

### Critical THINKING Question



Many Chinese people have embraced Western customs such as the celebration of love on Valentine's Day. These couples are in a Valentine's Day kissing competition in Taiyuan, China.

refers to penile–vaginal intercourse, others include oral sex, manual stimulation, and/or masturbation in their definition, and some believe that orgasm has to occur for an activity to be considered sex. Further, the ways in which people define sex are known to differ based on the gender(s) of their sexual partners (Schick et al., 2016). Penile–vaginal intercourse can be a fulfilling part of sexual expression for many people, but excessive emphasis on it can delegitimize the experiences of sexual and gender minority individuals. Additionally, this view can result in the devaluing of behaviors that are often most pleasurable to females, such as clitoral stimulation. Instead, non-intercourse sexual activities are often relegated to the secondary status of *foreplay* (usually considered any activity before intercourse), implying that such activity is not important in and of itself and is to be followed by the “real sex” of intercourse. This excessive focus on intercourse can have negative consequences on sexual expectations, as the following situation that brought a young couple to sex therapy illustrates:

“I think our sex life was better before we started having sex. In the beginning, we could kiss and touch each other for hours. We loved exploring each other's bodies with all sorts of anticipation. But after we started having sex, we kind of stopped all that build up. Now our sex is pretty routine and even boring sometimes. (Authors' files)

## Male and Female Gender Roles in Sexuality

The second theme and legacy of great significance is a rigid cultural adherence to gender roles. The gender-role legacy is based on far more than the physiological differences between males and females. Although physiological differences between males and females create general physical characteristics and inclinations in each sex, gender socialization limits, shapes, and exaggerates our biological tendencies. Moreover, many people do not fit neatly into a male or female gender experience; for those gender nonconforming individuals, strict and binary gender socialization can be especially oppressive. Rigid gender-role conditioning can limit any person's potential and can harm their sexuality (Petersen & Hyde, 2011). For example, gender-role expectations of “appropriate” behavior for men and women might contribute to the notion that the man must always initiate sexual activity while the woman must either set limits or comply. These patterns can place tremendous pressure on boys and men and severely restrict girls' and women's sexual expression and fulfillment (Kreager et al., 2016; Maas et al., 2015).

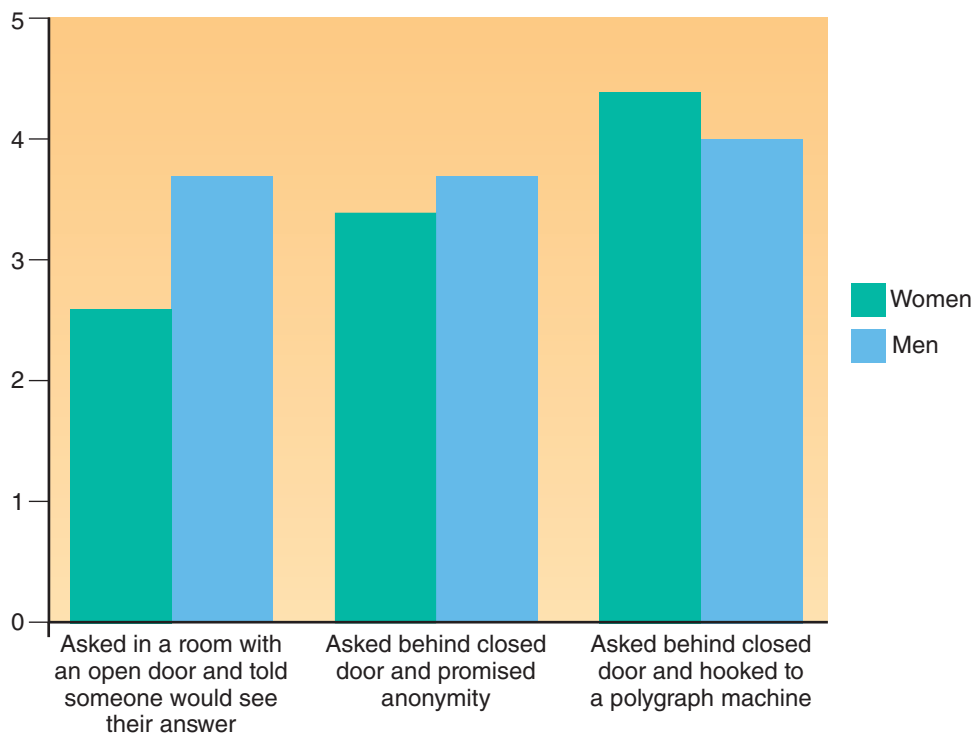
Across most cultures, women face more restrictions on, and experience greater sanctions against, their sexuality than do men. In the United States, for example, women are judged more harshly than men for engaging in casual sex or having multiple partners (Vrangalova, 2014). Female college students typically report feeling more guilt than men about their first intercourse experience (Lipman & Moore, 2016; Sprecher, 2014). Further, research shows that female college students feel more pressure than male college

students to not appear promiscuous. This study divided students into three situations that varied in privacy and accountability for truthfulness: Group 1 answered questions with an open door and were told someone may look at their answers. Group 2 answered questions behind a closed door and were promised anonymity. Group 3 answered questions while connected to a polygraph machine they believed was working. Men's answers were quite consistent across groups: Men in the first two groups reported 3.7 sexual partners and those in the polygraph group reported 4 sexual partners. In contrast, women's answers varied significantly depending on the differences in privacy and accountability. Women in the open room reported 2.6 sexual partners, those in the closed room claimed 3.4 sexual partners, and those in the polygraph group reported 4.4 partners (Alexander & Fisher, 2003) (see ● Figure 1.3).

Moreover, **slut shaming**—or humiliating, intimidating, or degrading a person for their sexual behavior—is a common threat experienced by many women throughout the physical world as well as in online spaces (Tanenbaum, 2015; Tate, 2016). Although some have sought to reclaim the word *slut* as a marker of sexual empowerment (McCluskey, 2017), it predominantly remains an indictment, typically of girls and women. Men and women alike are the perpetrators of slut shaming, and women tend to do so to express contempt for another woman, or they may do so to attempt to exempt themselves from being targeted. However, being labelled a slut is only one such threat to avoid; one study indicated the double-bind teen girls are in about sexuality. Teens did not judge boys negatively when they sexted (sent sexually explicit images or messages via cell phones or social media apps). However, girls were commonly described as “sluts” when they sexted. At the same time, girls experienced more pressure from boys to send sexual images than boys did from girls. If girls did not sext, they were considered “prudes” (Lippman & Campbell, 2014). Additionally, it is important to note that slut shaming is not exclusively experienced by girls and women; for example, many gay men feel pressure to escape the prevalent stigma and shame surrounding casual sex in some gay communities (Jaspal, 2017).

### slut shaming

Humiliating, intimidating, or degrading a person (typically a woman) because of their sexual behavior.



● **Figure 1.3** Number of sexual partners reported by college women and men. The answers differed more for women based on perceived privacy and accountability.

SOURCE: Alexander & Fischer (2003).