Human Sexuality

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Overview of Sexuality
Human sexuality has always been a taboo to discuss in public.
- Education regarding sex and sexuality has often been discussed on the “down-low” and kept secret.

- Our CULTURE plays a large role in what we are or are not allowed to discuss about sex and sexuality.
  - Much of the United States came from Northern European roots, and therefore adopted their perspective which is that sex is not always talked about (Great Britain, for example).

  Afghan Women for example are not suppose to be sexual at all, therefore, they are covered up with burqua that reveal nothing of their bodies.
  - This isn’t true obviously of all Muslim women, but some feel it’s essential for their beliefs.

- Even when we think of contemporary America, we like to assume that we are very open in our thinking and views on sexuality, yet this isn’t always the case…think of the Super Bowl in 2004.
  - Janet Jackson controversy.

Attitudes do have the ability to change over time, but there are some things which are usually very stigmatized:
- Masturbation
- Deviant Sexual Activity
- Deviant sexual orientation
ATTITUDE SURVEY
This is a way to see what your experiences and feelings are about sexuality. It will also compare you to your parents, and you a few years ago. Take a few minutes to complete this, you will NOT turn this in.

Sexual Intercourse/Sexual Response
Part of human sexuality is the actual act of sex.
- For some people, based upon their values and beliefs, sexual relations are only intended for the purpose of reproduction.

- For others, sexual relations are seen as more fluid and can be done for the pleasure of the woman or man.
  - There have been many instances, culturally, where the women were not suppose to enjoy sex on a pleasure level, but rather just do it and gain no pleasure from it.

Let’s look at the Human Sexual Response:
**Master’s and Johnson Four Phase Model:**

1) **Excitement**- this is when the body begins to show signs of arousal.
   Blood is routed to the pelvic region, this can lead to erection of the penis and arousal of the clitoris.

2) **Plateau**- this is higher level and more maintained sexual arousal response.

3) **Orgasm/Climax**- Buildup of tension which triggers pleasurable sexual release. It is usually brief, lasting a few seconds to less than a minute, but there is a rush of pleasurable physical sensations.

4) **Resolution**- Almost immediately after the orgasm/climax stage, the body then begins to relax and return to an unexcited state.
Sexual Values:
Activity: List on the board some sexual activities which you think are normal within our society today in America. (After that, have them list some activities which are not seen as normal within our society).

-Much of what we consider to be normal, or not normal, is based upon the predominating assumptions held by our U.S. and Western culture regarding sexuality.

-Within those definitions, normal was usually seen as attracted sexually to members of the opposite sex.

-And to desire penis-in-vagina intercourse as the ultimate expression of that attraction.

-Anything else was considered to be abnormal to varying degrees.

• While these labels of normal/abnormal were always in place, what is funny is that there is a great deal of anthropological and psychological evidence that human being are and have always been extremely diverse and variable in their sexual attractions and behaviors.

-Often this comes out through literature and art in which we see free expression of the variation in human sexuality.

There are many standards by which our sexuality and perceptions of sexuality in the United States are primarily based:

-The Heterosexual Standard- here the penis-vagina sex between a man and a woman is seen as the standard. It is what we compare all other abnormal sexual encounters to.

-The Two Person Standard- We are supposed to view sex as an activity for two.

-Although masturbation has for the most part gained legitimacy as an acceptable behavior, it is still typically viewed as a substitute for shared sexual activity, especially intercourse.
-It is still better according to this standard to experience sex as a duo.
-Any sexual activity that involves more than two is considered kinky.

-The Orgasmic Standard- you are supposed to reach climax in your sexual relations, without this, then you haven’t in our Western view of thinking accomplished what you set out for.

-The Romantic Standard- we are supposed to relate sex to love.
- Romance and love have become inseparably intertwined din our values.
-This is very subjective and can change though over time and culture, for example, in non-American, Victorian times, healthy and positive loving relationships were supposed to be unspoiled by the desires of the flesh, thus sex wasn’t good. Yet today, we view in many ways that the ultimate completion of a relationship is to have sex.

-The Safe Sex Standard- This is a more recent development which has emerged out of the scares over HIV and AIDS. There is a new emphasis on the need for condoms.
- but the standard for using condoms doesn’t happen, there are many people who are not using protection by this standard.

Our values and beliefs though have also transferred into the area of sex education and sexuality education.
- Sexuality education has evolved since the early 1960’s, when its aims were largely to prevent unwanted pregnancy and disease by giving young people knowledge.
- The next stage emphasized the need for values clarification, and communication skills.
The attitude among the general public has tended to favor some form of sex education in the school system; however, studies show that young people tend to still get the majority of their sex information from their peers or the mass media.

-There are also raging debates right now as to whether the U.S. should have comprehensive sexuality education- which would emphasize sex-positive concepts and preparing young people for possible sexual activity.
  -Versus those that are abstinence-only sex education which are often based on fear tactics, or religious values.

Sexuality education must be culturally aware. Recognizing cultural differences is a real key to much of the sexuality education success.

**Sexual Deviance:**
There is a large diversity among sexual values and the range of sexual behaviors among humans. The large spectrum then is something which can be studied.

Here are some ranges within the spectrum, some of which will deviate from the norms set up by our U.S. Culture:

**Hypersexuality**- unusually high level of interest in and the drive for sex.

**Hyposexuality**- an especially low level of sexual interest and drive for sex.

**Promiscuity**- sharing casual sexual activity with many different partners.

**Erotomania**- a very rare form of mental illness characterized by a highly compulsive need for sex.
  -This takes hypersexuality to the next level.
Nymphomania- this is the term sometimes used to describe erotomania in women.

Fetishism- sexual arousal triggered by objects or materials not usually considered to be sexual.
   - Domination
   - Bondage
   - Voyeurism

The Sex Worker Industry- This is a problem which is facing men and women. There are females who work on phone centers, or even worse they are working as call girls.

Hookers- common street name given to female sex workers
Call Girls- more highly paid prostitutes who cater to more exclusive clientele.

Hustlers- males who work fulltime as street sex workers
Call Boys- the more highly paid male sex workers.

Male sex workers are usually expected to reach organism and climax, thus they are more limited in some ways as to the number of clients they can see in a day.

Cross-Dressing: Transvestism
   - Transvestite has been a term which seems to get loosely applied to anyone who “cross-dresses” or wears clothes of the opposite sex.

   - This isn’t just for gay males.

   - There is a various degree of cross-dressing.

Some people cross-dress for a fetish. It causes them to have sexual arousal over wearing the clothing of the opposite sex. For example, a
man puts on a pair of women’s underwear, he then obtains sexual pleasure out of that.

Others obtain a gratification out of “passing”

- The idea that to pass as a member of the opposite sex would be exciting, there is a rush that goes with it.

**Sexual Orientation:**

Sexual Orientation refers to- **A preference for sexual partners of a particular sex(s).**

- Heterosexuality - you select partners of the opposite sex
- Homosexuality - you select partners of the same sex
- Bisexuality - you select partners of both sexes

Often, because of the same reasons of how we see gender, we like to try to fit people into clear sexual orientations. But often people may not be 100% “gay” or straight.

- Kinsey developed a scale of sexual orientation.
- There was 0 - no homosexuality, 6 exclusive homosexual.

- 37% of all men experienced orgasm in a sexual activity with another man at some time in their life.

- 60% of all men had some type of homosexual relationship before they were age 16.

- 30% of all men had some type of homosexual relationship between age 20 - 24.

Defining behavior though as being out of the ordinary is again very relative to the situation at hand. In some cultures, there is actually ritualized homosexuality, as Herdt described: Sambia War Rituals.